

## Community

On Tuesday I attended a Community of the Cross of Nails meeting in Coventry and this led me to reflect on what we understand by a community.

We naturally start at the local level. And we may well belong to a number of different communities: our street, our place of work, the clubs or associations to which we might belong, and not least the church congregation of which we are a part. These different communities may or may not overlap.

Then there are the wider communities of our neighbourhood, our city, our region, our country. We may or may not actually see these as communities, of course. And they are many who sadly feel excluded or alienated from them.

As far as the Church is concerned, though, these are all communities to which we are called to reach out. And that is where I believe the example of the Community of the Cross of Nails can help.

The meeting I attended was to explore how the different partners in the United Kingdom might relate more to one another, and how they might better share experience, expertise and resources – in short how they might become much more of a community of partners. The establishment of a UK board similar to those in Germany and the United States had already been agreed in principle and the meeting was a step in moving that forward.

The important thing about the Community of the Cross of Nails is that it is both international and ecumenical in scope. There are partners in many different and varied countries in the world, and it is good to see new partners joining. The Community as a whole is growing.

That is of course true of the Church as a whole, despite our denominational divisions. We may see decline in Church membership in the West but elsewhere there is clear growth.

We are all members of the body of Christ – that powerful image used by St Paul, most notably in our reading just now from his letter to the Church in Rome (Romans 12.4-10). And what unites us is our Lord Jesus Christ. What binds us together is God's love to us shown in the person of his Son. And we are called above all to love one another and to live together with mutual respect.

That surely is the recipe for peace and reconciliation in our world today – that love and mutual respect. Local communities are important but it is essential that we see ourselves as all part of the wider community of the whole of humanity. It is easy to lose sight of that when we are so preoccupied with our personal and local concerns. With God's help may we never forget the wider picture of God's world and God's love for all.

Kingsley Boulton  
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