



the German city destroyed by Allied bombing in 1945.

The Archbishop of Canterbury visited Dresden this weekend to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Allied bombing of the German city during World War II.

During the visit Archbishop Justin Welby spoke along with the German President, Joachim Gauck, at a service at the Frauenkirche (Lutheran church), which was destroyed in the bombing and reconsecrated in 2005.

He also preached at the church on Sunday morning, saying that reconciliation is "a gift from God" that must be continually nurtured.

The Archbishop, who has made reconciliation a priority of his ministry, also joined a human chain around Dresden's city centre symbolising the city's rejection of neo-Nazi ideology and its commitment to peaceful co-existence.

Speaking in the Frauenkirche on Friday, the Archbishop said that events in Dresden seventy years ago "left a deep wound and diminished all our humanity. So as a follower of Jesus I stand here among you with a profound feeling of regret and deep sorrow.



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Healing such wounds requires enemies to embark on the journey to become friends, which starts with our memories of the hurt we have suffered and ends with a shared understanding of the hurt we have caused each other.”

Speaking to the BBC after the service, the Archbishop spoke also of the bombing of British cities, especially Coventry and London, and recalled the terrible losses of the “heroic” crews of Bomber Command.

The Archbishop said later in his speech: “Given the pain of our past it is only the love of God in Jesus that makes that possible. We should never underestimate the miracle which peace in Europe represents - arguably the most significant political process of reconciliation in history.”

He also highlighted the profound symbolism of the relationship between the Frauenkirche and Coventry Cathedral, where he was previously in charge of reconciliation ministry. The churches, both destroyed in the war, are now linked by a twinning relationship.

Both churches are “very powerful reminders of what Wilfred Owen called ‘the pity of war’,” the Archbishop [wrote in a blog post from Dresden](#). “In many wars it is the civilians who bear the brunt of the pain, and especially from 1939-1945. They are almost always innocent. In Coventry and Dresden that was especially so.”

On Sunday the Archbishop returned to the Frauenkirche to preach at another service of commemoration. In his sermon [he said it was “tragic” that the church once again](#) found itself in a Europe struggling with division and violence.

“It is a deep reminder that reconciliation is a gift of God which is to be taken, made part of our very selves, and then nurtured and tended as one would a tropical plant in a cold climate, knowing that carelessness will lead to chill and ice killing the plant,” he said.

In response to events around the world, from the Ukraine to the Middle East, the Archbishop said Christians must “remember that the Jesus we serve, who reveals the very nature of God, bore a cross and would not tolerate for one second the idea that anything less than bearing it to the full extent was essential to His vocation, and thus to ours.”

Christians are also to be “a people who amidst the changes and chances of this life hold utterly to the reality of a God to whom we cry with every emotion from praise and thanksgiving, through lament and sorrow, to anger and resentment,” he said.

Read more

- [Archbishop's speech at the Frauenkirche](#) (13 Feb 2015)
- [Archbishop's sermon at the Frauenkirche](#) (15 Feb 2015)

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