

# **From the Ashes of Coventry Cathedral**

## **Community of the Cross of Nails**

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Extract from the Anglican Peace and Justice Network report 'Community Transformation: Violence and the Church's Response', September/October 2007

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### **Cross of Nails Centers**

On the 14th November 1940, much of the City of Coventry was reduced to rubble by German bombs. The Cathedral, at the heart of the city, burned with it. In the terrible aftermath that followed, Provost Howard wrote the words "Father forgive" on the smoke-blackened wall of the sanctuary. Two of the charred beams which had fallen in the shape of a cross were set on the altar and three of the medieval nails were bound into the shape of a cross.

The Cross of Nails is a very powerful and inspirational symbol worldwide of reconciliation and peace. After the Second World War, Crosses of Nails were presented to Kiel, Dresden and Berlin, cities shattered by Allied bombing: Out of the ashes grew a trust and partnership between Coventry and the German cities.

There are now 160 Cross of Nails Centers around the world, all emanating from this early, courageous vision, and all working for peace and reconciliation within their own communities and countries. This has no boundaries: it may focus on issues of politics, race, religion, economics, sexual orientation or personal; it can have broad and far-reaching national consequences, or it can make just a small – nonetheless significant – difference to people's lives. Centers can be churches, reconciliation centers, prisons, NGOs and schools, any body of people who have a heart and a need to pursue reconciliation in their own lives and the lives of others. The Centers in Germany and the USA are administered by national boards; others range over all continents – from Africa to Australia, Europe to Asia: truly a global network, with Centers being encouraged to support each other – practically and prayerfully.

### **Associate Centers of Reconciliation**

We also have partner organizations, from other faiths or working for interfaith relations around the world, and to them we present a miniature of the sculpture "Reconciliation," which is found in the Cathedral ruins, in recognition of their work towards healing wounds.

### **A Unique Ministry**

- In South Africa, the CCN centers have been focal points for sharing some of the painful memories and wounds of apartheid: they have been inspired entrepreneurial, health and land reclamation initiatives, and help to cross the boundaries of the social/religious/cultural divide.

- In Nigeria and Burundi, the CCN and associate centers play a vital part in the exit strategy from areas of intense interfaith tension and conflict.
- In the Middle East, our centers in Israel and Palestine are working towards a greater mutual understanding between Jews and Arabs.
- In the USA, where there are 43 centers, there are many active projects focusing on reconciliation within the community, teaching the ethics of mediation and coalition building. Some of the parishes are partnered with ones in South Africa, Sierra Leone and Cuba, offering practical and financial support.
- In Europe, Germany has the most active centers (40), many of whom are particularly committed to projects in Central and Eastern Europe (in Slovakia, Bosnia, Belarus and Romania). The UK is revitalizing its own collective ministry nationally and internationally, in churches, NGOs, prisons and schools. Our four centers in Northern Ireland – the Corrymeela and Cornerstone Communities, Lagan College and the Cross Fire Trust – are of world renown in their work with the Protestant and Catholic peoples, providing leadership, inspiration and a safe haven where trust and understanding can be fostered.

**[www.crossofnails.org](http://www.crossofnails.org)**

## **Litany of Reconciliation**

*(for other language versions see [www.crossofnails.org/litany](http://www.crossofnails.org/litany))*

ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALLEN SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD

The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class

FATHER FORGIVE

The covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their own

FATHER FORGIVE

The greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste the earth

FATHER FORGIVE

Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others

FATHER FORGIVE

Our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugee

FATHER FORGIVE

The lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women and children

FATHER FORGIVE

The pride that leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God

FATHER FORGIVE

BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER, TENDERHEARTED, FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, AS GOD IN CHRIST FORGAVE YOU