

Souls in the Hands of a Tender God: Stories of the Search for Home and Healing on the Streets


By Craig Rennebohm

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Since 1987, Craig Rennebohm has ministered to people who are homeless and struggling with mental illness. In *Souls in the Hands of a Tender God*, he tells the evocative stories of those who desperately need psychiatric, psychological, and spiritual support, like Mary, who surrounds herself with bulging trash bags, and Jerry, barred from every shelter and meal program in Seattle. With gentleness and grace, solid knowledge and wisdom, Rennebohm reaches out to each of them, and their stories become parables that explore mental illness and the spiritual heart of care and recovery.

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Editorial Review

Review

As well as a guide to how others can help be healing presences to the mentally ill, this hopeful book is a meditation on faith in a broken world.—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

"A refreshing look at compassion and caring for Seattle's outcasts . . . touching and not overly preachy."—Louisa Gaylord, *Crosscut*

"Recommend[ed] to professionals . . . to those who have struggled with mental/emotional problems, and to those who have mentally disturbed family members or friends."—Dean Watt, The Center for Progressive Christianity

"For the past 20 years, the Rev. Craig Rennebohm has spent at least three days a week walking the streets of [Seattle]. His mission? Helping the chronically homeless people everyone else bustles past. He shepherds people with mental illnesses to doctor appointments. He warms folks up with coffee at Starbucks. And, always, this United Church of Christ minister tries to get some of the 2,000-plus people 'sleeping rough' on any given night into housing. It's slow going." —Laura Vanderkam, *USA Today*

"Souls delivers a multilayered and nuanced discussion of homelessness and mental illness. And, when combined with a theological perspective that emphasizes God's love, Rennebohm's hard-fought-and-won insights into engaging the homeless and creating better systems of care offer refreshing contact points for psychology and religion."—James H. Zahniser, *Contemporary Psychology*

About the Author

Craig Rennebohm has worked for twenty years on the streets of Seattle, WA, supporting homeless individuals struggling with mental illness on the journey through the community mental health system to stability in the community. He has worked extensively with families, served as chaplain on the inpatient mental health units at Harborview Medical Center and has worked in partnership with local congregations to develop mental health ministries that include education, spiritual care and support groups, services of healing and encouragement, shelter, drop-in programs and supported housing. He has developed a basic "Companionship Training," which equips laity for ministries of presence and service, and "Relational Outreach," a resource and training for medical, mental health, human service and chemical dependency staff. Craig graduated from Carleton College, the Chicago Theological Seminary and the Pacific School of Religion where he earned a Doctor of Ministry degree specializing in pastoral care. Craig was ordained in Lowell, MA where he served in a community ministry position which included serving as a juvenile court chaplain, campus minister and as a staff member of the Lowell Pastoral Counseling Center. As pastor of Pilgrim Church in Seattle for 11 years he helped create a lively diverse congregation which embodied the message, "All are Welcome, Come as You Are." Craig is a United Church of Christ minister whose greatest delight is his family, Barb, Kelsey, Sam and Max.

David W. Paul is a Seattle-based writer and editorial consultant. He is a former political scientist who taught at Princeton and the University of Washington. He has authored or co-authored six books and many articles ranging from politics and history to film criticism, the Internet, and poetry translations. As a technical writer and editor, he worked on contract with Microsoft, Adobe, Boeing, and other companies in the Puget Sound area. His recognitions include awards from the Pacific Northwest Writers Association and the Seattle Arts

Commission. He has been a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow, a Fulbright-Hays Fellow, and a scholar-in-residence for the Washington Commission for the Humanities and the Washington State Arts Commission.

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