



"Healing the wounds of history, learning to live with difference and celebrate diversity, and building a culture of peace."

COVENTRY'S STORY OF THE CROSS OF NAILS

On the night of 14 November 1940, the city of Coventry was devastated by fire bombs dropped by the German Luftwaffe. The ancient St. Michael's Church, founded in 1326 and serving as the Cathedral in downtown Coventry, burned through the night. The anger and hatred of war totally destroyed all but the church's foyer. And England was forced to respond as it entered into World War II.

In the cleanup days immediately following the bombing, the cathedral stonemason, Jock Forbes, noticed that two of the charred medieval roof timbers had fallen in the shape of a cross. As if to make a grave of the mound of destruction, the timbers were set up in the ruins and placed on an altar of rubble. A local priest, the Rev. Arthur Wales, with the same intuition of death, retrieved three hand-forged medieval nails from the smouldering beams and fashioned them into a cross for the altar. As a Christian response to the devastation, the then Cathedral Provost, Richard Howard, inscribed the moving words of Jesus' utterance from the Cross, "Father Forgive," on what was left of the Sanctuary wall. He made a commitment not to revenge, but to forgiveness and reconciliation with those responsible. A month later, using a national radio broadcast from the cathedral ruins on Christmas Day 1940, Provost Howard declared that when the war was over, he would work with those who had been enemies "to build a kinder, more Christ-child-like world."

And WWII raged on. By 1945 the Allies had bombed many cities in Germany, ultimately bringing the war in Europe to an end. In the post-conflict Europe of the 1950's, while Coventry undertook construction of its new St. Michael's Cathedral alongside the ruins of the former church, a likeness of the original Cross of Nails was presented as a symbol of peace and forgiveness to Lutheran churches in Kiel, Dresden, Berlin and other cities destroyed by Allied bombings. It was through these churches that trust and partnerships between England and Germany grew and former enemies became friends. The Cross of Nails with its discipline through prayer and dialogue reached out to other areas of global conflict and eventually became a powerful, inspirational symbol of forgiveness and reconciliation throughout the world.

The *Community of the Cross of Nails* ("CCN") was founded in the 1970's by the Very Rev. H.C. N. (Bill) Williams, a successor Provost of Coventry Cathedral. The CCN is an international, ecumenical fellowship of individuals and groups committed to the ministry of reconciliation. In work related to the ministry of reconciliation in Ireland, the CCN was associated with both Protestants and Catholics. While the dominant constituency of the CCN is found among Episcopalians and Anglicans, members also come from Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and United Church of Christ churches. By its nature as a community of reconciliation, CCN is inclusive of all Christian traditions and is open to dialogue with all the other great world religions.

The Cross of Nails is coming to Holy Trinity on Sunday, April 17, 2017. As we become the newest member to this Community network of some 200 Partners around the world, the Dean of Coventry Cathedral will be asking the congregation of Holy Trinity to affirm its commitment to a ministry of reconciliation to achieve peace and justice between people and nations through prayer, penitence, and humble, loving service to our enemies and to those different from us. As we go about fulfilling that commitment "to build a kinder, more Christ-child-like world," please check in frequently with our own rapidly developing website www.holytrinitygmv.org, located under Parish Ministries/Cross of Nails Reconciliation Ministry, and link into the other CCN and CCN-NA websites referenced therein.