Coventry Cathedral has had a profound influence on my life.

I joined the Cathedral community in 1962 as a teenager. I was brought up in a Christian family in the non-conformist tradition. Joining the Cathedral community introduced me to ways of putting my faith into practical use in the world.

Through the Cathedral I met my wife, Jane, and we were married there in November 1970. Jane had been a member of the congregation from an even earlier age – attending worship when the undercroft served as the Chapel of the Cross. Later our two boys both gave and both gained from their membership of the Cathedral Choir, which provided them with training and experiences that they still value today.

Since its consecration in 1962 Coventry Cathedral with its ministry of reconciliation has touched the lives of many thousands of people across the world.

Today it is an honour for me to serve as Chairman of the Friends of Coventry Cathedral – an organisation that unites members in support of both the Cathedral building and its ministry.

Coventry Cathedral changed my life. My hope for the future is that working together we can ensure that the message of the architecture and ministry of the Cathedral can reach out, touching and changing the lives of many more people long into the future.

Martin R. Williams

FRIENDS AGM 2016

In September 76 members attended the AGM 2016. A number of them travelled considerable distances to be present, which is greatly appreciated. The meeting was followed by a fascinating talk by Frances Spalding (left), an arts historian who has many published works on 20th century artists, including a major study on the lives of John Piper and his wife.
She was able to set in context the life of John Piper as he began work with Patrick Reyntiens on the baptistry window, and she explained the influences that came into play in his work.

After her talk the Chairman presented Frances Spalding with a copy of the book sponsored by the Friends – “The Stained Glass of Coventry Cathedral”. The Cathedral's stained glass (including the John Piper baptistry window) is the single largest stained glass commission in the world, and the glass designs have had a profound impact upon the medium across the world. Copies of the book are available at the Cathedral’s retail outlets. At the AGM the officers of the Friends were appointed. The current membership of the Friends governing body is as follows:

CHAIR - Martin R Williams
DEPUTY CHAIR - Dr Richard Hills
SECRETARY - Revd William Howard
TREASURER - Deryck Horton
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY - Gill Brooke

MEMBERS OF THE FRIENDS COUNCIL:
Hamish Blair
Richard Chamberlaine-Brothers
Jim Newton
Mike Smith
Jane Williams
Mandy Wooltorton
Revd Canon Andrew Gorham
Coventry Cathedral is unlike any other. It combines the iconic Ruins, the international symbol of peace and reconciliation, and the new Cathedral, Britain’s outstanding post-war public building.

How significant is its art and architecture today, and how can we ensure that it is restored, preserved and valued for future generations?

Kelley Christ, the Cathedral Architect reflects on how the Cathedral is faring, what it will take to maintain it at a ‘plateau of good repair’. How best can the Cathedral adapt to the demands of worshippers, pilgrims and tourists in the 21st Century?

An enthusiastic and ‘hands-on’ architect, Kelley Christ is also the Architect to Southwark Cathedral, and is passionate about the care and conservation of modern and historic buildings.

Entry is FREE to members and £8 to non-members.

Is Peace Possible?

This was the subject tackled by Terry Waite when he spoke to a large Cathedral nave gathering last month.

Mr Waite was the Assistant for Anglican Communion Affairs for the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, in the 1980s. As an envoy for the Church of England, he travelled to Lebanon to try to secure the release of four hostages, including the journalist John McCarthy.

Mr Waite was himself kidnapped and held captive from 1987 to 1991. He spent much of this four year period in isolation, and he spoke of the impact this made on him personally and of the ways
in which solitary confinement deepened his faith. He described how he returned many years later to meet up with some of his surprised captors.

Today Mr Waite is president of the charity Y Care International (the YMCA’s international development and relief agency) and patron of AbleChildAfrica and Habitat for Humanity Great Britain. He is also president of Emmaus UK, a charity for formerly homeless people.

Canons for Reconciliation

The story of the Cathedral’s Ministry of Reconciliation begins with the actions of Provost Howard (right) after the destruction of St Michael’s Cathedral Church in November 1940.

On Christmas Day 1940, some six weeks after the blitz, in the BBC Empire Broadcast of a service from the Cathedral ruins Provost Howard spoke:

“What we want to tell the world is this: that with Christ born again in our hearts today, we are trying, hard as it may be, to banish all thoughts of revenge; … we are going to try to make a kinder, simpler – a more Christ-Child-like sort of world in the days beyond this strife.”

In the years that followed Provost Howard made contacts across the world, particularly in Canada and the USA, in work that laid the foundations for the Cathedral’s later international ministry.

In 1958 Provost Howard retired and was replaced by Provost Bill Williams (left) who pursued the international interest in Coventry’s ministry with great vigour. Within a year Provost Williams and the team of Cathedral clergy appointed by Bishop Cuthbert Bardsley published the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation that is still in use across the world today. In 1959 Provost Williams announced the establishment of the Coventry Cathedral International Fellowship, designed to link people throughout the world who wished to join Coventry
Cathedral in prayers for peace and reconciliation and in furtherance of this ministry to encourage acts of goodwill and an education programme to learn about the prejudices of this and other nations.

This international network was the forerunner of the Community of the Cross of Nails (CCN) that was formalised by the Revd Canon Kenyon Wright (1974-1981).


The USA Board of the CCN has funded the making of a film that examines the meaning of Reconciliation based upon interviews with six of the Canons for Reconciliation. The film received its first public showing at the Cathedral in the presence of four of those Canons on 14th October. The impact upon all those present was immense.

The film can now be viewed through the Cathedral website at – [www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/reconciliationreflections](http://www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/reconciliationreflections)

The film is also available on a memory stick from St Michael’s House at a cost of £10

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(upper left – Canon Kenyon Wright
lower left – Canons David Porter and Sarah Hills)
Towards the Cathedral’s centenary

In 2018 it will be 100 years since the founding of the Diocese of Coventry – the 100th birthday of Coventry Cathedral.

The Friends Council is looking for ways in which the Friends can mark the centenary. We are interested in any suggestions from members.

The Cathedral Archives contains few photographs and very little information about the first four bishops and about early Cathedral activities.

Can you help? Do you have any anecdotes to tell or pictures that you can share?


 Peace Week 2016 and Links with Dresden

Members of the Friends of Coventry Cathedral visited Dresden in February 2015 on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the destruction of that city.

Next month we welcome from Dresden a group of the Friends of the Frauenkirche – the Church Of Our Lady that was rebuilt with help from countries around the world and that has a Coventry Cross of Nails on its altar today.

During Coventry Peace Week the Cathedral’s link with Dresden continues with a talk entitled “Dresden: A Love Story” on 2nd November in St Michael’s House (6:00pm-8:00pm). The speaker is Ranier Barczaitis of the Dresden Anglo-German Association.

From 2nd to 14th November in St Michael’s House there is a display of 14 banners in an exhibition entitled “British Traces in Dresden”. Information arising from that exhibition will form the basis of the talk.

Coventry Peace Week also includes a showing of the film “Black Christmas” at the Cathedral in St Michael’s House on 3rd November at 1pm.

This is a documentary film that traces the journey of forgiveness and transformation of a perpetrator in the racially charged 1996 Christmas Eve bombing in Worcester, South Africa. The documentary digs deep into the complexity of forgiveness and leaves views thinking about the possibility of reconciliation.
The film will be followed by discussion with Coventry Cathedral Canon for Reconciliation Sarah Hills who journeyed with victims and survivors of the bombing to Pretoria Prison to visit the perpetrator.

Details of all the Coventry Peace Week events are available online at

http://coventrycityofpeace.uk/coventry-peace-festival-2016

#Coventry links with New Zealand#

The Dean of Wellington Cathedral, New Zealand was our visiting preacher one Sunday morning in September.

In a challenging sermon Dean Digby Wilkinson (left) spoke of the crisis of numbers in the Church of England. He urged all those present to act now and within the next year to introduce just one additional person to the Cathedral. He told how back home the Dean’s friends who are rugby sports enthusiasts happily invite him to a game to share their interest. Similar enthusiasm and support is now needed from Christians if the church is to survive.

*(You can listen to his sermon on the Cathedral’s website under the heading “Sermons and Talks”)*

Back in New Zealand the building of Wellington Cathedral has three particular links with Coventry Cathedral (all pictured below).

**LIGHT IN OUR DARKNESS**

The Advent Carol Service in Coventry Cathedral
Sunday 27th November 2016 at 6.30pm
Members of the Friends will serve mulled wine and mince pies after the service
As you enter Wellington Cathedral you are greeted by windows of dancing angels engraved by John Hutton, reminding us of his great west screen. This should not be a surprise as the artist was a New Zealander by birth, although he spent most of his professional life in England.

Further into the church a Coventry cross of nails is fixed in the chancel facing the congregation – “A Symbol of Christian Fellowship”.

Finally, the Chapel of Remembrance of Wellington Cathedral is formed of an original 19th century wooden church built by early settlers. Its furniture includes a prayer desk with particular significance to Coventry Cathedral.

The desk was presented to Wellington Cathedral in 1945 after WWII by a returning airman, Squadron Leader Hector Bolitho. The main part is formed of oak from St George’s Chapel, Windsor but the central arch is a sample carving made for the screen of St Michael’s Church, Coventry. It is the only surviving evidence of that screen. During the war the prayer desk was used by New Zealand airmen based in the United Kingdom.

Less than a mile away from Wellington Cathedral there is yet one other major link between the capital city and Coventry Cathedral. The Parliament Building - commonly called “The Beehive” on account of its shape – was also designed by Basil Spence.

AS WE LOOK FORWARD TO 2018 AND THE CELEBRATIONS OF THE CENTENARY OF THE CATHEDRAL’S FOUNDING WE ALSO LOOK BACK IN EACH BULLETIN ON PARTICULAR EVENTS FROM ITS HISTORY.

IT WILL SOON be the anniversary of the November 1940 blitz on Coventry. After the blitz the Cathedral and city were visited by King George VI. Provost Howard recalled the monarch’s three visits to the Cathedral in his sermon on 10th February 1952 at the Cathedral’s Memorial Evensong following the death of King George.

Provost Howard:

“YOU ALL KNOW THAT KING GEORGE CAME TO VISIT COVENTRY CATHEDRAL THREE TIMES, AND THAT ON EACH OCCASION I HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF CONVERSING WITH HIM AND FEELING THE DIRECT IMPACT OF HIS PERSONALITY. I WANT TO TELL YOU WHAT IMPRESSION HE MADE UPON ME, EACH TIME DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS.”
When he came on the Saturday morning after the Thursday night blitz, and stood at the entrance to the Cathedral viewing the ruins, he communicated to me a powerful sense of his quiet strong sympathy, and also a feeling that in his person the whole nation was in support of each suffering part, as in turn it had to bear the brunt. I know that the whole city was enormously encouraged by his speedy visit.

When he came the second time ten years ago this month, he came with Queen Elizabeth. The tide of war had ebbed out to its furthest limit and was about to turn, although we did not know it then. The King was full of vigour and interest; the Queen showed a kind of sympathetic compassion which was most endearing and very heartening.

But when he came for the third time last April, again with the Queen, there was a quality about his personality that I have never until this time dared to try to put into words. The King was looking very ill and frail; but it is not this that I am speaking of. As I went round the Cathedral with him and showed him the whole place laid out no longer as a ruin but – as the King himself put it – “as a place of worship”, as the Bishop and I took him and the Queen into the Chapel of Resurrection and as there we prayed all together the Lord's Prayer for God’s Kingdom of peace on earth, and as he showed his interest in all that he saw and was told, I became conscious of this in him: a sweet gentleness of disposition, a meekness of courtesy, a detachment, which was not altogether of this world, in a word, a saintliness, a walking with God. I thought of this when the Prime Minister was broadcasting on Thursday evening and saying how he felt that the King, during his latter days, was walking with Death. Was not the King so unafraid of walking with Death because he had already begun to walk with God.”

CHAIRMAN’S e BULLETIN

If you have suggestions or comments about matters included in the e bulletin or if you wish to help the FRIENDS in other ways, the Chairman will be pleased to hear from you.

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