

Excerpts from Holy Trinity's Application for Membership in the Community of the Cross of Nails

What is a Cross of Nails and How is Holy Trinity Connected?

For many years Holy Trinity has enjoyed its Foyers Ministry. From among its 1,182 baptized members, some parishioners join "Foyers" and are organized into small groups who meet and dine monthly in each others' homes on a six- month, sign-up rotating basis. There's no agenda, just good home-cooked food, fellowship, and time to get to know each other better. The dinner evenings conclude with a recitation of the Litany from the Cross of Nails. The historical fact of Coventry Cathedral's 11/14/1940 fire-bombing is known to these Foyers groups. But the significance and knowledge of Coventry's CCN aftermath in building not only a new Cathedral but also its world-wide Reconciliation and Peace Ministry had not been generally known at Holy Trinity in Gainesville, Florida, until parishioner Marilyn Peterson, through her work with Cuba, visited the Cathedral several years ago and brought news of CCN home to Holy Trinity.

Marilyn Peterson accompanied Bishop Delgado to the Community of the Cross of Nails' Gathering in September 2012. Invited by the Very Rev. Mark Pendleton, President of CCN-NA, Marilyn participated in the workshops, prayers, activities and festivities of the magnificent program hosted by the Reconciliation and Peace Team to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the consecration of the new Coventry Cathedral. Enticed by President Pendleton, Marilyn Peterson joined the Board of Directors of CCN-NA and became its Secretary at a short CCN-NA meeting held on the last day of the Gathering in Coventry. With encouragement from CCN and with the approval of the Vestry, Holy Trinity has applied and been accepted as a Cross of Nails parish.

How Does Holy Trinity Qualify?

First: Holy Trinity's History Connects with Coventry Cathedral:

Holy Trinity was established in 1868 in downtown Gainesville, Florida, not far from the seminary that later became the University of Florida, the state's flagship institution of higher education. By 1907 Holy Trinity's congregation had moved into its grey stone Neo-Gothic style church on NE First Street. With its wooden altar and furnishings, hand-carved by German artists, and its magnificent stained glass Ascension window in the narthex, the edifice became a historic site in Gainesville and a beloved church home to thousands over the next 84 years.

And then came our day of tragic loss, January 21, 1991. Our beloved church was utterly destroyed by fire...not by acts of war as in Coventry's history, but pathetically by the hands of a mentally ill arsonist. We mourned and sobbed in bonded grief, watching the fire fighters battle the fire to their heroic best. But for the bell tower, the sanctuary suffered a total loss.

But almost instantly, hope arose from the smoky remains as the still stunned congregation remembered



that the glorious Ascension window had been removed from the building for repairs just six weeks before the fire. Our precious treasure of Christ Ascending had been spared! Indeed, we would rebuild! Indeed, Christ Ascending would come again! Lead by a compassionate Rector, the Rev. David Pittman, a bold and determined Vestry decided to rebuild, not in the more affluent suburbs of Gainesville, but on the same spot in downtown Gainesville, where the urban challenges of poverty and homelessness tended to flock, where Holy Trinity could more readily

“demonstrate God's love and mercy to all.”



The next four years witnessed a robust church and community effort to reconstruct and renovate a new and healthy church of similar Neo Gothic design. The First United Methodist Church of Gainesville, three blocks up the street, kindly rearranged their own worship schedules to share their church space to accommodate Holy Trinity's weekly services, and special lasting bonds of friendship developed with our neighbor Methodists. On the Saturday Eve of Pentecost 1995 the two church families processed from the Methodist church to 100 NE First Street to jointly celebrate the dedication and consecration of Holy Trinity's resurrected home. June 3, 1995 marks the sunny day that parishioners could see the reinstalled (and miraculously "passed over") Ascension window shedding its

brilliantly bejeweled light and love of Christ in triumph over hate and destruction.

Second: Holy Trinity's Aspects of Reconciliation:

Having healed our own wounds of hurtful history in 1991-1995, Holy Trinity became ready to commence anew its mission in downtown Gainesville and expand on its Outreach Ministries. During the 1990's, Streetside Coffee became "Streetside Breakfast" every Sunday morning for the poor, homeless and Florida-bound transients. The Holy Trinity Child Caring Center, begun formally in 1974, expanded and continued throughout our reconstruction, providing daycare to local children. The "Downtown Ministry," a long-standing ministry providing compassionate assistance to the poor, was reorganized in 2009 by Rev. Loch and its leaders to aid the same target community; assistance is given in obtaining necessary legal IDs to access social services for basic needs and in making referrals to indigent health care facilities, including to our neighboring Methodist Church's medical clinic for the needy. Another ministry, "Family Promise," opens the church building to house, feed, and provide daily transportation for homeless transitioning families with children, for a week at a time, four times per year, in rotation with other participating churches. As well, various Pastoral Care Ministries provide solace to those needing comfort and reconciliation in their own lives: "Grief Support," "Kairos Prison Ministry," to name just two. Moreover, several of our Parish Life Ministries lend support to carry out our reconciliation missions — specifically "Foyers" in prayer and "St. Elizabeth's Circle," whose annual Holiday Bazaar donates all proceeds to our Outreach missions. Visit our website www.holytrinitygmv.org for more information on these and additional ministries within Holy Trinity. In anticipation of receiving our Cross of Nails and welcoming the Dean of Coventry Cathedral, The Very Rev. John J. Witcombe, to Holy Trinity on April 17, 2016, our newest "Cross of Nails Reconciliation Ministry" has now been posted to our website under Parish Ministries/Christian Faith Formation.

Two Ministries with International Implications:

There are two ministries at Holy Trinity of international impact that warrant special comment for purposes of CCN Partnership: (a) The Rev. Louanne Loch's leadership and Holy Trinity's support in the 2010 creation of the Alachua County Committee on Interfaith Relations; and (b) Holy Trinity's taking a leading role in the Cuba Companionship Ministry of the Diocese of Florida.

A. Holy Trinity's Response to Threats of Global Violence Sparked by Religious Differences:

During the summer of 2010, Terry Jones, the then pastor of the Dove World Outreach Center located in Gainesville, Florida, announced his plans to hold a Quran burning event at the Center. His expressed purpose was to commemorate the ninth anniversary of the tragic loss of lives and property that occurred at the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001. For weeks the national media reported on the planned burning. This caused some groups in the Middle East to warn that loss of lives would occur if such an event took place.

In quick response to the rising tensions in Gainesville and around the world due to the international media coverage over this planned event, the Rev. Louanne Loch invited 21 leaders of all faiths to gather at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church on September 8, 2010, for a Peace and Unity service. In her opening remarks to more than 300 attendees, the Rev. Loch said, “We gather together today to reinforce and pray for one another and stand against those who would lead us along a path of hate and fear.”

The Head of the Islamic Society of Central Florida, Imam Muhammad Musri, together with a Roman Catholic priest, a Jewish Rabbi, a Sikh representative, and ministers from various Protestant Churches offered prayers and read from the Quran, the Bible and the Torah. The Mayor of Gainesville lit a unity candle, and representative hymns and patriotic songs were sung, lead by Holy Trinity’s organist Dr. John T. Lowe at the Visser-Rowland organ. This service brought a sense of peace and reconciliation to our community and to the world at large.

The international media covered the Peace and Unity service, including *CNN* and *Le Monde* of France. Our local newspaper, *The Gainesville Sun Live* (GS Live), produced a video of the entire service and published an article the next day, September 9, 2010, entitled “Area Interfaith Service Has Message of Peace,” written by staff writer Chad Smith and accompanied by the following photo by staff photographer Doug Finger, shown below:

“A group of local religious leaders and City of Gainesville Mayor Craig Lowe sing during an Inter-Faith Prayer Service for Unity at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Gainesville Wednesday, September 8, 2010. As sunlight beamed in through a stained-glass window showing Jesus risen in the air with angels, a Muslim woman in a hijab sat with her child in the back of an Episcopal church - their place of worship for at least Wednesday afternoon.”

The Imam later met with Dove World's senior pastor, Terry Jones. Ultimately, the Quran burning scheduled for 9/11/10 in Gainesville did NOT take place. From the clerics invited to the unity service at



Holy Trinity, the Rev. Loch together with the Rev. Larry Reimer of the United Church of Gainesville, created, organized and co-founded the Alachua County Committee on Interfaith Relations. Later Peace and Unity services have been held. Terry Jones has continued with his public anti-Muslim declarations, but he ultimately moved his Dove World Outreach Center out of Gainesville several years ago to another location in Florida. Although no longer Co-Chair, the Rev. Loch remains active with the area’s Interfaith Relations organization.

B. Holy Trinity and its part in the Cuba Companionship Ministry of the Diocese of Florida:

In 1985 Bishop Frank Cerveny of the Diocese of Florida and Bishop Emilio Hernandez of the Diocese of Cuba formed and founded the Florida-Cuba Companionship Ministry to bridge the then 25-year isolation gap in relations caused by the Castro Revolution and America’s resulting cold war and embargo against the communist government of Cuba. The two Bishops paired Florida churches with Cuban churches and encouraged the “companion churches” to build lasting relations in solidarity with each other and to walk the Christian journey with our abandoned and isolated Episcopal brothers and sisters, suffering in Cuba from religious suppression, economic austerity, and political adversities between our two countries.



Holy Trinity's companion church : San Juan Bautista Episcopal Church in Florencia, Ciego de Avila Province, Cuba. Photos by Marilyn Peterson and Gerardo Logildes Coroas

In 1985 Holy Trinity was blessed with its companion church assignment, San Juan Bautista (SJB) in Florencia in the Province of Ciego de Avila in central Cuba, and began making annual visits to San Juan Bautista during the first few years of the new millennium. Holy Trinity has also actively participated with Florida Diocesan Cuba Committee, whose member churches navigate the complicated political impediments of the still-continuing US embargo and help each other “get our missionaries and goods to Cuba, nonetheless.” Close bonds continue to develop not only between parishioners of Holy Trinity and San Juan Bautista, but also with many parishioners of our own large Diocese of Florida. The Florida Diocesan Cuba Committee is now, in 2016, celebrating its 30th Anniversary of Ministry with Cuba, counts 39 churches in companionship with the Diocese of Cuba's 49 churches and missions, and is Co-Chaired by Holy Trinity's Marilyn Peterson, an attorney and former Spanish teacher, together with Dr. Julia Sullivan, a current Spanish teacher, of Holy Comforter Episcopal Church in Tallahassee, Florida.

In November 2010 Holy Trinity's participation in the Diocesan Ministry jumped to a higher, more active national and international level when Cuba's *first diocesan woman Bishop*, The Rt. Rev. Griselda Delgado del Carpio, was installed at the Cathedral Santísima Trinidad in Havana. Bishop Delgado asked Marilyn Peterson to interpret for her on many of her upcoming travels required by her episcopacy to the United States. With encouragement from the Rev. Loch and her home church Holy Trinity, Marilyn has since then assisted Bishop Griselda in coordinating her trips, accompanying her to the TEC Conventions of 2012 and 2015, the 50th Anniversary Gathering of the Cross of Nails in 2012, the Enthronement of Archbishop Justin Welby in 2013.



What will be required of Holy Trinity as we commit to CCN?

Our Commitment:

To Share in Prayer and to Grow with Coventry Cathedral within the CCN Network:

Holy Trinity is committed to pray humbly for peace and justice between peoples and nations, to treat our enemies with kindness in healing the sorrows of oppression and the wounds of war. The Holy Trinity Episcopal Family in Gainesville, Florida, feels called to a ministry of reconciliation in the Coventry Way. We plan to fulfill our commitments and to grow with Coventry Cathedral within the CCN Network in the following ways:

- ❖ Through prayer centered on CCN's "Father, Forgive" Litany. We will incorporate the Litany into our prayers for the people and into our weekly healing services on mid-day Wednesdays. We will continue to close our Foyers dinners and lunches with recitation of the Litany. We pray for our CCN Partners and for those listed and calendared on the CCN website;
- ❖ Through continuation of Holy Trinity's active ministries dealing with heated issues of diversity, until justice and peace on those issues can be achieved, with God's help;
- ❖ Through study of current diversity issues in our local community and providing a neutral place and space for listening and facilitating dialogue among those with diversity differences;
- ❖ Through contact with other CCN Partners in our geographic area or via the internet and will encourage membership on the Board of our regional branch of CCN in North America, CCN-NA;
- ❖ Through attendance at planned CCN Gatherings and encouraging group or individual pilgrimages to Coventry, England. We are also interested in preparing and nominating some of our young parishioners for internship opportunities to serve with the Reconciliation and Peace Team at Coventry Cathedral;
- ❖ Through regular periodic financial support to CCN via CCN-NA; and
- ❖ Through preservation of CCN's heritage in building a culture of peace by teaching our children at an early age the principles of CCN and the Coventry Way. We are very proud of our new Holy Trinity Episcopal School of Gainesville (HTESG), serving as an early education and development center in downtown Gainesville for infants through age 5.

On April 17, 2016, the Very Rev. John Witcombe, Dean of Coventry Cathedral, will present Holy Trinity with a Cross of Nails, recently blessed at the Cathedral in England. As a member of the Community of the Cross of Nails, Holy Trinity welcomes the challenge to foster reconciliation through the work of our ministries and in communion with our fellowman.