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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

A Church Moved Out. The World Moved In.

Service of Thanksgiving marks 80 years since the first United Nations General Assembly

London, Saturday 17 January 2026 — Methodist Central Hall Westminster today marked the 80th anniversary of the first meeting of the United Nations General Assembly with a Service of Thanksgiving in the Great Hall where the UN first convened in January 1946.

In a city rising from the ashes of war, this building stood as a testament to resolve rather than a mere display of grandeur. Eighty years later, the service bridged that inaugural moment of hope with the complexities of our current, fractured world, reaffirming why the United Nations still matters: to restrain conflict, uphold dignity, and insist that cooperation remains possible.

The service was attended by **Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Edinburgh**, **António Guterres**, Secretary-General of the **United Nations** and **President of the UN General Assembly**, **Annalena Baerbock** alongside ministers, diplomats, faith leaders, civic representatives, students and members of the public.

In his address, **Cardinal Vincent Nichols**, who himself celebrated his 80th birthday in November, reflected on the moral weight borne by those who gathered here in 1946, describing the United Nations not as an abstraction but as a covenant shaped by the devastation of war and the determination to prevent its return.

A central moment of the service was the **Act of Dedication and Commitment to the Future**, drawing on the original Preamble to the United Nations Charter. The Secretary-General proclaimed the opening words of the Charter — “We the peoples of the United Nations...” — reaffirming faith in human rights, equality, and the dignity of every person. The commitment was voiced by representatives across generations and faiths, including **Jo Roundell Greene**, granddaughter of Clement Attlee, Prime Minister in 1946, and Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, Moderator of the Free Churches Group. Each declaration was punctuated by the Methodist Central Hall Choir’s sung response from Micah 6:8: *“Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.”*

Revd Tony Miles, Superintendent of Methodist Central Hall said, “In 1946, the congregation of Methodist Central Hall Westminster agreed to step aside to make room for the world. This act of Methodist hospitality opened the stage for a significant moment in global history. In the echoes of our Great Hall, a fragile but determined resolve emerged: to protect future generations from the scourge of war. Eighty years later, we reiterate those words—not out of nostalgia, but to renew our commitment to healing our fractured world and fostering lasting peace.”

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