

# From the Superintendent

*By Rev Steve Day*

Dear friends,

On Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> January, I was privileged to attend a service of thanksgiving to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inaugural meeting of the United Nations General Assembly at Methodist Central Hall Westminster.

The United Nations (UN) was formed in the aftermath of World War Two, bringing together former enemies to seek another way of living together in the world. This video (<https://youtu.be/w3bWJrvRgJA>) records the first session of the UN General Assembly, which began on 10 January 1946. We heard how “The church moved out and the world moved in” as the congregation of Methodist Central Hall Westminster left the building to worship elsewhere to enable preparations for the UN General Assembly. It was a profoundly significant and gracious gesture.

In his homily, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, former Archbishop of Westminster, said<sup>1</sup>:

As we look back on 1946, let us honour those who gathered in this Hall. They were not superheroes cloaked in invincibility, but ordinary souls burdened by the extraordinary grief of families torn asunder, cities reduced to rubble, a world that had lost faith in its own goodness. Yet here, in this Methodist sanctuary – a beacon of the Gospel’s call to justice and mercy – they dared to envision something greater. The United Nations was no abstract treaty; it was a covenant, etched in the memory of the horrors of the Holocaust, the firebombing of Dresden, Coventry and Tokyo, the atomic clouds over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It declared, with quiet defiance, that vengeance yields only ashes, while diplomacy ploughs the soil for renewal. They pledged ‘to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war’ (Preamble of the Charter). One delegate later wrote of kneeling here in prayer, whispering for wisdom beyond borders.

He acknowledged the challenges today, in which “The very idea of nations working with trust, purpose, accountability and patience feels, at times, like a whisper against the clamour of nationalism and protective isolation.” In response to the challenges of achieving peace with justice in our time, he offered:

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<sup>1</sup> The homily can be watched via this link: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=901418498952487> or read here: <https://rcdow.org.uk/cardinal/homilies/80th-anniversary-of-the-united-nations/>

We pray for peace, which is always the work of God; for dialogue and cooperation between nations for the common good, the good from which no one is excluded; for the renewal of our international institutions so that national and international power may be used in the cause of a lasting peace based on justice, on respect for the dignity of every person, and on compassion for the poorest in our midst. Then we shall all breathe more easily and readily give praise to God.

May the God of all nations bless these endeavours, unite our wills and guide us so that dialogue may prevail and peace be our common inheritance.

In this period of Lent, it may be helpful for us to ponder Cardinal Nichols' words about the UN and reflect on the value of dialogue which seeks peace with justice, not just at the national and international levels, but also at the local community and personal levels.

God bless,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Steven", with a horizontal line underneath.

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## **King's Hall Fire**

You will probably already be aware of the tragic fire which took place at King's Hall Methodist Church in Southall on the night of Sunday 22 February.

I went to Southall with trepidation early the next morning, not sure what I would find. While it is very sad that any part of the King's Hall building has been damaged, I was relieved that only the central part was affected. We are very grateful to the fire crews who tackled the fire and prevented it from reaching the rotunda and façade.

The building is being surveyed soon and this should help us to assess what happens to the damaged part of the building.

Your prayers for the King's Hall congregation as they come to terms with the shock of the fire would be most welcome.