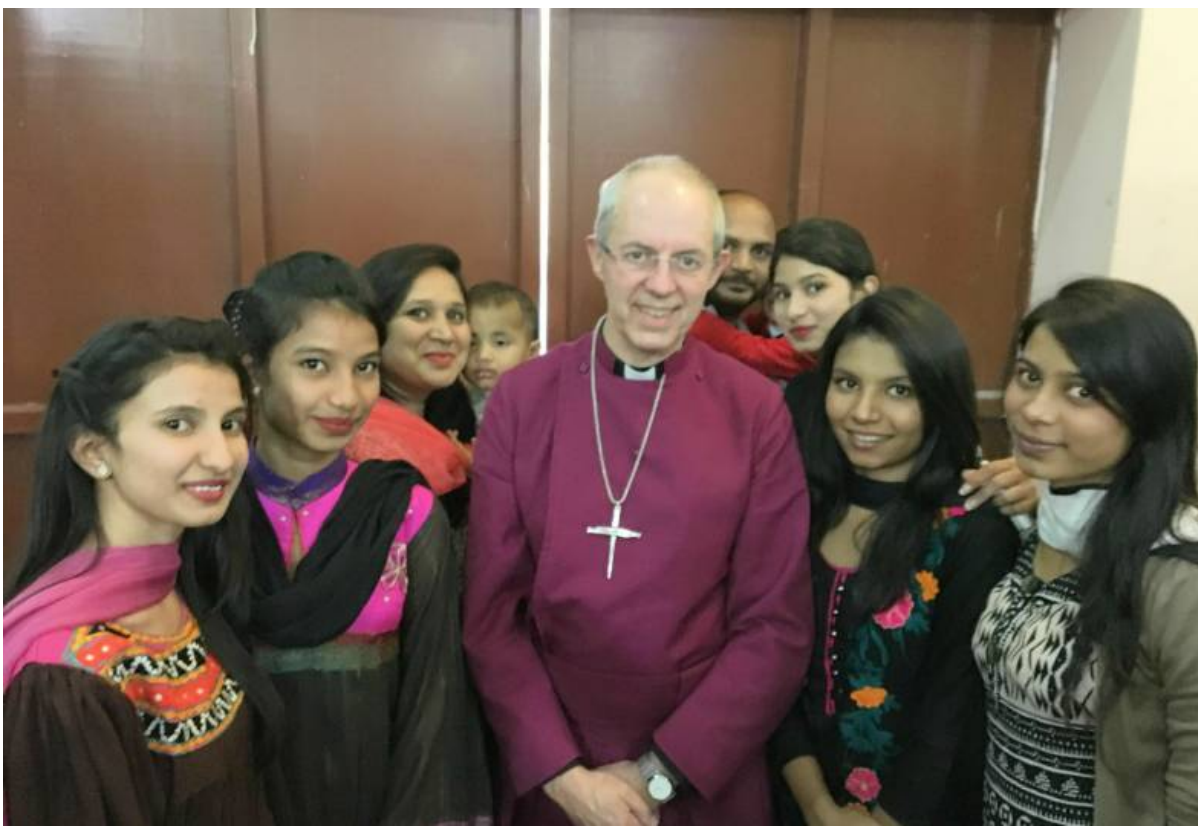




The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, visited Pakistan this weekend to express solidarity with the Church of Pakistan and church communities across the country. During visits to Lahore and Islamabad, Archbishop Justin met with church communities who have endured terror attacks in recent years, and shared with them in times of prayer and worship.



Freedom of religion and belief and the persecution of Christians and other minorities must lead to our support for those affected in every way, a point that the Church has joined many others in making. The Archbishop was invited, hosted and accompanied throughout the trip by Bishop Samuel Azariah, Moderator of the Church of Pakistan and Bishop of Raiwind.



On Saturday, Archbishop Justin joined a service at St Thomas Church in Islamabad, attended by families and victims of the suicide bombings at All Saints Peshawar in September 2013, including many children. During the Eucharist service, which the Archbishop described as “deeply moving”, he spoke of the words of Psalm 56:8, of God knowing our sorrows, and of the Christian belief in the crucified God.

On Sunday, the Archbishop preached and presided at an Ecumenical Sunday service at the Central Cathedral of Praying Hands in Lahore, with the bishops of the Church of Pakistan.



There the Archbishop met with a husband and wife, the latter having been badly injured in the Peshawar attacks, where one of their children also died. The couple are now both in college in Lahore, and spoke of the comfort of Jesus the Good Shepherd.



Later that day the Archbishop met with bereaved relatives and survivors of last year's terror bombing in Youhanabad, both Christian and Muslim. He spoke of the "amazing grace" shown by the survivors, and called for prayer for peace and justice in Pakistan.

On Sunday evening the Archbishop met with the staff and students of Lahore Christian Training College. He also met with young people from every diocese of Pakistan, who presented a compelling drama challenging violence and hatred.

On arriving in Pakistan on Saturday, the Archbishop met with the Adviser to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Foreign Affairs, Mr Sartaj Aziz, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to discuss freedom of religion and protection of religious minorities in the country, as well as to hear of the suffering of so many of the people of Pakistan in the struggle against terrorism.

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