

Leytonstone Methodist Church: 150th Anniversary Service

[0:00 – 6:05] [*Background music and pre-service atmosphere*]

[6:06] Welcome & Introductions Speaker: A very, very warm welcome to a very special service this day. There are too many people to make a special mention of, but I want everyone here to feel very welcome indeed, whether you are regular worshippers and members of this congregation, your invited guest for today's service, or you traveled at some distance to join us for this most special occasion: our 150th anniversary of the church opening for worship on this site.

But two people I want to just say a particular word of welcome to. One is our guest preacher and former minister, Janet, who you'll hear from. And it's lovely that Janet has traveled all the way from the Isle of Man to join us, where she's superintendent. It's 25 or 27 years since Janet first came here... The other person to mention, we are in the presence of Methodist royalty because another of our former ministers is also with us, the Reverend Norman Grigg. Welcome to you all.

Methodism here goes back much more than 150 years. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church, visited here on a number of occasions. In February 1767, he wrote in his journal: "*I preached at Leighton Stone. Oh, what a house of God is here. Not only for decency and order, but for the life and power of religion.*" We stand in the footsteps of all those who've gone before us... Just one symbolic action to start our worship: Let me show you these. These are all our baptism registers. Every person—mostly children, every adult baptized in this church in the last 150 years is contained in these registers.

[10:09] Call to Worship Speaker: You'll find our responses on the sheets of paper and I trust on the screen as well. God of the past who has fathered and mothered us, we are here to thank you. God of the future who is always ahead of us, we are here to trust you. God of the present, here in the midst of us, we are here to praise you. God of life beyond us, within us, we are here to glorify you. We stand as we are able.

[10:33 – 14:27] [*Congregation sings: "To God Be the Glory"*]

[14:52] Opening Prayer & Confession Miriam: Let us pray. Father and our God, we just give you all the glory. We give you all the adoration... Without you, where would we have been? It's your grace that has carried us thus far. The fact that you are up, you've left your bed, He's given you the strength to walk into this room—just thank Him and bless Him.

Bible says we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. But thank God for Jesus Christ because He says if we confess, He's faithful and just and He will forgive us. Let us confess our sins before Almighty God, as individuals and as a church... We thank you Lord in Jesus's name we pray with thanksgiving. Amen.

[20:31 – 23:54] [*Congregation sings: "Praise is Rising"*]

[24:07] Praise & Worship Charlotte: Hello. Today this church has turned 150 years old, and I pray for almighty God to grant everybody here a good life. Amen. We are going to sing the song "Praise God, Most High God."

[24:41 – 29:49] *[Congregation sings praise and worship songs]*

[30:02] Scripture Reading Speaker: We're now going to hear our reading today from the Gospel of John. And the person who's going to read it, I think, is the last person that was baptized here by Janet. His name is Andre. **Andre:** Morning church. This reading is taken from John 3:1-17. *"Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God...'"* [Andre reads the full passage, concluding with verses 16-17]: *"For God so loved the world, he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."* Thanks be to the Lord.

[32:56 – 36:01] *[Congregation sings: "From Heaven You Came"]*

[36:29] Ghanaian Methodist Fellowship Choir Speaker: We are particularly honored and privileged to have the Ghanaian Methodist Fellowship Choir join us in worship today. **Choir Leader:** Right. So we represent the part of the fellowship which is the whole of London... We're going to give you an anthem. That anthem has three languages: English, Ga, and Twi. If you sum it up, it's just by the grace of God. The song is entitled "Grace and Mercy."

[38:30 – 43:21] *[Choir performs "Grace and Mercy"]*

[43:23] Hymn & Sermon Introduction Speaker: How fabulous. It reminds me that we must think of excuses to have further anniversary celebrations to invite you back! We sing a hymn which, based on that passage from John's gospel, speaks of the mystery of God sending Christ to die for our sins.

[44:15 – 50:28] *[Congregation sings: "And Can It Be That I Should Gain"]*

[50:41] The Sermon: God's Love in the Past, Present, and Future Janet (Guest Preacher): Let us pray. Gracious God, as Nicodemus came to you in the darkness of night, we come to you asking for your light... Amen.

Well, it's good to be back to you. I wanted to bring you a happy birthday present. Today my message is about God's love in the past, in the present, and in the future. I want to talk about God's longing love first of all, then the life that God's love brings into our lives, and then finally I want to give love some legs.

Before we know God, before we search for God, God searches for us. God's heart has a Dorothy-shaped space in it, a Miriam-shaped space, a flow-shaped space. When we are not at home with God, God's heart has something missing, and God longs for that person like a mother longs for a child.

We are not born sinful; we are made in God's image. Sin is like a sickness or dirt that accumulates on us. Salvation is about bringing us back, restoring us to our full beauty and glory. When I was in Honduras, I tried to open a butane tank and struggled, exerting all my

muscles. Eventually, I had to ask Carlos, who picked up the spanner and opened it immediately. I was turning it the wrong way. This is a symbol of our turning around—turning from the things of this world to do God's will. Without God, we struggle and sweat; God turns us the other way around.

Finally, love has legs. To put into practice the mission of God, we need to put legs on our love. The legs we need are found in Micah: to do justice, to show loving kindness or mercy, and to walk humbly. Love isn't a noun; love is a verb. It becomes political and social. It's about seeing every single person as equally valuable and precious to God, and equally deserving of the resources of this world—food, water, housing, education. I've learned working in lots of countries that every single ethnicity and culture has something precious to tell about God's love that cannot be said in English. God's first language is not English!

[1:16:43 – 1:18:57] *[Congregation sings: "Hear the Call of the Kingdom"]*

[1:18:57] Prayers of Intercession Speaker: As we come to our prayers, we sit quietly and ask that God's Holy Spirit might blow where it will... We pray for our friends and community, our neighbors, and our city. May we find ways to put legs on our love and to do justice. We pray against the tyrants of this age who bring war and conflict. Bring a conversion from the love of power to the power of love. We pray particularly for people caught up in the latest bombings and violence in the Middle East... [Concludes with the Lord's Prayer].

[1:24:38] Notices & Announcements Speaker: A huge word of thanks to all those people who have contributed... Special thanks to Janet for coming all this way to bring us God's word. We have a small token of our appreciation to give to Janet. [Presents gift]. After this service, what we'd really like is to take a photo. We also have a sumptuous lunch offered free to all in the restaurant building. **Rachel:** Hello everyone. I wanted to talk briefly about a young adult group for the Methodist churches in East London. It's open to anyone 18 to 35 years old. We meet once a month and have a WhatsApp page if you're interested.

[1:30:42] The Walk-Up Offering Speaker: We are going to take up our collection... which is described as a walk-up offering. Whether you have an offering of money to give or not, all are invited to come forward either to place a gift in the receptacle up front, or simply to touch the box as a sign of your wider offering of yourself, your love, your prayers, your faith.

[1:31:51 – 1:39:06] *[Walk-up offering takes place while the Ghanaian Choir sings]*

[1:39:06] Offering Prayer & Prayer of Thanksgiving Speaker: Faithful and gracious God, we give you thanks for your love... We pray that these gifts may be used wisely. Amen. Lord our God, thank you for your hand upon the Methodist people in this place. For the women and men who a long time ago had the vision of a Methodist church in Leytonstone. Thank you for the past 150 years of faith and witness here, and for all that you still intend us to be and do for you in the years to come. Amen.

[1:42:10] Affirmation of Faith Speaker & Congregation: We are not alone. We live in God's world. We believe in God who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus to reconcile and make new... In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

[1:43:08 – 1:47:11] [*Closing hymn: "Lord, for the Years"*]

[1:47:11] **Final Blessing Speaker:** The blessing will be in English and in Ga. And now may the blessing of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon us and remain with us always. Amen.

[1:48:13 – End] [*Closing musical worship*]
