

## 12<sup>th</sup> August, Theresa Boettcher, volunteer intern



**As we prepare to say goodbye to our two volunteer interns at the end of this month after a very busy and fruitful year, we take a look back on the visits made by Theresa Boettcher to a few UK CCN partners earlier this summer....**

Earlier this summer, I was sent out around the UK to three of the partners and friends in the CCN, to visit and learn and help out a bit.

My first stop along the way was the Ammerdown Retreat Centre which is located south of Bath. The Centre always has events, from Jane Austen Courses to a program called Meet My Neighbour, where the local people have a chance to go to places of worship of different religions. Basically, any event or meeting you want to hold there, they will accommodate you and without making any profit. All the money they earn, they put into the Centre or for example use to help Ukrainian Refugees.

So as soon as I arrived it felt like a home, everyone was very friendly and helpful and so nice. Over the couple of days I spent there, I met with many different people that work there. At first, I met with Lauren, who is doing a social justice gap year at the Centre. She organizes many different events, like 'Trash 2 Treasure' which gives an opportunity for children to learn about the importance of recycling. After that I met with one of the Trustees, a very nice Scottish man named Bill and he told me a lot about the history of the Centre, of how it was originally run by nuns and about the owner of the grounds, Lord Hylton. I then met with the gardener at the Centre and he is doing some amazing work in getting the garden to be much more environmentally friendly, like making a compost for the food waste from the kitchen, only growing local plants and many other things. I talked to a lot of the other staff like Tina, who is responsible for marketing and Christine, who is the lead manager of Ammerdown. I joined morning prayer each morning, which was led by Christine and it was located in a little chapel next to the Centre, and it was really interesting to see a morning prayer outside of the Cathedral. On my last day there, Christine and I read the prayer tree together, which is a little tree carved out of wood where people who are passing through can hang some of the prayers, wishes or concerns that are on their mind. In my free time I walked around the ground a lot, which are just huge and incredibly gorgeous and I enjoyed the nature.

After I had to leave again, I went back to Coventry for a day and then went on to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, which is a very small island located a little bit south of the border to Scotland and you can only reach it during certain hours of the day because of the tide. I stayed there with Sarah Hills, who was until three years ago the Canon for Reconciliation here at Coventry Cathedral and is now the vicar of the Parish Church of St. Mary the Virgin. It was so nice staying with her, her husband Richard and their dog Finn. They live in the vicarage and they have the most beautiful garden with little ducks and chickens in it and it's looking out towards the mainland. I helped the next day with prepping for the Sunday service, which was really nice because Sarah played the organ during the service and the sermon was held by a Reverend Brad Whittaker, who works in Chattanooga in the USA. He and his family came over a day later and it was really nice to talk to them. On the next day I met with Revd Canon Kate Tristram, who is a retired priest and historian and still sometimes preaches at St. Mary's. She told me about her life, about how she saw the old Cathedral burn down in 1940 when she was a child, about how she went on to study history at Oxford and then found her way to God and studied Theology as the only woman between 200 men. Then 40 years later she was one of the first women to become ordained in the 1990s. She also told me about the history of the island, about St. Aidan and St. Cuthbert, their journeys and the Vikings. After talking to her, I went on to talk to Revd Sam Quilty, who is a curate at St. Mary's and runs the Marygate Retreat House, which is a Christian non-profit house. Basically, anyone who wants to stay there can pay as much or as little as they want. This is a huge leap of faith and also an amazing opportunity for people who normally wouldn't be able to afford such a stay. Her work with her husband is so great and I am amazed by how she does all of what she is doing. They are actually in the process of becoming CCN partners at the moment. I then went on with Sarah to an island meeting called Holy Island 2050, on how to make life on the island more sustainable for the future. The next day Sarah and I met with Mary Taylor, who is on the UK

CCN Board and she told mainly me about her work for the Flodden Peace Garden, who are CCN partners. She had many photos and was an incredibly nice person.

After I had to leave, I went on to Liverpool to the team parish of St. Luke in the City. I joined the service in one of the three churches and then had a tour around Liverpool Cathedral with Lilly Nelson and Charlotte from the Tsedaqah Community. They are a community that is in place for the so-called triangle of hope. This is a bond between the diocese of Liverpool, the diocese of Kumasi, Ghana and the diocese of Virginia, USA. Together they were once one of the biggest slave routes and now form the so-called Triangle of Hope. Their mission is repentance and reconciliation and they send volunteers from both Ghana and the United States to Liverpool to do projects around social justice and God. In the evening I went and to the house where they live together and I got to talk to them about everything they're doing and we hope to be able to welcome them at some point to the Cathedral. On the next day I went to help at a food bank that is giving out food every week in one of the churches, St. Bride's, which was an amazing and at the same time heartbreaking experience. All of the volunteers are really passionate about their work, but they are really struggling at the moment, because as food prices go up, the people's need for food banks goes up as well, at the same time there are less people donating food because it is more expensive. After I was done there, I went to their other Church, St. Dunstan's, where there was a Roma Children's Group. The children that come to this get the opportunity to do fun crafts, play games and get to let out all of their energy.

After that was finished I went to the train station and back home to Coventry. My three trips were an absolutely amazing opportunity and I feel so honoured that the Cathedral sent me there. The trips were very long and intense, yet went by so fast. I will cherish everything I have learned within those days and am very excited to see what the next interns are going to be doing

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#### **17<sup>th</sup> June, Lara Toczelowksi, volunteer intern**

***Last month both of our volunteer interns spent time away from Coventry, visiting various CCN partners for a couple of weeks. Today, we hear from Lara, about her time as guest of the Studienzentrum für Jugendarbeit in Josefstal, Germany:***

In early May I travelled to Bavaria to attend this year's European Ecumenical Study Course in the Study Centre in Josefstal. The course offers Christians from Northern, Southern, Eastern and Central Europe as well as Great Britain the opportunity to come together for an intensive ten-day meeting, get into conversation and learn from one another. Only interrupted by the two Covid-19 years, the study course took place for the 53rd time in 2022. This year's topic was "Christian Identity in a Changing Europe" with the theme "Not a Spirit of Fear, but of Power and Love and Sound Mind".

On my train ride from Munich to Josefstal I've already had some time to admire the beautiful, very idyllic landscape in the very South of Bavaria, where the Study Centre is located. The first days were very much about getting to know the other roughly 30 participants and getting introduced to this year's topic.

After breakfast we started every day with morning prayer in the small chapel. The Study Centre became a CCN partner in 1967 and the chapel is the place where they display their Cross of Nails. The different services we had throughout the 10 days were always led by other people so that there was an interesting variety to it. As this study course was both Ecumenical and European people of different denominations with different cultural backgrounds and worship traditions and who were speaking different languages came and worked together. Getting together with so many different people you wouldn't usually meet in everyday life - and definitely not all at once - created a very interesting dynamic. At a first glance, the most striking thing was probably how different all of us were, born into different generations in different countries and believing in different things. But still we slowly but steadily grew together as a group and in the end, I think everybody realized that our similarities were actually much stronger and much more important than everything that might have divided us. And one of the things I liked most about it was that everybody seemed to be genuinely interested and

really wanted to get to know other peoples' views and opinions on different issues even though they might not always agree.

But of course, the core of a study course is still the studying and we also did plenty of that. We've had lectures, excursions, workshops as well as discussions in both big and small groups. Talking about Christian identity in a changing Europe the biblical character of Peter took central stage in our discussions and we specifically looked at and talked about his changing identity as a follower of Jesus.

One of the most interesting days for me was definitely the Thursday we all went to Munich. There we first visited and got a tour around the Rumanian-Orthodox Centre in Munich. After that we went to the Evangelical Migration Centre Munich in the so-called Greek House, where we learned about their work with migrants in Munich. Overall, we got some very interesting insights on that day and then all went for a traditional Bavarian lunch in a restaurant.

The parts around the studying itself were actually what made the study course most special in my opinion. Especially after the Covid-19 years it was just really nice to be around lots of people again, eat together, pray together, laugh together, talk about important as well as rather mundane things. To go on hikes, sit together in the evenings and drink the one or other bottle of beer or glass of wine. To play table tennis and table soccer together and to grow together throughout these ten days.



Lara Toczowski, Coventry Cathedral volunteer intern

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25<sup>th</sup> March

**In conversation: the Rev Robert Childers and the Right Rev Brian Cole on racial justice and the importance of witness**

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4<sup>th</sup> March

**A prayer for Ukraine as war enters its second week, from Oliver Schuegraf**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8CdltwkyKo&t=18s>

*Video transcript:*

***There is a war waging in the middle of Europe.***

*There is a war waging in the middle of Europe. Most of us probably never thought that one day we would have to utter this sentence. In Europe, cities are being bombed, people are being shelled, civilians are dying. The population is seeking shelter in sub-way stations; almost a million refugees have already made their way to find refuge in Hungary or Poland.*

*There is a war waging the middle of Europe. What seemed unthinkable for so long has become real. And I, like probably many, feel perplexed and absolutely helpless. I have not done military service; I did community service instead. "War is contrary to the will of God" – this is what the World Council of Churches had urgently formulated in 1948. This should also apply to me as a prospective theology*

*student, I thought then. And now? Arms supplies and rearmament suddenly seem to be the order of the day. Can that be?*

*War is contrary to the will of God – What does that mean today for me, for us as Community of the Cross of Nails as we are striving for reconciliation, peace, and international understanding? Can there be peace without resolutely confronting and stopping the aggressor? I would so much like to know how this can be done. But I am perplexed. I am a conscientious objector, yet I admire all those Ukrainians who defend the independence and freedom of their country, even with weapons.*

*In the last weeks Coventry has been in contact with Anastasya from Saint Pauls, our Cross of Nails' partner in Odessa. Anastasya was grateful that the Community of the Cross of Nails is showing its solidarity with Odessa. She asked that we pray for her parish and for peace in the hearts of the people. Unfortunately, we have not heard from her since the war began.*

*I cannot get out of my mind the Bible verse with which the Litany of Reconciliation begins: All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. All have sinned. We become guilty where wars leave us cold just because they are far away. And we need to reflect openly and honestly how we, the seemingly uninvolved, have contributed that war is waging in Europa again. But even though we are all not blameless in this conflict, not all sin is equal. Reconciliation and peace must go hand in hand with justice. You cannot have one without the other. Injustice and aggression must be clearly called by their names. We must confront both without hating the aggressors. That is what Provost Howard has taught us.*

*But I remain perplexed as to how justice and peace are to come together. Forgiveness and reconciliation are perhaps too big words for the moment. But how do we start with small steps? Where can dialogue emerge, where is the space for people to come together so that peace and reconciliation might get a chance again?*

*What remains for the moment? Where to put my speechlessness? It helps me to know that over the centuries people have turned to God in their helplessness. Especially in the Psalms, people have not minced their words and have bitterly complained to God about their abandonment:*

*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? (Ps 13)*

*But I also hear in the Psalms: Come, behold the works of the Lord; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. (Ps 46)*

*We bring our helplessness before God and include in our intercessions Anastasya, Pastor Alexander Gross, and the entire Saint Paul's parish in Odessa, but also the Cross of Nails partners in Russia and Belarus: The Lutheran Church of the Resurrection in Kaliningrad, St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Moscow, St. Catherine's Lutheran Church in St. Petersburg, the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Volgograd, and the International Conference Centre IBB in Minsk.*

*So we pray: Almighty and merciful God, you are a God of peace. You have promised us a world where swords are forged into ploughshares, where people no longer learn to wage war. In Jesus Christ you gave peace. His way is a way of gentleness, non-violence, and reconciliation, even to the cross. He is our peace. God, we lament war and terror in many countries on this earth. We lament to you the suffering and violence that people experience. We lament the senseless deaths. God, we bring before you the war in Ukraine and our fear and bewilderment. We ask you that the war-mongers find their way back to the power of dialogue and no longer rely on the language of weapons. We pray that wisdom and the will for peace is stronger than self-assertion and power. God, we think of our brothers and sisters in faith and of all the people in Ukraine who are suffering under the war. We also think of the people and Cross of Nails partners in Belarus and Russia. We know that we Christians should be one in Christ, our peace. Make us to instruments of your peace in this time. Amen.*

**Oliver Schuegraf, Chair of the German Community of the Cross of Nails**

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25<sup>th</sup> February

## **An invitation to pray and gather together, from the Very Reverend John Witcombe**

“In a week when we are praying so much for our sisters and brothers in Russia and Ukraine, it’s a reminder that the message of reconciliation is always pertinent, always relevant, and the world needs whatever we can offer, in ourselves and in our prayers, to partner with God in his work of reconciliation”.

In a very dark week for peace in our world, Dean John offers an invitation to all across the CCN to gather together in prayer and in spirit for Coventry Cathedral’s 60th anniversary on Wednesday 25 May 2022; for the precious work in reconciliation that our Cathedral inspires in so many out in the wider world; and for the CCN octave of prayer and online international gathering in the week 22-29 May. Please do note the dates and aim to join us.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00GnvNYqcdU&feature=youtu.be>

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16th February

## **Facing the Future: Reconciliation and Ecological Crisis discussion series**

How do we reconcile with wounds and pain – and lack – that have not yet happened but that are very likely to come to pass? How do we begin to talk of reconciliation with an unknown but almost certainly more hostile future?

Some months ago, a few of us wondered what form a discussion based around the environmental catastrophe and our three CCN guiding principles might take, and we felt that more reflection and conversation around this could be welcomed by others.

**Healing the wounds of history** is fundamental to dealing with the past; but how does this adapt for facing future tragedy?

**Learning to live with difference and celebrate diversity** – how does this sit with the world’s finite resources? How do we acknowledge the need, overall, in our diversity to live with less, not more?

**Building a culture of peace** – what will this look like and how might it be achieved, when the parameters and the context are so unclear, and when future generations will be the ones in the frontline?

What seems apparent to many of us is that some elements of the world as we know it are likely to be changed permanently or even gone for ever, whatever we do to mitigate humanity’s damage to the planet. Even in the best case scenarios there is unlikely to be a complete return to a past reality, with all that this means for social justice for different parts of the globe. This realisation can be a traumatic one for any of us to come to terms with.

In partnership with the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, we’ve arranged a short series of online discussion sessions this March, to look at these questions from the starting point of each CCN priority in turn. With **Paul Bodenham** of Green Christian, who co-led discussion at our last online session on the environment held on the eve of Cop26, and **Chloe Greenwood** from the **Deep Adaptation Forum** as the lead speakers, it will be a space for people to share, and to begin – or continue – to unpick for themselves, how we feel, and respond to, the challenge ahead as reconcilers in our own communities. The aim is to provide a creative and prayerful, reflective space for people to engage with the ecological crisis and our part in it, and to gain strength for the task from others alongside.



How can we build in ourselves, and with others, a culture of peace out of such a conflicted situation? One that is robust enough to offer something meaningful for the future with all its uncertainties, amidst the increased probability of further social upheaval and conflict?

Do join us. The full series of three sessions runs **each Wednesday from 16th – 30th March from 7.00-8.30pm UK time**: all welcome, but please do aim to be there for all three sessions.

Sign up [here](#) by 9th March.

Alice Farnhill, CCN Co-ordinator and Tilly Martin, APF Co-ordinator

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10<sup>th</sup> February

### **Prayers for our partners and their communities in Ukraine and Russia, from the Very Reverend John Witcombe**

As tensions continue in and around Ukraine, we hold the country and surrounding region in our prayers, and carry in our thoughts particularly CCN partner, St Paul's Cathedral Community in Odessa.

*The Evangelical Lutheran community of Odessa was recognised by the Ukrainian state in late 1990, after the collapse of the USSR, and became the primary Lutheran community in Ukraine, with St. Paul's Church, originally built in the 1820s, as its cathedral church. The building has had a chequered history: It was a German Lutheran church in the 19th century, used as a broadcasting station and gym in Socialist times, burned down in 1976 and was finally reopened and consecrated in 2010 following a stunning restoration project, funded in large part by the Lutheran community in Bavaria and individual patrons. It's the CCN's first and only partner in Ukraine.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDuTRRZ5tnI>