

# CCN Newsletter

## July/August 2024

Healing the Wounds of History  
Learning to live with Difference and Celebrate Diversity  
Building a Culture of Justice and Peace

### Youth Gathering in Berlin, 12-13th October

Sign up today! Young people 18-28, join us for discussion with our Berlin partners, including the **Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, the Chapel of Reconciliation, the Martin-Niemöller-Haus Berlin-Dahlem, Martin-Luther-Memorial-Church and the Garrison Church in Potsdam**, on whether and how the wounds of history can be healed, different forms of remembrance, and how we respond to rising populism.

FREE to attend, with homestay accommodation arranged - just cover your evening meals. Travel subsidies available - further information, programme and registration [here](#).



### CCN Sunday, 29th September

Celebrate the reconciliation work in your community this CCN Sunday! Liturgy and prayers to use will be available [here](#) from early August which you are welcome to share. At Coventry we will be welcoming Oliver Schuegraf, Bishop of Schaumberg-Lippe and Chair of the German CCN, to preach; we will introduce our new volunteer interns for the coming year; and will welcome a new CCN partner, [Friends of the Holy Land](#), and bless two further Crosses of Nails.

Do consider how you can use the day to remind people of the reconciliation going on in your community (or where there is an unmet need), and how vital all of our roles in promoting our three aims (at the top of the page) are in today's very conflicted world.



### Join other partners once a month on Zoom to pray the Litany of Reconciliation - all welcome!

- On the first Friday of the month at 11am UK time, led from May 2024 by our UK & Ireland partners :  
<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/6527541231?pwd=uAgknkerTxUiC4pvYyi3jiEWbDtNLO.1&omn=82688331914>  
Meeting ID: 652 754 1231 Passcode: 2Cor518

- On the third Tuesday of the month at midday US EST, led by our North American partners :  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82501462596?pwd=Q1ZmNjNGZmhuekiORld1RTVPT1liUT09>  
Meeting ID: 825 0146 2596 Passcode: 746888

#### Contact us at:

[alice.farnhill@coventry.anglican.org](mailto:alice.farnhill@coventry.anglican.org) | <https://www.facebook.com/CCNCoventry/>  
<https://www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/reconciliation/community-of-the-cross-of-nails>



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### Our first virtual Cross of Nails presentation!



We were so pleased to welcome the Denis Hurley Centre in Durban, South Africa, into the CCN on 27th June by less than traditional means, with the benefit of Facebook and Youtube live streaming! The Centre is instrumental in social justice and interfaith work and has a UK charitable wing, which was able to receive the Cross on the Centre's behalf, and ensure its safe onward transfer to South Africa. Patron Archbishop Bernard Longley, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham, and trustees Michael Perrier and Helen Coleman attended for the small ceremony following the litany at Coventry, and immediately afterwards was a second short streamed service from St Martin's Church in Durban, with both ends watching each other's services. A further short service will take place in Durban on the Cross' arrival.

**So, will we do more virtual Cross presentations in future?** Undoubtedly - however the need for a relationship of some kind to exist - Dean John had visited the Denis Hurley Centre in the 2010s - is important, as is a network of other CCN partners geographically close to the new partner, ideally. We will still aim to present Crosses of Nails face to face in the main.

### Welcoming Braunschweig Cathedral's Youth Choir

Its not often that we have groups of 80 visiting! But we were so honoured to have one of Germany's foremost youth choirs visit us on 1st July to sing Evensong as part of their UK tour. Braunschweig Cathedral itself joined the CCN early last year, and the Youth Choir consists of young people aged between 15 and 20 passionately singing classical German and international choral works from Baroque to Modern. As the finest and most experienced youth choir of Germany's largest evangelical institution for church music ("Die Braunschweiger Domsingschule") the choir goes on concert tours to European countries every summer. 2024's tour followed tours in Sweden in summer 2022 and the Czech Republic last year.



## This year's intern CCN trips to Scotland and Northern Ireland

**Each June our interns' CCN partner visits are often a major highlight in their year. and it's always a real joy to organise something different for them. Our very heartfelt thanks to those partners in the UK and Northern Ireland who have very generously hosted them this year!**

### Lagan College, Belfast and the Corrymeela Community, Ballycastle : Lea Rischmüller

When it came to organizing my intern CCN trip this year, I asked if I could go to Northern Ireland, which fortunately was made possible. I flew into Belfast and to Lagan College, where I was very well taken care of by Helen, one of the school chaplains. Even though I tried to broaden my knowledge about the history of Northern Ireland and the troubles beforehand, I didn't expect these topics to play such a big role when I'm actually there, but talking to different groups of students and staff I did have some very interesting conversations about how much or little the Troubles still influence their personal lives. These gave me so many new aspects to think about and after Helen drove me around Belfast and shared lots of stories about the city with me, I definitely was forming a new perspective on Northern Ireland. At the same time, I very much got the impression that while Lagan is obviously influenced by its founding history during the Troubles, overall it's a school trying to deal with the needs of different students in day-to-day school life, similar to any other. That isn't to say, their concept isn't extraordinary. I knew about them being an integrated school, but I also learned that they run so many extracurricular programs for the students, such as peace ambassadors or young leaders, which is so much more than any school that I know offers. One of those groups did a weekend seminar at Corrymeela, which was how I reached the second CCN partner I came to visit.

Corrymeela has their own voluntary internship program for young people from all over the world, so I just joined them and volunteered for the weekend. My job was mainly to help with hospitality tasks, which gave me the opportunity to get to know many of the staff, other volunteers and visitors and also the general spirit of the community. I liked that the place seemed to mean something different to every person I talked to. For some it's a spiritual home, some see it as a place of Christian worship and some just come up there to enjoy the nature and step away from their regular life. It has a special feel about it, which was welcoming and relaxing and fun, I can't really put it into better words.



*Corrymeela Community*

The atmosphere is probably a product of the lovely people working there but also the gorgeous surroundings. I was absolutely taken back by the nature that's all around it and I'm just very happy to have stayed here. Most likely, I would have never gotten to see it, if it wasn't for my internship at the Cathedral in Coventry. A big thank you to Alice, who managed to organize this trip for me and also to the lovely people at Lagan College and Corrymeela, who made me feel instantly welcomed and comfortable.

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### To the Eric Liddell Peace Garden at Morningside United Church, Edinburgh: Blanka Słowska

Taking a long train trip to Edinburgh is tiring but we saw some sun during my stay (which as I heard is quite an unusual thing in Scotland). My new friend, Mary, showed me some key places in the Scottish capital city, and I spent time with the Eric Liddell Community located at Holy Corner, Morningside. I found out a bit more about the history-making 1924 Olympic gold medallist and missionary thanks to a small display, and saw for myself that the community's mission is bringing people together, enhancing their health and well-being and positively impacting their lives. Visiting the Eric Liddell Peace Garden in the grounds of Morningside United Church, Mary's initiative, was part of my visit, and I planted some yellow begonias at the garden entrance. Truly, a unique place...

Later I joined a tea gathering with some of the pensioners in the community, and was so honoured to be part of this, talking with patients with dementia. How fragile human life is. My final visit, back in England, to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, was breathtaking, and a unique and lasting experience.

My deepest words of thanks firstly to God, secondly to Coventry Cathedral, especially Alice, which made it possible for me to visit Scotland, thirdly to Mary – her hospitality, and all the conversations that we shared made this experience honestly unforgettable.



Blanka and Mary in Edinburgh

## News from ICONS (International Cross of Nails Schools)

We have welcomed two new Roman Catholic Schools in the ICONS family! Both schools have pupils aged between 3 and 11 and are involved in so many projects, including peer mentoring programmes. They teach pupils and staff to use the language of peace, reconciliation and forgiveness. One school has organised their learning around these 7 themes: the dignity of the human person, family and community, solidarity and the common good, rights and responsibilities, and the dignity of work and stewardship.

Our 11-18year olds' Peace Ambassadors training programme that we ran over 3 days looked at current peace building practice and how to transform conflict. See some of the students' definitions of reconciliation [here](#):

We also welcomed Patrick Cordery from ICON School Somerset College in Cape Town to the Cathedral to work with the ICONS team for a month. More to follow on what he got up to !



For more information, take a look at the ICONS-specific newsletter [here](#) or email: [Jessica.Weale@Coventry.Anglican.org](mailto:Jessica.Weale@Coventry.Anglican.org)

**Keep up with us through our social media and our website:**

[ICONS Facebook](#)

[ICONS Instagram](#)

<https://www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/reconciliation/icon-schools>



## Thought for the Month July/August 2024

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### A visit to St Paul's, Odessa

Recently I was invited to travel to Ukraine to visit our CCN partner of St Paul's Lutheran Cathedral in Odessa. I had been there before, in 2013, my first year here as Dean, when they joined the Community of the Cross of Nails. At the time that was largely in recognition of a church which had been renewed and reopened for worship after the end of the Soviet era. In truth, it was not really clear to me how joining the CCN was going to be of significance to them, but not long after, when civil unrest began to break out in Ukraine alongside the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, we heard that members of the church were taking their cross of nails out onto street corners where Christians from many different churches gathered around it to pray for peace.

That was before the full scale invasion began in February 2022. The new Pastor of the church, Alexander Gross, asked me to visit last summer, on the 170th anniversary of the church, but it didn't in the end prove possible. The invitation was renewed this summer, this time through a German deacon, Arne Bolt, who was spending some sabbatical months in the church. Arne is on the board of the German Community of the Cross of Nails, and has been a visitor here in Coventry, and I have met him in his home city of Rostock in Northern Germany. The German CCN had supported the installation of a plinth and art work for the Cross of Nails in the church, and I was asked to go and bless the installation, and spend a little time with the church and civic community.



It turned out to be just the right time to visit. Sometimes things happen like that. Pastor Gross's two daughters were back home from their studies in America and were able to translate, and the whole family were leaving the next day for a youth camp in the Czech republic. Arne was able to collect me from the airport in Moldova and take me over the border to Odessa. Several members of the local Christian and civic community were present for my presentation - and the next day also saw the renewing of Russian attacks across the country.

Sometimes as peacemakers our task is simply to go, to show solidarity and to bear witness. I bear witness to two things: one, that life goes on in Odessa in a way that seems very normal. As someone there said, we are not spending all our time picking our way around bomb craters. We had a lovely meal outside in the summer evening, and strolled on the beautiful tree-lined promenade above the port, listening to street musicians and enjoying the atmosphere. Two, that underneath that is a constant existential threat of attack, and that on my second evening my sleep was more or less destroyed by sirens and the sound of explosions in the middle distance.

In the midst of my presentation about Coventry's work in peace and reconciliation on Friday morning I was interrupted by Vladimir, one of the organisers, to say there had been notification of a missile attack, and did I want to go down to the bomb shelter. I didn't really know what to say, so I asked what they wanted to do - we'll just stay here, they said, but it's up to you. I said I'd stay too. Later, over lunch, I was told how much that meant to them. "We have to be here," they said. "This is our home, it's where our families are. You didn't have to be here, but you chose to come - and that means so much to us."



## Thought for the Month

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I'm not a hero. It did not feel especially unsafe for me to travel to Ukraine. I'd asked my host Arne, and Lesya, my Coventry contact, if I was being foolish travelling into a War Zone - it is a red zone on the government website, where we are strongly advised not to travel. But they had told me it wasn't foolish. And everything we do is a risk. So we make our decisions on the basis of what is the right thing to do, and in conversation with those we are closest to. My wife Ricarda said, Of course you have to go - or what on earth is the CCN for, if it's not to accept a request to be with those who are caught up in conflict?

So, I went to bear witness, to be with them and to bring their story back to Coventry. But I also went to bear witness from Coventry, from our story, to them. What do we have to say, from our history? We have two things to say: One is the existential reality that God's will is for the reconciling of all things. It's that reality witnessed to by Provost Howard, the leader of the Cathedral when it was bombed, in his words on Christmas Day 1940, "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." Yet to simply speak of reconciliation in that context can seem like a call for appeasement, a modern Neville Chamberlaine call to give in to the aggressor - and many in Ukraine feel or fear that is what the west is asking of them.

That's why we need also to remember the other thing that Provost Howard said in that same radio broadcast: "We are bracing ourselves to finish the tremendous job of saving the world from tyranny and cruelty ... we are in brave spirits, and can wish the empire a courageous Christmas." As I was researching this sermon, I realised that I have usually removed those lines from presentations. In fact they are in the very same paragraph as his repudiation of revenge. The thing is, that whilst speaking of the bigger hope of reconciliation, and holding on to that as our ultimate goal, what we may have do right now is to fight, really fight, against evil, and to defend ourselves against an aggressor, even whilst we hold on to the ultimate hope of peace.

It was really important to say this in Ukraine. We cannot always achieve reconciliation when we want to. My hosts in Odessa told me that my fine words about gathering around a table to courageously explore our differences, to use art to bring us together, might have been fine before 2014 when Russia invaded Crimea, but now something else was called for. That something else is peace with justice. We can only really be in dialogue with those who are willing to recognise the truth, to take responsibility for their actions. Resurrection and Reconciliation are the two Coventry key words. Another of my hosts said to me, "I have a third R for you: Responsibility". It was a point well made: Resurrection, Reconciliation and Responsibility will help us move forward towards Peace with Justice, which is today the third of our CCN priorities.

**The Very Reverend John Witcombe,**  
Dean of Coventry

*Extract from sermon preached on 14.07.24.*

