



GROWING TOGETHER IN HOPE

During the second half of the twentieth century the Coventry Cross of Nails became an internationally recognised symbol of the Christian story of reconciliation. Out of the destruction and despair of war it stood for a faith inspired response of forgiveness and hope in place of hate and vengeance.

Formed in 1974, the Community of the Cross of Nails is today a Christian network of some 160 churches and organisations in thirty countries drawn together by the story of Coventry Cathedral and sharing a common commitment to work and pray for peace, justice and reconciliation.

This story of a provincial English Cathedral, ruined and rebuilt as a witness to the Christian hope of resurrection, is about more than a building. It is about people of faith reaching out in obedience to Christ's command to love our enemies and forgive those who harm us.

Reconciliation in post-war Europe is one of the greatest political and social transformations in history. The contribution of Coventry Cathedral was to set such a transformation within the context of a Christian faith in which God's forgiveness is the source of healing and hope. In practical and creative ways enemies were made friends, and faith in a God whose heart is for the flourishing of the human family was proclaimed.

Christ in You - The Hope of Glory

The ministry of any Cathedral cannot be divorced from its building. The new Cathedral in Coventry, consecrated in 1962, and set alongside the ruined walls of the old, was itself a potent message of hope for a new beginning - for Britain and for Europe.

At its centre, behind the high altar, is Graham Sutherland's magnificent tapestry of Christ in Glory. Its imagery is taken from the Revelation of St John, showing Christ seated on the throne surrounded by the four living creatures.

Yet its significance for the ministry of Christian reconciliation goes to the heart of our motivation for our continued commitment to this task. In his letter to the Colossians Paul presents us with a vision of the cosmic Christ; the great mystery of the faith, Christ in us, the hope of glory - the one in whom God was reconciling all things.

If alienation from God and others, between peoples and from the earth, from our very self, is the profound dysfunction of human experience, then reconciliation in Christ is the response of a loving God full of grace and truth. This truly is God's mission to humanity and Paul invites us in his letter to the Corinthians to become God's ambassadors in this ministry of reconciliation.

As the Community of the Cross of Nails we are growing together into this hope. Hope that in the Christ of glory all things will be reconciled. That the day will come when the vision of a new heaven and a new earth will be realised, when the leaves of the tree growing in the new city of God will be for the healing of the nations.

This is what it means for us to be a Christian network committed to work and pray for the coming of the peaceable kingdom, making peace and doing justice as the daughters and sons of God.

Common Commitment - The Hope of our Calling

Each of our CCN Partners have their specific context and distinctive ethos within which they serve. So what does it mean for us to share together in the ministry of reconciliation?



As we look to the purpose of the Community of the Cross of Nails in its next phase of development, three things mark the practical expression of our common commitment to work and pray for peace, justice and reconciliation.

Few CCN Partners are involved in all three, but all of us should be living out a commitment to at least one in our place of ministry.

Healing the Wounds of History

Since its beginning in 1974 this has been the core purpose of the Community of the Cross of Nails. Such wounds were seen to be in three areas. The legacy of war and violent conflict, whose wounds if not tended carefully with forgiveness and justice, breed the contamination of vengeance and hate.

Then there is the exploitation of others resulting in poverty and disempowerment, especially in the relationship between the global north and south. Finally there is the deep scar humans are leaving on the earth through environmental pollution and consumer demand for the world's natural resources.

Nearly forty years since the formation of the Community these wounds of history still dominate the global agenda. Their impact is felt in all our lives. The *PAST* continues to haunt us. Nearly every contemporary conflict has deep roots in past wrongs. Many families still nurture deep hurts from displacement and violence.

Global poverty shames us in our failure to ensure a basic quality of life for all God's children. And the spectre of ecological disaster feeds a growing poverty gap and threatens new wars for scarce resources.

Such a ministry will demand our best and challenge our thinking and practice. Our contribution as the Community of the Cross of Nails will not solve the problems. But, for many of our CCN Partners, debating and practically addressing these issues is a beautiful symbol of the hope into which we grow together with Christ.

Learning to Live with Difference and Celebrate Diversity

Never has there been a period of human history when we know so much about the culture and beliefs of others. Never have those differences of identity and patterns of belonging been so relevant to our daily lives.

In our global towns and cities those who are different are no longer thousands of miles away but living in the same street. Our global economy ensures that when any region fails to live creatively with the tensions of such differences of race, tribe or belief, then we all feel the impact. We are truly a global village.

In every country and region where CCN Partners are found, questions of identity, belonging and the nature of a genuinely plural, just and inclusive society are critical to peace and stability. If we have nothing to say on such matters then our faith is irrelevant. If the Christian community cannot by example show how to live together with deep differences then we lack credibility.

If the church cannot be a place where we find grace to appropriately celebrate the rich diversity that God has created in human beings, then we have no hope to offer. Our *PRESENT* requires new patterns of community where equity, diversity and interdependence govern our interactions as individuals and groups.

So it is important for our ministry of reconciliation that we do not run away from debates over gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity. Nor should we stand aloof from the ongoing political questions of how we relate to the state and what it means to share public and civic space with those of different faiths and cultures.

Building a Culture of Peace

The most fundamental threat to the *FUTURE* of us all is the collective failure of moral imagination to find a way to resolve our differences and disputes without recourse to violence.



Our world lives in, and perversely thrives on, a constant state of war - gang war, war on terror, on drugs, on crime. Economies depend on the billions spent on the weapons of war and the training of those who would wage it on our behalf.

It is war which transforms the hardship of natural disaster, the failure of crops and the variances of climate into the catastrophic failure of governments and societies to support the life and health of their people. The famines and refugee crises of our times are of human making.

Over ninety percent of the casualties of our wars are civilians. The targeting of civilian populations through the terror of bombing and the horror of sexual violence has become a tactic of choice for those set on the eradication of those who, being different, are seen as less than human.

Responsibility for re-imagining an alternative to the fear and hopelessness under which millions live rests with us all. We need to commit the same energy and resources as those who wage war into making and building peace. We need to teach our young people the things that make for peace and the skills to seek peace and pursue it in their relationships.

During the long cold war in which the Cross of Nails became a symbol of hope, many ordinary people took imaginative and bold initiatives for peace within communities, among peoples and between nations. As a network of ordinary people in a world still seduced by violence, we need to find a new voice to challenge and change the prevalent culture of our time.

Community of Reconciliation - Our Gift of Hope

Together in the Community of the Cross of Nails we are conscious of the challenges that face our partners across the world. It is easy to be overwhelmed by the need. We are ordinary people and our resources are limited.

Yet the God who gives us the ministry of reconciliation does not leave us without hope. God simply asks us to be a reconciling and reconciled people, who in the ordinariness of our lives bear witness to the extraordinary gift of hope we are given in Christ. It will not be easy but as we grow together we can encourage and support each other to be part of all that the Spirit is doing to reconcile all things.

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