



The Manual

of The **Community** of

the **Cross of Nails**

in North America



Revised 2006

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Foreword

This manual of The Community of the Cross of Nails (CCN) is a response to those who have asked for guidelines and support materials to help them in their reconciliation ministries. It tells how one may join the CCN and outlines the Common Discipline and other practices encouraged for membership.

Because differences exist among individuals and groups, the CCN offers this manual as a catalyst and not as a limitation. For example, the Common Discipline may be revised according to particular needs and local custom, and should be supported by spiritual direction, retreats, and workshops.

Further resources can be found at the back of the manual and at www.ccn-northamerica.org.



The Litany of Reconciliation for North America

All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (*Romans 3:23*)

The hatred which divides nation from nation,
race from race, class from class, *O God, forgive.*

The covetous desires of people and nations
to possess what is not their own, *O God, forgive.*

The greed which exploits the labors of men and women
and lays waste the Earth, *O God, forgive.*

Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others, *O God, forgive.*

Our indifference to the plight of the homeless and
the refugee, *O God, forgive.*

The lust which dishonors the bodies of men, women,
and children, *O God, forgive.*

The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves, and
not in you, *O God, forgive.*

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one
another as God in Christ forgave you. (*Ephesians 4:32*)

*(This litany is based on the seven capital sins. It was written in
1959, and since that year it has been recited every Friday at
noon before the Altar of Reconciliation in the sanctuary of the
old Coventry Cathedral.)*





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Introduction

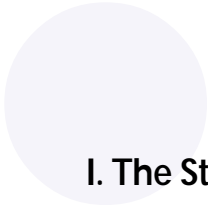
The Community of the Cross of Nails (CCN) is an international, ecumenical fellowship of individuals and groups who are committed to the ministry of reconciliation. This means reconciliation with oneself, one's family, the local community, the worldwide community, and God. The goal of the CCN is to bear witness to the power of forgiveness, to build new life out of the world's brokenness.

By its nature as a community of reconciliation, the CCN is ecumenical in its composition, *i.e.*, inclusive of all Christian traditions and open to dialogue with all the great world religions. The original work of the CCN, the rebuilding of the bombed hospital in Dresden, Germany, linked the Anglican Cathedral of Coventry, England, with the Evangelical Church (Lutheran) in Germany. Later it was the CCN's association with the Benedictine Roman Catholic Monastery in Ottobeuren, Germany, that led to the use of the Benedictine Rule of Life for lay people as the basis for the Common Discipline. 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, members also come from Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and United Church of Christ churches.

The CCN was founded by the Very Reverend H.C.N. (Bill) Williams, one time Provost and Provost Emeritus of Coventry Cathedral. He worked tirelessly to show the world possibilities for peace and reconciliation. His life was a faithful witness to the theology of reconciliation and laid a solid foundation for the work of the CCN.

The CCN promotes a disciplined spiritual life that couples prayer and study with active ministry. Much of its work is carried out by volunteers.



I. The Story of The Community of the Cross of Nails

The work of the CCN is linked to and inspired by the reconciliation between the English and the Germans, which took place after the bombing of Coventry in November, 1940, and the bombing of Dresden, Germany in 1945. However, as Provost Williams writes in *Order My Steps in Thy Way*, the beginning of the CCN can actually be found in 1326 when “medieval craftsmen hammered into the oak beams of the roof of the ancient St. Michael’s Church in Coventry, nails hand-forged by unknown medieval town smiths. In 1940 that ancient church, then a Cathedral, was burned in the anger and hatred of war.

“Those 14th century nails were strewed amidst the remains of the Cathedral. As if to make a grave of the mound of destruction, the Cathedral’s stonemason tied together two partly consumed beams into the shape of a cross and placed it among the rubble; a local priest, with the same intuition of death, made a cross of three of the ancient nails. Inevitably, the Christian response to the devastation was the utterance of Jesus from the Cross: ‘Father Forgive.’ The new Cathedral, built next to the ruins, now grows like a limb from the old, and the heart of the Christian religion is proclaimed in the rhythm of ‘Crucifixion-Resurrection through Forgiveness.’ ”

Today, the Cross of Nails stands as a world-renowned ecumenical symbol of reconciliation and hope.



II. The Ministry of Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a vital ingredient in the intimate relationships between individuals, an essential in the maintenance of community, and an absolute necessity for the development of world understanding. Most of the work of reconciliation has to do with the creation of dialogue. Therefore, the CCN does not take sides in a conflict. Rather, the CCN sees itself called to enter the chaos, stand in the middle, and create “in-between space.” People may meet one another in this space, find a safe place, and establish common ground so reconciliation can occur.

Members of CCN are involved in reconciliation projects in their own communities that bring healing where needed and stand as a sign of Jesus’ ministry to the world, showing that in Christ all things are made new. Members also recognize that they are more likely to inspire a spirit of reconciliation among others when they seek to reconcile their own inner conflicts. In other words, they recognize the need to reconcile themselves with themselves before they can offer reconciliation to others. This spiritual framework of inner as well as outer reconciliation includes prayer, study, and spiritual friendship. The desired reconciliation extends from internal personal struggles to the hostility between nations.



III. CCN Membership

Membership in the CCN is open to all. Both individuals and groups may become members by completing the application form available at www.ccn-northamerica.org or from the CCN North America office. Annual dues are payable by January 1 of each year. All members receive CCN newsletters, as well as information about trips and conferences. Direct services from trained leaders in the CCN are also available.

By joining, all members agree to live the Common Discipline and participate in a conscious ministry of reconciliation. Members may or may not be affiliated with a CCN Center or CCN Group.

CCN Centers are those organizations which have been recognized by the presentation of a Cross of Nails. These are usually groups which have been long established. CCN Groups are newer organizations which meet on a regular basis for fellowship, worship, and discussion.

Another category of CCN membership is a New Coventry Fellowship (NCF), which is a faith-based organization such as a campus ministry or similar fellowship that seeks to heal the brokenness caused by religious, social, political, racial, or environmental strife. A group may be nominated for NCF status by a CCN member. The group is recognized by the CCN Board and is presented with a picture of the Reconciliation Statue. This statue stands in the Coventry Cathedral ruins, in a park in Hiroshima, and in the Chapel of Reconciliation at the site of the former Berlin Wall.

IV. Starting a CCN Group

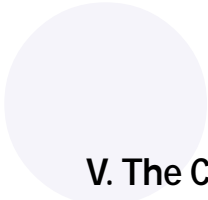
A group interested in carrying out the work of The Community of the Cross of Nails needs to begin in a simple and quiet way to understand the nature of living by a spiritual discipline and a focused theology. Praying and reflecting theologically, being together in a simple non-judgmental way, and expressing the life of the community in worship all build the kind of spirit that can create a space for the healing and reconciliation of a CCN group.

Creating a Safe Place for Dialogue

Reconciliation has to do with creating a safe place for dialogue to find common ground, even when the issue itself seems insoluble. Taking sides in judgment is not the process of reconciliation. Rather, reconciliation involves the more frustrating and painful behavior of standing in the middle and making an “in-between space” for people to meet one another no matter how intractable their differences.

Create this “in-between space” by observing these disciplines for dialogue:

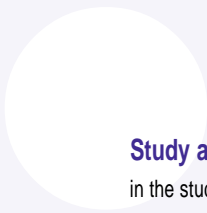
- Stipulate that only one person speaks at a time.
- Recommend that listeners ask themselves, “Am I really listening, or am I using the time to formulate my rebuttal?”
- Do not allow name-calling.
- Focus on one subject at a time.
- Discourage the use of emotional language that diverts attention from the topic.
- Discourage listeners from holding untested assumptions of what the speaker said, and encourage them to ask frequently, “Did I hear you correctly? Is this what you said?”
- Discourage the use of language that demeans the listeners or the speakers.



V. The Common Discipline

The Community of the Cross of Nails is sustained by the Common Discipline, which is based on the Benedictine Rule of Life for lay persons. Outlined here, the Common Discipline is a means by which members may dispose themselves to God's Grace in Christ, so that they will be open to transformation and become the people they are called to be.

Silence, Prayer, and Meditation: Members regularly devote time to silence and solitude. Such withdrawal from one's world is a basic source for the spiritual life. Finding a rhythm for withdrawal and involvement is an individual responsibility. Time for prayer and meditation might be as little as ten minutes four times a week, or as much as an hour a day. A day a month for reflection, an annual retreat of several days, or a sabbatical leave of several months may also be part of this practice. Members also follow the CCN Cycle of Prayer for devotions. (For further recommendations, see *Developing a Daily Discipline*, page 8.)



Study and Theological Reflection: Members regularly are involved in the study of some serious book. They may seek the help of study groups or a spiritual friend for this portion of the discipline. Study should involve understanding the text from the writer's point of view, probing its meaning for oneself and one's world, and evaluating the work overall from a theological perspective. Such theological reflection allows members to change the way they see the world and to respond to its needs as God calls.

Intimate Relationships: Members regularly set aside the time, energy, and honesty necessary for intimate relationships, for it is within the openness of this kind of love that the transforming grace of God begins to show itself in change and growth. For those who are married, family members along with special friends and colleagues will be the focus for intimacy. For those who are single, an intimate circle may encompass a larger group of persons who touch their lives daily. One may also seek support from a small group or spiritual friend.

Community: Members involve themselves in the life of a community in order to become less self-centered, more self-giving, and open to the Spirit of God in all creation. The communities begin small with a church, a Foyer Group, or a neighborhood, and widen into larger circles.

Worship: Members participate in the life of the church community, recognizing that personal prayer is fully realized only when it pours over into the corporate worship of a church. For those who are part of churches in Eucharist-centered traditions, members partake in the weekly communion that nurtures faith.

Service: Members respond to Christ's call to a ministry of service: "... whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many." (*Mark 10:43-45*) The local church is one place where members get in touch with outreach ministry and opportunities for reconciliation.



Developing a Daily Discipline

Devote 20 to 30 minutes a day to this practice.

Use any of the Daily Devotions on pages 137 and 140 in *The Book of Common Prayer* as a guide.

Read and meditate on the gospel for the day as appointed in the *Daily Office Lectionary* (beginning on page 936 of *The Book of Common Prayer*).

Follow one of the three classic ways to read scripture, namely, the Ignatian Reading, the Franciscan Reading, and the *Lectio Divina* Reading:

1. Ignatian Reading: Ignatius of Loyola commended the use of the five senses to stir our meditations as we read a Biblical narrative. He encouraged us to become one of the characters in the narrative and see how the story unfolds from the character's point of view. The ultimate aim is to help us perceive the narrative from the viewpoint of Jesus. In this way, we may more fully participate in his mind, heart, and work, especially as he reaches out to forgive us, so that we can reconcile ourselves with ourselves.

2. Franciscan Reading: This is a more fluid method which invites us to enter personally into the text. For instance, if we were reflecting on Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, the Franciscan method would invite us to take actions such as these: hold a crucifix in our hands and study the Lord's crucified body. We might sing the hymn, "O Sacred Head, Sore Wounded." We might look through today's newspapers to identify places where people are suffering. We might write a poem to capture what we are feeling for all suffering people. We would end our reflection by asking God to make us an instrument of peace in the lives of those who are suffering. We would wait for God to direct us to act out our reflection in witness to Christ's love for people.

3. Lectio Divina Reading: In the history of Christian spirituality, this is the best known approach to the Bible. The Latin name simply means “divine reading” and entails a fourfold approach:

1. **Read slowly.** Choose a short passage from the lectionary for the day and read meditatively, prayerfully. Watch for any phrase or word that jumps out at you and promises to have special meaning for you. Read with your own life and choices in view.

2. **Meditate.** Allow your special word or phrase to sink into your awareness. If, for instance, the word “my” of the phrase “the Lord in my shepherd” is your special word, you can meditate on the idea that God can be, and wants to be, your shepherd.

3. **Pray the text.** Formulate a prayer that expresses your response to the idea. You are engaging God in dialogue. You might recognize all the time that God had been your shepherd.

4. **Contemplate.** That is, rest in the beauty of the encounter with God and savor the moment of intimacy.




VI. Other Practices

Foyer Groups: Foyer Groups usually consist of eight to ten people who gather regularly in friendship to support each other in the work of reconciliation. They are not study groups or task groups, but instead are guided by the spirit of hospitality. They are “porches of welcome” where people come together in an open and receptive way. They begin and end their meetings with prayer, including the Litany of Reconciliation, and share a light supper. Because they are gentle, non-judgmental gatherings, where one is not worried by “what shall we do” or “what do you think,” Foyer Groups teach us the kind of openness necessary to be available to the grace of God.

Forging Connections: Members link with other CCN members through visits and correspondence. They build relationships through participation in retreats, conferences, student programs, and speaker exchanges. They also make contact with international communities within their own cities. Such outreach offered in a spirit of hospitality bridges cultural gaps and provides a place of welcome for a stranger in a foreign land.

Responsible Living: Members care for their own health, consider the needs of others and share their burdens, take time for recreation, and live within their means.



Resources

CCN Website (www.ccn-northamerica.org): This is the primary method for receiving information, announcements, and bulletins from Coventry Cathedral.

CCN Introductory Leaflet: A one-page, folded leaflet which introduces the CCN, its story and ministry. Good for recruitment and promotion. \$.25 *each* or \$20.00 *per 100*.

CCN Manual (Revised 2006): Considered essential for the leadership of a CCN Center or Group or New Coventry Fellowship. Includes the definition of and history of the CCN, a description of membership, instructions on the formation of a Group, a brief overview of the theology, an explanation of the work of reconciliation, an overview of the Common Discipline and other practices, and a list of resources. \$3.00 *each*. (One provided free for each group with 8 or more dues-paying members.)

Crossroads: The newsletter of the CCN-North America. Includes articles on the work of the CCN in the United States. Free to members and others upon request.

Reconcile: The newsletter of the International Centre for Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral. Free to dues-paying members. Includes articles on various issues and themes of the CCN theology as well as reports of work of the CCN around the world. \$2.00 *per copy to non-members*.

Other: Some audio-visual aids and lists of workshops, conferences, and events are available from the office of the CCN-North America, c/o Kathy Noe, Christ Church Cathedral, 318 East Fourth Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202-4299, knoe@cccath.org.



Recommended Reading

*Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological
Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and
Reconciliation* by Miroslav Volf

The Sunflower by Simon Wiesenthal

Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed by
The Rt. Rev. Bennett Sims

No Future Without Forgiveness by
Archbishop Desmond Tutu

*To Forgive is Human: How to put your past in
the past* by Michael L. McCullough with
Everett L. Worthington and Steven Sandhage

Copies of the books on the recommended
reading list may be ordered from the Christ
Church Cathedral Shop, 318 East Fourth
Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202-4299. Call toll
free: 1.866.621.7467. Order on line:
www.episcopalshop.com.

A Prayer for The Community of the Cross of Nails

Almighty God,
you have committed to us
the ministry of reconciliation
of your son, Jesus Christ;
give us the confidence in your power to forgive,
as your son forgave humankind from the Cross.
In his name, bless The Community of the Cross of Nails
and enable us to be witnesses
of your forgiveness at work where we live.
Unite us in a sacred fellowship
to heal the hostilities we see,
and give us the grace to love another
in the name of Jesus Christ
and to rejoice in the eternal fellowship
of his disciples.

Amen.





The **Community** of the **Cross of Nails**

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