

UNA Westminster joins service to mark 70th anniversary of the first meeting of the UN General Assembly in London in 1946

10 January 2016 To mark the first meeting of the UN General Assembly held in Methodist Central Hall Westminster on 10 January 1946, UNA Westminster worked closely with Superintendent Minister Revd Dr Martyn Atkins and his deputy, Revd Tony Miles, to create a service in the same location, worthy of this important anniversary. Members of the UN Veterans Association paraded the UN flag which the Revd Tony Miles later used to explain the significance of its design to the many children present. During the service, he interviewed former diplomat Sir Peter Marshall who had seen service at the UN in both New York and Geneva. They discussed the origins of the text of the Preamble to the UN Charter and the increasingly important role of the organisation. Sir Peter stated he considers the UN to be the greatest experiment in international cooperation the world has ever seen. Their discussion covered from the UN's earliest days when its founding nations chose London to host the inaugural meeting although it was a war-torn, bomb scarred, threadbare city at the time, and up to the organisation's current form which is multi-polar, stretching beyond New York, to Geneva and Vienna and many other cities. "The UN has changed international relations from the zero-sum game of classical diplomacy to the positive-sum diplomacy of the modern world. The benefit to humankind has been enormous" Sir Peter stated.



The two Lessons were read by members of the UNA Westminster Committee, Kishan Manocha, now Senior Adviser on Freedom of Religion and Belief, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and David Wardrop, Chairman of UNA Westminster Branch. In his sermon, the Revd Miles referred to the recent birth of his first grandchild when asking his listeners to imagine the world in which she would grow up. He

reminded them that, to make it possible for London to host the inaugural UN meeting, Mr Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary, had asked the Methodist community to 'leave their building' for a period of some months and the continuing sense of pride that Methodists still have in this important link with the United Nations today. The service ended with an Act of Resolve using text based on the preamble to the UN Charter.

More than two hundred members of the United Nations Association responded to the invitation to attend the service, joining the regular Sunday service congregation. "We feel privileged to have played a part in this important anniversary" said David Wardrop, "and re-committing ourselves to working together for a better world."

(Photo: from left, Lord Bates, Sir Peter Marshall, Kishan Manocha and David Wardrop)