

Thought for the week archive 2020

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Thought for the Week for 17th January – 2020: the year ahead for the CCN

Three new Crosses of Nails will be blessed this Sunday, 19th January, at Coventry Cathedral, which will be presented over the next three weeks to three new CCN partners.

Spanning the deeply poignant moment when the UK leaves the EU, we are pleased to start the year by welcoming these three new partners, from three different European countries, each significant in a different way. Southwark Cathedral will be our ninth partner in London and is a place of worship involved so closely with reconciliation and recovery on an ongoing basis, often very much in the public eye. The Pro-Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Brussels is the main Anglican church in Belgium and, among other things, at the heart of much-valued inter-cultural community building. The Bergen Cathedral



Community, a group of five churches who serve a number of different communities, has already enjoyed a long partnership with Southwark Cathedral. Brussels and Bergen both also extend the CCN's reach into two new countries, which is doubly exciting for us.

Three further churches join us later in the spring and late summer: the St.-Johannis-Kirchgemeinde Plauen and St Bartholomaei Demmin, both in Germany, and Johannes de Doperkerk in Wageningen in the Netherlands. We are also in early talks to welcome a further church this spring very close to home indeed, from Coventry Diocese; its local school is also working towards join the ICONS network.

This wonderful spread of different worshipping communities will also potentially be joined later this year by the Ammerdown Centre in Somerset and the Third Order of the Society of St Francis. The Ammerdown Centre has long been a residential reconciliation and retreat centre and will be hosting a reunion later this year of last year's first interfaith pilgrimage . The Third Order of the Society of St Francis is an Anglican religious order whose many members live as a dispersed community. Among other possible new partners in Eastern and Southern Africa, we hope to welcome this year the MINYE Congregation in Kampala, part of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and comprising displaced refugee communities from the various tribes of Western Equatoria. We look forward to embracing and involving this very different type of partner and to strengthening the CCN in East Africa.

The ICONS programme, led from the Cathedral by Jen Jenkins, goes from strength to strength, with partners now numbering into the 50s and plenty of interest from new schools, and plans and activities for the schools within the network, including the ICONS Ambassadors programme.

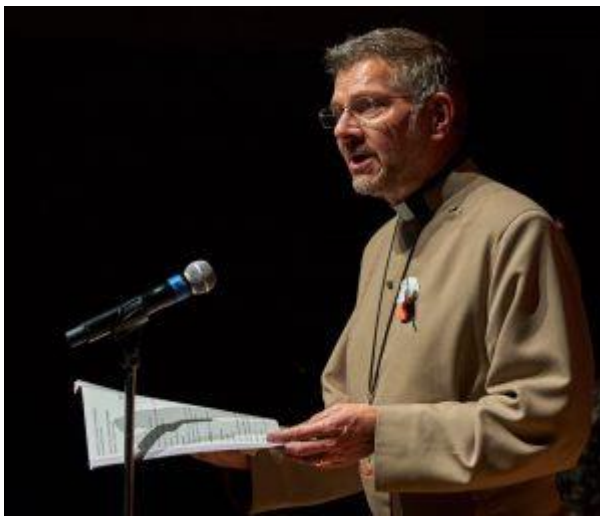
We will have in 2020 a busy year of hosting visitors ahead of Coventry's year as UK City of Culture next year, with a particularly big and vibrant group at our May pilgrimage from partners and prospective partners in Berlin, Hamburg, Saarbrücken and Vancouver Island. We plan also to run a second interfaith pilgrimage this autumn, together with our sister network Together for Hope. In March we will be hosting our "international reps" – the leads of the various regional CCN boards around the world. Together as a collective we will discuss ideas and form plans around the future shape of the CCN and its role, including in such areas as reconciliation and the environment as we seek to be reconciled to all creation, and to engage younger people. This November marks not only the COP26

in Glasgow but also the 80th anniversary of the Coventry bombing – not to mention a crucial election in the USA.

We in Coventry very much look forward to working through the year with all our partners, with our incredibly valuable partner boards – especially the very new ones in the UK & Ireland and in Canada as they grow – and with all those who give their time and energies to a ministry that, while rewarding, can often seem tough and remote. At a time of political and social polarisation, in which pulling apart can sometimes sound more popular than bringing together, our work and our role as a collective network of like-minded organisations has never been more needed.

Alice Farnhill, CCN Project Officer

Thought for the Week for 24th January – from the Dean of Coventry



New Year 2020 brings more than its fair share of changes ahead for us in the Community of the Cross of Nails. Almost 80 years ago we were in the grip of a conflict that engulfed Europe and tore St. Michael's Cathedral from us here in Coventry. In the following years we rebuilt relationships with our continental neighbours and the re-imagined Coventry Cathedral ended up at the heart of an international ministry of peace and reconciliation, the Community of the Cross of Nails.

In a few days' time, as I write this, the United Kingdom will leave the European Union, a decision which brings great sadness to us and to our many friends on the continent. It is however a great joy that just as this is happening, we are continuing to develop and nurture new relationships in Europe through the CCN – with our new partners in Holy Trinity Pro-Cathedral in Brussels and Bergen Cathedral in Norway, joining us on February 2nd and 9th.

The Community of the Cross of Nails exists to promote reconciliation, to inspire, equip and connect those working for peace and the Kingdom of God as a reality today. It is a sad fact that this work is ever more necessary, and our prayer that we will be used by God to keep hope alive at a time when it may seem threatened by political and economic movements around us. You will read in this newsletter about many of the wonderful events which we shared in 2019, and some of what will be coming up in 2020, all in the service of God's mission of reconciliation.

Here in Coventry we are working very closely with the Bishop and Diocese of Coventry to make this a reality in our own neighbourhood, as "Partners in the Message and Ministry of Reconciliation" (cf. 2 Cor 5. 18,19). Reconciliation lies at the heart of the gospel – for many of us, it is the heart of the gospel. It is the reason Coventry Cathedral exists, and it is a joy to share in this ministry with partners across the world.

Since this Thought was written, one of the angel panels in the Cathedral's iconic West Screen, engraved by John Hutton and loved by so many, has last night been smashed during a break-in. At today's Litany, Dean John said: "It's only a building, but buildings matter. And this is an irreplaceable piece of art that has served to inspire millions of visitors, which is now lost – or at least irrevocably damaged – for ever."

That's our history: we have experienced loss before, but it doesn't make it any less heart-breaking. We search our own hearts today for the grace to follow Provost Howard's example of praying 'Father Forgive' and to reach out in compassion and forgiveness to those responsible".

Every blessing

The Very Reverend John Witcombe

CCN Thought for the Week for 31st January 2020 – Mark Simmons, Chair, CCN UK & Ireland Board



The European Parliament's Brexit negotiator Guy Verhofstadt summed up the mood following the vote on Wednesday to approve the withdrawal treaty by remarking that "it's sad to see a country leaving that twice liberated us". For many of us on both sides of the Channel it is difficult to accept that the UK is turning its back on an institution that has guaranteed the peace and stability of our oft-divided continent since the truce that emerged in 1945. Despite the passage

of time, this is perhaps felt more keenly in places like Coventry which have witnessed war's destruction first-hand. For some people though, the European institutions are perceived to be an unloved and distant arbiter, unsurprisingly perhaps after decades of lies in the British press about so much, from the curvature of bananas or the colour of passports to how decisions are made.

Looking back, we must be grateful. Grateful that we had 45 years of close economic and political collaboration with countries with which 75 years ago we were at war. Grateful that we have been instrumental in drawing back the Iron Curtain such that it is little more than a nostalgic road sign to welcome the visitor. Grateful that social and cultural minorities across our continent have had their rights recognised, protected, enhanced, and enshrined in law. Grateful that we now enjoy much better food standards, animal welfare, workers' rights, and environmental protection, even though there is much more that we still need to do. Grateful that we have contributed to worldwide development and democratisation. Grateful that we have been able to stand shoulder-to-shoulder on the world stage, as equal partners with other nations which share the values we claim to uphold.

The European institutions are not flawless, of course; no institution is. But since it became an integral part of these institutions, the UK has contributed to that for which we are grateful, and indeed to that which some find irritating about the EU; we share both credit and responsibility. Having worked in the European Parliament and the European Commission, I have witnessed first-hand the UK's usually constructive, moderate and sensible voice in decision-making processes, and how much that voice has been valued by the other nations of the EU. By leaving the table and ceding its influence, the UK loses its voice – though this is the least tragic of the ironies embedded in the arguments for Brexit – and there will be grief across the continent tonight, not only on these islands.

In daily and weekly intercessions across the Anglican Communion, we pray that we and our leaders would seek the common good. Yet in our body politic and our public discourse there is a worrying suggestion that common good only extends as far as the water's edge, or only as far as the UK's internal national borders. We should guard against these ever-decreasing circles of interest.

At the heart of the Coventry story which inspires the Community of the Cross of Nails is a recognition of what we share; not only our shared need for forgiveness but also our need to break down barriers of 'us' and 'them' towards a shared responsibility for how we treat each other and our world. Our Dean calls this "journeying from a fractured past towards a shared future". In a post-Brexit world we must seize the opportunity to redouble our efforts to build this shared future.

In years to come, people may ask where we were when the UK left the EU. I for one will be marking the occasion with two minutes' silence, in remembrance of what has been and in prayer for what will be.

Mark Simmons

Chair, CCN UK & Ireland

Let us pray to God the Father,

who has reconciled all things to himself in Christ:

For peace among the nations,

that God may rid the world of violence

and let peoples grow in justice and harmony;

For those who serve in public office,

that they may work for the common good;

For Christian people everywhere,

that we may joyfully proclaim and live our faith in Jesus Christ;

For those who suffer from hunger, sickness or loneliness,

that the presence of Christ may bring them health and wholeness;

Let us commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,

to the mercy and protection of God.

Amen.

CCN Thought for the Week for 7th February – Hanna-Lotta Lehmann, Coventry Cathedral intern

We have one wonderful intern working with us in Coventry this year, and as she comes up to half way through her time with us, this is her chance to say hello!

My name is Hanna-Lotta; I am the current intern here at the Cathedral in Coventry for a year. I would like to take the chance to introduce myself briefly, why I am doing this internship and what my tasks are here at the cathedral.

I am 18 years old and finished school in summer 2019. I am from Germany and have lived my whole life with my family in Bonn (Haribos are from Bonn!).

I decided last year that I would like to spend a year abroad with Action Reconciliation Service for Peace (ARSP) after finishing school. I wanted to get to know a new culture and at the same time do some peace service with ARSP. ARSP is a German organization, which conducts its work with an awareness of the present-day significance of National Socialism and the Holocaust. Every year around 180 volunteers, mostly young adults, work for ARSP in thirteen different countries on a variety of educational, historical, political and social projects. If you want to do your service with ARSP you have to go to an application seminar. At this application seminar I first heard about Coventry and its history, and was so inspired that I applied. I then heard more and more about it, and my anticipation grew. A really remarkable point was when I went to a talk by Angela Merkel last summer, where she spoke about the Community of Cross of Nails and its reconciliation work as a role model for Christian peace work. I am really glad and grateful for the opportunity to work with the CCN and with the people at the Cathedral for reconciliation and peace.



My actual journey to Coventry started then in September 2019. I'm now working here at the Cathedral with the schools team, the events team and of course with the reconciliation team during the week. I love working with so many different people, who have different ideas and opinions. There is always a lot to do, which is great.

The last five months have been great and busy, too. I'm looking forward to the next six, in which I can work with the reconciliation team to develop and strengthen a youth strategy for the CCN.

In addition to the youth strategy, I will have the chance to work on the CCN and the environment. Since my childhood this has been a big topic for me; making the world more peaceful involves doing something to beat climate change. I think that we as humans have a huge responsibility for the earth, for animals and for future generations. We are responsible for the integrity of creation. So the big question is, what can the CCN do? What does reconciliation look like during this crisis? Can we reconcile with the earth, or with future generations? How can we reconcile with a future generation, with people we will possibly never meet? Can there be something like "advance reconciliation"? Just a few questions – there are many more! Together with the ICONS (International Cross of Nail Schools) team we have a lot of ideas and I am really excited to see our ideas growing in this year.

All in all I am really enjoying the work I can do here and I feel very grateful that I have been given this opportunity to experience and learn more about reconciliation. I'm still impressed by how wonderfully

the people at the Cathedral and in Coventry welcomed me. The hospitality is just amazing and I am very grateful to meet so many incredible people here, who helped me to feel home in Coventry!

Hanna-Lotta Lehmann

CCN Thought for the Week for 13th February – 75th anniversary of the bombing of Dresden



A reflection on the Dresden 75th anniversary, from Coventry

The attacks, on 13 and 14 February 1945 by the RAF and the USAF, were out of all proportion to the strategic importance of the city only three months before the end of the war. It was completely burnt out, about 25,000 died (the figure is still debated), mostly asphyxiated in their cellars by the firestorm. Churchill recoiled in horror when he heard the news. It was similar to Coventry's destruction at the beginning of the war – also by fire, though Coventry was a recognized war target. Our numbers are smaller, but both cities had their heart ripped out – our Cathedral, their Frauenkirche. That common experience led to our twinning in 1959, when Dresden was part of the East German Democratic Republic – a miracle in those political and cultural circumstances.

Provost Howard's prayer has found a ready reception in Dresden: Dresden now has five Crosses of Nails – the first in 1965, the latest presented only last year to the Busmann Chapel, a 15th century family chapel once part of the Sophienkirche, an important court church, which was deliberately destroyed in 1962 by the Communists. The chapel has recently been rebuilt using every tiny fragment that remained. Germans usually rebuild their damaged memorials, we often build new – including in our case the ruin preserved as a memory. Dresden's Frauenkirche, the Protestant city church, has been rebuilt exactly as it was, thanks to donations from across the world (including £1 million from Britain for the gilded orb and cross on the dome, made by a silversmith whose father had been part of the raid that destroyed the city. Not long ago we had a German visitor to Coventry who revealed in tears that his father had been one of the pilots "who did this to you".)

So how do the Dresdeners remember? In 2015 the 70th anniversary was marked with a state occasion – with the Federal President, Archbishop Justin, Bishop Christopher, the Bishop of Saxony, Dean John and both city mayors. In his address President Gauck – who had been a pastor in the East German city of Rostock until unification – underlined that Germany had started the war, it could not be surprised or angry that destruction should come back to hit it too. After this the ceremonial takes the same form every year: people gather on the Neumarkt to form a human chain around the city, to keep Dresden's far right groups (who are very prominent in the city) from taking over the official events. At 6pm everyone joins hands and falls silent as the bells toll. Then a Memorial Walk leads through the city visiting and remembering sites of destruction or catastrophe – the Synagogue, the Frauenkirche, whose dome collapsed in the fire just as our roof did, the Sophienkirche, the Town Hall and others. At each stop a text is read – including some by Provost Howard – which draws attention to its importance. There follows a service in the Kreuzkirche, then at about 10pm everyone returns

to the Neumarkt, lights a candle outside the Frauenkirche and waits for the bells to mark the exact moment when the first bombs hit. As a Coventrian you're made really welcome at all of this— they're so glad you want to be there. No trace of resentment, just a huge feeling of shared sadness and regret. The Frauenkirche is open throughout the night for silent meditation, for readings and music.

So this is Dresden's memory now – a city conflicted by its duality as highly cultured city (historically a royal residence) and site of far-right extremist groups – the anti-Islamic Pegida, and the Alternative for Germany – and yet strong in its links to Coventry. The Cathedral is not the only point of contact – the Coventry-Dresden Arts Exchange (run by John Yeadon), the Coventry German Circle (continually in existence since 1946), Coventry Association for International Friendship and Cardinal Newman School all maintain contacts and exchanges, via Dresden's German-British Association or with individual friends. Let's hope that as the UK withdraws into self-imposed isolation from Europe these links may still flourish.

BBC Radio 4's Start the Week at 9am on Monday 10th was devoted to the anniversary, and new initiatives – worth a listen.

Richard Parker, Coventry Cathedral congregation

Image: The Choir of the Survivors, by Helmut Heinze, gifted to Coventry on its 50th anniversary in 2012 and located today in Coventry Cathedral ruins.

CCN Thought for the Week for 21st February – Revd Canon Michael Rawson, Sub-Dean of Southwark Cathedral

There has been a church on the site of the present Southwark Cathedral since the 7th century when a convent was established at the oldest (and then only) crossing point of the River Thames. London Bridge has existed in a many different forms since then and the Christian community beside it has ministered to travellers and pilgrims through the centuries to the present day. Chaucer's pilgrims in the Canterbury Tales started their journey in Southwark. In 1106 the church was re-founded by Augustinian Canons who also established a hospital which eventually developed into St Thomas' Hospital, now situated opposite the Houses of Parliament. That ministry of healing and reconciliation forms part of our Cathedral life today.



Our decision to join the Community of the Cross of Nails came out of conversations around the need for reconciliation in our local community, our own neighbourhoods and across the Diocese of Southwark. We are delighted that our sister Cathedral of Bergen, Norway joined CCN at the same time as this strengthens and deepens our long standing relationship and witness. Over the past few decades our parish and the area around the Cathedral has become a vibrant, inclusive and outward looking place and a must-visit destination for lovers of high quality food, the arts and media. This is mirrored in Cathedral life where we seek to be an inclusive and open community, a place of meeting and conversation and a bridge linking different communities and groups.

The terrorist attack on Borough Market and London Bridge in June 2017 brought together our local community in ways that we could never have imagined. Out of fear and hatred blossomed hope, friendship and a desire to build bridges. An annual Grand Iftar during Ramadan co-organised with our local mosque and hosted by the Cathedral is now a regular feature of our life and brings together people of faith and goodwill for the common good. We take part in the annual Bankside Great Get Together, inspired by the Jo Cox Foundation. Our membership of CCN gives us a new energy and direction in our commitment to community building, together with a focus on the issues of youth violence and knife crime.

The deep wounds that have opened up through terrorism, the climate emergency and the Brexit debate show that our country and our fragile world needs hope, reconciliation and healing more than ever. As members of the Community of the Cross of Nails we have a crucial role in bringing people together in peace and love and making our world a kinder and more positive place for human flourishing.

The Revd Canon Michael Rawson – Sub Dean and Canon Pastor

CCN Thought for the Week for 29th February – how do we as a Community play our part in caring for the environment?



Greta Thunberg was in Bristol yesterday, joining a youth movement, Bristol Youth Strike 4 Climate, in a climate march. All seemed to go well and safely, even though concerns about numbers were what brought it to national attention beforehand! What a phenomenal difference this teenager has made in global terms in just the past 18 months. What started out as just her striking from school on Fridays has helped raise the issue of the environmental crisis to the absolute forefront,

with everyone, at all levels of society.

How we in the CCN respond to our climate emergency today and going forward is vital – indeed the CCN has taken strong stands on the environment before. Humanity's reconciliation with, and ongoing treatment of, God's creation is fundamental; it underlines everything else. It's something we'll be talking about and making decisions on this coming week with the lead CCN partners from the various regions of the globe (our 'international reps'), as we meet together, in Coventry, as we do every couple of years. How do we as a Christian community respond to the welcome – but definitely challenging – commitment from the Church of England, among others, to become carbon net zero within the next decade? What does this actually mean for how we live our lives? How do we support and encourage our 240+ partners in doing this? Undoubtedly there are others – organisations and individuals – out there who are way ahead of us in this; how do we make best use of their knowledge, expertise and resources to play our part in helping everyone take better care of our planet? How, indeed, do we continue to hold such senior level discussions within the CCN, scattered across the globe as we are? (yes, most will have travelled to this meeting by aeroplane).

A further key issue is in our increasing the CCN's profile with, and interest to, younger audiences over the coming decades. In many ways the two are very connected. As with the environment, much relies

on our partnering with those already well ahead in doing this, and listening, and responding to, where we can, what captures young Christians' interest and enthusiasm.

Please pray for wisdom and guidance as we discuss these issues – and if in direct practical terms you have suggestions as to those with resources and advice that we might consider adding to our list to share and speak to, I'd love to hear from you!

With our blessings,

Alice Farnhill, CCN Project Officer

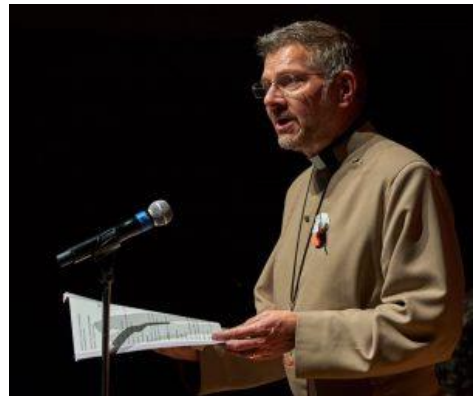
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Image by Bessi from Pixabay

CCN Thought for the Week for 16th March – The Very Revd John Witcombe

These are strange times and we need to hold one another in our prayers. Somehow the worldwide nature of the CCN seems especially precious when we are so bound together across the globe in experiencing this pandemic.

We know a great deal about hope in Coventry. Making space for hope has been the title of more than one of our fundraising campaigns. But this is a time when we need to make space in our hearts, as well as our buildings, for hope. We know that God has kept and held us through hard times before and given us grace to turn towards one another and towards his love.



There is always a temptation in times of fear to throw up barriers between 'us and them', whether the 'them' are the people we blame for what's happening, or the people who we see as threatening our survival in the midst of it all. Here in the UK there have been fights breaking out over toilet roll in supermarkets!

We have a message of hope in the face of adversity, even tragedy, of turning towards one another and God for the strength and grace to come through this. I have been greatly helped by verses from Ps 27 ... "I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!"

We wait for the Lord together, and hold one another in prayer.

The Very Revd John Witcombe MA MPhil

Dean of Coventry

CCN Thought for the Week for Mothering Sunday, 22nd March

This Sunday is Mothering Sunday in the UK, a significant date in our church calendar, just three weeks before Easter. It's a day historically about the church as 'mother', although increasingly in recent years it's merged with and now been overtaken by the much more secular notion of 'Mothers' Day' (confusingly, celebrated on different dates elsewhere around the globe!)



Mothers – and 'mothering', no matter who provides it – everywhere are absolutely to be remembered and valued on this day – even more so perhaps this year in such an unprecedented time of uncertainty and concern. Many will not even be able to visit their mothers in the UK if they are elderly, as part of the self-isolation coronavirus pandemic precautions.

But as much as mothers deserve our attention on this day – so too do another sector of our society: our clergy. This Lent and Easter they are faced, for the first time ever, with no possibility of running church services or indeed any gatherings of people until further notice, at a time when the need has probably never been greater; in the UK this Sunday will be the first such Sunday. I have been amazed over the past week at how, yes, communities are valiantly rising to the challenge of supporting one another, but clergy at the heart of those communities, in often very under-sung yet over-stretched ways, are embracing new forms of communicating and worshipping virtually as never before. The live streams I have seen, from cathedrals down to tiny rural parishes, have been inspiring and uplifting (see the German CCN's live stream of the Litany of Reconciliation [here](#)) – but often witty and entertaining too. All this pretty much on the hoof, dropped in at the deep end, in a rapidly changing situation.

In the Community of the Cross of Nails, just over half of our 250 partner organisations globally are churches and chaplaincies, but this applies to many many more than just those partners of ours. Clergy, everywhere, I salute you. Your jobs must be incredibly hard at this time. Thank you for everything you do and represent to your communities, the reconciling with the unknown and fearful that is going on daily, and your capacity to change rapidly with all that is unfolding.

As we worship at Coventry Cathedral today via live stream at 9.15am and midday for the Litany of Reconciliation, and at its pioneer ministry St Clare's at the Cathedral via Zoom at midday, we will pray for and cherish all those working so hard for others at this time – and clergy not the least of those.

Alice Farnhill, CCN Project Officer

CCN Thought for the Week for Saturday, 4th April – Robert Childers,
CCN USA Board president



GRACE AND COVID-19

It seems like everything I say these days is prefaced by, “these are strange times.” And they are. I don’t like the phrase, “the new normal”, but maybe we should just accept that right now, at this point in time, the way things are is the way they are going to be for the foreseeable future. Even though taking all these precautions in our day-to-day life is an inconvenience, if we act like there is no public health crisis or even national emergency, we

become part of the problem when we could be helping to “flatten the curve.”

So, I am doing my best to be a good citizen—practicing appropriate social distancing, washing my hands, coughing or sneezing into a tissue, etc.— but that doesn’t mean I am not anxious or scared. It doesn’t mean I am not inclined to take out my frustrations on others, projecting my own fears and anxieties on them. Unfortunately, I think that is part of what it means to be human, part of what it means to be broken, as we all are.

And yet, our fears and anxieties don’t have to control us or dictate how we act towards each other. Our brokenness doesn’t and should not have the final say. We are also children of God (1 John 3:1), made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). We have the spirit and love of God poured into us (Romans 5:5).

Most importantly, we have been given the gift of grace. John’s gospel tells us we have received a double helping of grace from Jesus—“grace upon grace.” John 1:16 So what, we might ask? What’s the big deal about grace? Or, to borrow the title from Phillip Yancey’s wonderful book, what’s so amazing about grace?

Grace holds together all these incredible gifts from God to us. The Greek word we translate as grace is “charis” which means “the divine influence upon the heart and our response to it and its influence in our lives”. In so many ways, grace plays out in our lives, by and through gratitude.

By all accounts, COVID-19 is an aggressive and highly infectious virus. The power of grace, however, is, I believe, much stronger. We have choices in how we respond to fear and anxiety. We have received grace upon grace, God’s love has been poured into our hearts; we have holy tools readily available to us.

In the days ahead, as we reach out to each other—face to face (maintaining a safe social distance, of course!), telephone, letter writing (wouldn’t this be a good time to reclaim this wonderful and nearly lost art?), email, text, or social media—remember grace. Remember the divine influence that has been poured into your heart. Remember that this grace can and should influence how we respond to each other. I believe grace can be a powerful vaccine for much of what is broken in our world and in our hearts. And we, each and every one of us, have the power to share this gift, bringing wholeness to others.

As Ephesians 4:29 reminds us, “let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Be well; be at peace, and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all, now and forever,

Robert Childers

Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, Lookout Mountain, Tennessee

CCN Reflection for Good Friday – Mark Simmons, Chair of the CCN UK & Ireland Board

A brief reflection on restoring relationships

Good Friday, 2020

Today we reflect again on Jesus’ death, from which we draw our inspiration as the Community of the Cross of Nails, in the words of Jesus from the cross: Father, forgive. Without entering in too much detail the theological debate on the nature of atonement and sacrifice, I find it helpful to think of this transformational act of forgiveness in the context of Jesus’ parable of the Father’s love. The father seeks not retribution for past wrongs, but restored relationship with his son.



There are some further clues in Jesus’ death about how we approach the restoration of relationships. Firstly, he does not wait for those who nailed him there – or all of humanity – to beg forgiveness. His forgiveness is pre-emptive. Secondly, it is made freely available. His last words, “they know not what they do”, encapsulated the grace to forgive and restore a broken relationship whether or not the other party realises what they have done. Thirdly, it is an ongoing cathartic process. As the Oxford theologian Paul Fiddes notes, if salvation is about restored relationships, we must be open to being “part of the act of salvation, not merely a reaction to it afterwards”.

The Apostle Paul sums it up in 2 Corinthians 5: “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us”. God reconciled the world to himself in Christ on the cross, but there remains an ongoing transformative process of reconciling us to God, each other, ourselves, and with the world around us. This is especially now as we re-discover our inter-dependence.

In these days of Covid-19 we see both the importance of relationships and the devastation when they are broken. We see too the impact of weak or unjust structures and systems which exclude the most vulnerable. We see the need for the catharsis of individual and collective forgiveness. We see the possibilities for thinking differently about how we care for our planet, as well as our neighbours.

In whatever small part we play in enabling people to journey from a fractured past towards a shared future, let us try to do so pre-emptively, proactively, consistently and graciously.

Mark Simmons, CCN UK & Ireland Board Chair

With thanks to our Head Verger, Dan Warchol-Anderson, for the photo, taken recently on his daily round of checks while the Cathedral, as much of the UK, is locked down.

CCN Thought for the Week for Easter Sunday – the Very Reverend John Witcombe

Easter Sunday April 12th 2020: Easter in Lockdown



The Easter stories are familiar with lockdown, of course: on that first Easter Sunday evening, we can read in John's gospel how the disciples were meeting behind locked doors for fear of those who were threatening their lives, but Jesus was still able to come and stand among them with words of Peace. Today, we meet behind locked doors for fear of the virus which threatens our lives, socially distanced from one another for fear of passing or receiving deadly contamination. Yet Jesus comes and meets each one of us and speaks through scripture and sacrament those same words of affirmation and peace: I am with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. I have the keys of death and hell: there is nowhere you can go where I cannot find you, and lead you to Life.

There are so many parallels with our empty streets and anxious faces as we dig into the stories of scripture, the traditions of the church, and the news which breaks on us from around the world each day. We know that Christ is with us in each step of this extraordinary and unexpected and unwanted path.

Our first reading from Colossians, read for us today by Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, describes Christ's people as those who have lost their bearings: for you are dead, St. Paul says, and your life is hid with Christ, in God. So this is a time of gift, for us to discover the truth of what it means to have died with Christ and to follow him into new and unexpected places.

On Thursday this week, Maundy Thursday, we were struggling to get our live streaming to work for our Maundy evening communion. We ended up starting the service rather late, which meant that we couldn't quite finish it in time to applaud the National Health Service staff at eight o'clock: so we paused the service, after blessing the bread and wine of communion, and before stripping away the accoutrements of a streamed service from the front room of a house, and suddenly realised that the footwashing which usually marks this service was being offered in hospitals and care homes up and down the land in a way that exactly followed the example of Christ. We thank our medical staff and care workers for showing us Christ in the midst of our news broadcasts.

On Friday, Bishop Christopher shared a powerful image of Christ falling under the weight of a cross which symbolised not only the corona virus, but all the diseases and infections of the world: surely he has born our afflictions and carried our infirmities. I remember how years ago we became familiar with the line, “the Body of Christ has AIDS”. Today, “the Body of Christ has COVID-19”.

Yet today, Easter Sunday, is the Day of Resurrection! I often reflect on the sheer number of times that the Hebrew Scriptures tell and re-tell the story of the liberation of their ancestors from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea – it’s the history changing example of the way God works, which puts everything else in perspective and gives a fixed point, a cairn in the path to return to. In the same way in Coventry we return again and again to the stories of 1940, the destruction through enemy action of the City and Cathedral, and the revealing of God’s gracious hope and presence: it still guides us, transforms us, and points us to Christ’s presence in the midst of whatever destruction, loss or conflict we may be experiencing.

I was overwhelmed as I reflected on the words which Provost Howard used almost 80 years ago on Christmas Day, 1940 – words which we could echo almost word for word as we ourselves celebrate the other great Christian festival:

“I’m looking now at the heaped-up ruins and the long line of outer walls, scarred and windowless, yet even now the ruined cathedral keeps much of its former majesty and beauty unconquered by destruction...So is the spirit of Christ, unconquerable. He suffers alongside of us, just as this cathedral suffered the same fate as the city... Early this Christmas morning, here under these ruins, in the lovely little stone chapel built six hundred years ago, we began the day with our Christmas communion, worshipping the Christ, believe me, as joyfully as ever before. What we want to tell the world is this: that with Christ born again in our hearts today, we are trying, hard as it may be, to banish all thoughts of revenge... We are going to try to make a kinder, simpler, a more Christ Child-like sort of world in the days beyond this strife.”

This morning we join in the celebration of Easter around the world in front rooms and near empty churches, but worshipping the Christ as joyfully as ever before. What we want to tell the world is this: that with Christ risen in our hearts today, we are trying, hard as it may be, to banish all thoughts of hatred or fear of others ... we are going to try to make a kinder, simpler, a more risen Christ like sort of world.

Our world has been changed for ever by this virus. But our world has been even more profoundly changed by the death and resurrection of Jesus, who reaches into the depths of our isolation and turns us back to him, and to one another. In the days beyond this virus it is our calling to live out the commitment we have discovered to one another, to continue to give thanks for those who care for us, to accept and receive the love and the hope which Jesus gives us to share.

In the ruins of the Cathedral is a statue. Originally called Reunion, it depicts the reuniting of two people who had been separated by war. Today there are many people separated by this virus: but we have a secure hope in Jesus of being together again, and we live as people who look forward to falling into each other’s arms again, with tears of joy and smiles of wonder, knowing that Jesus has never left us, nor forsaken us, but is travelling this journey with us.

We may be full of fear – this is all so unknown. Yet the words, ‘Do not be afraid’, which came twice in our Gospel reading – first on the lips of an angel, second from Jesus himself, are spoken again today, to us, in this place. We are, always, an Easter People, and this is our song:

Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed – Alleluia!

Amen.

The Very Reverend John Witcombe, Dean of Coventry

With thanks to our Head Verger, Dan Warchol-Anderson, for this wonderful photo, taken recently on his daily round of checks while the Cathedral, as much of the UK, is locked down.

CCN Thought for the Week for 18th April – Bert Kuipers, Chair of the CCN Netherlands Board

Luke 5, 12-16

In The Netherlands, just like in other countries, the weekly Litany on Friday noon has been adjourned for as long as necessary. Most churches have been closed, therefore such services are no longer possible. Instead of that, every week we ask one of our fifteen partners in The Netherlands to record and post a video of a celebration with two people. In this way, we still retain the feeling of belonging together.



This is quite necessary as well! How do we keep in touch? In the current crisis, the most essential part of human society is being affected: the fact that we need each other, to talk with each other, look in each other's eyes and if possible, hold each other. In part, that can also be done digitally, virtually or by telephone, but that is really different. We are told to maintain a social distance, to physically avoid each other.

Biblical stories tell us about relations that come into being when people cross that boundary. Like the story in Luke 5, in which a leper prostrates himself in front of Jesus in the belief that He can help him. Jesus touches the man, which is against every rule of Moses' law; leprosy is very contagious. Today, he would be on the receiving end of the wrath of every medical professional and politician. But the leper was healed on Jesus' word and a new world is created, at least for the ill man. Today as well, there are people reaching out to others across the borders of what is wise and safe and sound. In order to save lives, to provide decent care. We do not leave people to fend for themselves.

In fact, the intention of our weekly Litany is the same. We pray against the actual reality of the day-to-day policy. Peace and Reconciliation. In doing so, we break up the pattern that everybody should first stand up for oneself, each nation for itself. To pray for Peace and Reconciliation is an appeal to share with each other: attention, care, means, support. Today and tomorrow. We live in a larger and wider context.

Our national representatives, the world leaders, the politicians do not always score well. Our prayer invites ourselves and our leaders to think beyond our own fears.

Bert Kuipers

Chairman Coventryberaad Nederland

April 2020.

The videos referred to are shared on our Facebook page @ccncoventry. With thanks to Coventry's Head Verger Dan Warchol-Anderson for another of his wonderful photos taken at the Cathedral during the current lockdown.

CCN Thought for the Week for 25th April – Kasta Dip, India Peace Centre and CCN Asia



We are living now in the most inconceivable and uncertain time of our lives due to COVID-19 pandemic. More than a million cases, and the number growing daily. The whole world is in a standstill with imposed restrictions on the movement and social life of people. As a result of complete lockdown and banning of international flights to India I got stuck in Germany. Being away from family in a situation like this is very painful. However, kudos to my kind and caring hosts here in

Germany whose hospitality keeps me safe and hopeful.

It is already more than a month since I landed in Hamburg. As usual, whenever in a European city, I am amazed by its stately church buildings, rustling and bustling of activities in the city, galore of the shopping malls and restaurants etc. Normally, I would spend a bit of my time visiting these places. However, when I began my official engagements of meeting people, my ecumenical colleagues, restrictions came calling thick and fast. Social distancing and stay at home became an imposed norm as the world came to a standstill to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. Business, schools and offices have remained shut for weeks and now, most people are confined to their homes. Returning to India was far from my thoughts.

Forced into such a situation this time I got to spend a lot of my time in the countryside – in the lap of the nature. I observed that, amid this, nature is rebooting itself and reclaiming its space inviting us to reconcile to God and His creation. I go for a walk every day to nearby forests, swamps, river, sea and lake. Thank God that going for a walk is still allowed in Germany if one is maintaining the specified physical distance. This was after many years, maybe after my childhood, I spent so much of time walking on the meadows and in the forests appreciating God's beautiful creation and rendering Psalm 19 of David in my heart. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.

I began to reaffirm that God's invitation to reconcile to Him is experienced in ways far from our thoughts. Therefore, whether forced by a lockdown or a personal choice, when we take time to go out into creation, we're inevitably reminded of God in new ways as we experience the strength of a rock, the tranquillity of a paddock, and the pleasure of a wildflower. Nature delivers beautiful sermons about the very charisma and character of God without speaking a single word. Away from the normative social distancing I could find solace in the circle of the nature, which is all encompassing, non-discriminating – the very character of God. Mind it, what I am appreciating the most now was less lively a month ago, in the freezing winter – lifeless and bare, but now, having endured the adversity, they have started producing new leaves and flowers declaring that spring is here! Life can be dull and

full of challenges in situation like this but there is always hope of a fuller life if we care. It is my prayer and hope that like a season, this shall also pass. All we need to do is to prepare ourselves to reboot like nature does!

Kasta Dip

Director, India Peace Centre

Asia CCN

CCN Thought for the Week for 30th April – Hanna-Lotta Lehmann, reconciliation intern

An absolutely core member of our team right across the Cathedral, Hanna-Lotta, effectively finishes her internship with us today, having been recalled home a month ago due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It has been such an unmitigated joy to have her with us for just over half of the year she would have normally spent, and we're all so very sad to lose her. She's done some tasks from home in Germany these past few weeks for us too. We will all miss you so much, Hanna-Lotta!

6 months and 9 days, that means 191 days, 4584 hours, 16502400 seconds have I been able to spend in Coventry. Six months full of new experiences, 191 days of good humour, 4584 hours with lovely people and 16502400 seconds which I absolutely enjoyed.



Sadly, I had to leave Coventry five months earlier than expected, because of the Corona crisis. At the end of March I finally took a plane from London to Bremen, after two flights from London to Germany got cancelled.

It was just a weird feeling to know that I have to leave Coventry, my work at the Cathedral, my lovely co-workers, my new friends. In one week, my whole plans for my future got muddled up and I flew home with the feeling of that everything is just a bad dream. I think until I arrived in Germany, I didn't really realise that this is a pandemic and that the situation is real! On the one hand I was so sad to leave my new life now behind me, and on the other hand I was glad to be with my family during these difficult times. I was looking forward to seeing my friends and my family again; I had not seen them for nearly 7 months. When I arrived, I realised that this will be quite hard, even impossible. Of course, we couldn't have a welcome party. No 'goodbye hugs' in England, no 'welcome hugs' in Germany. It is hard for me to know that I even left the country at such a difficult time.

But I do think it is important to look forward. I'm truly grateful for my experiences in Coventry, for the opportunity to work for the Community of Cross of Nails, to meet so many lovely people, and that I was able to input to the youth and environment work in the CCN.

I have learnt a lot in the last 6 months. I have learnt that you can feel home in another country after a few months. I have learnt a lot about reconciliation and forgiveness, that reconciliation isn't always

easy, that it does take time. I have got to know the British humour, the welcoming way of the people in Coventry, and many cups of tea.

I do not know exactly how my future will look. I have quite a few ideas of what I can do next and I hope that one part will be the opportunity to come back to Coventry and to say goodbye properly with a proper 'goodbye hug'.

I hope every one of you and your loved ones are staying healthy and safe!



Hanna-Lotta with Jen, our ICONS manager, as they were both introduced to the Cathedral congregation by Dean John last Cross of Nails Sunday, in September 2019.

Hanna-Lotta Lehmann

CCN Thought for the Week for 8th May – Revd David Richardson, Royal Air Force



In January of this year I was in Berlin attending the annual International Military Chiefs of Chaplaincy conference. A time when military Chief Chaplains from across the world come together to talk, discuss common issues and of course to worship.

During the conference's main act of worship I had the privilege of carrying a Cross of Nails through the church – a moving moment in itself for any Christian. When I add that the church in question was the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial church in the centre of Berlin, changed beyond recognition during a bombing raid in the Second World War, and that I was in full Royal Air Force uniform, it is not hard to see why the event was especially poignant.

What makes it possible for a man to walk as a guest, through a reconstructed place of worship that men wearing the same uniform once destroyed? The answer lies, of course, in the symbol that I held. On the grounds of common humanity, one can see the empathetic attraction of an object from one war-damaged church being carried through the site of another. We know, however, that the cross is much more than that, it is the ultimate symbol of reconciliation. The cross of nails is not simply a found object which symbolises common human suffering – rather it points us to the God who stepped down among us, and dealt with our sins and conflicts and griefs once for all. As Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 5: 19, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself through the cross.

At the time of writing these words I find myself, like so many others, 'working from home' as the world is facing conflict once again, this time with a virus that respects no borders. The resilience and resolve of our societies is being tested in a way unknown for decades, and

we can only speculate what the world may look like in the months and years ahead. We can still draw hope, however, from the message of the cross as we seek to make the journey that lies ahead.

Both Coventry Cathedral and Kaiser Wilhelm Church elected to build new structures alongside the old, a stark reminder of the 'new creation' that is Paul's theme earlier in 2 Corinthians 5; the 'new creation' that is every Christian. Thanks to the cross, we can look not back simply to the past in reconciliation but to the future in hope, trusting in the God who loves us, redeems us, and has our future in His hands.

Revd David Richardson, Wing Commander, Royal Air Force (St Clement Danes Church)

CCN Thought for the Week for 16th May – Jeannine Friesen, CCN Canada Board secretary

As the current global health and economic crises continue to affect much of humanity, there has been good news – prophetic signs, perhaps, of God’s ability to nurture hope and new life in the midst of death and suffering. Here in Canada, the air quality over our urban centres has seen a marked improvement. In India, some reported being able to see the Himalayas for the first time in their lives. The clearer water in the canals of Venice has been a particular focus of attention as swans have made a surprising and delightful return. Dolphins have appeared in some of Italy’s waterways. How quickly the earth starts to heal herself when given the chance.



We see a new appreciation for health care workers, people that many of us have taken for granted. We have seen the importance of grocery store clerks, sanitation workers, personal support workers who care for the elderly and others who have been critical to our survival during this pandemic.

One can only assume that once the lockdowns begin to ease and we “return to normal”, these changes will not last. Unless, that is, we are ready to consider what our new “normal” will be. Will the positive signs we are seeing be a catalyst for changing our relationship with our environment? The Canadian Book of Alternative Services Baptismal Covenant includes a promise “to safeguard the integrity of God’s creation” – perhaps the current situation is inspiring Canadian Anglicans to find new ways to live out their Baptismal Covenant with respect to this promise. Will these changes have an impact on our valuation of the workers who provide so much essential labour yet are paid so little? We have seen the importance of grocery store clerks, sanitation workers, personal support workers who care for the elderly and others who have been critical to our survival during this pandemic. As governments hastily construct support packages to ensure that those most in need can survive, there are more discussions about policies like a guaranteed basic income for everyone.

At this time in the pandemic we long to return to normal human contact, to return to our workplaces in order to support ourselves and our families. At the same time, this crisis has forced us to recognize that there are aspects of our communal life that cry out for change, change that will bring us closer to the Kingdom of God, where there is enough for all; change that will ensure the proper stewardship of the precious gift of this Earth. Friends, we do not walk alone during this time of fear and uncertainty. We proclaim a God who loved us so much that He walked among us, taught us a better way, and died for us. The resurrected Christ is with us still, promising redemption and empowering us to meet whatever lies ahead. Grace and Peace be with you.

CCN Thought for the Week for 23rd May – Revd David Spademan, Managing Chaplain HMP Onley



HMP Onley is a category C adult male prison within the Diocese of Coventry. Opened some years ago, it has an original silver-plated Cross of Nails in the Chapel. In April 2016 the prison joined the Community of the Cross of Nails as a partner. We have asked Managing Chaplain, The Reverend David Spademan, to share with us briefly about how the prison is responding to Covid-19.

Whilst none of us could have anticipated the Covid-19 pandemic, we have all felt the impact it has had on our daily lives. The things that we normally take for granted have all changed. Many of us are experiencing the frustration of not being able to spend time with friends and family.

As with the community outside prison, in prison we are no longer able to meet for corporate worship or faith-based study groups. In order to minimise any spread of infection all movements in the prison are severely restricted. We are managing to facilitate daily exercise, use of phones and showers for all residents. They are also able to collect their meals from the servery as usual. We have received letters of thanks from residents who say that they do not know what more could be done to help them in the circumstances. There are many challenges that space does not allow me to expand on. I am privileged to work alongside the heroes who work with courage to keep our prisoners safe.

As Chaplains, we are preparing and distributing weekly written faith reflections for each faith group. We continue to support those who are experiencing bereavement and are providing pastoral care whilst maintaining appropriate social distancing. The Chaplaincy Team are ensuring that any residents who are symptomatic, and thus in isolation, have the opportunity to maintain regular phone contact with their families.

The current restrictions that we are all currently living with have caused me to reflect on how we can try to understand the lived experience of those who are serving prison sentences. How can we be a community when we cannot actually meet in the same place? Prison Chaplains in all prisons have been creative with weekly written faith reflections and some have been able to prepare video sermons in prisons that have the facilities to broadcast into cells.

These restrictions for all of us will be lifted when it is safe to do so. We can return to some degree of normality which may well look different for a while with ongoing social distancing. For those who will remain in our prisons, the separation from loved ones and community will continue. For most of these, they will eventually return to life 'on the out'. That is outside of prison. Let us consider how we welcome them. It will have a significant effect on how they reintegrate as contributing citizens. How well do you welcome people back into the community and specifically into your faith community?

As you makes plans for when the crisis is over, please add to your agenda a question about how you can welcome returning citizens. Please have a look at The Welcome Directory www.welcomedirectory.org.uk and register to be part of a growing network of faith communities helping people to reconnect.

'And this is my prayer that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.' (Philippians 1:9-11)

Revd David Spademan, Managing Chaplain HMP Onley

David Spademan is an Assemblies of God Minister, Managing Chaplain at HMP Onley, Member of the Steering Group for Free Church Chaplaincy in HMPPS, Trustee of The Welcome Directory and Member of the CCN UK and Ireland Board.

CCN Thought for the Week for 31st May – Oliver Schuegraf, Chair of CCN Germany

<https://youtu.be/DRVp7tk4eMg>

“How can we as reconcilers show our love and solidarity with our other brothers and sisters in the other parts of this one world?”

Listen as Oliver Schuegraf offers some perspectives this Pentecost Sunday, in the light of a world consumed this year no longer just by Brexit and its impacts particularly on Europe, but in the Covid-19 pandemic, something much more global and challenging.

CCN Thought for the Week for 6th June – Robert Childers, CCN USA Board President

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Book of Common Prayer, p. 305, The Baptismal Covenant

When I was asked to write a reflection for this week, I said I would try, not knowing what, if anything I might have to say. The world, as it is at this present point in time, is unlike anything I have ever experienced. The United States of America, my home, is becoming unrecognizable to me. It seems as if the very fabric of our society is unraveling before our eyes. The pandemic, as bad, dangerous and destructive as it has been seems almost secondary—and I don't say this lightly—compared to the horror of seeing a police officer murder an unarmed man, George Floyd, in broad daylight, with witnesses and fellow “law enforcement officers” calmly looking on.

I was born and raised in Selma, Alabama, and have witnessed the destructive horror and evil of racism. I know that sin—the sin of racism especially—unaddressed and unconfessed will continue to eat away at the soul of a society and a people. My hometown is a dying community because what happened in Selma in 1965 has never been addressed, confessed and repented of. The life changing and hard work of reconciliation has never been done, and though most of the adults who were present at the time of the 1965 Civil Rights marches in Selma have died, the generational sin of what happened still survives.

The generational sins of slavery, lynching, Jim Crow laws and state sanctioned segregation continue to haunt, impact and infect our entire country, not just the South. Redemption, renewal, and reconciliation can only come through an awareness of sin and the turning towards the new life promised to us in Christ's resurrection. But where and how do we begin to make this spiritual turn, as individuals, as a people, as a country?

I believe the Martyrs of Uganda, whose feast day I recently celebrated, show us a way forward. On June 3, 1886, 32 young men, pages of the court of King Mwanga, were burned to death for their failure

to renounce their faith in Christ. When Christianity was introduced in Uganda under a prior King, some nine years earlier, it flourished among the members of the royal court. King Mwanga, when he ascended to the throne, was angered that some of the converts to Christianity were placing loyalty to Christ above loyalty to the King. When the young men refused to pledge their total loyalty to Mwanga he sentenced them to death. On their way to their death, the young men sang hymns and prayed for their enemies.

The witness of these faithful martyrs offers me hope in these troubled, tumultuous and divisive times. In the United States, battle lines have been drawn along all sorts of lines- political (especially), economic, racial, religious, etc. The divisions have been especially strong among “people of faith”, those who profess a belief in a “higher power”. It seems that the draw of loyalty to something or someone other than Jesus has been the dominant pull for many. What if our loyalty to Christ was above our loyalty to political party or candidate? Or country? What if we looked at each other through the eyes of Christ, letting our loyalty to Christ lead the way? As 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old has passed away.”

The Martyrs of Uganda have much to say to us at this crucial time in history, calling us to proclaim Jesus as Lord, rather than the civil authorities and our elected officials. Our Lord Jesus calls us to tend his sheep and to follow Him. May we have the courage and wisdom to do so.

Blessings, grace and peace,

Robert T J Childers

The Rev. Robert T. J. Childers

Good Shepherd Episcopal Church

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“May mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance”

Jude v. 2

image: <https://piercecountygro.org/memorial-for-george-floyd-in-river-falls-wi/>

CCN Thought for the Week for 12th June – Vicentia Kgabe, College of the Transfiguration, South Africa

Praying, worshipping and being community amid COVID-19



Since South Africans just like the rest of the world have heeded directives from their local and national governments to self-isolate, and everyday life experiences such as – faith, social, communal and commerce gatherings and interactions had to be stopped or done remotely.

For us, at our seminary, the call to end the academic term early and send seminarians home was a big blow. But understandably this had to be done to spare lives and slow the infection rate. Our Chapel (corporate worship) is the centre of our academic and formation life. We are in there 7 days a week, 3 times a day (Meditation, worship service – morning and evening and Compline Prayer at night). We observe the Angelus daily at midday. Going away with no clarity of when we will gather again, has been amongst other challenging matters.

Prayer and worship have taken on a new format, the one that many of us didn't rehearse for nor budget for. Virtual worship (a new terminology in Liturgy) has been a new norm for many, but also challenging for those who don't have access to the internet, thus depriving them of the opportunity of gathering with the faithful for worship. I find myself challenged on how to be a better pastoral caregiver during this period and how I will teach Pastoral Theology to my students, as so much has changed. The foremost question on my mind is how do we/I care and be present when getting close to each other can and may result in an infection that might lead to death for some?

With the challenges that COVID-19 presents to all of us, being church, being disciples, being caring, loving, and a reconciling community of believers is what we are called to be and to do. The acts of goodwill and generosity that are being demonstrated have iterated how much we need each other.

Self-isolation/social distancing/lockdown/shelter-in-place has been sobering, and more than anything it has enabled us to count our blessings and to do what we have told ourselves that we didn't have time for.

May we begin the week with hope: hope that the hungry will be fed, the homeless will be sheltered, the sick will be healed, the bereaved will be comforted, the lonely will be befriended, and the vaccine will be found. We are the body of Christ and our sacred text reminds us what Jesus said to His followers "for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

The Revd Canon Dr Vicentia Kgabe (PhD)

Rector and Principal of College of Transfiguration – Grahamstown, South Africa.

Picture: with thanks to the Church Times

CCN Thought for the Week for 20th June – David White, Third Order of the Society of St Francis



The word ‘unprecedented’ has been used so much during these months of lockdown.

I was drawn back to Luke 24 recently, where the disciples meet the risen Jesus on the Emmaus Road, and you don’t get any more unprecedented than that. To those disciples, resurrection was an unknown event and even more of unexpected blessing (to say the least). And all this came at the

end of what must have been a long day in a series of long days for those and the other disciples.

This post-Resurrection story has always been important and formational for me and when I read it, I didn’t think there was anything new I could mine from it. How wrong I was! Something in the story struck me forcefully. Something that’s actually relevant to the COVID-19 crisis that we are all living through and also relevant to our understanding of reconciliation. It’s something that’s apparent from the moment Jesus catches up with the two, sad, uncertain disciples trudging home to Emmaus in the afternoon of the first Easter Day. When Jesus, disguised as a stranger, speaks to them the three stop to gather themselves. Then Jesus interprets the scriptures to them as they walk along. By the time they reach the disciple’s destination, their village, it’s nearly evening and they ‘strongly’ persuade Jesus to stay with them. They all come together around the disciples’ table to eat a meal.

What is it that struck me? I realised that one of the fundamental, basic components of this story is hospitality. Right from the moment Jesus joins them, Cleopas and his friend do not ignore the stranger or give him the brush off when he comes up and, rather impertinently, wants to know what they are talking about. They extend hospitality. They welcome him into their discussion. They listen to all that he says about Moses and all the prophets. On arriving home, they invite him to stay with them and it’s when they sit down to eat and Jesus breaks bread that they recognise the stranger as Jesus, the Risen One, who has been with them all along.

According to the dictionary the word ‘hospitality’ means: the quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way. The word has its root in Latin from which we also derive hospitable and hospital. There have been so many stories about hospitals around the world treating seriously ill people with COVID-19; of their doctors, nurses and other staff being warm, friendly and generous. So generous that they have put their own lives at risk and many have paid the ultimate sacrifice. Little wonder that the public have responded by showing their thanks by clapping, banging saucepans, cheering, playing instruments, anything to show how much they value what front line staff do and have done.

Equally, the basis for any steps towards reconciliation is to treat others with equanimity – guests and strangers – in a warm, friendly and generous way so as to help to establish a sense of trust and to create a space where dialogue can take place and develop. In the Emmaus Road story, the two disciples do just that and by their welcome, their listening and their generous invitation Jesus becomes real to them, revealing that though he reconciles all to himself, others can do the work of reconciliation too.

Lastly, it takes them some time to recognise him. I’m encouraged by their delayed recognition and professions of faith. Sometimes faith comes easy; at others it’s jolly hard and Jesus isn’t always easy to recognise. Either way, Jesus is there, waiting patiently – even in the ICU.

CCN Thought for the Week for 27th June – Kathryn Fleming, Canon Pastor at Coventry Cathedral

OPEN for private prayer

That was the notice we gladly displayed on the gate to the ruins last week, following the what our “new normal” might look like...

We had felt so necessary to the city in the week before lockdown, when people we had never met before found their way through the doors to share their fears and anxieties as we headed into the unknown. So many candles had burned and it was an immeasurable privilege to offer all those tangled thoughts and feelings to God, and to pray for each worried soul:

“May the love of the Lord Christ go with you wherever he may send you. May he guide you through the wilderness, protect you from the storms. May he bring you back rejoicing at the wonders he has shown you. May he bring you back rejoicing once again within our doors”.

Now people could be brought back once again within our doors....I was excited, hopeful...only, they mostly didn't come. While the sun shone and there were queues for the newly re-opened shops just round the corner, the Cathedral was very quiet, though there was a ripple of excitement on Saturday when a young man proposed to his girlfriend in front of the charred cross in the ruins. A special place for a special moment – and a reassurance that we hadn't quite been forgotten! Generally, though, it seemed that after long weeks of isolation and fear, the people of Coventry were so keen to put the bad times behind them that they were intent on picking up life exactly where they had left off...and for most of them, “where they had left off” did not include regular visits to the Cathedral.

But of course, while the building has been closed for all those long weeks, the Cathedral as God's Church has been absolutely open for business, praying, listening, trying to share stories of hope and to foster community. Online worship has connected us with friends near and far, and brought us close to people whom we would never have met inside the building and for some of them, that accidental encounter as they scrolled through Facebook on a quiet morning might just be the start of a new journey with God. You can never tell how God might use the building next. On Monday, I watched a father and son apparently intent on taking photos in the nave, paused for a moment to read the prayer I'd placed by the Kiel Candle Globe. To my surprise, they then headed towards me: “You're Canon Kathryn aren't you. I have been joining you for worship every day since Lockdown began. Can we light a candle and pray together now?”

It seems that the ministry of presence matters as much online as in the real world...and I'm so thankful that our buildings act as sign-posts in both contexts, encouraging people to pause for a moment – and in that pause, perhaps, to hear God's promise of a new start, of healing whatever the wounds of history.

The Reverend Canon Kathryn Fleming

CCN Thought for the Week for 5th July – A Litany for 2020: St Clare's at the Cathedral

On the day that UK worship communities are finally allowed once again to meet to worship in person and many, although not all, are doing so – following strict guidelines – and the day we also give thanks on our National Health Service's 72nd anniversary, we share a prayer written last month by Coventry

Cathedral's pioneer ministry, St Clare's at the Cathedral , which seems to sum up so many of the enormous issues that we are all across the world facing in 2020.

A Litany for 2020

This litany was written in June 2020, on the week of the 3rd anniversary of the Grenfell Tower disaster, and during the PRIDE month. However, it also offers prayers re climate change, Black Lives Matter and the global pandemic. You are welcome to adapt it to reflect the current issues in this eventful year. <https://stclaresatthecathedral.org/worship-resources/>

“When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

God of compassion, we come before you this morning in our helplessness. Hear the cries of our hearts.

That those whose died in terror in the flames of Grenfell, may rest in peace

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That those whose lives were ripped apart through injury, grief or loss that fearful night, may find hope and healing

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That those who still live in housing that risks their health and wellbeing, may be given the dignity of homes that are safe

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That those in positions of authority may use their voice to speak out for the voiceless and the oppressed

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That all those who have died through police violence, may rest in peace

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That the voices of those who protest against the racism that infects institutions, governments and nations do not fall on deaf ears

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That those who have learned to hate, learned to think that they are superior to others, learned to use violence to get their way, may have their eyes opened, their hearts convicted and their lives changed.

God of compassion

Hear our prayer That all those with privilege, authority or power, may have the courage to be humble, to listen and to learn.

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That those who have died from this terrible virus, may rest in peace

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That those who grieve may find hope and healing

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That those who livelihoods have been devastated by this pandemic may find the strength to continue

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That those who live in fear of violence or abuse in lockdown may find refuge and freedom

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That those who are ill may be made well

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That governments may act with wisdom and care for all their people

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That the injustices that have led to the poor and disadvantaged being most affected by this pandemic, may be challenged and changed

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That the beautiful diversity of your creation may be embraced and celebrated

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That there may be an end to homophobia, transphobia and all fear of difference

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That the spirit of PRIDE may continue, even without the physical marches

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That there may be an end to the continued misuse and destruction of our beautiful planet

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That as we emerge from this pandemic, nations may work together for a more sustainable future

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That Brexit negotiations may be conducted in a spirit of goodwill for all people

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That the poor may be lifted up, that the sick may be healed, that the oppressed may be set free

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That the good news of the kingdom of God be proclaimed in every corner of the world

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

That we have the courage to be workers, speaking up against injustice wherever we find it, and sharing the love of Christ with all those in need

God of compassion

Hear our prayer

Reverends Charlotte Gale and Naomi Nixon, St Clare's at the Cathedral

CCN Thought for the Week for 10th July – The Very Reverend John Witcombe, Dean of Coventry Cathedral

The profound issues around race that have surfaced this year are the responsibility of us all, to face, to own and to address, however little we may feel we know about where to start. Dean John expands on this in this video below, at a time when even the actual word ‘race’ within the Litany of Reconciliation’s specifically German translation continues to present ongoing challenges for our German partners. This letter, written by Dean John together with Oliver Schuegraf, Chair of the CCN German Board, to the Church Times, published last Friday 3rd July, is copied below:

<https://youtu.be/mXCbWE8RC28>

Letter to the Church Times, published 3rd July 2020:

“We were pleased to see your coverage of the argument over the removal of the word ‘race’ from the German constitution (19 June), and a reference to the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation with its plea for God to forgive “the hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class”. The Coventry Litany has been prayed since 1958 across the world, and especially by the Community of the Cross of Nails (CCN), a network of churches and other organizations inspired by the Coventry story, as a way of admitting our own complicity in the deep fractures, including the many forms of racism, present in our world, and pleading God’s healing and forgiveness. We would like to assure your readers that the German CCN, with over 75 member organizations, has been earnestly debating whether to remove the word ‘race’ for ten years: as an international network we have become more and more aware that the word has different connotations in different languages. The word itself has become especially emotive in Germany, and many feel the concept of race is itself divisive and racist. Others feel that the text is so well known and used throughout the world that it should be left untouched, and allowed to do its work of surfacing the issues in order to address them. In this, it is refusing to deny the real diversity in humanity as a whole, and the divisions that confront us: refusing the more comfortable and superficially reconciling ‘all lives matter’ rhetoric in favour of recognizing and embracing the need to speak of particular lives that have not received justice. However, the discussion in both Germany and the UK CCN to find the right translation and form of words for the Litany for each context will continue with our other international partners as we pursue our three priorities of healing the wounds of history; learning to live with difference and celebrate diversity; and building a culture of peace.”

CCN Thought for the Week for 17th July – Revd Sarah Bourne, former curate at Coventry Cathedral



In last week’s live-streamed Compline from St Mary’s community in Banbury, we prayed for the world to be healed from all malice and hatred, and that we might root out the evil of racism. We live in worrying times where divisions within society and between countries are growing wider again along all sorts of lines, and people are negatively labelled and judged by others with frightening speed and scant regard for the need to hear their story.

One of the recollections I have of studying physics at school is Newton’s 1st Law, namely that a body which is moving in a straight line will continue moving in that direction unless a force acts upon it. Looking back over our country’s history, we can see examples of

extraordinary injustice and racism shown by earlier generations who had a sense of superiority over other human beings they deemed to be of little or no value. Many considered slavery normal and the exploitation of the oppressed as just the way society was. But this ingrained attitude started to change direction by the actions of remarkable philanthropists, such as those who founded schools and hospitals and who worked to abolish slavery and to promote human rights.

Our 21st century society is becoming more aware of our own shortcomings in the present day, and we are not simply condemning the unacceptable behaviour of previous generations. We are starting to recognise the on-going need to change our direction of travel. We too have to re-assess our own prejudices and value-judgements calmly and honestly, and be open to offering others a platform from which to speak about their experiences.

We have moved forward but there is still much more to do. We need to be willing to ask forgiveness for the times that we have contributed to injustice or have failed to acknowledge systemic racism and discrimination which is undoubtedly continuing across all sections of society. It's not enough only to condemn the unacceptable behaviour of previous generations and applaud the efforts of those who worked to change the direction of that culture. We are called to support all who are disadvantaged, and to listen to the narrative of people who have so often been ignored. We need to change the direction of travel, following Newton's 1st law to build a culture of peace.

The time I spent working at Coventry Cathedral taught me a huge amount about the ministry of reconciliation. The Coventry Cross of Nails, formed from debris of the bombed cathedral in the Second World War, has become an international symbol for peace and reconciliation across divisions of politics, race, religion, sexuality, environment and personal relationships. The core values of the Community of the Cross of Nails are summed up in the following guiding principles which address past, present and future:

- Healing the wounds of history
- Learning to live with difference and celebrate diversity.
- Building a culture of peace

As Christians, we believe that reconciliation comes from God and we believe that every human has value and worth as a person made in God's image. As we move into a 'new normal' following on from the shake-up of our world by the Covid pandemic, let's take the opportunity to examine our own prejudices, to change our own behaviour and actively seek reconciliation.

Sarah Bourne – 1st July 2020 sarahbourne@banburystmary.org.uk

First published on the St Mary's Banbury web page earlier this month.

CCN Thought for the Week for 27th July – Robert Childers, CCN USA President

About six weeks ago Revd Robert Childers posted a CCN Thought for the Week based on the tragic death of George Floyd and its impact on his home nation. This article, first published in the Good Shepherd Episcopal Church newsletter, continues the theme.

Reflections on the life and death of John Lewis and wondering whether we can hear the words “black lives matter” as a Gospel Mandate rather than a political statement



Like so many Americans, I was saddened to hear of the death of John Lewis, Congressman from Georgia. He was a man deeply grounded in the gospel of Jesus and committed to the nonviolent principles he learned in his work with Martin Luther King. At an early age he articulated his beliefs and principles as one of the speakers, along with Dr. King, at the 1963 March on Washington, where King delivered his

“I Have a Dream” speech. Some two years later he was called to live out his beliefs as he walked over the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma.

On Sunday, while reading an article about John Lewis, my eyes kept coming back to the photo above the story. It was a photograph from Selma, Alabama, my hometown, of “Bloody Sunday” when peaceful marchers were attacked by law enforcement officers as they crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge at the beginning of their march to Montgomery. A large group of state troopers are chasing the marchers back over the bridge, with Billy clubs raised and gas masks covering their faces. One trooper is standing over a fallen man, Billy club in his hand and arm raised. The fallen man has his hand on his head. This man is John Lewis. The blow from the state trooper’s Billy club cracked his skull.

I remember as a 10-year old seeing this same picture in our local newspaper. Then, my 10-year old eyes were not drawn to the injured man. Instead, all I could see was the sign on the building across the street which said, Haisten’s Mattress & Awning, Invest in Rest. Mr. Haisten, who owned this business, lived down the street from me and I knew him and his wife since the boys in the neighborhood often had to climb their fence to retrieve errant baseballs which landed in their yard.

When I looked at that picture in March 1965, I did not see violence or oppression. I did not see a young black man being wrongfully assaulted. I just saw Haisten’s Mattress & Awning, Invest in Rest. That is all that mattered to my young 10-year old eyes. The life, the health, the well-being and safety of that young man didn’t matter. In short, his black life did not matter.

The life of John Lewis did not matter to the state trooper who was wantonly striking him on the skull. The lives of the marchers did not matter to the Selma, Alabama Police Department. Their lives did not matter to the Dallas County Sherriff’s Department. Their lives did not matter to the State of Alabama. The lives of the black citizens who were wrongfully beaten as they crossed the bridge on “Bloody Sunday” did not matter to so very many in the United States of America until they saw on their television sets that evening what happened on that Sunday afternoon on a bridge in Selma, Alabama. And then, for many, black lives, for a time, mattered.

We have come a long way since Bloody Sunday and the Selma to Montgomery March but still the phrase black lives matter proclaims we as a country are not where we ought to be. Black Lives Matter began as a response to the killing of Travon Martin in Florida and other violence inflicted upon Black individuals and communities. Since that time, and especially in the last few months, Black Lives Matter has become highly politicized, both by the left and the right. Like so many issues in our country today, Black Lives Matter has become a lightning rod, hot button topic in our highly polarized society.

I am writing about black lives matter—not the “movement”, but our fellow American citizens whose skin color is black—because for far too long many in our country have acted as if the lives of black

people did not matter. I did not choose to write about this to proclaim my political allegiance to any party or politician. I feel compelled to write about this because, in these troubled times, I am struggling as hard as I can to follow Jesus and love my neighbor as myself. I am trying to work out “with fear and trembling”, Philippians 2:12, exactly how I “strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.” Book Common Prayer, p.305.

I often say, especially in these strange times we find ourselves in, that we are all children of God, each of us made in the image of God, bearing the divine spark of the Holy Spirit within each of us. If that is the truth—and I believe it is—then why should we have to single out one particular group of people proclaiming that they matter? Does that phrase signify that black lives matter more or are different than other segments of the population?

One doesn't have to look too far or dig too deeply to see that black lives in our country are generally at a disadvantage in so many different ways when compared to other groups. As a people, and a race, black Americans are disproportionately impacted regarding access to voting, quality education and health care. Black Americans, especially males are more likely than other races to experience violence at the hands of law enforcement. Similarly, when one looks at arrests and sentencing, the black population is adversely impacted at a much higher rate than other groups. The unemployment rates are higher and average wages are lower for black Americans than other segments of our populations.

In our Declaration of Independence, we say that all men (humans) are created equal and that we are “endowed by [our] Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” And yet, for our entire history, Black Americans have faced barriers and obstacles keeping them from accessing these “unalienable Rights”. It is a stark judgement on our democracy and political system that a great segment of our population is denied or has restricted access to many of the rights and privileges of basic citizenship.

This is the political reality, but I want to address the gospel mandate to pay attention to and care for “the least of these.” Matthew 25:44-46 In this gospel passage, Jesus speaks about the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the sick and those in prison, asking how we have treated them. He reminds us that inasmuch as we bless or ignore these children of God, we are blessing or ignoring Him. In our country, black Americans are disproportionately hungry, thirsty, treated as strangers, sick and in prison. In short, they are “the least of these”.

This is why I don't believe we can say “all lives matter” and then proclaim we are following the gospel of Jesus Christ. To say simply that “all lives matter” is a way for white people—like me—to get ourselves “off the hook” saying, in effect, nothing is inherently and systemically wrong in our culture and society, that the status quo is just fine. In the United States, quite often the laws, the criminal justice system, access to voting, healthcare, and other basic unalienable rights work to the disadvantage of a specific segment of our population. Not only that, but those same societal structures have benefited the white population generation after generation, creating systemic benefits that further the racial divide.

“Black Lives Matter” does not purport that other lives do not matter. Rather, it is a declaration that a race does, in fact, matter, despite societal structures repeatedly telling and showing otherwise. To say that “all lives matter” can be a way for white people to ignore the truth that our culture and its conscious or unconscious biases has repeatedly said some lives — often white lives — matter more than others.

As Christians we are called to follow Jesus, loving God and our neighbors—all of them. In the Episcopal tradition our Baptismal Covenant calls us to “strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.”

If we are to do what Christ calls us to do and be the people Christ calls us to be, we must prayerfully discern how our thoughts, words, deeds, as well as the structures of our society, impact, marginalize and discriminate against people of color. Jesus says how we treat “the least of these,” is how we are treating Him. If we are to take Jesus at his word, when we fail to recognize and act to address these societal issues, we are ignoring the very presence of Christ in our midst.

Blessings, grace and peace,

The Rev. Robert T. J. Childers

Good Shepherd Episcopal Church

Lookout Mountain, Tennessee

With thanks to the BBC news website for the photo accompanying this article.

CCN Thought for the Week for 3rd August – Brian Crisp, Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, USA

Since March, the United States has seen the exponential spread of COVID-19, a pandemic that has crippled society. This disease has not only exposed our physical vulnerability, but laid bare our moral crises: The continued violence of racism and the insidious horrors of white supremacy. Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Dominique Fells are the latest names of Brown, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BBIPOC) killed by the hands of white violence and the police. Like the Hebrew prophets who walked amidst brutality while holding steadfast to the Torah, we are refusing religious clichés because we know such platitudes contort into treacherous policies, politics, and pogroms that eradicate and erase BBIPOC lives. This is the point where we find No’Adiah.



“No’A-who?” my partner, Charles, asked. “You completely understand that no one will know who she is.” Yes, I am aware that most people are not familiar with No’Adiah. Her story is rarely told from pulpits, and scholarship about her is neglected by academics. Until very recent attention, she was presented as male in most translations of Ezra-Nehemiah, evidence of centuries where the “God with us” was very much a man.

Yet in the last part of the Hebrew Bible, she makes a brief but telling appearance during post-Babylonian exile. In a prayer that more resembles a political briefing than communion with the Divine, Nehemiah, the Persian-endorsed governor of Judea, utters a plea, “Remember also the prophet No’Adiah and how she has spoken so boldly to me.”

We ask ourselves about the nature of No’Adiah’s proclamations. What could she have said that stirred such vitriol in Nehemiah? From the sole verse, we have little evidence, but from the actions of Nehemiah, I have an idea. I believe that No’Adiah spoke out on behalf of the women and children affected by Nehemiah’s policy of separating families denying them sustenance, stability, and shelter. I believe that No’Adiah advocated for a love that knew neither the boundaries of empire nor the

border walls of citizenship but reached beyond every obstacle to unite people in mutual care. I believe that No'Adiah loved the people left behind in a destroyed Jerusalem; these were the people that rebuilt their lives, reconstituted their families, and reimagined their God, and these are the people Nehemiah wanted to kill in the name of ethnic purity. I believe that No'Adiah, unlike Nehemiah, believed in a Holy Force that had no concept of chosen versus unchosen, clean versus unclean, pure versus impure, or you versus me. I believe that No'Adiah stood firmly in the prophetic tradition of Hagar, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, and the daughters from Joel. I believe her words shook Nehemiah's political vision to its core. She was outspoken, fiery, courageous, and audacious.

It is this audacious identity that lays claim to every person of faith as we are called to be love in the world. This care and compassion for humanity are so great that it overwhelms us to act in bold and courageous ways. At this moment in the United States, we white people of faith are being asked to act in prophetic ways to stand up for Black Lives. We are understanding that this reconciliation is long past due and that every ounce of our energy should be invested in uplifting people that have been denied and persecuted by every aspect of our society. We are reminded that No'Adiah's actions are constituted by her relentless love of people. She is inspirational for those of us who find that our faith is contrary to the principalities and powers of our time. We are called to choose advocacy over absence, protests over prayer; and crying out over creeds. This is not a time to be a consumer of the word, but doers of its message. Such defiant acts are not divisive but are intended to advance the caring, the tending, the nursing, and the nurturing of a new way of life that is good and just for our BBIPOC sisters and brothers.

"Remember also the prophet No'Adiah." The imperative verb strikes my attention as it is paired with the adverb: Remember also. We can rephrase this in myriad ways. "Emphatically, don't forget." "Commit this to your mind and heart." "Essentially, do not neglect this." The phrase, unlike any platitude, is rich as it implores us to embrace those BBIPOC bodies dismembered by our churches, our communities, and our country. The words insist that each Black Life be included in the care and comfort of humanity while beckoning, "There is room, there is a place, and there is love." Remember also No'Adiah, and Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Dominique Fells. Their bodies demand our attention and our work. It is an amazing prayer and a phenomenal mandate, one that is worthy of No'Adiah, whose Hebrew name translates "God is always revealing." This often-neglected prophet reminds us all that we are boldly called to heal the world with and for the BBIPOC community. That is audacious!

Brian D.Crisp

Minister of Missions and Adult Education

Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh, North Carolina

CCN Thought for the Week for 21st August – St Saviour’s, Claremont and Good Shepherd, Protea, Cape Town, South Africa



The 18th August has been a highlight in the St Saviour’s Parish calendar for twenty years since we were presented with a cross of nails admitting St Saviour’s Claremont with Good Shepherd Protea to the international Community of the Cross of Nails in 2000. This happened in Coventry Cathedral at the first International CCN Conference. Since 2001 each year we have held a special service, reminding us of our responsibility for reconciliation on the nearest Sunday to the 18th August calling it CCN Sunday alternating between St Saviour’s (mother church) and Good Shepherd Protea (chapel). We usually have had a guest preacher followed by a lunch giving us time for fellowship. This year being our twentieth anniversary, unfortunately we are unable to celebrate this service as the church is still closed because of the Covid 19 pandemic.

The Church of the Good Shepherd Protea has been a symbol of God’s presence at the foot of Table Mountain below Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens since 1864, when the first Bishop of Cape Town, the Rt Rev Robert Gray, had bought the farm Protea and built a small chapel for the converted slaves he had been released in 1834, and who had formed a settlement on the farm. Bishop Gray named the chapel Good Shepherd and changed the name of the farm to Bishops court, which is still the residence of our current Archbishop. The settlement grew over the years and so in 1886 the present church was built with the assistance of the Protea community who brought stones from the nearby Liesbeeck River.

Protea Village grew into a vibrant self-sustaining community providing much needed labour, especially for the development of Kirstenbosch, until the people were forcibly removed by the apartheid government in the sixties. This caused much heartache and pain as the community were split up and spread all over the desolate Cape Flats. Many stayed faithful to Good Shepherd, coming once a month for a service as the church was closed in 1968 for regular service. The church reopened for regular worship on Advent Sunday 1978, forming a new congregation as now the surrounding new white neighbours also joined the church. This was an opportunity to get to know each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, despite the apartheid laws of the time.

In January, 1995, I was prompted by God to read Psalm 37. It says, verse 22 “ Those the Lord blesses will inherit the land “ and verse 29 “ the righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever “. The community did not believe it was possible to claim their land. I called Lawyers for Human Rights to convince them that it was possible with the new Restitution Act. They formed a committee, gathered the scattered community together and in September 1995 they submitted their claim for the land from which they had been so brutally forcibly removed. I served on this Committee for eleven years. The process has been long and hard. Many meetings, a court case, delays, and ups and downs.

In 2006 the Land was restored to the community. The process is still continuing today and despite Covid, meetings are continuing via Zoom. The Protea community are to be commended for their tenacity, patience, perseverance, retaining their dignity and hope through the many years. Today

there are substantial plans for the redevelopment of the land and the return of the community, bringing justice to all and hopefully some healing.

This is the story that caught the attention of Canon Andrew White who invited us to join the Community of the Cross of Nails, a journey which started in the eighties when I visited Coventry Cathedral. The story of reconciliation spoke to me as I felt healing the hurts of history is so much needed in South Africa. Over the years and many visits to Coventry we have established wonderful relationships with many CCN Centres and Cathedral staff. After the visit of Canon Paul Oestreicher in 1991 we started a prayer group meeting on the first Friday of the month praying the Litany of reconciliation. This has met ever since then and only stopped this year because of Covid.

We are extremely grateful to the Rev Oliver Scheugraf for setting up the international Zoom meetings for prayers during the lockdown, and now meeting on the first Friday of the month. We have attended four international CCN Conferences (2000, 2004 ,2012 & 2018) in Coventry; our youth have been privileged to attend several CCN Youth Conferences sponsored by the German CCN in Coventry, Germany and Poland. Being part of the international community has meant so much to us sharing our stories, hopes and dreams, and putting the Protea story on the international stage. We have been so blessed with the many visits to Cape Town from Cross of Nails partners and been so happy to share our story with them and show them our beautiful country. The highlight was hosting the second international CCN Youth Conference in Cape Town in 2006. Forty-five delegates from eleven different countries arrived as strangers and left as friends.

Through the many generations Good Shepherd has been central to the lives of the Protea community. In the dark days of apartheid it was a safe meeting place. Despite many of them joining churches in their new areas they often return for baptisms, weddings and funerals and other special occasions always tending the family graves on their visits. Throughout the claim any success or progress has been celebrated with a special thanksgiving service. God has walked this journey with them.

In preparation for the return of the Protea community, the church building was enlarged in 2010 when extensive renovations needed to be done. Now seating about one hundred and twenty (previously ninety), in 2019 the Archbishop Thabo Makgoba proposed that Good Shepherd should become an independent parish with its own parochial boundaries. This is still in discussion and should be finalised once the lockdown is over.

We pray that in the not too distant future building will start and the Protea community can return home with much rejoicing.

To God be the glory.

For further information www.goodshepherd-protea.org.za

Jenny Wilson

Companion of the Community of the Cross of Nails

CCN Thought for the Week for 28th August – a month to go until CCN Sunday!

Our second annual day to celebrate the CCN takes place in just under one month, on Sunday 27th September, and we invite all CCN partners to join in as and how they can!

It has been a year that many of us struggle to find appropriate adjectives for. From the appalling racial injustices and powerful reactions to these across the world, through various calamitous environmental and climate-related upheavals, to the global Covid-19 pandemic, perhaps no other year of late has reminded us quite how much we are all so interconnected, while simultaneously living through political and economic times where disconnect with others has perhaps never felt so acute. Yesterday, when this picture was taken in Coventry, was a very grey day, and this perhaps sums up a year which has felt so very much in limbo. Certainly in Coventry, and in the Chapel of Unity and St Michael's House which you can see in the picture, life has been anything but normal.



Our Community is unique, and powerful in its multiplicity of voices, and on this one day we encourage you to join in with partners around the world, in praying the litany as we all do regularly, but also in seeking inspiration from others in the network, and remembering the value of the work in reconciliation that each of our partners and communities covers.

How do I take part?

Churches can incorporate CCN Sunday into their regular Sunday service on that day (see the suggested liturgy for CCN Sunday, and the scripts of both the Dean of Coventry's homily and the CCN UK & Ireland Board Chair's reflection – you are welcome to use all of these, or just those parts that suit);

Due to the pandemic and the reality that many church congregations simply are not able to meet either as usual, or at all, there is the option to watch the video service at home or how best suits your situation – we will share this on both the Cathedral's and the CCN's Facebook pages on the day itself alongside our Cathedral Eucharist. Those partners and schools who do not meet on Sundays – and indeed anyone! – please also use this option freely and feel free to share it on your own social media channels;

play the video as part of your church service (advance viewing here – not for sharing until Sunday 27th September, the day itself, however, please!).

As the video explains, this year is the 80th anniversary of the bombing of Coventry on 14th November 1940, and the driver for the story of reconciliation around which Coventry and the CCN operates; therefore this year the service comes to you from Coventry Cathedral and from partners in the CCN UK & Ireland board. Next year another geographical region of the CCN will lead the service.

With our blessings from Coventry, we invite you to join us in celebration and in community!

Alice Farnhill, CCN Project Officer

CCN Thought for the Week for 12th September – Rahel Tippelt, former Coventry reconciliation intern



We are so looking forward to welcoming this year's new Cathedral intern, Josefine, to Coventry in the coming weeks for the beginning of her year working with us and ARSP. Our interns make a huge difference to our ministry, and go on to do great things – including two, Cerys and Stacy, beginning training for ordained ministry this month. Rahel, our German intern in 2016/17, recently got in touch, and we share her reflections here.

How my year working for the Reconciliation ministry at Coventry Cathedral impacted on my life.

At Coventry, through working for the school's team, helping run CCN pilgrimages, guiding tours for adults and children, and organizing and hosting events at St Michal's House, I learned about reconciliation in the name of Christ.

Already before my year in Coventry I had practised building bridges and reconciliation in my daily life, but I didn't know how to make a difference in the world as an individual and felt hopeless quite often. Many seemed to just care for themselves, or maybe just get lost in their daily lives; little relationship to God, themselves and the people/community around them. This was my motivation to dedicate one year as an intern at Coventry Cathedral, where I found some answers, which influenced my life and perspectives on life, relationships and the world forever.

Primarily, this year was about God and me. I grow up with a religious background but my parents' divorce changed everything, and God's voice didn't reach me and I lost faith, in him, community and the world. I just believed in myself and nothing else anymore. But his voice always showed up from time to time, and now I know that he never left me completely. Coventry was a crucial year. I started to hear and listen to him again and started to see and feel the kindness of the world and people around me; to have hope again. I am still on my way with that – each of us is on a life-long journey with God and those around us.

Secondly, I learned to reconcile with myself, my background, and citizenship as a German person, which impacts me way much more than I expected. I understood life is messy from time to time and we need reconciliation in different ways. Often, we just wait for a problem to resolve by itself, but we have to actively enter relationships and to be brave to risk something if we want to change and/or create something.

Sometimes we tend to just act, instead of listening at first. It is such a beauty that the world is so diverse. We should celebrate it and learn from each other instead of fighting against each other and telling each other that there is just one right way.

Since Coventry I have lived and worked for the German Lutheran Church in a Café in Jerusalem for pilgrims, where diversity was everywhere and I learned to listen even more to different voices without judging. That's challenging in that area of the world because there are so many strong opinions. The role of friendship across barriers was key: listening, instead of taking action or judging, in normal heart to heart relationships – reconciliation of difference at a basic level (such as nationality) for both sides.

I was reminded over and over that we need to meet each other as a first step to start the process of reconciliation, which is difficult, and full of up and downs, but so worth it.

Now I am living in Leipzig, Germany and going to work as a social worker to support refugees and migrants, something I found my passion for in Coventry. This is my way to impact the world and make it a better place through listening, acting and being an example of how to live in and as a community.

Be brave and prepared to fall in between. It's worth it. And believe that you are not alone. God and Community are around you even if you can't feel it from time to time.

Rahel Tippelt

CCN Thought for the Week for 25th September – welcome to Josefine Ufkes, our new intern!

2020 is anything but normal a year for internships. This year's new ARSP intern, supported by our partners in the German CCN Board, will have a very different experience to previous years' interns, with a much closer day-to-day connection to ARSP itself and some of its other projects, and a different living location, with other interns in London, but hopefully none the less rich for that. We look forward to Fine working with us two days a week in Coventry, and with other tasks remotely.



Hello, my name is Josefine, mostly known as Fine, I am 19 years old and the new intern at the Coventry Cathedral for one year. This year, I graduated from high school in my hometown Herborn, in Hesse, near Frankfurt. I have known that I would like to go abroad for a while since my sister went to Sweden after her graduation, but I did not expect to come to England, live in London and work in Coventry. What luck it all went like this!

I am one out of 130 German, Polish, and Ukrainian volunteers of ARSP (Action Reconciliation Service for Peace) that work and help out in various projects in 13 different countries. ARSP is an organization that focusses on learning from the huge mistakes made and the cruel crimes committed during World War 2 by the Nazi regime and working therefore in a sense of peace and reconciliation for a better present – and future.

Coventry Cathedral is ARSP's longest partner project in the UK, and I get the opportunity to join its community just in time for their partnership's 60th anniversary next year! I am really looking forward to my different tasks here, supporting the cathedral's team and working with the Community of the Cross of Nails, expanding my horizons while meeting new people and learning much more about our history and reconciliation in a spiritual context. Especially this year, it is not straightforward coming to work as part of an international network and I feel grateful to be welcomed this warmly.

In times like these, in which political polarization seems to challenge us in every topic discussed, I think it is, particularly for my generation, of utmost importance to meet each other with respect, humanity

and in a spirit of peace and reconciliation. I hope I can serve the community as well as this year's special situation allows me to do and I am excited to make great experiences that will last a lifetime!

Josefine Ufkes

CCN Thought for the Week for 17th October – are online pilgrimages the future?



In this year so unlike any other, long-distance visits to Coventry have been largely ruled out, for pilgrimages as much as anything else. And so, with faith, but still a fair degree of trepidation, the idea of the 'online CCN pilgrimage' developed as the year progressed. This week was the week the first of them happened!

19 pilgrims from ten different organisations and five different countries joined several of us from Coventry, each from their own homes, ranging from a Baptist, Lutheran and an Episcopal Church and a peace garden set on United Reformed ground to an Anglican church, cathedral, pro-cathedral, relief and aid charity, peace network and lay minister researching a project on the CCN.... a fantastic, diverse mixture of very new partner organisations, organisations involved for several decades, and individuals seeking to find out more, over just about as broad a geography as could practically be accommodated given different time zones.

Bringing Coventry to life virtually is inevitably a big challenge, but the Dean's personal video tour through the Cathedral, recorded in September and October, seemed to put this across very well indeed, and was incredibly special. Dean John then led a talk and discussion on Coventry's theology of reconciliation.

Day two was more about everyone getting to know each other, with the background story-sharing session for each attending organisation and the usual juggling act of enabling everyone to tell their story in time, which is never quite enough!, but which always so helps to 'level the ground' for each reconciler present. Discussion followed on confronting racial injustice with reconciliation, led by

Cornelia Kulawik, vicar of Berlin-Dahlem in Germany, and Vicentia Kgabe, head of the College of Transfiguration in South Africa, both of whom we were so glad to involve in the programme. We discussed race both as an issue of problematic terminology, specifically in Germany, and as an active relations issue, in a year when on both fronts, but particularly the latter, the issues have been particularly and in so many cases painfully and tragically prominent.

This extended very naturally into discussions around inclusion and diversity the next day – and how helpful or not those actual terms can be – using Pullen Memorial Baptist Church (a long-standing partner since the 1970s) and Holy Trinity Pro-Cathedral Brussels (partner since February this year) and their different work as examples. Diversity around race and gender – and a growing awareness of how very far we need to go still – were very much to the fore in minds in this pilgrimage, and a source of real concern, as indeed was the anxiety around changes in society just this year arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, the forthcoming US election, Brexit and the rise of the far right in so many parts of the world. We were glad to be able to use the Week of Prayer for World Peace prayers each day just before praying the litany together, which touched on so many issues pertinent to this year.

And did the format work? It certainly did! Of course, this is a very different type of pilgrimage. Physically being in Coventry to experience the holy place at the heart of our network is impossible fully to replicate, and we all missed the opportunity for those spontaneous 1-1 connections with new people over dinner or coffee. Also, entire days at this is impossible; we met over three consecutive four-hour-long afternoons, or mornings for those in the USA. But in the circumstances, Zoom, as many others have also shown, does a fine job at providing opportunity to connect even a large-ish group, with careful forward planning and use of breakout rooms for closer conversations about specific questions to keep things fluid. Connections were still made between people in ways even stronger than we might have hoped. Some inevitable technical issues aside (mainly around connecting to other social media platforms) there is so very much good to take away from this first try at pilgrimage in this way, and having welcomed probably a broader cross-section of partners and friends than any other pilgrimage in recent years is no bad way to start! All of whom were a real joy to welcome for the three days, and several of whom we will hear from via various ‘Thoughts’ in weeks to come.

This is such a difficult year across the globe, but it’s been so encouraging to be reminded this week that our essence is strong, that individually and collectively so much good work goes on, and in the need to connect with each other there is great opportunity. Our physical, in-situ pilgrimages are still very much part of our fundamental ethos, when we can do them once again, but do watch out for more CCN opportunities like this one in 2021 and beyond.

Alice Farnhill

CCN Project Officer

CCN Thought for the Week for 2nd November – from a recent online pilgrim from Holy Trinity Pro-Cathedral, Brussels



Reflections on joining the Coventry Cathedral Community of the Cross of Nails and the recent Pilgrimage

Reconciliation.....Well, professionally and non-professionally, I periodically facilitate small group work, including the sort of work that requires bringing disparate views together at times. There are many initiatives across the globe that promote reconciliation or provide moderation/mediation/arbitration services. They had caught my eye in the context of my facilitation

activity, and I had done some research on some of them.

Then David Stone, Sub-Dean at Coventry Cathedral, joined my church, Holy Trinity Brussels, on Sunday morning 2nd February 2020. He preached about reconciliation and talked through the perseverant work of Coventry Cathedral to bring about a more peaceful world. It became obvious to us in the congregation that the work of Coventry Cathedral in this area is no small achievement. Having taken the brunt of a Luftwaffe bombing campaign in 1940, the Cathedral's ruins left behind are stark enough even today to suggest the hell-hole that the place must have seemed immediately after the event. But the Cathedral was brave and clear-sighted enough to set about a re-build almost straight away – a physical rebuild of the building and a spiritual rebuild – out of the hell-hole – based on forgiveness. With the spiritual rebuild came the formation of the Community of the Cross of Nails and the cathedral's ministry of reconciliation.

David Stone was with us at Holy Trinity Brussels that morning to seal our own membership of the Community as a church. Holy Trinity is a "European" church in that we sit in the same city as the European Institutions. We are also an international church, in that we attract members from all corners of the world. Brussels also hosts NATO and many embassies representing countries worldwide. So Holy Trinity is challenged by, but also delights in, diversity.

I was quite taken with what David had to say and went to quiz him afterwards. That was subsequently followed up with a connection to Alice Farnhill at the CCN, and then quite a long discussion with John Witcombe, Coventry Cathedral's Dean.

So I found myself attending the CCN's Pilgrimage last month, along with one of the clergy at Holy Trinity, Jean-Bosco Turahirwa. Jean-Bosco is Holy Trinity's official representative for the CCN. He has a background in conflict management, mediation and reconciliation. He has worked for several years for the Brussels Mennonite Centre at national and international level.

The first point to note about the Pilgrimage was that it was on-line – inevitable in the current COVID-restricted circumstances. This was simultaneously a restriction and a liberation. A restriction because of the lack of in-person contact (no meals together, etc). But a liberation in that we were able to welcome into our midst participants from different parts of the world who would not have been able to contribute otherwise.

The second point to note was the insights all of us undoubtedly absorbed at different points during our three afternoons together. To give an example for me, I was intrigued at how one's choice of

language can simultaneously include and exclude others. If I talk about Black Lives Matter then I clearly draw attention to the perceived needs of a particular population group. But then don't "All Lives Matter"? But if I say that, then I take away attention from where the needs possibly really are.....

The third point that struck me was the rapport between the Cathedral staff – even on-line. Well done CCN for practising what you preach, and thank you for setting the tone for the rest of us pilgrims!

So where do I go from here? As a Christian believer of many years, one of my deepest joys (although not always one that comes to the fore first!) is to serve. My prayer is that this experience of CCN so far would be another step along that path of service, as I await what God would have me do in the area of reconciliation. Thank you Lord, your call.....

Sue Bird, Holy Trinity Pro-Cathedral, Brussels

NB. this article does not necessarily represent the views of Holy Trinity Pro-Cathedral, Brussels.

CCN Thought for the Week for 6th November – Revd Neil Willard, Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church, Houston



It was a great privilege for me to attend the first virtual pilgrimage to Coventry Cathedral last month on behalf of my congregation in Houston, Texas. That event was held online, of course, because of the global pandemic that continues to affect the lives of all of the participants, who came from five different countries.

At the beginning of one session, while something was being sorted out, we had a moment to talk about whatever was on our minds. So I noted, for whomever might be curious, that early voting had recently started and that Harris County, where most of Houston is located, shattered its previous record for the total number of ballots cast on the first day of early voting. More than 100,000 people voted not only on that first day but for each of the first seven days of early voting. The total number of voters in the previous presidential election in Harris County was surpassed before Election Day, at the end of which 1.65 million ballots had been cast.

Not surprisingly, my fellow pilgrims from other parts of the world were very interested in this American presidential election. The choices we make here affect them too.

There were, of course, plenty of worries on the minds of Americans that motivated them to show up at the polls and exercise their right to vote. Many were concerned about the mishandling of the pandemic and a rising tide of anti-scientific attitudes. Others were afraid of a further erosion of their economic situation if stricter public health measures were to be adopted. Still others were focused on racial injustices that keep reappearing in the news. Latino voters demonstrated their diversity by voting differently in different parts of the country. There were sharp divisions between rural and urban settings and also by level of education and gender.

While I'm writing this, votes are still being counted. So there hasn't yet been an official winner declared who will be the occupant of the Oval Office for the next four years. Regardless of that outcome, the divisions that have been uncovered and revealed in this election will remain.

One of the things I love about America is the fact that our ideals about universal human rights can be the source of a reformation from time to time when we're able to recognize that we haven't lived up to those ideals. My hope is that my own parish, committed to the ministry of reconciliation through the Community of the Cross of Nails, can be part of that process through the power of the Holy Spirit. It's the hope that we can look at ourselves in the mirror, first seeing things as they really are, and then remembering we are God's children and, therefore, citizens of another kingdom, a kingdom marked by grace and mercy and by the love we've known in Christ Jesus.

The Rev. Neil Alan Willard is the Rector of Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas.

CCN Thought for the Week for 13th November – the Very Reverend John Witcombe

Sisters in Reconciliation – a piece written originally for the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche in Berlin for this weekend

On November 14th 1940, St Michael's Cathedral in Coventry, along with much of the city around it, was destroyed by Luftwaffe bombing. Although the destruction and loss of life was later exceeded in many other places, especially in Germany, the destruction of Coventry came to symbolise the loss and tragedy of war. It also came, uniquely in the United Kingdom, to symbolise the rebuilding of relationships between former enemies, as the Cathedral and City communities reached out to the people of Germany, first in Kiel, and then later in Hamburg, Berlin, and famously Dresden along with many others, with a message of forgiveness and an invitation to reconciliation.



I visited the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church for the first time in February 2013, soon after becoming Dean of Coventry. Your church feels like our sister in the work of reconciliation: we share similar architecture and beautiful modern glass windows; we share the preservation of a part of our ruins; our new buildings were consecrated with a year of one another; we share an image of your moving 'Stalingrad Madonna'; you have one of our 'Crosses of Nails'. I was very moved by my first visit, and was hoping to be with you as you mark the 80th anniversary of the Coventry Blitz in your annual service of remembrance.

Sadly, Covid-19 has prevented my travelling to you. The invitation, and the expectation of sharing with you as you remember an event which could have torn us apart for ever, but instead led to our reconciliation and friendship as cities and as places of worship, was welcome, surprising, and very moving. In how many other places in the world do people choose to remember and memorialise the

suffering they have caused to others? This is something about which I have learned a lot from our German friends.

Our shared witness to reconciliation is a message of hope to the world. It is a message that says, whatever happens, knowing that we all need forgiveness, we can find a way forwards towards a shared future. Our own definition of reconciliation is this: journeying from a fractured past towards a shared future. In Coventry we do this through our three priorities of: healing the wounds of history; learning to live with difference and celebrate diversity; building a culture of peace.

The world is presently even more divided than ever. The pandemic is not the great leveller we at first thought: instead, it is revealing our inequalities and our tendency to be selfish as people and nations across the whole world. Brexit is a word my autocorrect still does not recognise, but is an all too present reality for us in Europe. Racial injustice is an abhorrence to God who would have his children learn to live together as sisters and brothers, whoever they are.

Our friendship and fellowship is a sign of the possibility of a different and a better future, and I look forward very much to being with you again as soon as this virus has passed and we are once more free to travel. Our two churches, ruined and rebuilt, remind all of us that even when things look their worst, there is a future, even though rebuilding may take many months, many years.

Mirosolav Wolf describes hope as 'love stretched out into the future'. Our love for one another is exactly that – a love stretched out into the future, which we offer freely to the world.

Very Revd John Witcombe, Dean of Coventry

CCN Thought for the Week for 20th November – thoughts on a virtual 80th anniversary



2020 being what it has been, the 80th anniversary of the Coventry Blitz was pretty much all virtual, as we had come to expect it would be. It seemed perhaps a little muted in the run-up – but the technology played out proudly.

And so we had Dean John beamed in on the Sunday morning of the 15th November via video to the nave of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirchengemeinde in Berlin, which he had been due to visit (pictures, and see previous Thought), and greetings and prayers from Berlin were shared at Coventry. Coventry Cathedral shared a fantastic online service at 7pm on the Saturday 14th, with contributions from a number of people across the City and also from CCN lead partners around the globe, who read the Litany.

Equally symbolic however was a short half-hour leading up to the midday anniversary Litany on Saturday 14th, when, quietly and behind the scenes, 39 mainly UK and German CCN partners connected up via Zoom from their homes to mark the occasion which, amid all the destruction and horror, gave rise to the network that holds them together. Different partners shared updates and readings, and it seemed like a beginning, the start of ways in which not just individuals but different

groups in the network can come together with not really much fanfare, but for common meaningful connection. It felt immensely powerful – even though, in the event, much came down to logistics and keeping to time!

Much good has arisen from 2020 in terms of our interconnectivity. Old ways have fallen by the wayside somewhat, and new ways via videolink have taken over. No, of course, it's not the same, but it's a joy to connect with partners around the world every first Friday of the month at midday Central European Time, to catch up a little, share news and pray the Litany together. A similar regular practice, we hope, will take shape on a different Friday each month, which can involve our partners west of Europe during their daytime hours. None of this was happening before. Thus, out of the challenges of 2020 comes hope, and new ways of being together! What a positive take-away from the 80th anniversary.



Alice Farnhill, CCN Co-ordinator

With thanks to the Ev. Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirchengemeinde for these three photos taken last Sunday 15th November.

CCN Thought for the Week for 27th November – applications open for Journey of Hope 2021



If 2020 has taught us anything, it's that our personal and collective response in times of crisis and conflict are crucial. As Covid-19, racial injustice, and the climate crisis continue to deeply impact our society, we are inviting you to join us on a journey of hope: not the kind of hope that simply wishes for change optimistically, but the kind of hope that faces reality, stands in solidarity, and takes radically compassionate action.

We are a community of committed peacemakers: people of faith who believe that everyday peacemaking, from a place of our deepest values, can reconcile some of the most sacred relationships between ourselves, the Earth, our faith, and with others.

This community will be an anchor point as we explore together how to creatively and courageously respond to the fractures of conflict and polarization, cultivating a more relational and resilient society.

If you believe a new, more peaceful way of being is not only possible but paramount and want to be inspired by experienced faith leaders and innovative practices, this programme is for you.

The Journey of Hope is a 6 month leadership programme for people of faith to transform their communities, taking place across six weekends, mostly online, from February – July 2021, taking applications now. In partnership with some of the leading Christian based peace & reconciliation centres in the UK & Ireland, including Coventry Cathedral, we will equip participants to creatively and courageously respond to issues of crisis and conflict in their communities, cultivating a more relational and resilient society. There is a cost to attend, but there are bursaries available.

More information and to register your interest now visit [Journey of Hope – St Ethelburga’s](#)

Reconcilers Together

A partnership of peacemakers across the UK and Ireland

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Thought for the Week for 18th December – a look back on 2020 for the CCN



It’s been a year unlike anything we’ve known before. The key word for it probably is ‘online’; as for so many others, everything’s gone this way this year for the CCN!

To look on the positive side however, it’s forced us to take the plunge into areas that we already knew we needed to be addressing: how to bring Coventry to others, who don’t have the means to come to Coventry? How to connect meaningfully

partners across large distances in such a dispersed network?

The earliest venture down this road was early in lockdown, in March, in the form of the German CCN’s Friday litany prayers on Zoom, which quickly became a source of connection and fellowship each week for partners far beyond Germany’s own borders. It’s been a joy to connect with partners this way, and such good news that beyond lockdown the litany became monthly and still continues on the first Friday of the month at midday CET (next one on Friday 8th January).

At Coventry we held our first online pilgrimage in October, taking place on Zoom across three afternoons, and we were so encouraged to have 19 pilgrims from 5 countries and both sides of the Atlantic. There was much discussion and sharing of ideas, not least on the subject of race and the CCN in a year when, in large part triggered by events in the USA, this has been tragically foremost in people’s minds. The group is due to meet



regularly online going forward, where circumstances permit, and we shall certainly be running more online pilgrimages each year going forward, alongside our traditional in-person pilgrimages (dates for next year here).



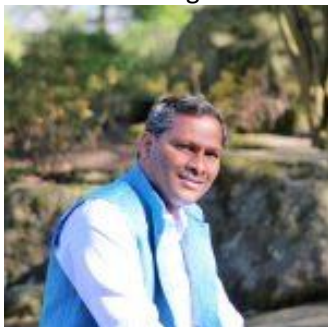
The 80th anniversary of the Coventry bombing took place this way as well, via video messages between Berlin and Coventry, via Zoom virtual meetings, a thought-provoking reflection on the wider relevance of the anniversary this year, and via the Cathedral's online service broadcast at 7pm, the time of the bombing. Earlier, CCN partners from both the UK and German boards joined up together via Zoom in a first 'virtual' linkage of the two boards; a significant moment. Each of the lead partners

from the CCN boards around the world recorded a really special shared litany of reconciliation as well, used in the anniversary service.

At Coventry many staff were furloughed (put on government paid leave), and a few very sadly lost their jobs entirely in a resulting restructure. Jen Jenkins, our ICONS project manager, sadly, also, left us to work for the Coventry DBE. Our internship was affected, as well – we had to say goodbye, mostly virtually, to Hanna-Lotta months early, in March, and while we've been delighted to welcome Josefine in September her internship has hitherto been very different; part-time only, with us, because of the Covid logistical circumstances we find ourselves in, and long-distance for much of the time.

Before Covid took hold, in January our ICONS Ambassadors programme was launched, training 30 primary-aged pupils from 5 local ICONS in peace building and reconciliation, so that they could lead on positive change in their own schools. Sadly, only two of the planned four sessions could take place before the pandemic put a long-term interruption on the programme. We had several schools poised to receive their Crosses of Nails in April and May of this year, but sadly St John's CE Academy in Coventry and Brailes CE Primary in Warwickshire are having to wait a little longer to receive their crosses (as are other CCN prospective partners). Schools are still engaging in the process of finding out about and becoming ICONS and we look forward to more schools joining us in 2021.

Just the weekend before lockdown restrictions began to take hold, we had a physical get-together meeting with our international board, the lead partners from each CCN geographical cluster area around the globe. This was a great two days of overview and sharing ideas, and arising from both that meeting and successive regular ones on zoom, we have a new CCN Governance Document, which sets out how the CCN works and interconnects. We spoke also of plans for another international gathering and youth gathering in 2022, and 2020 notwithstanding we are very much planning for these still – more



information forthcoming in spring 2021. We also focussed quite strongly on interfaith engagement and the CCN's still very small sister network Together for Hope – which we hope to be able take forward much more boldly in 2021.

I think if we were to award a prize for resilience this year it would be to Kasta Dip, our CCN Asia representative, who became caught in early Covid restrictions in Germany when he attended meetings there en route home from our CCN international board meeting and only made it



home back to India in the summer. We absolutely salute your months of fortitude, Kasta – and we so value the time you and all the other international reps gave us in attending.

We've had new partners join, too (albeit in much smaller numbers than a typical year) and from new countries: Bergen Cathedral Community and Holy Trinity Pro-Cathedral Brussels joined at the beginning of the year, as did Southwark Cathedral in London – we're thrilled to have them all on board. And in September, the Evangelische Kirchengemeinde Demmin in Germany joined us, about whose story Dean John preached movingly in Coventry Cathedral the following Sunday, CCN Sunday – which, as so often this year, was for many an online service but on this occasion led beautifully by our UK & Ireland board partners in a prepared video.



We know this has been an incredibly tough year for everyone everywhere, that will leave scars behind it long past the chimes that ring in the new year (where this is even possible). We're set to head into a recession that is the worst of any of our lifetimes – coupled with, in the UK, for very many of us, the immense sadness that is Brexit in just a few weeks. Things are, and will be, really tough. We continue to be incredibly grateful for the CCN ministry that our friends in the German CCN and USA CCN enable through their financial support, and for their spreading the word about the CCN more broadly – which this year has led to the CCN proudly winning the 10,000-euro ecumenical prize from the Catholic Academy in Bavaria (presentation delayed until 2021).



Early this year at Coventry the Cathedral's West Screen was broken into, and one of our precious, irreplaceable John Hutton angels was smashed. The screen will never again be quite what it was, and this has desperately saddened so many. What happens next is still to be confirmed. Yet we end this year with a fabulous winter ice rink in the cathedral ruins, created and sponsored by Coventry City of Culture 2021, a year of cultural celebration which starts in May 2021, as one of the pre-events, and a chance to bring real joy (and a few happy but sore muscles, as I can testify) to local people this winter.

With our blessings and sincerest thanks for all your support and endeavours this very tough year, and may this Christmas bring you hope, peace, and rest.

I leave our final words to two of our partners: one, Erin Newton, of Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in North Carolina, USA, offers us her own personal version of the Litany, which has words so resonant to this year; and a wonderful picture from our dear partners in Neuendettelsau, Germany!

Alice Farnhill, CCN Co-ordinator

Litany of Reconciliation

Erin's version, Dec 2020

All have failed to fully see and live into the glory of God.

The anger and intolerance that disable us from inhabiting our civic spaces together,

God, forgive.

The ways we trade and interact with our global neighbors that enrich ourselves at their expense,

God, forgive.

The way we vastly undervalue green spaces, clean water and air, healthy land, and reduced consumption,

God, forgive.

Our resentment of those who rejoice at a time when we see only desolation and loss,

God, forgive.

Our failure to see Christ in the faces of the homeless family, the person who is mentally ill, the one who does not look like us, the prisoner, and the refugee in flight,

God, forgive.

Our capacity to normalize and turn a blind eye to harassment, bullying, sexual abuse, and human trafficking in all its forms,

God, forgive.

Our failure to call out our religious and civil institutions for excluding rather than drawing the circle wide,

God, forgive.

The actions we take and the words we say without consulting or trusting the God who made us,

God, forgive.

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ modeled for you.
Amen.



The Diakoneo and Augustana Theological Seminary in Neuendettelsau, Germany on CCN Sunday

CCN Thought for the Week for 11th December – Mary Taylor, Flodden Peace Garden

From time to time circumstances change for some of our CCN partners, over which they have really no control. One such is Flodden Peace Garden, beautifully designed and maintained, sited in the surrounds of a United Reformed Church building which itself has now closed as a place of worship and is being cleared currently for sale. And thus, the future of the Peace Garden is unknown.



Flodden Peace Centre at Crookham United Reformed Church

We are in the season of Advent – a time of watching and waiting. On the first Sunday of Advent this year Crookham United Reformed Church had a poignant online service reflecting with praise and thanksgiving on its history and on the gifts of mission and ministry people had brought for hundreds of years to this church situated in a beautiful village in Northumberland, about half an hour from Holy Island. Over the years we have warmly welcomed visitors to the peace garden and have been particularly pleased to see those connected to the international partnership of the Community of the Cross of Nails.

Crookham is situated not far from the battlefield of Flodden, a place where thousands still visit reflecting on the battle there. Many events took place in 2013 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of this historic tragedy. One was the creation of a peace garden around Crookham United Reformed Church. On 8th May 2018 Rev. Canon Dr. Sarah Hills graciously said the litany for reconciliation on the battlefield: the first time she said she had prayed the litany on a battlefield! Those of us who were there will never forget this powerful occasion, just before the presentation of our Cross of Nails.

What has it meant so far to be an international partner? In Crookham we have a small ecumenical group which met before the Covid 19 global pandemic, regularly on Fridays at 12 noon to say the litany, to reflect about our international partners for that particular day and to pray for peace in the world. It was a delight to meet some partners at the enjoyable and thought-provoking international gathering in September 2018 in Coventry, and then to reconnect and also to make new friends at the CCN online pilgrimage just very recently, virtual thanks to the wonders of zoom. Another virtual joy has been on the first Friday of each month at 11am when thanks to our German partners the litany is shared in German and English. We sit and hear the pings as partners enter our screens from South Africa, India, America and Europe and come together to share concerns and to pray. I really look forward to this very special time of peace and reconciliation and hope it continues for a long time.

The other main aim of the Crookham peace garden is to be a place of building a culture of peace. It is a “garden designed to grow people” . That is my experience and over the last seven years it has touched many people in different ways. It is a place where church neighbours never know when or who would visit as this garden is open 24/7. One day I met a couple on holiday. It was their third visit, they said, to remember a child who had died, and to sit and reflect in the garden.



What will happen to the peace garden? This is a question being asked by so many of all faiths and none. Exciting discussions are currently taking place to hopefully incorporate plants, including the red rose, and possibly other parts of the peace garden around Crookham village hall and elsewhere.

Please enjoy a virtual tour of Crookham peace garden during this service , which also includes some lovely people linked to the Community of the Cross of Nails sending messages of peace into the world.

Goodness is stronger than evil; Love is stronger than hate;

Light is stronger than darkness; Life is stronger than death.

Victory is ours through Him who loves us.

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu

Mary Taylor, currently a Trustee of the UK and Ireland Board, Community of the Cross of Nails



FLODDEN^s peace centre at CROOKHAM

THIS TIMELINE REPRESENTS A JOURNEY through 500 years from the date of the Battle of Flodden in 1513. This Garden seeks to sow the seeds of peace, reconciliation, and hope both in the lives of those who walk through it, and in the wider life we all share in a turbulent, fragile, also precious and beautiful world.

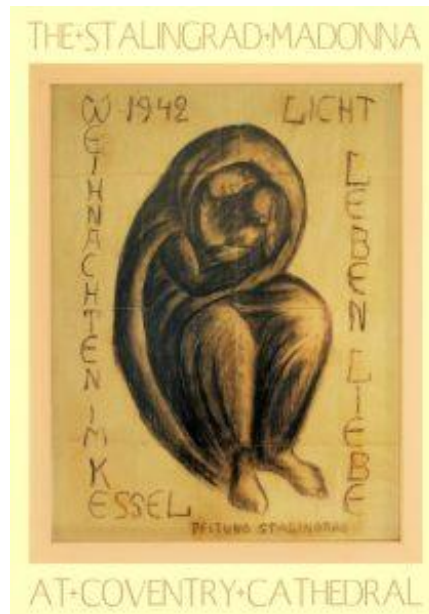
Take your time as you read the Timeline and reflect at the many corners we have turned as a human race: sometimes into dark directions, sometimes into light and hope. Often such moments turn on the influence of individuals, which help us understand the potential we have as individuals to make a difference in the world for the better.

As the Battle of Flodden in this area 500 years ago has been the engine for this Centre for Peace and Reconciliation in the life of the world as it is today half a millennium later, we can see how even from the darkest hours of human history the light of a brighter future can be identified and nurtured.

The challenge lies with the question with which this Timeline ends: What will you do for peace? Our response need not be a grand or public gesture, but each day brings opportunities for us to take maybe just small steps in the right direction that can help bring peace and reconciliation into our relationship with the wider world, or the lives of those closest to us.

The hope of those who tend this Garden is that the Timeline's journey through 500 years and the wisdom we can glean from human history will inspire and encourage all who pause for thought along its way.

CCN Thought for the Week for 24th December – Dan Koski, Institute for Ecumenical Research, Romania



Finding Christmas in Isolation, as Community, with the Stalingrad Madonna

Licht, Leben, Liebe. Light, Life, Love.

These are the words that illustrate the border of the Stalingrad Madonna, or Stalingradmadonna, drawn by Pastor Kurt Reuber, a Protestant minister, physician and military officer attached to the German Army encircled during the Siege of Stalingrad, now Volgograd, during the Second World War in December of 1942. Created with charcoal on the back of a large Soviet military map through the cold, dark of winter in the midst of unending suffering, the Virgin Mary and the Christ-child are depicted in a graceful, simple style as young mother and newborn son, devoid of ornamentation, regal clothing or any further illustrative indication of their holiness. And yet, the image is immediately identifiable as the Nativity of Christ; Light, Life and Love.

The Stalingrad Madonna survived the war, its illustrator did not. Pastor Reuber died a prisoner in the Soviet Union in 1944; his illustration has since become a central feature of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church/ Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche in Berlin, and arguably, the second-most important symbol of the Community of the Cross of Nails.

Twice I visited Coventry as a Community of the Cross of Nails member during my decade of living and working in the Holy Land. Twice I have sat alone in silence in front of the copy of the Stalingrad Madonna in the Coventry chapel. Twice I have found myself as lost in contemplation as I have through nine Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem, through countless hours of services, tours and silent prayer in Nativity Church, day in and day out, year after year. Twice, I returned to the Holy Land from Coventry, renewed in the purpose of my work, if not in the hope of a better future.



Dan in 2016 at Nativity Church, Bethlehem, in front of the "Seventh Angel" mosaic uncovered during renovations.

Two years after my last visit to Coventry, I made my final celebration of Christmas in Bethlehem, taking part in a small midnight mass held in a convent near Nativity Church. As I journeyed home on foot in the darkness of December, walking one final time past the refugee communities of displaced

Palestinians from the 1948 war, the military checkpoints, and the enormous Separation Wall that has torn Bethlehem apart, I kept the image of the Stalingrad Madonna in my mind; barefoot and draped in simple rough cloth in the midst of poverty and crisis, yet the most blessed of all women, holding the most precious gift the world will ever know. Soon they must leave Bethlehem and begin their next trial; for the moment, all is well and as it should be in the place that God has intended. Two thousand years later, in the same town of Bethlehem, my faith asked me to see the enduring truth of that message when everything around me cried out the opposite. Now in December of 2020, it still does so today.

LICHT, LEBEN, LIEBE. May we find Light, Life and Love not as we wish it be, but as it is revealed to us.

Dan Koski is a staff member of the Institute for Ecumenical Research/ Institut für Ökumenische, a regional community member of the Community of the Cross of Nails located in Forschung in Sibiu/Hermannstadt, Romania. He has been involved with the Community of the Cross of Nails since 2016. Dan can be reached at ccesiofh@gmail.com.