



## The Ashes of Dresden

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Recently, Dresden commemorated the 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the WWII bombing. Many people gathered for an embrace of hands while church bells rang “never again.” Although the ashes of Dresden can still be seen in the burned-out blocks used for restoration, many people in Germany have yet to return to real peace that can only be found in the cross. Yet, the church still stands strong through the ashes to love and serve our neighbors here. We are amazed at the wonders of God’s grace for our self-consumed ash-filled hearts. Our salvation is a gift from God. It is nothing that we deserve, but God gives it to us with no strings attached.

Our Persian (Iranian) friends come to Germany for many reasons. Some of the Persians became Christian in Iran and had to flee. Some became Christians since they arrived in Germany. Many times, it was just the warm hospitality (Gastfreundschaft) that got them to come back and marvel at the holiness of the liturgy of God’s Word and hymnody. Some leave Iran for political reasons, such as the Kurds, who live in Iran as second-class citizens. Others are just trying to get a better economic situation. Our friend, Babak, shares his story with us knowing that it will reach you now.

## Meet Babak, 24 years old, Refugee from Iran

1) **Why did you leave Iran?** I became a Christian in Iran. When the police discovered that I was a Christian, then I was a “wanted” man. So, I have had to abandon my job, life and family. 2) **How did you find out about Jesus in Iran?** I heard about Jesus through an old friend. My friend that introduced Christ to me was not a good person in the past. After my friend knew Christ, I saw positive changes in his behavior and mood. I became curious to know what changed in him. 3) **Have you shared Jesus with family or friends?** I have not been able to share Jesus with my family, but I have shared Jesus with friends. Christ provides the right way of life. Friends are always there for me; they help and support me as much as they can with encouragement. 4) **Tell us about your family?** My family members are Muslim, like most Iranians, so they couldn’t accept this important change, but for my safety and my life, my father helped me. But, even if my family accepted my new faith, our society will never accept me. The community is drowning without liberty. 5) **How did you escape the country?** I left Iran through Serow border, which is one of northern cities in Iran, then across Turkey by car and bus, then arrived in Serbia. I went on foot through a very demanding way and sometimes by car. I arrived in Greece with many dangerous and harsh situations. 6) **How has your experience been at St Petri Church?** I had my hard days in Greece. I didn’t have much money or food and staying away from family the only hope I had was Enjil, Arabic name for the Gospel of Jesus, and the church where I went. I always took part in churches in different places and some people like Siyamak and Koroush and other friends helped me. They comforted me in a way that helped me to continue my way with a stronger faith, which was living for Christ. After a while, I came to Germany by plane and reached Dresden. After completing the paperwork, the police transferred me to the Hamburger Straße camp. There, I met so many people from Iran, who helped me and took me to the St Petri SELK church. I already had a great feeling even before entering the church. Now that I have been going to St Petri for a while...I feel like I’m part of a great family and everyone, especially Pfarrer Dittmer, is family. This helps me a great deal. so I could find Jesus and

strengthen my faith. The church has made it less miserable to be away from my family and friends. Pfarrer Dittmer and others have kindly taken the effort to help me solve my problems and difficulties. They’ve been there for me all the time. I have invited my friends to our Gottesdienst (church service), but since their Gottesdienst are mostly in the same time with ours they could not attend with us, although many are eager and willing to.



**Babak**

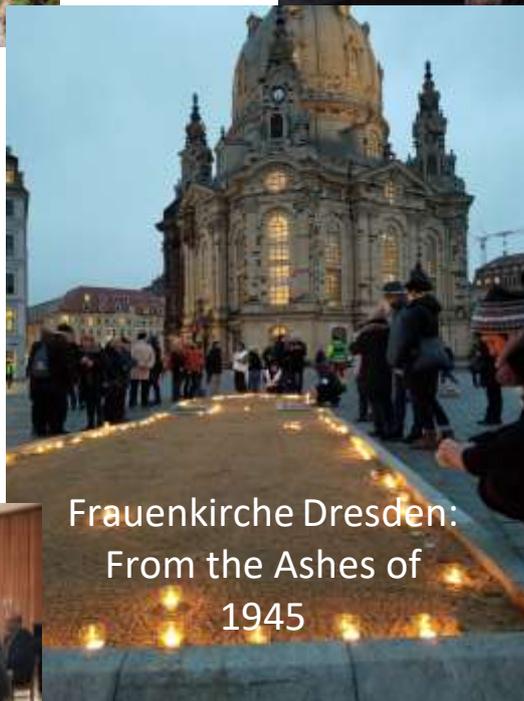
## Prayers:

- That refugees like Babak receive the gift of grace and grow in faith by hearing the Word of God.
- For our Pastor and congregation to not get weary, but run the race of faith by loving and serving each other.
- For repentance and great mercies shown to us during the Lenten season.
- For our supporters who serve with us to make known the hope we have in Christ alone.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Ephesians 2: 8-9 ESV

“God has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes.” Job 30:19 ESV

Blessings, *Carl & Karen* Cecil



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