

In June 2023 I had the honour to spend three days in London. During this time, I was able to visit two partners of the Community of the Cross of Nails. On my first day I visited Southwark Cathedral which is located right next to London Bridge, but very hidden by other buildings and the railway bridge. When I arrived, I took a look around the impressive building to get my own first impression. Jay Colwill the Canon for Mission was the one who gave me a tour through and around the cathedral. He showed me where the Cross of Nails is placed and explained in which way they are using the Litany of Reconciliation and how important the Cross is for them. He also told me that the old part of the cathedral and especially the old columns were the inspiration for the building of Westminster. This fact wasn't really a surprise if you look at the beautiful cathedral. During the tour I got introduced to the nearly the whole team. At noon I attended the service and the following Eucharist. It was very interesting to experience a service in another cathedral in the UK. Afterwards Jay and I had lunch together and used this time to talk about his role as the Canon of Mission and about my work at the Coventry Cathedral as an intern from Germany. I was able to get glimpse of his work when I joined a meeting which was about upcoming events and how it could be possible to make a service more attractive for families.

The other two days I spend at St Thomas' hospital. During this time, I was a part of the Chaplaincy Team of the hospital and shadowed their work. One member took me around the hospital and showed me the whole building including the different rooms for prayers and the small Chapel in the middle of the building. The team consists of many people with different religions and faiths. It was great to see how all of them are working together and have the same aim, helping and praying for sick people who might have no family or who also want to practice their religion during their time in the hospital. All of them are doing a great and



important job. This is what I could see and feel for myself when I followed a member of the team through the hospital. She talked to the patients and prayed with them. It was beautiful to see their worried and sad faces turn into faces with big smiles and hopeful eyes when they saw the member of the Chaplaincy Team. On my first day I was able to attend a service at Lambeth Palace, close by. Archbishop Justin Welby, the head of the Anglican Church, lives here, and after the service in the chapel of his palace we all gathered together for a buffet in the palace garden, and I even got to meet the Archbishop personally.

These three days in London enriched me such a lot, and it was great to meet all these different people who are all part of the Community of the Cross of Nails. Thank you to everyone who made this trip possible for me!

Marlene Tiemann (pictured right)

To allow a wider view on the topic of reconciliation, I was sent abroad to visit Coventry's partner city Dresden, and over five days I visited four Cross of Nails Centres there. My first day started with an early train ride to the office of the Frauenkirche where I was introduced and welcomed by the friendly faces of the people working there. After I was shown around the office building the volunteers of the Frauenkirche took me up to the dome where a spectacular view over the city was awaiting me. When we were back on solid ground I took part in a midday service that gave an introduction into the history of the building and the clerical life of the church. The last activity of the day was an in-depth tour of the Frauenkirche from top to bottom. Our tour guide was enthusiastic and full of knowledge so that two hours were easily filled with stories about the building and its people. Part of that was also the story of the destruction of the Frauenkirche and how they received the Cross of Nails that is displayed on their altar. The Cross of Nails is actually the only Cross you can find on the altar since a beautiful mural of other biblical figures decorates the walls above it.

The next day Angelika Behnke, the Dean of the Frauenkirche, took me to the Diakonissen hospital, which was bombed and destroyed during the war. It was reconstructed in the years after the war and is a functioning hospital to this day. The special link to the Cathedral is that in 1965 volunteers from Coventry went to Dresden and helped to clean out the ruins of the hospital. Today the Cross of Nails finds its place in the church on the hospital grounds and replicas can be found on each floor. It was interesting how interwoven our history is considering that volunteers from Germany also helped to rebuild Coventry Cathedral. In the afternoon the interns of the Frauenkirche took us on a tour through Dresden and I got to see the city from their perspective.

The last days were filled with visits to the extremely beautiful church Maria am Wasser, a small church that has a beautiful location right between the River Elbe and a blooming garden. Finally, the Busmankapelle, a place of remembrance only quite recently finished, and which left quite an impression on me because it is formed by parts of a church room, in a building entirely made of glass, hidden between modern buildings and showing how history and the present time are coexisting next to each other just like here with our new and old Cathedral.

Besides my visits to CCN partners I also got the opportunity to talk to the events team of the Frauenkirche and talk about their approach to culture, which resonated strongly. My days in Dresden were filled with interesting, enriching conversations and so much knowledge. It again showed me how many sides and perspectives there are to our shared history and how constant conversation is needed to grow a relationship. I now have a better understanding of Dresden's story and how similar the Coventry story really is. I'm really thankful for the opportunity I had here.

Lara Dieke (pictured left)