

# Thought for the week archive 2019

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## CCN Thought for the Week for the New Year – St Michael the Archangel, Southampton



*O God, by whose command  
the order of time runs its course:  
forgive our impatience, perfect our faith  
and, while we wait for the fulfilment of your promises,  
grant us to have a good hope because of your word;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Common Worship offers us this Collect for use at around New Year. It seems to me that the Collect hits some important nails on the head. Few, if any, of us reading this will have avoided 'impatience' in the last year. Impatience perhaps about 'things', but more likely about people and personal matters. Perhaps impatience with the slow progress of a project we are undertaking. Or impatience about bringing a personal 'habit' under control. Or impatience with a colleague or family member whom we regard as 'hard to get on with' [impossible!]. Or impatience at the tragic divisions of our world – some of which seem to be getting worse. The Collect invites us to reflect on whose time scale we are working to.

The Collect reminds us that the God with whom we have to do is the God who does fulfil God's promises. To be sure, we may have to cry out, like the Psalmists: 'How long O Lord, how long?' But Scripture is clear that God will, in God's good time, fulfil God's promises. How can we be sure about this? Precisely in the story which drew us together at Christmas: God comes among us to share our life and loves and frailty and frustrations and our death to redeem us – to give us hope.

St Michael the Archangel Southampton was very clear in joining the Community of the Cross of Nails in October 2018 – thank you Canon Sarah for a wonderful sermon which changed at least one life – that 'overcoming the divisions of history' was something which we were actively engaged in with our neighbouring Catholic Church, St Joseph's and was something we wished to take further and deeper. Beyond the monthly shared soup lunch (weekly in Lent); beyond the joint 'birthday party' at Pentecost; beyond the shared Meditative Prayer Group to beginning to think about working and waiting and praying together – while we await that day when we can be together at the Lord's Table.

What St Michael's hadn't seen at that point was another opportunity of 'overcoming the divisions of history'. To be sure, we were very clear that we would (and did) welcome back with open arms the Resurrection Choir from St Petersburg, given the incidents of poisoning just down the road from us at Salisbury, and the anti-Russian sentiment generated in their aftermath.

However, the St Petersburg Choir are not the only visitors from the former Soviet Union to Hampshire and Wiltshire. The Russian Orthodox Convent of St Elisabeth at Minsk, Belarus, comes each year to the winter markets at Winchester and Salisbury to sell wares lovingly crafted in its workshops to support its outreach to the broken and homeless and orphaned of society in Belarus. I had made contact last year, which resulted in December in a first ever visit to a Church of England parish church by one of the team, Sister Olga. It was a joyous occasion. And, in April I will travel to Minsk to spend time at the Convent and to share in their celebration of Easter.

A small thing? Perhaps. But one way of breaking down the long history of suspicion between the Eastern Churches and the Western churches is interpersonal encounter. And, with a Convent dedicated to Holy Martyr St Elisabeth the Church of England has a head start – for she is one of the 20th century martyrs represented on the outside of Westminster Abbey since 1998: an action of this great national church which now facilitates our further ‘bridge building’ at St Michael’s. If you are unfamiliar with these exceptional statues, I commend them to you – all Christians who were faithful to Christ even to death.

I wonder in what small or large activities you will be engaged in 2019? Each Friday when we gather to pray the Litany, we feel enormously privileged to be part of this kaleidoscopic worldwide body of people committed in a myriad of different ways to overcoming division. Even if at times you continue to hope through gritted teeth, may you rejoice in hope in this New Year, through him who gifts us hope and enables us to be bearers of hope!

Revd David Deboys

St Michael the Archangel, Southampton

## CCN Thought for the Week for 11th January – Robert Childers, President, CCN North America board



*“Look here is water, what is to prevent me from being baptized?” Acts 8:36*

This question was asked of Phillip, one of the first groups of people named as a deacon in the early church. The man who asked Phillip this question was a man from Ethiopia, who was a eunuch. There were at least two good reasons why Phillip could have answered his question in the negative. First of all, an Ethiopian was a gentile, a person the Jews could not and would not associate with. Secondly, he was a eunuch. As

such he would be prohibited from worshipping in the assembly of the Lord.

So, by all the standards of his Jewish faith, customs, teaching, upbringing and general outlook on the world, Phillip should have had no dealings or association with the man from Ethiopia. And yet, he does. He not only associates with, listens to, and counsels him, he also baptizes him.

Phillip says to this man, and to us, that those who are not like us, don’t look like us, don’t share our cultural or political views, are from strange and foreign lands; all these people are children of God, worthy of our love and respect.

What does Phillip, the deacon and evangelist, have to say to us in the political and social environment we live in today, both in the United States and throughout the world? More than we can handle, I suspect. Many of us, in the fragile and combustible climate we live in, have decided we have had enough. We don’t want to associate or communicate with, accept, or listen to anyone who is not like us. We have lost, or are losing, our capacity for listening, accepting, caring, forgiving or loving those who are not like us. We simply don’t have the energy or heart to be present with, and for, those not like us.

I realize this touches on matters that many would call “political”, but I believe they are first and foremost matters touching at the heart of the Gospel. If our faith in Jesus Christ means anything, it means we look at the world and don’t first see the things that divide us. Rather we see a “new creation”. We see something/someone “new” because the resurrected Christ has drawn the world, and everything in it, to himself. And this resurrected Christ asks us to reach out and be connected—the fancy theological/church word is reconciled—to the people Christ places in our midst.

Phillip was an evangelist, which means he had a message. His message was the good news of Christ’s love and forgiveness. What he said and did flowed out from that message. As Christians, this is our message and we are called to listen, to care, to love and forgive each other. May we all, through the power of the Holy Spirit, strive to be Christ to each other, with no restrictions or conditions.

Blessings, grace and peace,

Robert Childers

Lookout Mountain, Tennessee

## CCN Thought for the Week for 18th January – Jack Slater, UK intern

No-Deal. May’s Deal. Managed Withdrawal.  
People’s Vote. Irish backstop.

Brexit has introduced a whole range of new terms to our public lexicon. It would also not be unfair to say that Brexit appears to have introduced a whole new tone to our public discourse- a tone of acrimony and anger; hostility and hate. Certainly, it is an issue that has divided the country cutting right across political, geographic and social lines.



For those of us involved in reconciliation work this might seem like an opportunity for us to step in. Surely if Brexit has created anything it is the urgent need for reconciliation at all levels of British society.

This does, however, leave many of us in something of a quandary. As is the case with all of these epochal decisions, most of us feel fairly invested in this debate in a partisan way. Especially working for the Reconciliation Ministry here in Coventry- a ministry with many partners in Continental Europe and a long association with the broader European project (which extends far beyond the formal structures of the European Union)- it can seem hard to stand back and speak of reconciliation between two warring factions when you feel very much part of one of those factions.

For me, this is a feeling only highlighted by generational politics. Recent polling suggests upwards of 80% of those in the 18-24 age bracket would vote to remain in the EU- in sharp contrast to the much more Eurosceptic older generation. In conjunction with the disproportionate weight given to older voters in policy discussions (disproportionate, but not politically unwise given their propensity to vote), this has certainly produced an air of grievance amongst many younger people who feel as if decisions that weigh heavily in their future are being made without consulting them.

In an opinion piece such as this, I would be expected to reveal that I don't find the above convincing and that. I would argue that, in fact, Brexit presents a wonderful range of opportunities for young reconcilers such as myself who are committed to the European project. It would be a wonderful "aha" moment and all would be well.

Unfortunately, that would be a lie. I don't have any idea what an answer to the above dilemma is. To my mind, either I have to pretend that I'm somehow impartial on Brexit, or I have to acknowledge that I cannot be seriously involved in reconciliation surrounding Brexit. I would imagine this is a dilemma shared by the majority of those in the UK concerned with reconciliation- few of us could claim impartiality in the Brexit debate.

I am, at least, comforted by the knowledge that Brexit is far from the first conflict in history that has left reconcilers in a difficult position between a cause or side they strongly believe in and a need to reconcile opposing sides. One can hardly imagine that Desmond Tutu could claim impartiality in post-apartheid South Africa for example.

In fact I have a suspicion, a hope even, that most reconcilers are familiar with this problem- with trying to reconcile a scenario where we strongly identify with one side.

This makes reconciliation messy. It erodes the idea that reconcilers can stand above from a conflict and help make things better while not becoming part of that conflict. For Christians, this should be neither surprising, nor distressing.

If I am permitted a brief theological digression- Christians understand all reconciliation between people as only possible because of the reconciliation that has occurred between humanity and God. The Greek of 2 Corinthians 5 is clear that the ministry of reconciliation is not just given to us but placed inside us by the reconciliation of God to humanity through Jesus Christ. This divine reconciliation did not see God standing above the conflict- in the person of Jesus Christ very much got "stuck in" to our conflicts. Therefore, surely, true Reconciliation is not only often messy- but always messy, because reconcilers cannot but become part of a conflict.

And so, to bring things to a close, I can unashamedly say I am an opponent of Brexit and share this with many of my colleagues and yet this does not preclude our ability to do reconciling work in and around the Brexit debate. In fact, as a parting provocation, perhaps partisan involvement in the conflict- taking a stand either for or against- is necessary to reconcile the conflict. God only reconciled our conflicts by getting stuck in- perhaps the same is true for us.

## CCN Thought for the Week for 25th January – Beatrice Rummel, Plauen, Germany

### Steps towards Reconciliation in Plauen

In September 2018 five of us from Plauen attended the CCN international members' gathering and met with many other representatives from Cross of Nails partners worldwide. We were deeply moved as we listened and shared experiences of forgiveness and reconciliation. We also told our own story, and why we applied to receive a Cross of Nails for our town (to be presented on Good Friday, 10th April, 2020).

Churches in Plauen, the city council and various organizations have founded a network called "Remembering – Reconciling – Raising Awareness". One member of this network is a historian at the "Vogtland Museum", who did some research on Plauen especially during World War II. In the town archives he happened across a letter from an American soldier called Frank Clark, as well as an article about him in the magazine American Heritage. The story, the subject of a forthcoming lecture in Plauen on 19th March, is below.

#### Letter from Frank Clark – Air Force Pilot in World War II

"He spent his tour of duty bombing German cities and made it home only to discover he could never leave the war behind him. Then, a lifetime later, he found a way to make peace." (American Heritage)

Frank Clark was born on 17th October in 1925, the youngest of nine children. When his father died he was 13 years old, and at 18 he became a soldier in the Air Force of the US Army.

On 19th and 26th March 1945 he was involved in bombing raids on Plauen. In his personal logbook he wrote: "The town must have been important to rate two missions." (American Heritage)

After World War II he left the military, married and said nothing of his experiences. Later, in 1981, he suffered from ill health and on the morning on 16th May 1987 he woke up with an idea: he would write letters (one of which is pictured below) to all the towns in Germany he had bombed. His postman had advised him to address the letter "To the Public Officials in ...(Town)".

Seven letters were returned unopened. He didn't know the difference between East and West Germany. But soon he got answers from towns and citizens all over Germany. His letter was published in lots of newspapers in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Lord Mayor of Plauen wrote an outline answer, although it is not clear if he sent it.

Some of the replies back have so much resonance for other times – including the times we live in now:

"Those responsible for others' fortunes must remove old prejudices and stereotypes" came back one of the replies. "The citizens in Plauen are convinced that the creation of a system of international peace and safety helps to remove step by step weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear weapons until the end of the century and (develops) a mutual collaboration to solve global problems of the present"; "no one from Plauen feels hatred for the British or American peoples or for any human-beings in the world, and citizens will do everything they can to create a peaceful life for all people in the world".

In 1995 Frank Clark died; he wasn't able to read his story in the May/June issue of American Heritage that same year. "He would have liked to thank Kathy A. Johnson for her help in preparing the initial manuscript, which he had called Pilot for Peace."



May 16 1987

TO THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN

PLAUEIN

This is an open apology for having participated in the bombing of your city  
26 March 1945

As we are told as soldiers on either side to perform our duties, it does not mean we can not feel the part others must play.

Having participated in 35 missions as a gunner and togeller<sup>(x)</sup>, the thought has always been with me that those on the ground the innocent and the guilty were one and the same in war.

Surely now we should understand that men with malice in their hearts are not to be taken lightly. This is true on this side also.

We must consider that humans are far from perfect and make many mistakes in dealing with one another.

Whatever we do in life we must all be careful not to follow blindly.

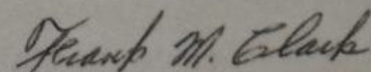
In the month of May in the United States we observe Memorial Day as I am sure you do in Germany.

This should also be the time for forgiveness of past wrongs.

Please again accept my heartfelt apology.

Thank You

Sincerely



For my own Peace of mind, would you have someone reply to my letter.

Frank M. Clark  
217 S. Water St. E.  
Fort Atkinson Wisconsin  
53538

## CCN Thought for the Week for 1st February – Margaret Lloyd, Coventry Cathedral

### Towards living with difference and celebrating diversity

At Coventry Cathedral some of us meet together regularly in foyer groups. Foyers (small groups meeting usually in each other's homes to eat together) were established in the 1960s when the new



Cathedral opened, so that members of the community could get to know each other better than is possible at a Sunday service – since you cannot love those you do not know. While Canon Sarah Hills was here the foyers were re-launched specifically as a way of embedding the reconciliation ministry in the life of the congregation. Previously there was a sense that reconciliation was principally the concern of the reconciliation team and mostly had an international focus.

Our group usually meets monthly to eat a bring-and-share meal together and then spend a while on some reconciliation topic. We sometimes use the CCN Thought for the Week as a starter, so planning our recent gathering which took place on the day of the Brexit votes at Westminster, I first considered Jack Slater's interesting piece ( Jan 18th ) on how we can be reconcilers in a situation where we are partisan. Then, realising that not everyone in our group shares my own passion for politics, I took a step back to consider something fundamental to our engagement in reconciliation in any situation – the state of our own hearts.

At Coventry Cathedral we have recently begun a 6-week Retreat in Daily Life, and as preparation for guiding others on this retreat I spent 6 weeks with Joyce Rupp's book

Open the Door: A journey to the true self (Sorin Books, Notre Dame, Indiana 2008), a series of daily reflections and meditations taking us first through the door of our heart to God, opening ourselves to transformation, and finally to considering how the world can be positively affected by our presence. The chapter for Week 6, Day 3: Bringing Respect seems so relevant to seeking to live with difference and celebrate diversity, that it became the focus for our foyer. Here is an extract:

"I want to declare an open-door policy of the heart; it gets wearisome scrutinising everyone through the peephole before sliding the deadbolt free."

The further we enter our authentic self, the greater the contribution of our presence in the world. Within the confines of our inner sanctuary, fuller love arises and keener awareness grows of how intimately connected we are to all that exists. We become a non-judgemental, listening, caring presence. Rather than engendering fear or animosity in us, the vast diversity of people with whom we engage enlarges our compassion.

The differences we bump into invite us to deliberately be a door of respectful presence. We open the door of our mind and heart to those persons whose ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and other personal traits and beliefs are opposed to or different from ours. By opening the door, we do not give up what we value and hold dear. Rather, our attitude is that of Christ: We look at a deeper level for what unites, instead of what divides. We approach each person with a sense of their innate blessedness.

Prayer:

Creator of all that exists,

Your seeing is wide, deep, and clear.

Turn me toward the unity I have with others.

Touch my heart with your loving vision.



Widen what is too narrow in my view.

I want to value each person's innate worth.

Help me appreciate the gift of diversity.

I open the door of my heart to you.

I open the door.

Scripture:

Live in harmony with one another ( Rom 15:5)

This, and the Meditation section that accompanied it, was revealing and transforming when preparing for a difficult conversation I had to have with someone. I realized the fear in my heart that lay behind an inclination not to get too close to this person. Through the meditation I began to see them as God sees them, to see their goodness. When it came to the conversation it went better than I could have imagined, drawing us closer to each other. This is reconciliation in action on a personal, every day level.

In our foyer discussion we realized that fear and prejudice about those we do not know are often behind our divisions. When we know someone well we can love the goodness in that person that we see manifest in how they behave to the people around them, and any differences in our opinions about a range of issues can become irrelevant. At a heart level we are connected despite our differences. It's in our hearts that transformation must come for there to be reconciliation.

So it seems that a Retreat in Daily Life that at first glance might seem to have little to do with reconciliation turns out to be very relevant to the central calling of our Cathedral.

Margaret Lloyd, Member of Coventry Cathedral congregation

## CCN Thought for the Week for 8th February – a focus on HOPE Africa



HOPE Africa, the social development outreach programme for the Anglican Church in Southern Africa, exists to enhance, enable and facilitate. Our vision is to empower communities through integral mission, and our mission to promote and implement a development programme within this region for the improvement of the spiritual, physical and emotional well-being of the poor and oppressed people of Africa on a non-denominational basis.

Programme areas we cover include Leadership, Capacity Building, Sustainable Development and Public Witness. Here we assist the local church to respond to challenges in society by developing relevant solutions. The organisation tries to align current work with priority areas of each country, as well as with global narratives; this includes food security, issues of gender equity, access to quality healthcare, job creation and economic development.

The current economic climate has challenged HOPE Africa to become more sustainable, and this has meant that various tenders with local and national government have been applied for. As a result, the organisation was able to facilitate the Work Integrated Learning graduate placement programme in partnership with the National Skills Fund in South Africa – over 400 young graduates gained valuable work experience and some have subsequently obtained employment. A second programme – the TB Management programme in partnership with the National Department of Health and the National Religious Association for Social Development (NRASD) – part of a collaborative effort to find missing TB cases in South Africa while also providing screening, testing and linkage to care on HIV and STIs. Although these programmes in many ways contribute to existing needs with our region, such as high rates of unemployment and high rates of Tuberculosis, it has diminished our focus on leadership development and capacity building of the church. It has also been largely limited to our work within South Africa and this has not translated to funding for work undertaken in the 6 other countries in which we operate, namely, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Lesotho, Angola and the islands of St. Helena and Tristan da Cunha. To provide support, we often engage in Special Projects to raise funds for items such as water tanks as water scarcity has become a high priority in most of our region, as well as projects to ensure school supplies and uniforms for access to schooling for children in less affluent communities. While our focus often seems to be based on the physical solutions required to bring about restoration, it is always partnered with the need for reconciliation around the redress of past historical injustices.

We would appreciate your continued support and prayers as we undertake to fulfil our mandate which is:

- To promote and implement poverty alleviation programmes within Anglican churches and church structures, encouraging church members to reach out to the community,
- To challenge inequality, injustice, disempowerment and discrimination,
- To ensure the poor and marginalised are able to access government services that are aimed at improved living conditions,
- To encourage the church to be an active role player in the development of policies that address poverty, inequality and injustice,
- To encourage the church to be involved in public witness through public campaigns, and
- To work in partnership with the public and private sector on programmes that are aimed at sustainable development and ensuring the dignity of all people.



## CCN Thought for the Week for 15th February – a focus on our growing ICONS network



I was recently up at one of our ICON Schools in the north of the UK, St Aidan's CE Memorial Primary School up in Hartlepool. When preparing a PowerPoint for the assembly I was leading, I was really struck by the part Jock Forbes had to play in the establishing of the Cross of Nails as a symbol for peace and reconciliation. When he climbed the spire tower that post-Blitz morning and pointed out the girders that had fallen in the shape of a cross, I am sure he felt deeply angry about the loss of the beloved cathedral and no doubt entertained thoughts of retaliation and revenge. But this elderly man, who held no title, but had simply been the Cathedral stonemason and had been on fire watch that night, saw the symbol of the cross when he gazed down at the rubble. Later, he took up two fire-damaged medieval beams and lashed them together to form what is now the Charred Cross. When he placed it at the Altar of Rubble he had built in the ruined apse it stood, itself a symbol of destruction, as a reminder that Christ's suffering met with that of the City. It was this symbol that prompted Provost Howard to write 'Father Forgive' in chalk on the wall behind it (later engraved in huge letters). The tone of the Cathedral's response to the tragedy the conflict had caused was set and local Reverend A. P. Wales was moved to bind together medieval nails from the stricken Cathedral roof into what we now recognise as the Cross of Nails, starting something that has had such repercussions for good through history. Jock Forbes made room for a different response to pain and tragedy and loss, when he set aside the desire for revenge and instead noticed that cross in the rubble and considered what Jesus's story reminds us even in the darkest, most difficult times. So, when I spoke to the children I told them Jock's part of the Cathedral's story and emphasised that to be a peacemaker in their own time and community they don't need to have a title or be in a powerful position, they just need to want to transform conflict and make room for forgiveness, peace and reconciliation whenever they get the opportunity.

I took the 'Peace Trail' up to Hartlepool with me. These are 8 stations that help pupils consider what the different aspects of peacemaking are. I think the first one is the hardest and sets the tone for the rest of the Trail. It is the 'Peacemaker Backpack' and you must choose 5 skills and values from a huge selection to put into your peacemaker backpack, a tool kit for reconciliation. It's not easy. When the Bishop of Coventry did the trail last year at a local ICON School, St Paul's CE Primary School in Nuneaton, he expressed how difficult it was to choose. It isn't easy. Peace-building requires many skills, it means being intentional and cultivating the attitudes and actions that are most important. I hope the Peace Trail teaches that. I know it gets the adults thinking as well as the children.

We have thousands of children in our ICON Schools around the UK and the wider world. Dedicated teachers are teaching their children what it means to be a peace maker and how vital it is for the world we live in. With one ICONS application recently approved and another application just come in just this year, the ICONS network is growing, which means more children ready to choose peace over retaliation and to load up their peacemaker back packs with peace building essentials and go out into their homes, their schools and their communities.

Mrs Jennifer Jenkins

ICON Schools Project Manager

## CCN Thought for the Week for 22nd February – Bilton CE Junior School, Rugby, UK

I am very excited to have been accepted and welcomed into the Cross of Nails Community. My team and I work really passionately to create a wonderful learning environment where everyone is valued. This I know is something everyone involved with ICONS is also passionate about.



The difference to us, as a school community, in becoming an ICON school is immense. Our aspiration is to build on and share the good things that we have started and are proud of at Bilton C of E Junior School. We are also looking forward to being able to share in other similar initiatives that are going on as part of the network. We really relish the opportunity for the ICONS Project Manager and Cathedral Schools' Team to work with us to further embed reconciliation into our ethos, policies, partnerships and strategy and work across the entire organisation from the youngest pupils to the board of Governors.

We see our relationship growing with Coventry Cathedral and being able to access more of the facilities that they have to offer and developing our Worship calendar. It would enable us to work with other schools that have a similar ethos and drive to: 'inspire children and young people with hope by creating a safe place for them to explore powerful emotions and practice the skills of reconciliation and we want them to be encouraged by the positive example of their teachers and school community. By doing this, as adults, they might play an active part in changing the world by overcoming prejudice of all kinds, and managing differences without destructive conflict.' (Coventry Cathedral Website).

We would very much like to make links outside of our local community, possibly branching out nationally and internationally to give our children as wide and broad experience as we can. We are also very interested in giving children a greater awareness of world faiths.

As you can see, I am very excited to get started. If anyone wants to know more about us or make links with us we would love to 😊

Mrs Alex Norton, Head Teacher

[www.biltonjuniorschool.co.uk](http://www.biltonjuniorschool.co.uk)

## CCN Thought for the Week for 1st March – Mark Simmons, Coventry Cathedral



I was privileged to be invited to speak last week at the 75th anniversary commemoration for the bombing of the city of Nijmegen. This, the oldest city in the Netherlands, is only 2 miles from the German border and was the frontline towards the end of the Second World War. Like Coventry, it hides its age thanks to the scale of the destruction.

I spoke of the three main themes of Coventry Cathedral and the Community of the Cross of Nails: healing the wounds of history, learning to live with difference and celebrate diversity, and building a culture of peace.

It is clear that a number of historical wounds have been allowed to fester. Many people have lost the sense of identity, dignity and belonging which derive from employment or community, as the manufacturing sector continues to dwindle and as the colours, languages and cuisines of our high streets have shifted towards what some would call vibrant and others would call threatening. We have allowed the gap between elites and the grass-roots to grow. This gap is exactly the same as that which undermines good governance in so much of the developing world and leaves so many millions in grinding poverty. We must heal this wound, and guard against nationalist or partisan choices under which the have-nots will become the have-even-lesses. We will do this by funding social enterprise non-politically (such as has been possible through the European Social Fund) to build community, by training people to work in new industries and services, by helping people to develop their dignity, worth and identity through volunteering, through social care, through decent parenting, through hospitality and welcome to those who are lonely, through championing environmental protection. I do not say this glibly, as someone who does these things and has seen in Darfur and elsewhere the impact of climate change on violence and migration first-hand, but because they are essential for healing the wounds of history and if we ignore these wounds we do nothing to treat the causes of events like Brexit.

We will otherwise be unable to learn to live with difference. We will be unable to learn to love the “other” in such a way that there is no “other”, because we all share one humanity and because we are all made in God’s image. We will revert to the “us” and “them” mentalities which threaten our public discourse and our social cohesion, and which have led to so much violent conflict around the world.

These two themes are pre-requisites for building a culture of peace. By peace we do not mean the absence of violence – though this is important – but the sense of wholeness and fullness of life about which Christ himself preached. A culture of peace is only possible when we love and forgive each other as Christ loves and forgives us.

Mark Simmons

Dean’s Advisor for Reconciliation Ministry, Coventry Cathedral

Chair, Community of the Cross of Nails (UK & Ireland)



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## CCN Thought for the Week for 15th March – The Busmannkapelle, Dresden

*On 12th February 2019, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the twinning of Dresden and Coventry, Dresden received its 5th Cross of Nails as an affirmation of their joint commitment to work for peace and reconciliation.*

We Dresdneners are proud that of the more than 200 Cross of Nails centres worldwide there are now five of them in my hometown of Dresden: 1965 – the Christian hospital Diakonissenhaus, 1966 – the main Protestant Church of Dresden, the Church of the Holy Cross (Kreuzkirche), 2005 – the famous Church of our Lady (Frauenkirche), rebuilt after the ‘Velvet Revolution’ with substantial donations from England, 2006 – the small but very active Parish Church ‘St. Mary on the Water’ (Maria am Wasser) on the outskirts of Dresden, and since last month the Memorial of the Church of St. Sophia-Busmann Chapel, run by a civic foundation and the ‘Friends in support of the memorial’.

The Memorial of the Church of St. Sophia-Busmann Chapel is different from the other four centres. It will be able to contribute to the work of peace and reconciliation in Dresden in its very particular way because this memorial has a very exceptional history which must not be forgotten.



This Memorial has been built on the foundation of the once oldest churches in Dresden, the Church of St. Sophia, dating back to the early 13th century. Although the church was hit by bombs on 13th February 1945 it wasn't damaged as badly as most inner – city buildings and churches. Therefore it was without question that this famous and important Church of St. Sophia was to be rebuilt after the war.

Yet the communist leaders of the newly founded German Democratic Republic (GDR) had different ideas and visions regarding the rebuilding of cities like Dresden. In July 1952 the new authorities of the GDR decided to enact their vision of a communist city. The atheist functionaries of the communist party SED were determined to fight religion as “opium of the people”. For Walter Ulbricht, head of the new East German state, there was no place for the Church of St. Sophia in his master plan for reconstructing the city of Dresden. In his mind the church stood in the way of a great avenue for military parades as well as a shopping mall with cheap eateries for the people (in the vernacular called ‘Fresswürfel’, i. e. ‘greedy pigsty’). The church towers stretched too far into the sky and were at odds with the atheist ideology of the government. At a Dresden city council meeting on August 11th 1956 Walter Ulbricht put it this way when referring to the Church of St. Sophia: “What do you mean by oldest church of the city. Whether young or old we have to ask whether we have a need for them at all! ...

In spite of intense protests of the Dresdneners only some of the valuable assets could be saved when the Church of St. Sophia was eventually pulled down. On May 1st 1963 the ideological fight was won by the communists and the Church of St. Sophia was wiped out off the skyline of the city. After its demolition the Church of St. Sophia did no longer



figure in the public mind. Nevertheless the church has been kept alive in the cultural memory of many people in Dresden.

That is why following the peaceful revolution in 1990 the newly and democratically elected councillors, as well as Saxony's Office for the Protection of Historic Monuments, decided to save the Church of St. Sophia from falling into oblivion. On its original site a memorial was to be erected. In 1995 two young architects won the competition launched by the city council for the erection of a memorial. Unfortunately the necessary financial means were not available at the time. Therefore a 'Society for the building of a memorial of the Church of St. Sophia' was founded and became very active in fundraising. A civic foundation, Bürgerstiftung Dresden, acted as building contractor and leased the land from the city. All that made it possible to begin with the building work. In the end funds once belonging to the SED, the East German Communist Party, which had been invested abroad were recouped by the German Government and used for the realization of projects such as the Memorial of the Church of St. Sophia-Busmannchapel.

Even though the building of the memorial Church of St. Sophia-Busmannchapel will only be completed this autumn we are very grateful to have been presented with a Cross of Nails on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the twinning of Dresden and Coventry on 12th February 2019. The moving ceremony attended by many Dresdners is a big milestone on the way to grant this memorial a new meaning:

Since the original Church was dedicated to St. Sophia ('Sophia meaning 'heavenly wisdom) we want visitors to be aware of the burning issues we are facing in today's world of injustice, violence, wars, suffering, destruction and failure. To help visitors to reflect on our accountability to God and our fellow human beings there will be space on the gallery for exhibitions to remember the Christian martyrs of Saxony. In the basement there will be a room for silence, prayer and meditation. On the ground floor where the Coventry Cross of Nails was put next to a medieval sculpture of Christ, Man of Sorrows, there will be a multifunctional room for talks, lectures, concerts and theatre plays.

As the Busmannchapel is covered in a glass structure passers-by can always see what is happening inside and hopefully get curious and feel invited to come in. And as the memorial will be open to the public daily we hope that this place will become a living bridge between Christians and non-Christians being guided by the UN prayer for peace which will every hour be projected against the outside wall:

Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth, from despair to hope, from fear to trust, lead us from hatred to love, from war to peace; peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our world, let peace fill our universe.



The story of the Cross of Nails of Coventry and the story of the 5 Dresden Crosses of Nails are proof that the vicious circle of hatred and enmity, of resentment and self-righteousness can be broken.

Ulrike Birkner-Kettenacker, Lutheran minister and board member of the Friends of the Memorial of the Church of St. Sophia-Busmann Chapel

## CCN Thought for the Week for 22nd March – Thoughts on The Knife Angel at Coventry Cathedral

**Until Easter, a wonderful artwork stands just below St Michael and the Devil at Coventry Cathedral: following temporary installations at both Hull and Liverpool, it's Coventry's turn to host the Knife Angel, a unique memorial to the victims of knife crime, made from over 100,000 knives seized by the police in the UK. It is humbling to see each day a cluster of people around the Angel, which has attracted huge attention in its time here already.**



Standing so close to our two cathedrals, it occupies a good place to plant seeds of hope, inviting us all to reflect on the choices we make in life. Of course, we're no strangers to loss, pain and destruction here, nor to making positive choices when another route might seem so much easier. I can't imagine that Provost Howard was universally popular when, in 1940, he responded to the Coventry Blitz not with hatred or anger but with the two words which are still present in the apse of the ruined cathedral, "Father forgive".

The power of the missing word is, I believe, Coventry's greatest gift to the world, for where there is no "them" you are prevented from "othering" anyone, forced to recognise that we all have potential for both good and evil, that the choice is ours.

The Knife Angel, looking down at his own empty hands, is not a figure of power but of helplessness. He seems to be asking "Why? Why?" and, like us, has no answer.

While our own patron Michael, the Archangel, is confidently beating down Satan under his feet, – an angel sure of ultimate victory – Alfie Bradley's Angel finds himself unarmed and uncertain, still in the midst of the struggle. Under his questioning gaze we can perhaps gather our thoughts, our longings for peace in the city, and make our own choice, to opt for a better tomorrow in which violence and hatred have no place.

In making something beautiful from the ugliness and violence of the knives Alfie follows a pattern that is part of the Cathedral's own DNA – using the pain of the past to build something brighter and stronger – a peaceful future.

Of course we must not imagine for a moment that, having welcomed the Knife Angel, we have done our bit to stand against knife crime. The causes are many and complex, but the over-riding absence of hope in some parts of the community must surely be a significant part of the picture. I was particularly sad to hear how often victims are knived with their own weapons...in other words, whatever the popular narrative, carrying knives does not make anyone safer...Those who have been hurt are too often the very ones who brought weapons to the scene.

My hope and my prayer is that while he is with us, the Knife Angel will help us to review not only our own choices but the provision for those who may feel they have no choices at all.

I'm certain they do.

Please, put down your knives...

Canon Kathryn Fleming, Canon Pastor, Coventry Cathedral

Each day the Litany of Reconciliation is prayed at the Knife Angel, and the Declaration of Hope below then follows:

Today, we stand together as one.

We call for an end to the violence and aggression in our city that causes division, despair and death.

We long for a shared future where our homes and our streets are safe places again.

We declare that the power of love & forgiveness is stronger than the power of fear and revenge.

We will each play our part.

We will not be afraid.

Today we choose to believe in hope.

The Knife Angel took two years to create, and is a national monument against violence and aggression. It was created by artist Alfie Bradley at the British Ironwork Centre in Oswestry, Shropshire, this is the first time it has been on display in the Midlands as part of a UK tour having been to Liverpool and Hull. It stands at 27-feet and is made up of 100,000 weapons confiscated by police forces across the country in 2015/16, and was made in response to the growing issue of knife crime in cities across the country. It serves as a physical reminder of the impact of knife crime on people's lives and a memorial to those who have lost their lives, and is designed to provoke conversations around the issue.

Coventry City of Culture Trust is leading a city partnership including the City Council, Cathedral, Positive Youth Foundation, Coventry Youth Partnership, Coventry University and Herbert Gallery and Museum working together to highlight how art and culture should provoke serious and meaningful conversations on the most difficult subjects. Being UK City of Culture in 2021 is more than a year-long festival and celebration. The City of Culture Trust aims to create a movement for social change and through the build-up, in 2021 and across the longer term legacy to put culture as a driver of real and lasting positive benefits to communities across Coventry.

## CCN Thought for the Week for 12th April – an appreciation of teamwork and friendship!



We seem to be busy at Coventry with visits from various CCN partners at the moment, which is a real joy! On just one weekend last week we welcomed a visit from Neuruppin in Germany on the Friday, and on Saturday it was the turn of the Flightpath of Friendship Reconciliation, who came down from Doncaster on a special trip to mark the third anniversary of the presentation of their Cross of Nails, which they brought with them to be blessed a second time – pictured here with Dean John Witcombe, only newly arrived home from sabbatical.



Such visits are always a matter of teamwork, and particularly at the moment when it can seem that there are never enough of us on some days! All the more special are those who are there to meet and greet and bless too, when the core reconciliation team can't be there ourselves – not least the ever-trusty Richard Parker who has, in English and in fluent German, made wonderful friends of numerous visiting CCN groups over the past few years. A heartfelt thank you to him and to all those who help our reconciliation ministry in all its forms, and a note below from a very happy visitor!

Hello dear friends,

I just wanted to personally thank everyone involved for a perfect day. Our group have made many posts and were overwhelmed by the hospitality and warm welcome. To Alice for all the help with organising and producing the schedule for the day. Especially the tip of the flapjacks (at Rising Café), yummy! Our guide Richard, a true gentleman of immense talent, education and wisdom. And blessed Canon Kathryn for her kindness and our special blessing of the Cross.

God Bless and thank you all.

Jacqui and friends. XXX

<https://www.facebook.com/flightpathoffriendshipreconciliation/>

## CCN Thought for the Week for Holy Week – solidarity with our friends in Sudan

Less than two weeks after the resignation of Algeria's ailing president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir was forced this week to step down from office after nearly 30 years in power. In both countries, the balance of power was tipped by shifting military loyalties. In both countries, protestors are demanding wholesale change that goes deeper than the simple and dramatic but relatively painless removal of a figurehead.



I say "relatively", but recognise the crucial difference here between the two presidents; HE Omar al-Bashir was charged a decade ago of crimes against humanity and genocide for his and his government's role in the war in Darfur. I was spokesperson for the international NGO community in Sudan at the time these charges were levied, and my colleagues and I had to toe a fine line between recognising the need for the president to be held to account and cautioning against a heavy-handed and largely toothless response which could make the lives of Darfurian people even worse.

This tension goes to the heart of our Community of the Cross of Nails priorities. The charges themselves did nothing to address the wounds of history, whether the brutal annexation in 1916 of the ancient kingdom of Darfur by Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, or the centuries-long Arabisation of North Africa, or the more recent rise of the Muslim Brotherhood. While it is historically inclusive in its approach to Islam and Christianity, Sudan has come to be wary of, rather than to celebrate, this diversity. It has come to identify itself based on what it is not, rather than what it is. This leaves less room for difference, and so makes it less able to build a culture of peace.



All Saints' Cathedral, a Community of the Cross of Nails partner in the Sudanese capital Khartoum, has been both a bystander and a trailblazer on this journey. On its present site, it has been around only a few years longer than the government of HE Omar al-Bashir. But, mirroring Coventry Cathedral's own story, its consecration in 1983 belies its original foundation in 1904, and its new incarnation exposes the wounds of history which have yet to be healed.

In our solidarity with our CCN partner in Khartoum, we hope and pray that the events of the last few days and months will serve not to entrench old divisions but to offer an opportunity for a new and more inclusive vision for Sudan to emerge from the rubble of destruction, such that a culture of peace can become not just a distant dream but an ever-present reality.

Mark Simmons, Dean's Advisor for Reconciliation Ministry, Coventry Cathedral

## CCN Thought for the Week for 17th May – highlighting Cross of Nails Sunday on 29th September!



Calling churches and partners across the CCN! On Sunday 29th September, and the last Sunday in September each year thereafter, we'll be helping our worship and reconciling communities across the world to give some special focus to the CCN, to go back to why they became involved in the network, and how they can strengthen connections with other partners.

All of our partners pray the Litany of Reconciliation regularly. This however is a chance to go a little deeper, and reaffirm a commitment to the core of the reason for belonging.

"The CCN gives us the unique opportunity to (be reconcilers) in a network. It is so uplifting to be part of a wider group that also cares about reconciliation. The CCN is such a great variety of institutions and people – there is so much to learn from each other. Our new Cross of Nails Sunday is a chance to feel part of the great community, to recommit, and to pray for and with each other." (Dr Oliver Schuegraf, Chair of the German board of the CCN)

So, what does Cross of Nails Sunday involve? We have a suggested short Liturgy which can be used as part of your regular Sunday worship. We will have some sermon notes available in the coming months which you are welcome to tap into, and videos and interviews forthcoming (view the first one here) that you can use. Lastly we would encourage you to reach out to those involved in reconciliation projects in your own church community (if it's not those reading this!), and give them some prominence in the service – highlight what fantastic work they are doing in Jesus's name!

More information is on the Cross of Nails Sunday page which will have more added in the coming months, and we would welcome any ideas that you have and suggestions for what would help your community celebrate Cross of Nails Sunday – please do get in touch if so!

"Reconciliation is at the heart of the Gospel. The CCN reminds us that the Gospel calls us to reach out to one another no matter whom, or what their creed or beliefs are." (Revd Robert Childers, President of the North America board)

With our blessings,

Alice Farnhill, Community of the Cross of Nails Project Officer

## CCN Thought for the Week for 3rd June – reflections on a joyous first CCN/Interfaith pilgrimage at Coventry

By The Very Reverend Shane Parker, Dean of Christ Church Cathedral Ottawa



Last week something new was added to the 45-year history of Coventry Cathedral’s Community of the Cross of Nails. For the very first time, a CCN pilgrimage was expressly interreligious, combining partners from both the international CCN network and the Cathedral’s new “Together for Hope” network. I was very privileged to be a participant and assisting leader in this new venture.

For three days, 18 individuals from five organisations, representing five religions (Zen Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and several Christian denominations) shared time together, listening respectfully to one another’s experiences and perspectives on reconciliation. We heard of the challenges and opportunities for reconciliation in Germany and Canada, as well as in communities, centres, cathedrals, and hospitals in the UK.

It was a great joy to meet the skilled and sensitive chaplains of the Guys’ and St Thomas’ NHS Trust Chaplaincy, who bring much front-line experience of diversity to our understanding of reconciliation. And it was truly a pleasure to welcome the spirited “Faithful Friends” of Smethwick—the first Together for Hope Partners—into our discussions, and to hear of their remarkable journey of interfaith reconciliation and friendship.

The pilgrimage began and ended with sharing in the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation before the charred cross in the ruins, and joining in the Pledge for Transformation before the reconciliation statue. It was moving to stand as a very diverse group, united in our concern for a reconciled world—and to gather many willing tourists into this circle of hope.

The traditional “Hilltop pilgrimage walk”, was substantially modified as an interfaith pilgrimage, with prayers from each religious tradition being offered as we moved through the four sacred sites—reflecting on what it means to move from division to community, from pain to healing, from despair to hope, from death to life.



We formally and joyfully welcomed the Guys’ and St Thomas’ NHS Trust Chaplaincy in London as prospective CCN and T4H partners (they will join both networks on 3rd July), and their Cross of Nails and Together for Hope plaque were respectively blessed and commissioned in the presence of a number of the chaplaincy team here on pilgrimage. It was also a pleasure to bless a Cross of Nails to

our three youngest pilgrims from Evangelisches Jugendwerk Bezirk Öhringen in Germany, for presenting to them in October.



In keeping with the long tradition of CCN pilgrimages, this first CCN-T4H pilgrimage was made rich by the participants' willingness to share their stories with one another in a spirit of respect and trust, allowing meaningful relationships to quickly form, and enabling mutual learning about the journey of reconciliation.

I conclude by commending to you Together for Hope's own Pledge for Transformation, applicable to those of all faiths or none:

#### A Pledge for Transformation – Together for Hope

For love, which heals wounds,

we will stand.

For generosity, which opens space for hope,

we will stand.

For nurturing, which builds a culture of peace,

we will stand.

For compassion, which seeks the best for all,

we will stand.

For respect, which enables us to love with difference,

we will stand.

For humility, which allows healthy relationships with others,

we will stand.

Together for hope,

we will stand.



#### CCN Thought for the Week for 5th July – Guys' & St Thomas' Hospital Chaplaincy Team, London

**We were overjoyed to welcome the chaplaincy team at one of central London's biggest and busiest hospitals to both the CCN and its new interfaith sister network, Together for Hope, this week, having spent several inspiring days with a number of the chaplains in Coventry on pilgrimage in May.**

'What do hospital chaplains know about reconciliation?', a CCN member had previously asked me. 'We do a lot of reconciliation work,' I replied, 'praying with or listening to people coming to terms with illness, impending death or grief, or those who watched others die horribly, like in the Grenfell Tower fire. We don't do much about political reconciliation or campaigning, but we work with individuals and families and the institutions we serve – mainly individuals.'



Many years ago, as an ordinand, I came to Coventry and was struck by the reality of the old Cathedral displaying transparent wounded-ness, and the art and architecture of the new speaking the old words of good news to succeeding generations. After the recent major London Bridge and Westminster Bridge attacks, on the doorsteps of our two hospitals, and the many sadnesses that are seen day by day, it has struck us anew how much the work of reconciliation is needed in our community.



On 3rd July, St Thomas' Day, it was an absolute pleasure and privilege to welcome Alice Farnhill, Mark Simmons and members of the CCN to St Thomas' Hospital where the chaplaincy team became members of both the Community of the Cross of Nails, and Together For Hope. The day started in the Marquee, outside St Thomas' opposite the Houses of Parliament. There was a reflection on peace, hope and mercy. We lit battery tealights on our tables, 3 candles, as 3 staff members had died within a fortnight and there was a lot of pain in the institutions in which we serve. We remembered our patients,

the firefighters and their need for safety, and for all visitors and for our hospital staff and those who work for the London Fire Brigade, whom our chaplaincy also serves. Then Simon Betteridge led a fun study day on reconciliation which was greatly appreciated. The Lambeth reconciliation course was adapted for a multi-faith and belief context and worked very well with the chaplaincy team members. There was much laughter and serious learning took place in a friendly atmosphere.



The presenting of the Cross of Nails took place in a special service in St Thomas' Chapel, and was



followed by a simple Reconciliation Agape. Attendees came from the Catholic and Pentecostal churches, the Church of England, the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches, and Sikhs and Buddhists. All shared bread and juice, served by the chaplains, the Cross of Nails was very movingly passed among every person in the congregation, and everyone was given a Cross of Nails pin badge by Alice and were encouraged to take their folding portable cup home (we tried to be green!) Then the whole congregation, together with members of the 'Critical Care

Choir' and keyboard, upped and went to the Marquee. The congregation included Jews, Buddhists, Christians and people representing the Muslim, Sikh, Humanist and Hindu communities. After hearing from the different belief communities about their understanding of reconciliation, and learning that there is much that unites us, the chaplaincy was presented with their beautiful 'Together For Hope' glass plaque, and the ceremony was followed by a release of doves on the river bank, signifying peace and healing.



The whole day was moving, prayerful and compassionate, fun and enjoyable. It was a happy day and we are delighted and excited to be part of both CCN and Together for Hope. Thank you for having us!

Revd Mia Hilborn

Hospitaller, Head of Spiritual Health Care and Chaplaincy Team Leader,  
Senior Brigade Chaplain

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust



## CCN Thought for the Week for 6th September – Stacy Taylor, outgoing Coventry intern



I'm coming to the end of two years as a reconciliation intern at Coventry Cathedral. It has been a journey so different from my expectations — fun, challenging, joyful, tearful, full of love, changing, bumpy — beautiful.

I didn't fully know what to expect: I had left a corporate career to go back to university as a post-graduate, and I wanted to study abroad as I had not done previously. I also wanted to transition finally from the corporate world to the humanitarian sector. For most of my life, if you'd asked me what I wanted to do, I'd have said, travel and help people. In my school and university days, I wanted to be a doctor with Doctors without Borders, and was adrift when I realised my organic chemistry grades would not get me a slot in medical school. What do you do when your planned life path crumbles before you?

The journey to Coventry



So, I joined the military programme at university. It provided a direction, a path, funding and a job afterwards. I met amazing and inspiring people and did what I hoped was a service to society, and learned that I was capable of many things, just not organic chemistry. (But I also lived with the running joke from my grandpa about my sister, a linguist and missionary, and me, “ah, the one who is saving the world and the one who is bombing it.”) But I felt I saw more of the wars and conflicts, often with which I didn’t agree, we stepped into as a country. Later, I worked in medical device manufacturing, which felt closer aligned with my values, alongside exceptional, committed and passionate people, but I still wanted to do something in the humanitarian sector. On my vacations, I went on international trips with Habitat for Humanity to build houses or with missionary organisations, and there came face to face with abject poverty and hospital wards for malnourished children in Malawi, mass graves in Internally Displaced People villages in Northern Uganda, genocide memorials and the after effects in Rwanda. Things that should change us.

I also came across hope, resilience, ingenuity, love, mercy. And I saw the scars of war.

After a while, and approaching that age 40 milestone, I decided to make the big choices that might lead me to work in humanitarian aid. By then, I wanted to work with refugees and internally displaced people. I left my work and went to SOAS, University of London, to study for a Masters in Violence, Conflict and Development – a wonderful and challenging year of wrestling with the world as it is, with how often what is done to try to help hurts, with difficult and painful topics with people so passionate about wanting to make this world a better place. During this time I went to a transformative art exhibition by the War Studies Department of King’s College London. It showed among many other things, aerial footage of the damage done by United States, and others, in Iraq: scars of war related to my past. It hurt and I hurt.

I became resolved. I didn’t want to do the aid after the conflict. I wanted to be involved in trying to resolve the conflicts before they turned to violence and war. I teared up every time I read the beatitude ‘blessed are the peace-makers’ (Matthew 5:9). I wanted to be that.

Brought (not sent) to Coventry!

And so I came here. I found this internship, working in reconciliation, from a place of faith and hope, Coventry Cathedral, where the scars of the past are visible but beautiful in their place in the journey towards hope, resurrection and reconciliation. This internship, where I thought I would go ‘do reconciliation’ has been much more of a journey of my reconciliation with my past, with my God for my past, and with the brokenness and scars of this world. It has been a time of learning and growth in skills but also spiritually. We teach and our physical space exhibits the importance of story – our story, ‘the other’s’ story, God’s story. We try to give people the space to reconcile with themselves, with God, and with others. We strive to make an opening for people to explore and to find peace. With the prayer that since they have physically walked through the story of the Cathedral and have seen reflections of their story in that journey, they might go on their way with hope and the desire to work for reconciliation in their own lives and communities.

This is a challenging place. One where the floor says, ‘to the glory of God, this cathedral burned.’ One that recognises our part in the destructive tendencies of mankind ... ‘Father, Forgive.’ And one that reminds us of the reconciling and restoring love of God, not just for the individual but for relationships, communities, and the world. It is a place that asks us to think beyond ourselves but not neglect how our actions and understanding of the world come from our journey and story, reminding us of the need to see, listen, and be open to the other.

This is a place of healing where we can sit at the top of the Queen's steps and see our reflection with the ruins behind, the scars of our lives, but surrounded by a host of saints and angels as we look forward towards the tapestry with the face of Jesus. This is a place of hope.

With love and gratitude, to those who have supported me through this journey the past two years: CCN – North America, all of our pilgrims and visitors, our partners, the Cathedral Congregation, my family and friends, my co-workers at the Cathedral in particular the Reconciliation Ministry Team and my fellow interns, and especially Emma and Sarah. My heart is overwhelmed, my life is changed, my hope is restored.

As is sometimes said in Christian churches...

God is good.

All the time.

All the time.

God is good.

Stacy Taylor

## CCN Thought for the Week for 27th September – Cross of Nails Sunday this Sunday

We are so looking forward to this first Cross of Nails Sunday – a chance to collectively celebrate our network during worship on this one day on 29th September.

At Coventry Cathedral we shall be following a special liturgy and blessing three Crosses of Nails to go to three new partners in three different countries in the coming weeks, including the 50th ICON School – Bury Church of England High School, in the UK. The others are to go to the Ludwigskirche Saarbrücken, Germany, and Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church, Houston, Texas.

Our love and prayers at this time to all partners across the network, whether churches, charities, schools, seminaries, chaplaincies or other communities – many of whom may not gather together on this particular Sunday, but who will collectively be in the thoughts and prayers of all who will. Every single one of our 235 active partners, across five continents, whatever their reconciliation ministry, large or small, is a force for peace in the world, and together we are a community that makes a difference!

For resources and sermon notes, [click here](#).

Alice Farnhill, Community of the Cross of Nails Project Officer



## CCN Thought for the Week for 4th October – Praying for our Nation

As we enter a month of extreme uncertainty in the UK, an uncertainty which stretches far across and beyond our own borders, we share here this piece by Canon Kathryn Fleming. Each of our Thoughts for the Week to follow this month will focus on the strength of our partnerships with others in Europe, and our CCN pilgrimage (30th October to 1st November) will be very closely focussed on this too.

### Praying for our Nation

Coventry Cathedral was born in a climate of post-war recovery and co-operation. Our very fabric reflects this, with gifts from so many countries all around us. Together with our calling to the work of reconciliation, this gives us a particular responsibility to pray for the healing of our fractured society and the survival of international friendships that have been a key part of our life for many years. As we travel through this month together, uncertain of what the future might hold, it seems good to have a particular time and place in the cathedral to focus those prayers.



So throughout October (unless there are large groups attending) we will be praying the Litany of Reconciliation in the Chapel of Christ the Servant, and invite visitors and community to pause if they are able, to spend some time praying for our nation in this season of change and anxiety.

Throughout the hour from 12 noon until 1 pm, three candles will burn there: one for ourselves, our hopes, fears, joys and griefs; one for our neighbours, those with whom we agree and disagree, those who are rejoicing and those who are weeping, our local neighbours – and our international neighbours; and the third, for our shared future. There will be other resources to help focus your prayers and we do hope that you'll feel able to join us sometime this month.

*God of past,*

*present*

*and future,*

*be with us as we take our next steps as nations together.*

*May we strive to love*

*our neighbour as ourselves*

*Listening and speaking*

*with respectful kindness,*

*embracing difference.*

*Remembering how much all have been forgiven by you,*

*may we offer friendship,*

*grant mercy,*

*and seek peace and justice*

*in our shared future.*

*Amen.*

## CCN Thought for the Week for 11th October – “.....These things that are stronger than the forces that would drive us apart”



**A church with a story with so many parallels with Coventry's own story commemorated the 75th anniversary of its destruction last weekend – German speakers can see the local news report of the story and event. The magnificent Ludwigskirche in Saarbrücken also took the opportunity to become our latest CCN partner, and Canon David Stone attended the whole**

**weekend to welcome them into the network.**

“Thank you for the warmth of your welcome and hospitality. It is a great pleasure to be with you here this evening. I bring you warm greetings from the city of Coventry in the centre of England and from its Cathedral in particular.

Every now and then, somebody makes a decision whose consequences are more significant than they could possibly have imagined. Such an individual was Dick Howard, Provost of Coventry Cathedral from 1933 to 1958. During the night of November 14th 1940 he worked tirelessly to battle against the flames that were consuming his beloved Cathedral during the bombing of Coventry known as ‘Operation Mondscheinsonate’, ‘Operation Moonlight Sonata’. His efforts were in vain. He and those working alongside him were defeated. Destruction had the upper hand that night, an event we commemorate to this day – just as you look back to October 5th 1944.

In Coventry November 15th 1940 is also a special date to remember. The day after the night before. When Provost Howard found it within his heart to express the willingness to forgive, the desire to reconcile, the passion to reach out and make friends with his enemies. The flames that had destroyed his beloved Cathedral did not destroy him. He was able to extinguish any thoughts of retaliation and revenge. Instead he set himself the task, once the war was over, to build bridges of reconciliation and so turn enemies into friends.

And so began Coventry Cathedral's ministry of reconciliation, now expressed in over 200 places around the world through the Community of the Cross of Nails, to which the Ludwigskirche is to be admitted tomorrow.

I want to say to you that the current turmoil in the relationship between the United Kingdom and her partners in the European Union makes the bonds of friendship we forge through organisations such as the Community of the Cross of Nails even more vital. This evening, through the gift of music, we are celebrating that which binds us together – our common humanity, our particular shared experience of the suffering and horror of war, our passion for peace and friendship. And we want to affirm that these things are stronger than the forces that would drive us apart.

It is a real privilege to be able to represent Coventry this evening.

My thoughts in closing turn to the Cross of Nails which I shall be presenting at the Ludwigskirche tomorrow morning. The Community of the Cross of Nails is at its best when it inspires and involves the individuals who belong to its partner churches and organisations.

So may that Cross find space in your heart and mine. The cross which speaks of the love of God embracing all humanity. The cross which speaks of the power of God transforming suffering. The cross which speaks of the invitation of God urging us to be partners with him in pursuing peace and holding out hope in his hurt and hurting world. Thank you.

Canon David Stone, Canon Precentor, Coventry Cathedral

## CCN Thought for the Week for 18th October – two of our former reconciliation interns, Coventry, Brexit and the future

**On the eve of a knife-edge UK parliamentary vote on the Brexit deal, and a crucial time for all of the EU in the whole debate, we hear from two of our recent reconciliation interns from Germany – the country with the most partner organisations in the CCN – both of whom had transformational placements in Coventry, about the impact of their experience of the cross-border partnership and learning enabled through both the CCN network and mutual EU partnership.**

*Both of us – Felicitas Weileder and Maite Böhm – have been interns at Coventry Cathedral with Action Reconciliation Service for Peace (ARSP). We recently met to reflect on our time in Coventry and how it impacted our lives, and how the current uncertainty around Brexit leaves us feeling. We want to share a few of our thoughts with you. Felicitas was an intern in 2011/12 during the Golden Jubilee and the two big international gatherings 2012. Maite finished her internship just recently. During her year from 2017 to 2018, she also organised two big gatherings.*



**Felicitas** : I grew up in a small town in southern Germany, which had not fully reappraised its history, and where remembrance events were mostly organised and visited by older people. A few friends and I, seeking to change this, founded a youth group for the remembrance of the cruelty of National Socialism. Through this volunteer work, I knew the work of ARSP and it was only the next logical step for me to become an intern with them. As a believing Catholic and based on my experience with our youth group, I was really happy that I had the opportunity to work in Coventry.

Coventry, the Cathedral and its people had a tremendous impact on my life. I gained a deep knowledge of reconciliation and the impact of war and violence; hence, after returning to Germany, my studies focused mostly on development, good governance, and conflict prevention. I work and have worked on those topics in previous professional experiences and also at my current job, and I returned to the UK in 2018 to study for a year in London.

I was deeply moved by the hospitality and friendship of British people, and am still in touch with various British and American friends. I really hope that the friendship between our two countries will continue after Brexit. I met wonderful people of the Community of the Cross of Nails in Coventry,



whose individual stories, and stories of their churches or organisations, have often inspired me. Thus, I decided to volunteer for the German board of the Community of the Cross of Nails in Germany, and Maite and I hope to develop programs to interest especially the young generation in our vital work for reconciliation and peace during the next four years.



**Maite:** The first time I visited Coventry and its cathedral was at the age of fifteen on a pilgrimage where I was deeply moved by Coventry's story and wanted to get involved. Therefore I started volunteering for CCN work at my church, especially trying to get other young people involved. I had also heard about the internship at the Reconciliation Ministry and therefore decided to become an intern with ARSP after finishing school.

Spending this one year abroad working for Coventry Cathedral and learning about reconciliation and peace work had a huge impact on my life and was a great experience that I will always remember fondly. Not only did I get to support the Cathedral in its ministry but I also got to meet a lot of incredible people who became a big part of my life. Not only was I welcomed very warmly but I also found a small second family in my fellow interns and a second home in Coventry. Brexit is therefore affecting me on a very emotional level, and I so hope that the friendships between my friends and me will last through this awful time.

The CCN with its partners from all over the world is such a good example for international relationships, and how individuals can make a difference – its first partnership being the one between Coventry and Kiel, whose roots started to grow even during war time. I welcome being a new member of the German CCN board and working together with Felicitas on reaching out to younger people and getting them involved in peace and reconciliation work.

## CCN Thought for the Week for 25th October – Bert Kuipers, Chair of the CCN Dutch Board

**As Brexit indecision continues, we hear from our Dutch CCN Board, from whom a number are due to join us on our Coventry CCN pilgrimage this week, about the inspiration that Coventry's story provides in the Netherlands, in a growing sub-network that has a healthy momentum of its own!**

Praying for peace – does it still make sense? In particular when democratically elected world leaders threaten others with violence, not hesitant to take up arms?



In The Netherlands, there is a growing number of places where the Litany of Peace and Reconciliation is prayed every week. Some twenty years ago, we started with two participants and in recent years, a new partner has joined our Dutch network every year, with around half of them formally partnered

with Coventry thus far. Originally, the participating communities each shared traumatic war experiences (Nijmegen, Arnhem, Rotterdam), and the geography of the distribution of the partners shows the course of the front during World War II from 1940 to 1945. New communities rather seem motivated by aversion to war today.

Actually, it's remarkable, such a revival. Issues of war and peace have kept coming up from time to time; here in the Netherlands there was a strong aversion to the deployment of nuclear weapons in the 1980s. Are we re-inventing the wheel? In Nijmegen, a Cross of Nails was discovered in the rebuilt tower of the Stevenskerk, given long ago and forgotten. When the current vicar became acquainted with our network and spoke about it in his parish, a church warden with a good memory told him about the presence of this Cross, which has now been relocated and has a function in the weekly prayer. And thus Coventry meets the demand for recognizable visibility, spiritual discipline and the feeling of belonging together internationally.

The ecumenical structure of the prayer tradition from Coventry proves to be another reason for the increase of the number of partners in our country: the Coventry groups that pop up across our country basically have an ecumenical character. The Coventry partner-groups that originate in our country tend to become subsidiary groups of the CCN through the Dutch network sometimes long before they formally partner with Coventry. The tie with Coventry is important but so is the fellowship and support of all the Dutch partners, of which there is soon to be a 16th, Breda.

As someone explained during our biannual gathering: "Friday is Coventry day, I go to the market then, buy the flowers for Sunday. I go to the Litany, have coffee with the others and then: let Sunday come'. Praying for peace, the search for allies in one's own town or village, also across the borders of one's own religion is a new form of inclusive spirituality. Prayer takes time, and above all, discipline.

A pilgrimage to Coventry, together with fellow-prayers from your own town as well as from other towns brings you into contact with the sources of that spirituality. We wish our friends this coming week a thought-provoking and prayerful pilgrimage.

Rev. Bert Kuipers, Chairman Coventryberaad Nederland (Dutch Coventry Consultation Group)

## CCN Thought for the Week for Advent Sunday – Pullen Memorial Baptist Church



Throughout Advent, CCN partner Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, is sharing daily meditations contributed by both Pullen and by their own key overseas partners. We share below the first of them, on the mutual support and opportunity that partnership brings; and we think of and pray for two very recent and very soon to join UK CCN partners as they support the wider public in the aftermath of more tragedy on London Bridge just these past few days: Guys' and St Thomas' NHS Trust Chaplaincy Team, and Southwark Cathedral.

You can sign up to receive Pullen's meditations here:

[Sit Down With Abraham](#)

Jesus once said, "Many will come from east and west and sit down at table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Though our international partnerships we share in that truth. Sometimes we do so literally, as they visit us and as we visit them. Sometimes we do so by contributing to their work as the need arises. They are our friends, our fellow guests at Abraham's table.

Our oldest international partnership is with the Community of the Cross of Nails, a post-World War II group of churches, peace and educational organisations based in Coventry, and committed to working for reconciliation. Visiting Coventry in 1972, a Pullen couple heard the story of the war-time destruction of the ancient Cathedral by enemy bombs, and of the formation of the Community with the theme, "Father, Forgive." Upon returning home the couple proposed that Pullen send a group of young people to Coventry for a program on reconciliation. Twenty young people and five adults spent a month there in 1974, and two years later another group made a similar pilgrimage. After that second group left, the leaders in Coventry invited Pullen to apply for membership in the CCN. We did so, and in 1977 the Provost of the Cathedral came to Pullen to present the Cross of Nails that now hangs in our sanctuary. The foyers in which many of us participate are facilitated by the CCN group, and many of our members have visited Coventry. Occasionally a clergy person from Coventry has come to Pullen.

In the 1988 a couple from Pullen's Peace and Justice Group attended the International Baptist Peace Conference in Sjoviks, Sweden. There they met two Cubans, Noel Fernandes, a layman from Ciego de Avila, and Paco Rodes, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Matanzas. Both wanted to visit the United States to study English, though, they said, "We know that is impossible." They were thinking both of the Cuban embargo imposed by the United States and the cost of travel. The Pullenites said, "We think it can be done," and upon returning home proceeded to make it happen. In the summer of 1989 the Cubans spent two months in the home of their American friends and studied English at Wake Tech. During their stay, Paco proposed a partnership between Pullen and First Baptist in Matanzas, and our deacons endorsed it. Since then, in spite of the embargo, scores of Pullen members have visited the church in Matanzas. And, again in spite the extreme difficulty for Cubans to get visas to enter the United States, we have brought a significant number of Cubans to visit Pullen.

In 1989, through Bridges for Peace, Pullen's Peace and Justice Group assisted a Pullen couple go to the Republic of Georgia in the Soviet Union. Prior to that trip the couple read an article about Malkhaz Songalishvili, a young Baptist graduate student and instructor at the University of Tbilisi who had been appointed by the Archbishop of the Georgian Orthodox Church to a committee to translate the Bible into modern Georgian. In Georgia the couple skipped a scheduled excursion and instead asked their host couple to help them find Malkhaz. With some difficulty, they found his home in a nearby village. There they were entertained at tea by his parents until he came home from work. In time, Malkhaz took the Americans to his room, where he used a microfisch reader as he worked on the Bible translation reader. The visit ended with an invitation to the Americans to attend the Wednesday night church service. Prior to that service the Pullen couple met with the four pastors of the Church, and learned that their social concerns and activities were quite similar to those of Pullen. On the spur of the moment, they suggested that the Tbilisi church and Pullen become partners, and the pastors agreed immediately. Because of both the great distance between the countries and the high cost of travel, visits have not been frequent, but communication has kept us close, and Pullen has played a significant role in projects of the Tbilisi church, now called "The Peace Cathedral."

The Zimbabwe partnership had its genesis in 1992 when a young woman, a student at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond, had a course taught by Henry Mugabe, president of the Baptist Seminary of Zimbabwe. She followed up that contact with three mission trips to Zimbabwe, and was instrumental in leading the Alliance of Baptists to create an alliance with Zimbabwe Baptists. Mugabe was a frequent visiting professor at the Richmond Seminary, and when he was in this country he

usually visited Pullen. Our first significant contribution to Zimbabwe was made in 2006 to help construct a cistern for the Seminary. Since that time the church has included in its yearly budgets a contribution to the work in Zimbabwe.

Our latest partnership began in 2002, when the Board of International Ministries of the American Baptist Churches asked us to become a sponsor for Drs. David and Laura Parajon, medical missionaries in Nicaragua. We agreed not only to support them financially but also through our prayers and by our correspondence. Our Nicaragua Mission Group was formed in 2007, and from time to time the Parajons came to visit the church. The leaders of the group then made an “exploratory trip” to Nicaragua, and took a group there in 2008 help establish a health clinic in El Bejuco. Their work there was eminently helpful in beginning construction, and a year later the clinic was ready to open a year later. That trip was the first of a series of such journeys.

Visiting Pullen recently, Dr. David Parajon said in the Sunday worship service, “Because of you we know that we are not alone.” And our pastor said, “How changed we are because of our partnerships.”

Roger Crook, Pullen Memorial Baptist Church

**Daily Advent Meditations – An Advent reader for 2019 : A Collaboration between AMOS, Community of the Cross of Nails, FBC Matanzas, Peace Cathedral in Tbilisi, Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, and The Zimbabwe Theological Seminary**

## CCN Thought for the Week for 14th December – 24 years on from signing peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina



On a cold day in Paris twenty-four years ago today, world leaders gathered to sign and witness the Dayton Agreement, bringing to an end the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina which had torn the country apart for nearly 4 years. Some would argue that the war had raged on and off since 1389, when the Serb and Bosnian armies were defeated by the Ottomans on Kosovo Field in an event which remains at the fore of public consciousness even today.

It is tempting to see agreements like Dayton as synonymous with peace. After all, that is what the ‘Dayton Peace Agreement’ calls itself. During my work in Sudan and South Sudan over the last 16 years I have been privileged (and at times frustrated) to play a very small part in negotiations which led to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and subsequent ‘peace agreements’ for Darfur and Eastern Sudan, and we could devote several pages to the ways in which these were neither comprehensive nor about peace. The events that have rocked Sudan in recent months and continue to blight South Sudan are evidence of unfinished business.

Some elements are common to such agreements: maintaining a ceasefire; deciding which groups may seek independence and which will need to integrate themselves into existing states; agreeing territorial boundaries; ratifying new constitutions; policing the new arrangements. There may be provision for how to honour shared or distinct national memories, how to share power and wealth, or

the timeframe for agreeing the things which in the violence of a bloody conflict are simply too raw to address immediately.

Twenty-four years on, the Dayton Agreement has not been an unmitigated success. Bosnia-Herzegovina remains deeply divided. Its constitutional labels entrench these divisions, and exclude minorities. The agreement stopped the killing, and a ceasefire is of course a very good thing. But justice and peace were de-prioritised in negotiations to end a genocide, and have yet to be put in place.

Dayton did include, as many such deals do, a mutual commitment to respect human rights. At the time this may be seen by negotiating parties as simply a means to hold war criminals to account, or at best to avoid further bloodshed. But understood more broadly, the respect for human rights comes close to what the Bible means by peace. In this week's passage from Isaiah 11 which foretells Jesus' ministry, we read of judging with righteousness, of standing up for the poor and needy, of predator and prey lying down together as a symbol of an earth which is "filled with the knowledge of the Lord".

The real measure of peace is not whether or not we are at war, or how we carve up our countries into zones of control and influence by the powerful, though this may be an important precursor to peace. We demonstrate peace by how we fairly we treat each other, how we look after and speak up for the poor and those who are in need, and how we enable perpetrator and victim to seek and find a shared space of healing.

Mark Simmons

Dean's Advisor for Reconciliation Ministry

Coventry Cathedral

UK Chair, Community of the Cross of Nails

## CCN Thought for the Week for 20th December – Dan Koski, Institute of Ecumenical Research, Romania

Country to Country, Cross to Cross

This past autumn, I relocated from Serbia to Romania to begin work with the Institute for Ecumenical Research (Institut für Ökumenische Forschung/ Centrul de Cercetare Ecumenică) in the city of Sibiu/Hermannstadt in the Transylvanian region of Romania, following a lengthy period of uncertainty and relocation following a decade in the Holy Land. While my life's journey across five nations on three continents has taught me to expect the unexpected, I had not anticipated to come into contact with the Community of the Cross of Nails once again.



I have been involved with the Community since 2015, when I worked at Tantur Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem as an administrator, and had the privilege of helping formalize the decades-old relationship over a period of three years. Unfortunately, complications with visa and residency issues



meant that I had to begin the search for a new home, and I had to step away from being an active participant in Community work as I ended one chapter of my life and began another. A year later, I have found myself working once again for an institute that is engaged in both the theological study and parochial aspects of ecumenical Christianity.

The Institute of Ecumenical Research is located within the historic city center in a complex which includes the Johanneskirche, a parish under the Evangelical Church of Augustan Confession in Romania that has been the main body of faith of the German-speaking Protestants of Transylvania known as the Saxons. It is here that our local Cross of Nails is kept and looked after by those that have made the Community a part of their ministry and faith journey. Community litanies and gatherings are held in German, Romanian and English as per the language of the attendees.

As with the Holy Land, Transylvania is a land of multiple peoples and faith traditions; thankfully with a far less turbulent history and a stable present. The city of Sibiu, also known by its historic German name, Hermannstadt (as well as a third, its Hungarian name Nagyszeben), is famous for its architectural beauty that reflects its rich history, but it is the living history of local faith communities and organizations that have helped make it an ideal setting for a Community of the Cross of Nails to flourish.

Once an individual has become a part of the Community, there is a sense of familiarity and comfort to see the Cross of Nails in a location or house of worship that is new to them. No matter the denomination or country, the Cross of Nails is a connection of a common shared experience and values within the vast journey that is the Christian faith. How each Cross came to its precise location is always a unique story, but its purpose and function are always the same. Through a willingness to be joined together in prayer, fellowship and a spirit of reconciliation at all levels – sectarian, national, regional, social and as individuals – the Community of the Cross of Nails acts as a sort of spiritual waystation for pilgrims of faith in every sense of the word.

This Christmas, as I celebrate the feast of the Nativity of Christ not in the town of Bethlehem but in Transylvania, I will reflect on the friends and family I have left behind in the Holy Land, but will also give thanks to the possibility of new relationships in my present home. Knowing that whatever challenges await me, a local Community of the Cross of Nails will once again just be a short walk from my desk at work is indeed a Christmas gift to be grateful for.

Dan Koski can be reached at his email at [ccesiofh@gmail.com](mailto:ccesiofh@gmail.com) , and through the Facebook page of the Institute for Ecumenical Research.

## CCN Thought for the Week for 30th December – a look back at 2019

A look back on 2019



2019 has seen some change in Coventry and a healthy mix of new partners joining the CCN and ICONS!

Dresden gained a 5th partner in the Sophienkirche Busmannkapelle in February. The Busmannkapelle, designed and built on the foundations of the original chapel of the same name which formed part of the bomb-damaged and subsequently dismantled original Church, is a truly unique

memorial to war and destruction, as well as a very powerful and thought-provoking building-artwork, in the very heart of the city.



In June, two new partners in Canada came on board: the stunningly located Sorrento Centre, a peace and retreat centre in rural British Columbia, and Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, Vancouver Island – connected to us historically, but now a fully-fledged member with its own Cross of Nails.

Shortly after this, in July we welcomed our very first hospital chaplaincy – Guys’ and St Thomas’ NHS Trust on central London’s south bank. We were thrilled to have many of their chaplains – of various different faiths – here on pilgrimage with us in May for what became our first ever interfaith pilgrimage, and which led to the chaplaincy joining our new interfaith sister network Together for Hope too, as its second partner.

Autumn was again a busy time for new partners, with one of Germany’s foremost churches, the Ludwigskirche in Saarbrücken, itself very heavily damaged during the war 75 years to the day previously; a youth ministry, Evangelisches Jugendwerk Bezirk Öhringen, in southern Germany; the historic Pauluskerk Breukelen in the Netherlands; and Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church, in Houston, Texas.



We celebrated our first Cross of Nails Sunday on the final Sunday in September, with a number of partners incorporating celebrating the CCN into their morning services across the world, particularly in Germany; we hope to run this each year as a chance for partners to know they are praying and celebrating our network together, concurrently on one special day each year.

Here in Coventry we said goodbye to Stacy – who arrived as a Nelson and left as a Taylor! – after her two years of input, support and friendship with us as our US intern. We’re delighted she’s still in Coventry and we can see her from time to time. And we said hello and welcome to Hanna-Lotta Lehmann, our German intern for this year, who has got well stuck in to her role across reconciliation, schools, events and tourism in her first few months. In between all of the various changes the loyal services of our wonderful volunteer Richard Parker has kept us welcoming people in German when we have needed to!



Two more key new arrivals at the start of this year have been Jen Jenkins, ICONS Manager, who is growing and strengthening the ICONS network, working from the Cathedral’s schools team. During her time here our 50th ICON School – Bury – joined us, one of five UK schools to join this year. And Mark Simmons, Dean’s Advisor for Reconciliation Ministry, has been with us for this past calendar year to manage the team and its activity and other partnerships day-to-day part-time. He also – wearing an entirely different, voluntary hat – chairs the now year-old UK and Ireland CCN Board, which is making a real difference to connectivity.

Another CCN partner Board to very much welcome this year too is the CCN Canada Board under Dean Shane Parker from Ottawa– who spent a very



rich two weeks with us in Coventry in May and who helped heavily with our interfaith pilgrimage. These networks are key to the CCN making a difference to partners!



There have been a number of poignant war anniversaries this year, not least in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, in March and in Nürnberg in November, as well as in Saarbrücken (above) in October. Also, in September, in Darmstadt, where on this occasion one of our UK partners, and a key one in this context, St Clement Danes, the Church of the Royal Air Force, attended on Coventry's behalf. We so very much welcome the chance for partners to support one another through the CCN network, which is based on Coventry, but which enables links to be forged around and through Coventry's example. And in Coventry, more broadly, we were visited so memorably by both the Knife Angel and by Where Light Falls.

As we look forward to a very good number of new partners again in 2020, in the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, central and south Africa, and from two countries new to our partnerships – Belgium and Norway – we are also seeking to focus how we can best use our unique network in reconciling the themes of our time – not least Brexit, and its many and varied current and long term effects; but also the global environment crisis, and our shared need to act, and make a difference; and how we become a network that better engages young people. Expect to hear more from us on those very soon!

Alice Farnhill, CCN Project Officer

