Today, Trinity Sunday, is a day of invitation. A day to celebrate relationship. A time to hear and respond. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded.”

‘Go, therefore and make disciples…’ a clear calling from Jesus through his Father and their Spirit. So what do we hear Jesus say? And how do we respond? Those two questions are core to our life as Christians. And they are core to our life as reconcilers. What do we hear ‘the other’ say? And what do we say back? That is the heart of reconciliation…and of course, conflict. That is the heart of forgiving and being forgiven. That is the heart of relationships and why they break down. Whether that is between me and God or you and God – Matthew tells us, ‘When they saw Jesus, they worshiped him; but some doubted.’ What do we hear Jesus say? And how do we respond?

Whether that is between me and you; us and them; in the Church, in our homes, schools, communities, nations, the earth...what do we hear Jesus say? And how do we respond? Matthew shows the disciples as being given authority to bear this calling. Not because of who they are, but because Jesus has called them. Because of their response to this vocation. This vocation to baptise in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Their vocation to love one another. To forgive and be forgiven. To love their enemies. To model relationship as friends, as forgivers and reconcilers. And of course, we are invited to hear this invitation too through Jesus’s life and death and resurrection. Through the sending of the Spirit. Through the forgiveness of the Father.

And as we know, this is not an easy calling. It involves repentance, justice, truth. As well as love, grace and hope. This calling must be at the heart of our relationships, as it is at the heart of the Trinity. This calling, this invitation from Jesus is something we may hear differently. After all, we are all made in the image of God, but we are not all the same. Gay or straight; Jew or Greek; woman or man; powerful or powerless; black or white; slave or free. How I hear this invitation is not necessarily the same as how you hear it. That is not the point. The point is, do we hear this awesome invitation? And then, how do we respond? And as our listening, our hearing, our understanding of this invitation from Jesus will not be exactly the same, nor will our response be. Some of us are called to be teachers; some prophets; some healers according to Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. But we are all called to be reconcilers. Because that is what the model of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit teaches us. This being together is a model of good relationship. Of love and forgiveness and grace. Of responding to this wonderful invitation to dwell in this Godhead of forgiveness and reconciliation. And this model is for all people. Those who voted Conservative this week; those who voted Labour. Those who attend the pride march this weekend; those who stayed away. Those who we agree with; those who we don’t. But of course this must not be a binary set up. Right or left; gay or straight; right or wrong. The model of the trinity has three relationships at its heart – a giving and receiving which is not polarised or polarising. That space of the Trinity is the space of reconciliation. The space where hurts and injustices can be brought and heard; where responses of love and mercy and forgiveness can be sought and given.

We have just hosted the annual meeting of the International Reps of the CCN here – with friends on the Boards from across the world. Germany, USA, South Africa, Poland, India. And it was a wonderful time of relating; of new friendships forming and old ones strengthening. And we certainly didn’t agree with each other all the time as we
thought and discussed and prayed our way through the meeting. It was a time to re-examine the work of the CCN hearing and responding to the huge passion and commitment of all round the table. What does healing the wounds of history, living with difference and building a culture of peace mean today in 2017? What do they mean for Coventry cathedral in 2017? What do they mean for each of us who hear and respond to this call from Jesus in our differing ways. With our differing gifts, responsibilities, contexts...

Being in relationship is not about being the same – it is about understanding the other better, about being formed together into hope, about enacting and embodying the Trinitarian dance of love and mercy and grace. This relational way of being that is modelled for us in the Trinity is why, rather than demonstrating and counter-demonstrating, rather than descending in to the ‘you’re wrong and I’m right’ binary mode of being we see in much thinking in politics, theology and many spheres of influence in today, we must find another way of living with difference, of celebrating diversity that is God’s creation.

What is overarchingly clear is that in this Coventry story of Nov 14th 1940 and how Provost Howard heard this call from Jesus then, and his response of, Father forgive’, he set us off on this particular path of forgiveness and reconciliation. And not just us here in this place. Hundreds of partners in the CCN across the world – churches, charities, prisons, human rights centres, schools. This is a way we can respond in and from this place of wounding to this invitation to be healers. To be reconciles. You may know that one of our partners in Germany, the Human Rights Centre in Cottbus, a former Stasi prison, organised a peace walk over Easter in Northern Iraq that I joined to show our support for people still suffering from live conflict and its effects there. It was truly a pilgrimage of wounding and hurts; of fear at times (we were walking near IS bases and Mosul, which we could hear being shelled); of confusion; of anger – why did one of our guides bring his AK47 one day and show it off? ...the answer to that is another whole sermon – but do talk to me afterwards if you would like to know more. But as we walked, we were journeying with the other. Christian, Muslim, Yazidi, Europeans, Kurds, Iraqis, refugees and those who had not fled from IS. And we provided this other space – it certainly wasn’t safe – but it was faith filled, hopeful, reconciling. It enabled us to hear and to respond in a different way. Ways that were creative, messy and sometimes grace filled. I took a small cross of nails that Bishop Christopher blessed here on Maundy Thursday and held a service on Good Friday in the village of Batnay, deserted and mostly destroyed by IS. The church desecrated. And I held a service of pain and lament there on Good Friday, placing the cross of nails on the broken and battered altar. But we went back to the same space on Easter Day – a space transformed, still unsafe and broken. Cleaned up as much as possible; Easter flowers; lots of small children in white; soldiers receiving their Easter communion; hundreds of people from the surrounding villages and refugees who had fled responding to this great call of Jesus. With joy and celebration in the midst of conflict and suffering. Go and make disciples. Go and be reconcilers.

This call to be reconcilers is our charism here in this space of suffering and rebuilding , our gift. Our gift from God and to Him; our gift to ourselves and to the other. We here can provide a different response to the current worldview of the binary treatment of difference. We can provide a space which is safe enough for people to gather to hear this invitation from Jesus in this way, and to best respond to it with their particular gifts. The concept of safe space is not what the Trinity means. No space is or can be entirely safe. We have seen that recently in the attacks in Manchester, and London, and Syria, and all over the world. But in our response to these events, we here can respond with a space which is faith filled, faith ful, just. A space to hear and to listen. To forgive and be forgiven. That is our gift. Let us share it, and let us take our place seriously because nothing else seems to be working in this uncertain world. We have an offering which is born out of our calling to be reconcilers. That is how we can respond to Jesus great call. That is how we can be disciples and enable others to join us. With both humility and the authority that we are given, let us go forth...and share this wonderful space we have with the world.