

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release: Monday, 5th October 2026

“Made in the image of God, made for each other”: Chine McDonald preaches at Methodist Central Hall Westminster’s 114th anniversary

A congregation of many nations gathers in the hall where the United Nations first met, to hear a call to radical welcome in a fractured world

Methodist Central Hall Westminster celebrated its 114th Church Anniversary on Sunday 4 October with a morning service in its Great Hall, where guest preacher Chine McDonald, director of the religion and society think tank Theos, called on the Church to be “the mosaic of beauty and difference” in a world that is pulling people apart.

Preaching on Genesis 1:26–27 and 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 under the theme “Made in the image of God, made for each other”, she reminded the congregation that the first General Assembly of the United Nations met in the same hall in January 1946, as delegates from around the world gathered to build a future of collaboration, solidarity and peace.

Eighty years on, she said, the world feels more fractured than those delegates might have hoped. Yet looking out at a congregation of different ages, backgrounds, accents and nationalities, she saw something worth celebrating: one body, gathered to worship the God in whose image every person is made.

“We live in a world where dehumanising forces are seeking to pull us apart,” she said. “To divide and to conquer. A world which seems to be resorting to ideas we thought we had once moved past: that some people are more worthy of dignity than others.”

Drawing on her own journey from Nigeria to London as a four-year-old, she described the image of God as a revolutionary truth: that every person, from the refugee and the person sleeping on the street to the chief executive and the person we disagree with, carries a God-given dignity that cannot be reduced to productivity, status or wealth.

Because Genesis records God saying “Let us make humankind in our image”, she argued that human beings bear the image of a God who exists in relationship, and so cannot bear that image fully alone. “It would be easier if we could just ignore others,” she said. “But to be made in the image of God ourselves is to know that we can’t just be image bearers on our own.”

Turning to Paul's picture of the Church as one body, she closed with a challenge to the congregation and the wider church: "The Church, the mosaic of beauty and difference, needs to be the place where all are welcomed; where the body exists not as different parts but as one, each part equal."

Revd Tony Miles, Superintendent Minister of Methodist Central Hall Westminster, said: "For 114 years this building has been a place where people from every corner of the world have gathered. At its heart has been a worshipping community seeking to follow Jesus. Chine's words named something we see here every Sunday: a church family that is richer because it is different, and that is called to welcome everyone who walks through our doors. In a divided world, that is a gift we want to keep offering at the heart of the nation."

Methodist Central Hall Westminster has been a global Christian family following Jesus at the heart of London since 1912. Standing opposite Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament, it welcomes worshippers and visitors from across the world every week.

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Notes to editors

1. Methodist Central Hall Westminster is a Methodist Local Church in the Westminster Methodist Circuit, at Storey's Gate, Westminster, London SW1H 9NH. It opened in 1912. Registered charity number 1145076. Website: mchw.live
2. The first General Assembly of the United Nations met in the Great Hall of Methodist Central Hall Westminster in January 1946.
3. Chine McDonald is director of Theos, the religion and society think tank, and the author of *God Is Not a White Man* and *Unmaking Mary: The Myth of Divine Motherhood*.
4. Photographs of the service are available on request. Credit: Dan Forshaw / Methodist Central Hall Westminster.

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