The Third Side: Why We Fight and How We Can Stop
by William Ury (Penguin)

This is a marvellous and inspiring book by the co-author of “Getting to Yes”. Ury focuses on the transformation of conflict from coercion to consent and from force to mutual interest. He conducts a survey of how conflict has been addressed throughout human history, pointing out that it is only in relatively recent times that a confrontational or competitive approach has predominated. Now, he argues, with the knowledge revolution the time has come to revert to collaboration, consensus and co-operation.

The author emphasises the role of the “third sider” to help people handle their differences, focusing on the process as much as the outcome. He gives mediation its place as a vital component in the range of “third side” roles and expands his analysis to show how conflict can be prevented, resolved or at least contained. His illustrations from the real world are extensive and moving. His ability to draw examples from his own experience in a wide range of fields of human activity is impressive.

Quite simply, if there is one book to engage the hearts and minds of those who are interested in how we can deal with conflict positively, this is it.