

Thought for the week archive 2017

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CCN Thought for the Week for 6th October 2017 - Canon Sarah Hills

Canon Sarah Hills, Canon for Reconciliation at Coventry, shares our very first 'Thought for the Week' and invites you to participate!

<https://youtu.be/q8W0VqhtonY>

CCN Thought for the Week for 13th October – Mark Pendleton

Standing with Cuba in the Days after the Storm

Cuba, like other parts of the Caribbean, had never seen such a powerful storm. Hurricane Irma stalled over the northern central coast of Cuba for two full days in September, 2017 with Category Five winds. Cuba takes pride with its disaster preparedness, yet this storm took the lives of ten souls. Even Havana, at the western edge of the storm, experienced massive flooding when the iconic sea wall was breached, leaving citizens to paddle through the streets in makeshift rafts.



With two of our Cross of Nails partners in Episcopal Churches – the first Baptist partner will receive a cross in 2018 – we are partnered with the Friends of the Episcopal Church at <https://www.friendsofecuba.org/> for the Community of the Cross of Nails to receive donations to help provide food and shelter to those most impacted along the northern coast.



Members of the CCN in North America are planning to visit Cuba in the coming months, with Canon Sarah Hills joining us along with other CCN partners from Germany and South Africa. Our hope is to, in a simple and humble way, begin to heal some of the wounds of history between Cuba and U.S. – nations and peoples separated by the Cold War, family distance, and mutual distrust. The first part of the experience will be

centered in the 'Little Havana' section of Miami. Our intention is to meet with Cuban Americans of different generations whose lives were and continue to be impacted by the 1959 Cuban Revolution and subsequent waves of hundreds of thousands of Cuba émigrés to the U.S.

Mark B. Pendleton, President, CCN-North America

CCN Thought for the Week for 20th October – Kasta Dip



This week Kasta Dip, Director of the India Peace Centre, which joined the CCN last November, sends us his thoughts on events in Asia right now.

In the past couple of weeks, in Asia, two incidents have made us think where the world is going to.

One is of the Rohingya fleeing Myanmar and the second is of the killing of Gauri Lankesh, a senior journalist from Bangalore, by extremists.

Considered by the United Nations as the “most persecuted minority group in the world”, the Rohingyas are a stateless group of people concentrated in western Myanmar, and facing brutal assaults from the Burmese state and military. Since October, frequent reports have come in of the Burmese army burning down Rohingya villages, rapes and murders of the nature of ‘ethnic cleansing’. Faced with the savagery, about 10,000 Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar have rushed into Bangladesh for refuge. This is not the first time that this group has been seeking shelter from the Bangladeshi government on account of being brutally persecuted at home. Last time a mass exodus of the Rohingyas happened was in 2012 when communal clashes erupted between them and the Rakhine Buddhists who were later represented by the Burmese Army.

While Bangladesh remains their favourite destination for decades now, they have been seeking out refuge in other neighbouring countries as well. While Human Rights Watch has called the military crackdown on Myanmar a case of ‘ethnic cleansing,’ the UN’s office of Human Rights has declared that the crisis in the South East Asian country be ‘tantamount to crimes against humanity’. State counsellor, Aung San Su Kyi, who was awarded Nobel Peace Prize 1991 for her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights has not taken the side of this oppressed; rather she has claimed that those attacked were Jihadists and that the military lock down is a means to ensure state security against extremist organisations in the region.

His Holiness Pope Francis said that he is following the “sad news of the religious persecution of Rohingya community and has asked that the members of the ethnic group be given full rights.” The Nobel laureate Desmond Tutu has called on Aung San Suu Kyi to end military-led operations against Myanmar’s Rohingya minority, which have driven 270,000 refugees from the country in the past fortnight. The 85-year old archbishop said the “unfolding horror” and “ethnic cleansing” in the country’s Rakhine region had forced him to speak out against the woman he admired and considered “a dearly beloved sister”. In an open letter posted on social media, he said that “the images we are seeing of the suffering of Rohingya fill us with pain and dread” and has urged Suu Kyi to intervene. However, as of now, she has not taken heed of his words.

The plight of the Rohingya continues to worsen – in India, the government has decided to deport the Rohingya citing security reasons, as they are vulnerable to recruitment by ISIS and other extremist groups.

In Karnataka, Gauri's killers and those who planned her assassination may never get unmasked, but the objective is evident create the fear of retaliation among those who dissent and question majoritarianism. They succeeded, at least momentarily. And this is not the first time it is happening. On August 30, 2015, M M Kalburgi, a rationalist and free thinker from Karnataka was shot dead at his residence. Two years later, Gauri was killed, once again within the confines of her home, spaces they would have thought were safe.

Any democracy will stand strong only when it is built on the foundation of free speech, and holds onto the essence of it. Debates and disagreements are a part of democracy, and for India, a country which prides itself on being the world's largest, the acid test for its democratic ideals lies in how it treats those who dissent. Today, however, the space for dissent is shrinking in India. An influential echo chamber of self-proclaimed nationalists and protectors of religion nudged along by a despotic leadership - are trying to silence every independent voice which chooses to disagree with them. How many more deaths are we going to witness? How many voices are going to be silenced?

In Kerala too, there have been multiple examples in the past where rationalists, free thinkers and journalists have been threatened. The threats caused outrage, but never fear. With Gauri Lankesh's murder, fear has become much more tangible.

As Dhanya Rajendran says "the collusion between political parties in enabling political violence needs a strong response from us, as citizens. When young women in a pub are attacked, when people belonging to two faiths are assaulted for being in a relationship, or even for travelling together, the condemnation needs to be unequivocal and unanimous. It is when the society gets divided into Gauris and Kalburgis on one side and the bigots and their supporters on the other, that many among us become wanton enough to justify a murder. We cannot be divided into left-wing and right-wing when we are faced with violence for just having an opinion."

The murder of Gauri Lankesh should not frighten us in having an opinion or take away our freedom of speech or expression. It is a democratic right. Democracy lies in the hands of the people and the right to freedom of expressions plays a vital key role in the proper smooth functioning of the state. If the state does not function properly and is distracted from what it is obliged to do, it is the duty of the common people to make them remember. Freedom of speech is a medium given to us to live with dignity than merely existence. "Democracy is no democracy without free speech and expression".

Many times this freedom of expression and speech has been used by the corrupted people to lure the poor people and bring communal tensions. Freedom of speech is the expression where one conveys other what their views on a topic are. These views are sometimes revolutionary as in the case of the Great Martin Luther King where his famous speech 'I have a Dream' had a huge impact on the whole community, whereas on the other side the Nazi Party of Hitler had a different side. Hitler's speeches provoked the people of the Nazi party to kill Jews, and rest is the history. As George Washington said "If freedom of speech is taken away, then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter." Therefore, it is our moral duty to defend our freedom of speech for fullness of life and this is the prophetic mission of the church.

These two incidents speak of the hate that is growing beyond boundaries. Hate is tearing societies along racial, ethnic, gender, and religious lines. For all their "patriotic" rhetoric, hate groups and their imitators are really trying to divide us; their views are fundamentally anti-democratic. True patriots fight hate. They counter hate with acts of goodness.

Sitting home with our virtue does no good. In the face of hate, silence is deadly. Apathy will be interpreted as acceptance — by the perpetrators, the public, and — worse — the victims. If left unchallenged, hate persists and grows.

All over the world people are fighting hate, standing up to promote tolerance and inclusion. Let us join them and bear witness to our Christian calling of peace and reconciliation.

Kasta Dip

Director, India Peace Centre, Nagpur

CCN Thought for the Week for 27th October – Oliver Schuegraf

Oliver Schuegraf, Lutheran Minister and Chair of the CCN German Board, gives us his thoughts on reconciliation just ahead of Reformation Day, 31st October – especially resonant this year in the 500th anniversary of Luther's 95 theses.

<https://youtu.be/u4upmlfe5vs>

CCN Thought for the Week for 3rd November – Maropeng Maholoa

CCN Thought for the Week – Maropeng Moholoa, Programmes Coordinator at HOPE Africa, a Social Development Programme of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa

Archbishop Desmond Tutu described the post-apartheid South Africa as a rainbow nation immediately after our first democratic election in 1994. However, the recent events that took place in South Africa are really worrying, especially when one begins to think of how far we have come as a country. We have seen some isolated incidences that goes against the ethos of the rainbow nation.



The #FeesMustFall student protests which began in 2015 continue to haunt many of our universities. It is very unfortunate that many of these protests are violent in nature – from both the police and private security companies and the university students. Several university buildings such as libraries, and most recently part of the historic St Mark Anglican Church in District Six (Cape Town), were destroyed by arson attacks. Service delivery protests in many of the previously disadvantaged communities as well as labour related protests are no different either in terms of violence.

It is now public knowledge that the coffin assault duo was found guilty of assault, attempted murder, kidnapping and intimidation charges for forcing Victor Mlotshwa into a coffin and threatening to pour petrol on him. Willem Oosthuizen and Theo Jackson's actions brought racism as a topic in many households across the country. Regardless of what Mlotshwa did or did not do, it was inhuman of Oosthuizen and Jackson to force him into a coffin.

Two university students were recently suspended for using the K-words (ethnic term of abuse) in a video which was erroneously shared on a social media group. The fact that these young students appeared to be comfortable to use the K-word is worrying. It clearly shows that while some of us are moving forward, some people are moving backward. The same could be said about people who paraded the apartheid flag during the recent #BlackMonday Campaign.

With all these events and many others not included here such as xenophobia, true reconciliation seems to be a pipe dream. But our Christian faith challenges us to be a people of hope. It is for this reason that the Community of Cross of Nails (CCN) centres in South Africa have a duty to promote the principles of ubuntu which teaches community solidarity, caring and sharing amongst community members. CCN centres together with the International Cross of Nails Schools should continue to focus on healing the wounds of history, learning to live with difference and celebrate diversity, and building the culture of peace. CCN ministry is surely relevant and could be enhanced by community dialogues.

Peace and Blessings.

CCN Thought for the Week for 10th November – the Most Revd and Right Hon Justin Welby

On the eve of Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday in the UK, we're really pleased to release an extended Thought for the Week from the Archbishop of Canterbury, recorded in 2015 as part of the 'Reflections on Reconciliation' video series with current and previous Canons for Reconciliation at Coventry (see our Resources page for others in the series, being released every few days through early November). Lambeth Palace is closely connected with both the CCN through its formal membership last year, and with Coventry Cathedral through various day to day links with the Archbishop's Reconciliation Ministry. In this hugely inspiring and thought-provoking film, Archbishop Justin shares his memories of his time in Coventry, the Cathedral's impact on his work and more general perspectives on the place of reconciliation in today's world.

<https://youtu.be/8T27FsodUVI>

CCN Thought for the Week for 17th November – The Very Revd John Witcombe, Dean of Coventry Cathedral

At the close of a week of Remembrance, as well as the anniversary of Coventry's own bombing on 14th November 1940, our own Dean, the Very Revd John Witcombe, speaks about the power and relevance of Coventry's reconciliation work, and the 70th anniversary of our very special relationship with Kiel in Germany, whose Nikolaikirche received our first Cross of Nails in 1947.

<https://youtu.be/-q4ch4ELyqU>

CCN Thought for the Week for 24th November – The Very Revd Shane Parker,
Dean of Christ Church Cathedral Ottawa, Canada



In September I was privileged to attend a historic Anglican Church of Canada gathering in Pinawa, Manitoba, called *The Road to Warm Springs: The National Consultation on Indigenous Anglican Self-Determination*. Coverage of that consultation, including excellent videos of key presentations, can be found at www.anglican.ca/im/rws/.

The weather was cool, with soft grey skies and sporadic rainfall. There was a pathway along the waterfront and it was good to walk there, looking out across the lake at the small islands and the soft colours of the far shore. It had been years since I spent time in that part of Canada, and many memories of my life as prairie boy came to mind amidst the pungent-sweet smells of early autumn among the trembling aspen, white birch and balsam poplar trees.

The gathering was convened by our Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, with National Indigenous Bishop Mark MacDonald. Sixty-eight indigenous and non-indigenous Anglicans met concerning *The Covenant of 1994* promise to build a truly indigenous Anglican Church. The consultation concluded with a “Call to the Church” which was signed by all participants. Part of the text says:

With eyes wide open we are looking to the future with great hope and we hereby renew our commitment to The Covenant of 1994 and the vision of a truly Indigenous Anglican Church. We commit ourselves to all the work necessary to bring this vision to its full flowering. In the spirit of our Church’s endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on The Rights of Indigenous Peoples we call all our bishops, clergy and all the baptized to stand in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples in their quest for self-determination.

Much of the time was spent in careful listening. It was profoundly moving to hear and see indigenous Anglicans speak about the faith we share—and about the suppression of their traditional spirituality by our non-indigenous Anglican forebears. The Gospel of Christ’s reconciling love is so evident in the hearts and minds of indigenous Anglican clergy and lay leaders—who possess great wisdom and skill. And it is so very evident that their right to govern their lives in faith as a new body within the Anglican Church of Canada is an imperative for them. It is a healing imperative for our whole church.

As we listened to teaching about traditional indigenous ways, it became easy to see why the Gospel of Christ's reconciling love was so readily grasped by indigenous communities from the time of the earliest missionaries: traditional indigenous spirituality clearly resonates with the core spirituality of both the Old and New testaments. Traditional western ways, which were layered upon the Gospel and tragically forced upon indigenous children in Canadian Residential Schools, are often distant from the teaching of Jesus, who spoke from middle-eastern traditional ways. It is always good to recall that Jesus of Nazareth was an indigenous person, whose understanding of Creation was not linear and deductive. And certainly not layered with the cultural or structural ideas of England—including its language, ideologies and manner of dress.

European Christians were profoundly misguided when they referred to the traditional indigenous ways as "paganism" or superstition, and when they forbade them or ordered the people to destroy their symbols and rituals. The truth is that the God of Jesus, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was already in this land and in the hearts of its original people long before western missionaries came here. It is time to honour that truth.

I close with a prayer based on the First Nations practice of praying to the four directions. This is based a Cree adaptation from the Indigenous Ministries of the Anglican Church of Canada.

In it you can feel how the wisdom of traditional indigenous ways deeply grounds our understanding of God's reconciling love. You can also see how the Indigenous Anglican community in Canada shapes its prayers—as Anglicans have done in different contexts for centuries:

Come Great Spirit, as we gather in your name.

We face East: To your symbol colour Red, the hue of revelation. To your animal symbol the Eagle, strong and nurturing. To your lessons calling us to the balance of your Spirit in harmony with brothers and sisters. To invoke your wisdom and grace, the goodness of the ages.

We turn to face South: To your symbol colour Gold, for the morning star. To your symbol Brother Sun that enlightens our intellect and brings light on our path to live responsibly. To your lessons calling us to balance of mind in the spirit of humility. To invoke your spirit of illumination and far sighted vision. Help us to love you and one another with our whole heart, our whole mind, and our whole soul.

We turn to face West: To your symbol colour Black, still and quiet. To your animal symbol the Thunderbird. To your symbol the thunder, mighty and purposeful. To your lessons calling us to balance our emotions in the spirit of gentleness and honesty. To invoke your spirit of introspection, seeing within. Give us your strength and the courage to endure.

We turn to face North: To your symbol colour White, of clarity and brightness. To your animal symbol the Swan which brings us in touch with Mother Earth and growing things. To your lessons calling us to balance of body in the spirit of good humor. To invoke your spirit of innocence, trust and love. Help us to open our eyes to the sacredness of every living thing.

We turn to complete the circle and look: to God our Creator who cleanses our Mother Earth with snow, wind and rain; to Jesus Christ the Peacemaker who fills us with the wideness of mercy and lovingly embraces all; and to the Holy Spirit who inspires us to action. Amen.

CCN Thought for the Week for 1st December – Krizstina Giefing, Neue Mittelschule Guntramsdorf, Austria

The week before commemorating the bombing of Coventry, our first forms got to know its story. Through the Cross of Nails ICONS network our school is closely bound up with Coventry, and we looked at how difficult reconciliation is, in one particular lesson.

We decided to build Coventry Cathedral with pieces of wood, like Jenga. I talked with the pupils about the night of November 14th, 1940 – the night when the German airforce bombed the factories producing aircraft engines to sabotage the British air defence.

400 flats were destroyed and 500 people died in this night. The medieval St. Michael's Cathedral was destroyed, too.

Richard Howard wrote the words "Father forgive" onto the walls of the ruins and he asked for reconciliation. That was courageous as well as risky.

When our work was done we admired our beautiful Cathedral. Therefore we didn't realize that one of the boys had hung on to some of the pieces of wood. Suddenly, and completely unexpectedly, he started "bombing" our Cathedral. Only the tower was left.

The shock among the other children was deep. They wanted me to send this boy out of the classroom. They didn't want to have him among them anymore. So I started telling them about Coventry. We talked about truth, fairness, peace and so on. Our Cathedral was small, and of course much less important than the one in Coventry, but our grief was really deep.



The pupils were shocked about their classmate and what he had done. His behaviour had really been shabby and perfidious. But now it was for us to forgive him. We talked about the meaning of "Father forgive". Nobody is perfect and faultless. We have to understand that God forgives us because of his Grace, which seems to be endless.

We said, "If God forgives us all, then we should also do it." The pupils were willing to do so but they wanted to hear an apology. Their classmate should see his deed and ask the others to forgive him. This obviously was the most difficult thing for him to do, and it took him quite a while before he was able to. But the words finally brought healing, and we started rebuilding our Cathedral. The most interesting thing for me to see was that the pupils used the words "peace" and "justice" for building the roof.

In this lesson we all – teachers and pupils – learned something: the story of Coventry and the Cross of Nails brought reconciliation into our class!!!!



CCN Thought for the Week for 8th December – Paul Maxwell-Rose, Christian International Peace Service (CHIPS)

This week, as we journey deeper into the season of Advent, we hear from Paul Maxwell-Rose, Director of CHIPS, one of our partners based in the UK, who outlines why the Christmas story has so much relevance to all of our work as reconcilers, and how CHIPS today follows Christ's example in 'taking both sides' as the fundamental basis of its own community reconciliation projects.

www.chipspeace.org

<https://youtu.be/H1PDZm-ZFt8>

CCN Thought for the Week for 15th December – Mark Simmons, UK CCN

This week began with Human Rights Day, commemorating the signature on 10 December 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was also the anniversary of the first-ever Nobel Peace Prize, awarded in 1901 to the activists Frédéric Passy and Henri Dunant for their roles in founding the International Peace League and the Red Cross Movement respectively.

The Universal Declaration came after centuries of conflict in Europe for control of power and wealth, people and territory had culminated in a war of such horrific violence and global reach that the world was determined – for a few short years at least – to do things differently. The Declaration recognises explicitly that barbaric acts can be resisted when we protect the dignity of each individual, when we uphold fundamental freedoms, when we refuse to allow “them” and “us” thinking to creep in. In other words, protecting human rights promotes peace.



While the text of the UN resolution establishing Human Rights Day does not mention the Nobel Peace Prize award on whose anniversary it falls, it strikes me as no coincidence. After all, the Peace League and Red Cross had been prompted by the horrors of war, just as was the Declaration. And all recognise in different ways that if we are to thwart war we must learn to respect and value our shared humanity and dignity. Upholding dignity promotes peace. And from a Christian perspective, it is rooted in our each having been made in the image of God.

The Declaration also enshrines the idea that freedom of speech and belief are linked to freedom from fear and want. Once the freedom of belief is denied it is an easy and slippery slope to denying all sorts of other forms of political, economic, social and cultural participation. We begin to erode not only rights, dignity and capital, but the very essence of someone's identity, of what makes each of us feel valued, of what makes each of us feel that we belong. That eroding slope escalates towards a cliff of violence. But it also keeps people deliberately excluded from the things like land, education and healthcare which would help to lift them out of poverty.

For me this is all intrinsic to the vision of the Community of the Cross of Nails, just as for its member churches and organisations like Cord, for ICON schools and beacons of hope like Ibba Girls' School. We will only be able to flourish in the future and when a culture of peace is built on protecting and promoting our rights, our dignity, and our fundamental freedoms to engage fully and non-violently in political, economic, social, cultural and spiritual life.

[CCN Thought for the Week for 22nd December – Revd Canon Paul Oestreicher](#)

For our Christmas Thought for the Week, we're delighted to share Revd Canon Paul Oestreicher's message with you. Canon Paul was a Canon at Coventry Cathedral and Director of the Cathedral's then Centre for International Reconciliation from 1986 to 1998, and continues to work as a journalist and expert on human rights, peace, faith and reconciliation.

<https://youtu.be/3sQcezgNgJU>

[CCN Thought for the Week for 29th December – Bishop Michael Oulton, Anglican Diocese of Ontario, Canada](#)

Thank you, Bishop Michael Oulton and St George's Cathedral, Kingston, Ontario, who we were thrilled to welcome into the CCN only last month, for this wonderful message to close the year and help us look forward to the next with hope.

May we wish you all a very Happy and peaceful New Year.

<https://youtu.be/xUtvzSNu3A>