



The Reconstruction of the Garrison Church in Potsdam



guide our feet into the way of peace
www.garnisonkirche-potsdam.de



Cross of Nails adjoining the reconstruction area, source: Andreas Fink

Remembering History – Learning Responsibility – Living Reconciliation

The tower and the main building of the Garrison Church have adorned the skyline of Potsdam for over 230 years.

The church was once part of the famous view of the Three Churches and, owing to its historic location, the church was considered to be one of the inner-city churches.

At last, the restored tower in its fascinating surroundings can become a focal point around which a new community may grow: an open house for varied discussion, where attractions for tourists, passers-by and school groups will be developed.

The Cross of Nails Chapel and the tower are spiritual spaces in which contacts might be initiated, conversations instigated, and ecumenical dialogue nurtured – but also where an exchange between firm believers and non-believers can be established. The following three themes define the aims of the church's mission.

Remembering History

Contemporary Potsdam writer Sigrid Grabner illustrates this theme with the words, “A city, like a man, has a memory preserved through its buildings, documents and traditions.”

Numerous events, both good and bad, are connected with the Potsdam Garrison Church. The decision of the SED (the German Democratic Republic’s ruling Socialist Unity Party) to demolish this building of special historic interest in 1968 led to its total destruction. Engagement with our own history is an essential prerequisite for understanding the present, and for shaping the future.

The rebuilding of the tower offers current and future generations the opportunity to examine critically the racist and inhumane ideology of the Nazis, as well as their successors in the SED dictatorship. The tower of the Garrison Church will become an interesting and illuminating place of learning for the study of German history.

To learn the Lessons of History

Studying this field recalls the warning of Richard von Weizsäcker: “We learn what man is capable of from our own history.”

The rebuilding of the tower of the Garrison Church will provoke conversations about how we wish to conduct ourselves in the future. Open and fair debate about our heritage, our present self-awareness and our aspirations for the future will help our civic community to develop and improve. Special spaces are needed where we can hear the call for freedom, and accept our responsibility.

Living Reconciliation

Nelson Mandela recalls a basic principle of Christian reconciliation when he said, “No man is born to hate other men.” The Christian understanding of mankind is aware of the duality of men’s deeds: man can put his mind, and his actions, to good or evil use. This duality, both positive and negative, is dramatically mirrored in the history of the Garrison Church.

From a Christian perspective, God’s great deed of reconciliation reminds us of mankind’s duality. The invisible God made Himself known to us in Jesus Christ. God’s solidarity with one man who was hung on a cross by other men is seen as a passionate protest and divine reproach against the violence of mankind. The resurrection of Christ denies fear and death the last word: it awakens faith, promotes love and creates new hope. Christians believe that from their meeting with Christ they will gain the confidence, courage and the power to bring about the changes that are needed. Out of this, new reconciliation will flourish. Families, neighbours and those divided by enmity will be emboldened in Jesus’s name to begin anew, and gain the freedom to transform their lives.

The Potsdam project is a member of the International Cross of Nails Community. We see the Cross of Nails Chapel as a space from which to express to the world the experience of our own guilt, the growing shift in attitude, and the gift of reconciliation.

Children’s painting of the
Garrison Church tower,
source: SGP





Cross of Nails in the Cross of Nails Chapel Potsdam, source: SGP

The Garrison Church tower as the centre for the Cross of Nails community in Potsdam

The Coventry Cross of Nails is recognized throughout the world as the symbol of reconciliation. People assemble under this cross in an attempt to overcome differences and enmities, and to search for new paths within a shared future.

After the destruction of Coventry Cathedral in 1940 by German bombers, Richard Howard, the Provost of the cathedral, not only had a cross made from the destroyed roof timbers as an emblem of reconciliation, but also engraved on the wall of the chancel the words "FATHER FORGIVE", the last words of Christ on the cross. These words are the fundamental plea of the Cross of Nails prayer.

We offer this Cross of Nails liturgy in all our prayers for peace and through divine worship acknowledge our joint guilt for the condition of the world. The community work in the Potsdam Chapel of Nails is shaped by the Resurrection of Christ and the mission of reconciliation as embodied in Coventry's example of guidelines for living. We are part of the German, and the wider world, Cross of Nails Community (CCN).

Reconstruction of the Garrison Church Tower

In October 2017 work began on the reconstruction of the tower of the Garrison Church in the centre of Potsdam under the patronage of the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier. Externally, the restored tower will resemble the former ruined church, whilst internally it will point to the future uses and needs of the church's mission. The rich variety of sources of information will ensure that a historically accurate architectural reconstruction is made in keeping with original building methods, using authentic materials such as bricks and cement. Thus a major work of north German Baroque as built by the architect Phillipp Gerlach will arise anew.

After the April 1945 bombing, only the external walls of the nave and the battered stump of the tower remained. Already by 1950 the Holy Cross community had moved into a chapel refurbished in the tower. By the 1960s, work was beginning on the restoration of the ruined church. However, along with other churches in the GDR, the Garrison Church of Potsdam, which could have been restored, was demolished by order of the State.

Now, 1,200 square metres of floor space in the rebuilt tower will be made available for remembering, learning and living. Inside the tower there will be a chapel, seminar rooms and exhibition space. About 300 square metres of floor space will be allocated to exhibitions on major historical and other themes. These will focus in-depth on the history of this site. Beneath the exhibition levels there will be seminar rooms in a variety of sizes, in which themes from the exhibitions and also other aspects of the past and the present will be studied, in order to enable better learning for the future. Central to this, and above all else, will be task of educating young people, which will be

supported by the provision a library. A lift will ensure that the observation platform at 57 metres above ground will be accessible for all, thereby complying with disability regulations. The belfry will be located above the observation tower.

There will be a shop on the east side of the ground floor of the tower and a café on the west side. The chapel will be at the heart of the tower, in the middle of the ground floor. In the base of the tower, the Bible verse “guide our feet into the way of peace” is engraved in German, English, French, Polish and Russian.

The planned costs for the entire tower project amount to approximately 38 million Euros. In the autumn of 2017 work at a cost of 27.5 million Euros began on the basic structure of a fully serviceable tower without the belfry or bells. The aim of the Foundation is to press ahead with the erection of the tower, without further delay. More donations are urgently required to achieve this goal.

In the donations catalogue, “Bauen Sie mit, mit Ihrem guten Namen!” anyone interested can purchase, for example, a bell, or an architectural ornament, such as a stone vase, a brick or a staircase. The catalogue is free and can be obtained from The Cross of

Nails Chapel, Breite Straße 7, 14467 Potsdam or on the internet at www.garnisonkirche-potsdam.de.

If you are interested, simply contact us. Official sponsorship recognition will be awarded in line with the receipt of donations, so don't delay!



Beginning of the reconstruction, source: SGP

Funding the Reconstruction

In April 2016 there was positive news for the rebuilding of the Garrison Church tower. The regional synod of the Protestant Church of Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz (EKBA) confirmed its financial support by a two thirds majority in closed session. It will grant the Garrison Church Foundation an interest free loan of 3.25 million Euros for the reconstruction of the tower.

Similarly, the Board of the Protestant Church in Germany confirmed a loan in the amount of 1.5 million Euros, and furthermore the Autumn Synod of the Potsdam Kirchenkreis a loan of 250.000 Euros. The commitment of the Protestant Church to the tower rebuilding project has not only increased funding, but has also raised public awareness and support, as evidenced by the receipt of donations

of almost 4 million Euros in the same year.

Recognition of the Garrison Church as a significant architectural work by the Media and Culture Department of the Federal Government resulted in an award of 12 million Euros being pledged to the 2013 Foundation by representatives of that department.

Thanks to donations, government funds and the loan from the Protestant Church, together with grants from previous years,



Computer visualization of the tower, source: SGP



24,000 bricks will be visible in the walls – possibly with your names on them. Get more information: <http://garnisonkirche-potsdam.de/en/donate-and-support/donate/>, source: Monika Schulz-Fieguth

building work was begun in the autumn of 2017 at an estimated cost of 27.5 millions Euros.

The next step will be the construction of the lower stages of the tower, with a floor area of 1200 square metres providing the space to meet all planned requirements. The mission of the Foundation, the Funding Association and the Rectory is embodied in this space in the three themes of “remembering history, learning responsibility, living reconciliation”.

Further donations will be sought in order to erect the steeple, to apply architectural embellishments, and to install the belfry, so that the exterior of this multi-purpose building might also become a shining beacon. This stage will cost about 10 million Euros. The total cost of rebuilding the tower will be around 38 million Euros.

Potsdam Garrison Church Foundation

On 23 June 2008, after a church service with Bishop Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Huber, and in the presence of a very full congregation, the religious Garrison Church of Potsdam Foundation was established. The date of establishing the Foundation was very carefully chosen: exactly 40 years before, at the time of the usual morning service on a Sunday, the SED state government had demolished the Garrison Church despite massive protests within Germany and elsewhere. The aim of the Foundation is the rebuilding of the Potsdam Garrison Church as a study centre for German history and culture, and as a physical memorial.

In the future the church will be used as a city church, open to the public, as a symbolic church and as a place of learning. The central purpose of the Christian teaching within the three themes of 'remembering history, learning responsibility, living reconciliation' will be to spread the message of reconciliation. The Foundation's aim is to promote tolerance in all cultures, and mutual understanding between all people. Thus the Foundation will strive to work with a variety of partners in science, culture, the media and business.



Supporters of the Cross of Nails Chapel, source: Monika Schulz-Fieguth



Divine service celebrating naming of the Cross of Nails Chapel, source: SGP

The Cross of Nails Community of the Potsdam Garrison Church

The Holy Cross Community has made its home amid the ruins of the Garrison Church since 1950. The Community's attempt to turn back history and forge a new beginning on this site was abruptly ended by the destruction of the church in 1968. In 2011 a temporary chapel was consecrated on the site of the former Garrison Church, and in 2015, on the anniversary day of the destruction of the Church, the creation of a high-profile charitable association was celebrated. Such associations emerge in places where spiritual living, moral development and care for the soul shine forth.

Members of our association are people who support peace and reconciliation within their own local communities by living a Christian life, and by accepting their social responsibilities.

However all those who feel drawn to a Christian community are joining our association – and all are most heartily welcome.

Association for the Reconstruction of the Garrison Church in Potsdam

In February 2004 Potsdam citizens founded the Association for the Reconstruction of the Garrison Church (FWG) at the initiative of Potsdam's Chamber of Commerce and with the support of the regional Protestant church and the regional capital city of Potsdam. The FWG is a partnership between individuals and organizations which will promote, fund and support the reconstruction of the church and its mission.

Will you also support us? You would then become a member of the organization. Membership and application forms can be downloaded from our website: www.garnisonkirche-potsdam.de.

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