



The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, sent a message to the service of friendship and reconciliation at Canterbury Cathedral today marking the 70th anniversary of Victory in Japan Day.

Veterans were joined by many Japanese and British promoters of reconciliation for the dedicated Evensong service, which has been held annually since 2005.

The service, which alternates each year between Canterbury and Coventry cathedrals, is organised by the International Friendship and Reconciliation Trust, which was formed five years ago by veterans of the Burma Campaign.

Archbishop Justin Welby said:

"Today we commemorate the end of a war that left the world with deep wounds and fractured relationships. The long and painful process of healing these wounds has required former enemies to embark on the journey of becoming friends. To those of you here today who dared to step out on that journey, I voice the gratitude of a countless multitude. What you have done has been a gift to the world.

"During my time at Coventry Cathedral I bore witness to the incredible power of this gift, the ministry of reconciliation. It is a costly gift, bestowed on us by God in Christ, who in turn equips us with the courage to step out into the unknown and share in this ministry.

"The peace for which we give thanks today remains an ongoing project of reconciliation. Walking together as friends requires talking together in truth. Wherever we see relationships starting to break down, we must reach out. To offer the hand of friendship is to offer the hope of peace. Together, we pray for that peace: the peace for which we work, yet which only God can bring."

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