



Council Chair of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)
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"Europe is changing but the Church of God remains constant in its witness. The deep commitment that we have to one another is not based on our common membership of the European Union but on our membership of the body of Christ. We witness the rise of populism and the emergence of extremist political parties which are being successful at the ballot box. Some of the old certainties are not so certain any more. European relationships are changing, not least as a result of Brexit. We do not know what will happen and what the relationship between the UK and EU will look like after 29 March 2019. However, what we do know is that the relationship between the Church of England and the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland goes back over many centuries – long before the European Union.

As churches, we urgently appeal to all politicians to find fair and sustainable solutions for the future coexistence of the UK and the EU. United in Christ we are drawn together in hope, faith and love, and those things which divide us are of much lesser importance.

This week we have seen in a few short days the commemoration of a number of significant events in the past: the centenary of the end of the First World War, the 80th anniversary of Kristallnacht and the 80th anniversary of the Kindertransport. They are historic events of immense importance pointing to the dangers of extremism, the peril of division and the disaster of conflict.

This coming Sunday is Volkstrauertag in Germany - the annual commemoration of those who have died in armed conflicts. Our two nations have a history of war between us but also a history of the search for lasting peace. As some politicians and political forces seek to drive a wedge between people so it is all the more important that the churches continue to strive for reconciliation and to speak out prophetically for a Europe where the values of human rights and human dignity are central, based in the great Christian traditions of our two countries when at their best.

As religious leaders, united in our commitment to see a flourishing Europe committed to the common good and respecting the dignity of every human being, of all faiths and none, made in the image of God and the object of God's love in Jesus Christ, we call on our Governments not to lose sight of the urgent task of safeguarding our created world and its people. Our world requires a better future than one based in hatred and division. It is the task of the church to bear witness to the love of God, across borders as sisters and brothers in Christ.

Since the Meissen Agreement of 1991 the Church of England and the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland have, together, sought to find ways of strengthening ties between churches in England and Germany. Through parish and diocesan links, theological and educational exchanges we are able to see one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, united in our common baptism. If political and economic relationships are strained, it is the duty of Christians to work for unity and understanding and to build bridges between nations and cultures for the good of humanity, in the service of Jesus Christ."

3 min read

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