

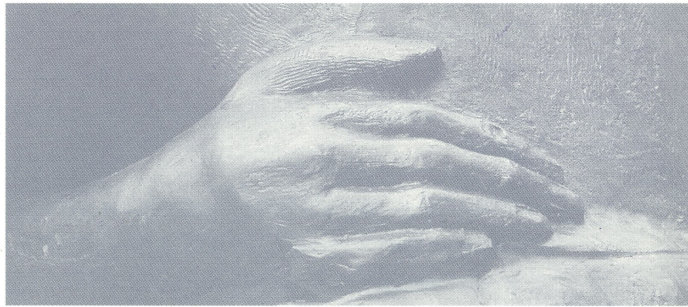
*Centre for the Study of
Forgiveness and Reconciliation*



COVENTRY
UNIVERSITY

Front cover picture

Statue of Reconciliation, Coventry Cathedral and
Hiroshima Peace Museum.



The Centre for the Study of Forgiveness and Reconciliation is a new Centre based at Coventry University. The Centre was officially inaugurated on 11 March, 1996, when its distinguished patron, Mary Robinson, the President of Ireland, delivered the inaugural lecture. The Centre is associated with Coventry Cathedral and International Minds Forum.

The need to understand forgiveness and reconciliation

In the wars and conflicts of the 20th century, it is estimated that over 130,000,000 humans have perished. As we approach the 21st century, the greatest challenge facing the human family is the realisation of world peace.

The study of peace and conflict reveals two notions of peace: positive and negative. Negative peace is the absence of violence, and an end to the bloodshed, not an end to prejudice and hate. Negative, albeit welcome, peace was exemplified by the agreement signed by the leaders of the former Yugoslavia and by what have become known as the Middle East and the Irish peace processes.

Positive peace is more than absence of war; it is the elimination of the deep-rooted structural divisions which lead to conflict and violence. It brings an end to hatred and prejudice, racism, economic and political injustices and indifference to suffering.

To help achieve positive peace, we must study how enemies can achieve reconciliation through development of mutual understanding and respect. If people are not to be derailed from that goal, they must start practising a collective form of forgiveness and reconciliation leading to permanent peace.

If the 'New Global Order' is not to remain forever just a slogan, then we must start to apply principles of forgiveness and reconciliation to the conduct of international relations and indeed to make them a fundamental part of any peace negotiation. Peacemaking between governments, leaders and countries is very honourable and often deeply moving, but it cannot be profound or lasting, unless it includes genuine forgiveness and reconciliation between the ordinary people who have suffered on both sides.

When addressing 'forgiveness and reconciliation' we raise two distinct but related issues with global consequences. One, the fact that people need to take responsibility for their actions and two, the importance of remorse, apology, forgiveness and reconciliation as vital elements in peacemaking

and peace-keeping. In the areas of conflict resolution and war prevention, it is becoming clearer than ever that public apologies leading to healing process and forgiveness often constitute a critically important seal on the processes of peacemaking and peace-keeping, whether domestic or international. They reaffirm the humanity of people often denied or brutalised during past conflict. In the long run, accepting responsibility for one's actions in the past, and expressing remorse and regret, may prove to be the most important elements in the process of healing and a prime condition for genuine peace and stability worldwide.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are sadly under-explored themes, yet vitally important to our development as individuals and societies. To seek forgiveness and reconciliation between nations and peoples (as well as individuals) needs a greater understanding and sympathy won through psychological, cultural and historical insight and knowledge. This can be a very dynamic process.

Coventry, the Cathedral and International Minds

Since 1940 when Coventry Cathedral was reduced to ruins by incendiary bombs, the Cathedral and the City have become powerful and evocative international symbols of forgiveness and reconciliation. In the post-war era many courageous and imaginative initiatives have been taken in many parts of the world, building for Coventry a unique international reputation. This mission has been represented by the Cross of Nails in Coventry, a symbol which has been presented in all five continents of the world where people have sought to find peace and reconciliation: USA, Nicaragua, Cuba, Germany, USSR, India, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong are just some of the locations where the Cross of Nails has been presented.

The power of Coventry and its Cathedral as a focus for reconciliation was succinctly expressed by German Chancellor Willy Brandt when he visited Coventry in 1965: 'The word "Coventry" symbolises the consequences of hatred and gruesome waging of war. The new Cathedral is recognised all over the world as a Church of reconciliation. It would have been unimaginable twenty-five years ago to expect Coventry to become a world centre of reconciliation.'

Most recent evidence of the continuing power of the name of Coventry was the role played by the Cathedral and the city in 1995, fifty years after the end of the Second World War. In an anniversary year which evoked strong and conflicting emotions at international and intergovernmental levels, as well as in those who had suffered individually and collectively, the Cathedral and the City did much to assist the processes of reconciliation. Notable in a wide range of activity was the unveiling of two identical statues in Coventry and Hiroshima of a specially commissioned sculpture symbolising reconciliation. The University was also represented at both events.

Coventry University has worked with the Cathedral and the City in many of these initiatives. The University has an international mission and seeks to promulgate 'moral values and the principles of equality, justice and academic freedom'. This latter strong commitment within the University's

Mission Statement is very unusual in modern universities and underpins the University's determination to be a multi-ethnic and multi-faith institution of higher education. Coventry University also has a strong commitment to its local and regional environment and would thus encourage academic activity in reconciliation both in its own hinterland and internationally.

Through the very close relationship with Coventry Cathedral and through the University's extensive local and regional networks, the Centre for the Study of Forgiveness and Reconciliation will strive to play a local and regional as well as an international role.

International Minds Forum is responsible for publishing International Minds, occasional research into psychological aspects of international affairs, relevant seminars and conferences.

The Forum aims to explore the understanding of the psyche of the peoples of the world, the value of international decisions and why they are sometimes wrong, and to pursue the analysis of international conflict and research into the ways in which crisis decisions are made and much else besides, with writers from various backgrounds and disciplines.

The Forum is served by a Panel of Advisors. They are: Austin Amissah, Dr John Brademas, Dr Jack Dominian, Dr Fay Fransella, Rabbi Albert H Freidlander PhD, Rt Hon Malcolm Fraser, Jeremy Mitchell, Dr Kamran Mofid, Ambassador Yoshio Okawa, Revd Edwin Robertson, and Dr Andrew Samuels.

Aims and activities of the Centre

The Centre will initially focus on the study and analysis of processes of forgiveness and reconciliation, which include the following broad themes:

- (F&R) in the context of the transformation of conflicts.
- The relationship between different types of (F&R): individual, social, institutional, cultural etc.
- Theological, psychological, anthropological, sociological, historical, political and economic approaches to (F&R).
- The theory of the dynamics of (F&R).
- Experiences of groups committed to (F&R). The approaches that have guided them and how they applied those principles.
- Orientation, education and training models of groups involved in facilitating and empowering (F&R) process.
- (F&R) in peace education.

The above activities will initially be achieved through the organisation of Annual Lectures; the continuation of the Ambassadors' Lecture series; annual major conferences; small seminars and workshops; short courses; summer schools and related activities. The Centre will also act as a focal point for the gathering and dissemination of expertise from academics and practitioners inside and outside of the University.

Organisational Structure

Patron: **Mary Robinson**, President of Ireland.

Associate Director: **Dr Kamran Mofid**

Steering Committee: Dr Paul Hartley (Chair), Dr Kamran Mofid, Professor Bob Pryce, Mr Oliver Furley, Mr Shinder Thandi, Sister Mary Dean, Mr Patrick Lister CBE.

Management Committee: To include steering committee members as well as Canon Paul Oestreicher (Coventry Cathedral) and Mr George Bull OBE (International Minds).

Panel of International Advisors

Professor Dr Judit Balazs, President, European Peace Research Association (EuPRA)

Ambassador Kazuo Chiba, former Ambassador of Japan to Great Britain.

Professor Kevin Clements, Director, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, USA.

Canon Nicholas Frayling, Rector of Liverpool.

Professor Tetsuo Hamauzo, Hiroshima University, Japan.

Professor Katsuya Kodama, Secretary General, Asia-Pacific Peace Research Association (APPRA)

Professor Mahendra Kumar, Gandhi Peace Foundation, India.

Professor Father Peter Milward, S J, Sofia University, Japan.

Ambassador Yoshio Okawa, former Ambassador of Japan to Canada.

The Very Reverend John F Petty, Provost of Coventry, Coventry Cathedral.

Professor James Piscatori, Senior Fellow for Muslim Politics, Council on Foreign Relations, New York, USA.

Professor Peter Ricketts, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada.

Ralph Summy, The University of Queensland, Australia.

For further information, please contact

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