



# GARRISON CHURCH IN POTSDAM

A memorial of past and future



WIEDERAUFBAU  
GARNISONKIRCHE  
POTSDAM



GUIDE OUR FEET INTO THE WAY OF PEACE  
[www.garrisonkirche-potsdam.de](http://www.garrisonkirche-potsdam.de)

## Baroque meets modern

With the reconstruction of the Garrison Church tower, a cultural and touristic highlight will be realised. An education floor for exciting discourses on history and the present, a spiritual haven of peace in the tower chapel and a viewing platform at a height of almost 60 metres will be created – fascinating views in every direction.

The former court and garrison church was a landmark, a place of worship and an integral part of the famous Potsdam Three Churches – an absolutist monument of faith, monarchy, power and the military. It was a complex symbol of Prussian history and the development of the German state from the Empire to the National Socialist tyranny and the GDR dictatorship up to the present day.

The goal of the restoration of this baroque cultural monument is to create space for meetings, education and involvement. It is a complex task with a view to history, present and future. This is how the new tower design by the architects Hilmer & Sattler and Albrecht should be understood: it shows an exciting symbiosis of reconstruction and modern functionality. At the centre of the building and at the heart of the project is the tower chapel – another successful combination of historical references and contemporary design. It is a church for everyone, in the middle of Potsdam, in the middle of society.

### Key triad:

- Remembering history
- Learning responsibility
- Living reconciliation

## Remembering history

The Garrison Church is a crystallisation point of German history; for many, it is an integral part of the collective memory. At this place



Youth on the building site. Photo: Dr. Stephanie Hochberg

of remembrance of national relevance, a lively debate is already taking place regarding the traces from the Prussian monarchy to the two German dictatorships.

The Garrison Church was built between 1730 and 1735 by order of Friedrich Wilhelm I for the members of the court and garrison. In 1809, the first freely elected town councillors held a ceremonial session here, and in 1817 the Reformists and Lutherans united. As the burial place of the Prussian monarchs and the place of presentation of captured regiment flags, the church was transformed into a national hall of fame. The road to ominous fame culminated in 1933 in the »Day of Potsdam«, when the National Socialist Imperial Chancellor Adolf Hitler staged his closing of ranks with the conservative elites. This was followed by wartime destruction, a new beginning of church life with the installation of a chapel in the tower, another dictatorship and demolition in 1968.

The Garrison Church is a symbol of arrogance and fall, resistance and conformity, as well as freedom and oppression. The history of this place will be put to the test here in all its ambivalence in terms of its many Prussian, German and European facets. The display on the history of the site on the exhibition floor of the tower essentially serves this purpose.

# Learning responsibility

Our democratic system of values forms the benchmark and reference for the crucial reminder of dictatorships and totalitarianism. The educational work connected with the tower of the Garrison Church is intended to strengthen the ability of people to stand together against war and violence, dictatorship and abuse of power, stigmatisation and exclusion, and to walk together on the path of peace and reconciliation.

The younger generation in particular is in the focus of this educational work. For this reason, we provide opportunities that help young people in particular assume social responsibility. Democracy is an achievement. It must be preserved and promoted anew at all times. All citizens bear responsibility in this unfinished process.

# Living reconciliation

The concept of reconciliation has accompanied the reconstruction project from the outset. This expresses our conviction that we need to think more deeply about how social conflicts, armed conflicts and tensions between economy and ecology can be perceived, dealt with and brought closer to a solution.

Translation of the German word »Versöhnung« into English (»reconciliation«) offers one approach. »Reconciliation« refers to the calling for a round of consultations to exchange different points of view, openly discuss conflicts from the past and explore possibilities for joint action. Practicing a peaceful attitude and a sense of solidarity for the needs of fellow human beings promotes the chances of settling conflicts and developing viable solutions

The former Potsdam court and garrison church was a military and civil church, but the military character dominated. The reconstructed



Musical service in the Cross of Nails Chapel.

Photo: Dr. Stephanie Hochberg

tower will become a place of peace and reconciliation in the sense of conversion, where what happened will not be forgotten. It fits into the European and worldwide network of Cross of Nails Centres – the garrison church tower as part of a worldwide topography of peace and reconciliation.

## Member of the international Cross of Nails Community

German air raids reduced Coventry to rubble in 1940. The city's cathedral gained sad notoriety during the German war of annihilation and became the starting point for a global movement: The Coventry International Cross of Nails Community, currently with a network of 235 churches, associations and educational institutions mainly in Germany, Great Britain and the USA.

A visible sign of reconciliation is the cross of nails from St. Michael's Cathedral in Coventry. The awarding of the Cross of Nails to the Pots-

dam project in 2004 is both recognition and a challenge to make the idea of reconciliation from Coventry clear as an identity-creating concern at the core of the work.

It is based on the three tasks of the Cross of Nails Community:

- Healing the wounds of history
- Living with difference and celebrating diversity
- Creating a culture of peace



Altar with cross of nails in the Cross of Nails Chapel. Photo: Dr. Stephanie Hochberg

The Christian message of resurrection and reconciliation, on which Coventry's rules of life are based, characterises the congregational work of the Cross of Nails Chapel in Potsdam. The congregation is part of the global Cross of Nails Community. This is visibly reflected in an inscription carved into the sandstone base of the tower: »Set our

feet on the path to peace.« The idea of peace and reconciliation should become the basis of all action. For this reason, the biblical word for peace was engraved into the sandstone in German as well as in the languages of those nations whose history is particularly closely connected with this place – English, French, Polish and Russian.

## Design and construction

The tower design by architects Hilmer & Sattler and Albrecht forms an exciting symbiosis of reconstruction and modern functionality.

After the bombing in April 1945, the outer walls of the nave and the tower's high tower stump were spared from fire. Both were rebuilt



The construction site of the Garrison Church tower.

Photo: Dr. Stephanie Hochberg

and in 1950 new church life began here: The Holy Cross parish established a small chapel in the tower passage. Although safety measures were carried out in the 1960s on the preserved structure, the ideologically motivated demolition in 1968 could not be prevented. Like over 60 other churches in the GDR, it was blown up in the name of the socialist social utopia.

Today, the outer baroque structure of the church tower and the architectural sculpture has been largely restored true to the original, while the interior room concept follows a modern design concept. The tower base, originally consisting of four massive brick pillars, is opened up and offers space for a chapel with close to 120 seats. At a height of almost eight metres, it is the heart of the tower and is located in the centre of the ground floor. The associated sacristy is on the ground floor and two study rooms for the rectory are on the first floor. On the west and east sides on the ground floor there is also a café and the entrance with a sales area.

The abundant sources available allow a reconstruction of the original exterior architecture of the Garrison Church using largely historical techniques and original materials such as brick, mortar-cement and sandstone. Construction of the Garrison Church Tower began in October 2017. First, the 38 drilled piles, each 38 metres long, were driven into the ground to lay the concrete foundation. In February 2019, building construction began, and in April 2020 the structural work on the four base storeys was completed.



Former FWG chairman Peter Bauer and his grandchildren with donor bricks. Photo: Bauer, private

A total of four full storeys with 1200 m<sup>2</sup> of usable space are being built. These include areas that invite visitors to an exhibit on historical and contemporary topics and provide opportunities for youth and educational work in seminar and lecture rooms.

Uncomplicated access for all people is the goal, which is why inclusion is so important: high-contrast colour design, Braille lettering and barrier-free access are just as much a part of the design as is a handicapped accessible lift that provides access to all floors up to the viewing terrace at a height of almost 60 metres. Under the almost 90-metre-high dome of the tower, the carillon will be able to welcome guests from all over the world as a peace carillon with musical messages of peace.

# Financing

The total project costs for the complete reconstruction of the tower amount to approximately 40.5 million euros. The aim of the foundation is to complete the tower in full and in one go. For this reason, further donations are required during the construction period. You too can make a donation: with your name, in memory of important people or moments, as a brick or step sponsor, as a donor for a bell of the carillon or as a patron for a future-oriented educational project and a church that combines history and the future. In the middle of society. In the middle of the city. In the middle of Germany.

Since the establishment of the Potsdam Garrison Church Foundation, thousands of donors have been financially involved in the reconstruction. In 2016, the Protestant Church in Germany, the Protestant Church Berlin-Brandenburg-Silesian Upper Lusatia and the Potsdam district have provided a total of five million euros as interest-free loans. By resolution of the German Bundestag in December 2019, the federal funding was increased to 20.25 million euros.

## Garrison Church Foundation

On 23 June 2008, after a solemn church service with Bishop Wolfgang Huber, the foundation charter of the ecclesiastical foundation Garrison Church Potsdam was signed by representatives of the founders, the regional church, the church district, the Protestant Church Relief Association and the state capital of Potsdam. From an historical perspective, this was an important day: forty years earlier, under pressure from the SED Politburo, the Garrison Church, which could have been rebuilt, was blown up despite international intervention. The aim of the foundation is the reconstruction and operation of the Potsdam Garrison Church as a place of learning about German history, a church and a site of cultural and architectural heritage.



The Chapel in the tower in mid-construction.

Photo: Dr. Peter Michael Bauers

The basis of the foundation's work is the triad »Remember history – learn responsibility – live reconciliation«. The church programme in particular is based on the Christian mission to be ambassadors of reconciliation. The foundation aims to promote tolerance and international understanding in the spirit of the Coventry International Cross of Nails Community. In this context, it strives for cooperation with partners from science, culture, media and economy. In the summer of 2017, Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier assumed patronage for the reconstruction of the Potsdam Garrison Church.

## Potsdam Garrison Church Cross of Nails Community

The ruins of the Garrison Church, which could have been reconstructed, had been home to the Holy Cross parish since 1950. The attempt

of the congregation to live conversion and make a new beginning was abruptly ended by the demolition of the church at this location in 1968 on a Sunday during church services. In 2011, a temporary chapel next to the building site of the former garrison church was put into service. In 2015, the formation of a profile congregation was celebrated there on the anniversary of the demolition. Profile congregations are formed where a special focus is emerging that shapes the spiritual life, educational efforts and pastoral presence in a place.

The Potsdam Cross of Nails Community people who, in addition to their membership in their home parish, support the peace and reconciliation work in this place. People who want to get closer to a Christian community will also find a spiritual home here.

You are very welcome!

## Scientific Advisory Board

The Scientific Advisory Board of the Potsdam Garrison Church Foundation was constituted on 12 October 2018 under the chairmanship of Professor Dr. Paul Nolte to provide scientific support for the foundation and the project. Ten prominent figures from the fields of science, culture and politics advise the Foundation on the planning and implementation of all activities connected with the reconstruction of the tower and its furnishings as a place of remembrance and reconciliation. The Scientific Advisory Board deals with the aspects connected with the triad of the Foundation »Remembering History – Learning Responsibility – Living Reconciliation«, both individually and in their mutual interdependence. It supports reflection on the project from an interdisciplinary and comparative perspective. It advises the Foundation, is open to its questions and at the same time is independent in its deliberations. The Scientific Advisory Board usually meets twice a year and organises events of political education for the public.

# Sponsorship

In February 2004, on the initiative of the Industrieclub Potsdam e.V., citizens founded the Fördergesellschaft für den Wiederaufbau der Garnisonkirche Potsdam e.V. (FWG) with the support of the Protestant state church and the state capital of Potsdam. Its aim is to promote the reconstruction and subsequent preservation of the Potsdam Garrison Church. FWG is an association of individuals and organisations that advocate and support the reconstruction of the Garrison Church and its subsequent work.

Would you also like to support us? Then become a member of the Society. You can download your application for membership on our website.

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