



# PRESS INFORMATION



<b>To:</b>	News Desk	<b>From:</b>	Christine Doyle
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**As Coventry marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Coventry Blitz, the Cathedral shows its support for the people of Paris following the attack on their city.**

A message from the Reverend Canon Dr Sarah Hills, Canon for Reconciliation

“The appalling events in Paris last night once again remind us of the depravity of which humanity is capable. Our heartfelt prayers go out to all those who have lost loved ones, to those who have been injured and traumatised in these attacks.

“There is a terrible irony for us here in Coventry that this attack occurred hours after the Cathedral hosted ‘Rising – a global peace forum’. Hundreds of delegates gathered to investigate, debate and try to understand just these sorts of dreadful events and how best to respond.

“Today is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing in WW2 of Coventry, when we commemorate the destruction that happened here on the night of November 14<sup>th</sup>. On the morning after the bombing, Provost Howard the leader of the Cathedral community, stepped into the smouldering ruins of the cathedral and said two words – ‘Father, forgive’. This was an acknowledgment that we are all in need of God’s forgiveness – victim and perpetrator alike, and so our work of reconciliation and peace began. It is equally imperative today that we respond to darkness with light; despair with hope; conflict with reconciliation.

“Today we find ourselves again on the morning after terrible destruction and loss of life, and we need to respond not out of hatred or revenge, but out of a genuine desire to seek peace and reconciliation. As Paris is ‘locked down’, so we must ‘open up’ as we strive to maintain the tiny chink of light in the darkest of places, which is the light and hope of God.

“In Coventry Cathedral we have opened a ‘Book of Hope’ as a sign of this light. We invite all communities to join with us in seeking this hope of peace. As we seek in the next days to live out this message of ‘Father, forgive’, we offer the opportunity to join with us in our communities, our places of worship, our towns and cities, to hold a human peace chain, to encircle of communities in hope. Let us stand together – people of all faiths and of none – and commit to showing that there is another way, a better way to live together in peace.”

## The Coventry Litany of Reconciliation

*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 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 which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God  
FATHER FORGIVE

*Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

**-ends-**

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Notes to Editors

### **The Reverend Canon Dr Sarah Hills, Canon for Reconciliation**

Our Canon for Reconciliation Ministry, Sarah, was born in South Africa, brought up in Northern Ireland, and has lived in Sheffield since the mid 1980's. She qualified in medicine and worked as a psychiatrist, specialising in psychotherapy. She was ordained in 2007, and has most recently held the post of the Bishop of Sheffield's Adviser in Pastoral Care and Reconciliation.

She has recently been awarded her doctoral thesis in the theology of reconciliation at the University of Durham, and is a Visiting Fellow of St John's College, Durham. She is married to Richard, a GP, and they have two teenage boys, Matthew and Jack.

### **Coventry Cathedral Ministry of Reconciliation**

Coventry Cathedral is one of the world's oldest religious-based places for reconciliation. Following the destruction of the Cathedral in 1940, Provost Howard made a commitment not to revenge, but to forgiveness and reconciliation with those responsible.

Using a national radio broadcast from the Cathedral Ruins on Christmas Day 1940 he 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.'

It was this moral and prophetic vision which led to Coventry Cathedral's development as a world Centre for Reconciliation, which over the years has provided inspiration and support to many Christians addressing ongoing conflict in contemporary society. A major part of this ministry was the establishment of the [Community of the Cross of Nails](#), which today is an international network of over 170 CCN Partners in 35 countries committed to a shared ministry of reconciliation.

The Cathedral's work for reconciliation has involved it in some of the world's most difficult and longstanding areas of conflict. Building on this experience we are committed to develop our ministry as a centre for excellence to resource the church in the practical outworking of reconciliation as an integral part of Christian worship, witness and discipleship

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

The Coventry Cross of Nails is recognised around the world as a symbol of peace and reconciliation. Formed with three medieval nails from the destroyed St Michael's Cathedral, it embodies its ministry of hope and friendship with Germany in the years after 1945.

With the rebuilding of Coventry Cathedral in 1962, the Cross of Nails (the original is embedded in the High Altar Cross) became the focal point of a growing international ministry of reconciliation.

Today CCN Partners are to be found in many of the world's major conflict areas. They include churches and community groups, as well as peacebuilding and reconciliation agencies.

### **Why a 'Cross of Nails'?**

Following the bombing of Coventry's medieval cathedral on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 1940, a local priest, the Reverend Arthur Wales, created a cross by binding together three of the huge medieval nails that littered the debris. The Cross of Nails has become a poignant symbol of Coventry's international ministry of reconciliation.