

*Text of a message delivered by Grant Harris at Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 9th August 2026.
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the kingdom of God among us

The kingdom of God becomes visible when ordinary people notice, love, and serve the people Jesus notices, names, and draws near to. This message celebrates how that kingdom is being expressed through the ministries of the Windsor Park LifeCare Trust and invites us all to put our faith into action.

Introduction: The kingdom of God

When Aidan preached last week from Luke Chapter 17, we were 22 weeks into our series called **King & Kingdom Come** as we take a close look at the big themes we see through the Gospel of Luke. We started this series back on the 21st September 2025 and by working through it in four blocks over 18 months, we're deliberately not rushing it, because the big themes in this Gospel take a bit of time to sink in.

One of the big themes we've seen, particularly in recent weeks, is that the kingdom of God, or seeing the world through a God lens, becomes visible the more we notice people that others overlook. We've continually seen that the focus of Jesus' stories and parables are those that often don't make the headlines. From the teenage Mary in the birth narrative to shepherds and tax collectors and servants and ten men with leprosy through to the only person named in all of Jesus' parables, Lazarus, a beggar covered in sores who lay at the gate of an unnamed super-rich man, we continually see Jesus focussing in on those who need to find hope in a world where hope is hard to find. That hope is the kingdom of God - a kingdom like no other that Jesus says has moved into our neighbourhood. And when Jesus said the kingdom of God is among you, he

wasn't describing a future reality waiting for heaven, he was describing a present reality that begins wherever God's people embody God's character in God's world.

To those of us who are on the lifelong journey of knowing Jesus, becoming like Jesus, and doing what Jesus did, the challenge is how do we live out the values of the kingdom of God – and how do we do that as the body of Christ, the church.

Today we want to celebrate one way that we do that here at Windsor; one way that we've developed in recent years to build on the foundations of those who have gone before us as we morph and evolve as a community of faith. What we've seen throughout the story of our church reflects the words of Luke, that the kingdom of God becomes visible when ordinary people notice, love and serve the people Jesus notices, names and draws near to, and we recognise that this has always been part of the story of this church.

For context, back in the middle of the 2010's we were thinking and praying about how we might more reflect the kingdom of God in our local community, how might we develop some of our existing ministries and grow others that focus on the needs that we saw at that time around us – and I believe it's continually the role of the church to do this, and Windsor's history is one of doing exactly that, that's our knitting.

Windsor Park LifeCare Trust Sunday

As a result of that pondering, in 2018 we formed the **Windsor Park LifeCare Trust**, which became the 4th piece of the Windsor Park Group sitting alongside and part of Windsor Park Baptist Church, the Equip Trust, and Windsor Park Hub Limited, all of which together make a missionally minded local church that **seeks to build stronger communities by putting our faith into action** – our vision seeks to implement what Luke is encouraging followers of Jesus to live.

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^ The Windsor Park Life Care Trust was added to the Windsor Park Group in 2018.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus repeatedly teaches that kingdom people notice, love, and serve people who are vulnerable, isolated, struggling, or unseen, and LifeCare is essentially one of our practical expressions of that same Kingdom vision: **seeing people, holding people up, and helping them to flourish** as best as we're able.

Many of you have been on that journey with us since we birthed LifeCare in 2018 and now eight years later we're continuing to do what we've always done – follow the lead of the Spirit to develop ministries, be involved in ministry activities, review ministry progress, adapt ministry activities, and be constantly seeking the new dreams and vision that the Holy Spirit gives us in the middle of everything we do.

Of course, we know that this year has been the most challenging year in the life of LifeCare, for a reason none of us envisaged. Sarah Clark became embedded in the development of LifeCare when she joined the team in February 2019 as part of our CAP Debt Centre at that time. Sarah joined the team because inherently she believed in the value of the kingdom at work in the world and she wanted to be closer to the action. A few years after that she became the very

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competent Manager of the trust, becoming an integral part of our senior leadership team here at Windsor, leading one of the key quadrants of the Windsor Park Group.

Most of you will know that Sarah tragically passed away in an accident here on the Shore on Wednesday 11th March, a day that will be forever etched into the lives of all of us at Windsor, particularly those of us who have the privilege of serving on the staff team; five months later we still grieve, we miss her around the office and our hearts still go out to Cam, Hannah, Max, her family and Sarah's very wide group of friends. To be honest, we're only slowly moving forwards, adjusting to something we'd still rather not have experienced.



^ Sarah speaking at LifeCare Sunday on 24th March 2024

At the same time, we remain deeply grateful for what Sarah worked towards. Sarah understood that LifeCare wasn't simply a collection of programmes, but that it was about people, it was about seeing people who felt unseen and reminding them that they mattered to God. That was Sarah's gift. She saw people because she knew they were people worth seeing and she was passionate about seeing that remain the core focus of what LifeCare is about.

In response to Sarah's passing, I'm deeply grateful for the work of the LifeCare board, staff team, our Elders, and in fact the whole of the body here at Windsor ... in what has been a very difficult

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time to navigate, we've come together in a way that shows that the world at its worst shows the church can be at its best.

With the legacy of those who have gone before, let's hear from some of those who continue to steward the work and ministries of LifeCare, people who are constantly asking themselves the question, *'Who is Jesus asking us to notice?'*

Let's hear from **Gayle van Hoffen**:

Hi, I'm Gayle, and I have the privilege of leading the Family Care ministry under the Windsor Park Lifecare Trust.

Every family has a story, and sometimes that story includes separation or divorce. It's a journey no one plans for, and yet it's one that many people in our community are walking. 5715 children under 17 experienced this in NZ 2025.

In Family Care, we intentionally walk alongside these families. Many of them are in a very vulnerable space. Separation is recognised as one of life's most significant and stressful events, not only for adults but especially for children. We now know that significant childhood adversity can have lasting effects well into adulthood. Yet we also know something incredibly hopeful—that early support, caring relationships and practical tools can make a lifelong difference.

*People often ask me why I choose to work in such a challenging space. My answer is simple: **because I don't just see brokenness - I get to witness hope.** I get to see healing begin, confidence grow, and families discover that this difficult chapter doesn't have to define the rest of their story. That's why I love what I do.*

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*Through our **PowerUP** programme, we come alongside children as they learn healthy ways to understand their emotions, build resilience, and discover that they are deeply loved by God and never alone.*

*We also support parents because when parents are supported, the whole family unit is strengthened. Through our **free Family Law Clinic**, people receive practical guidance to help them navigate what often feels overwhelming. Our **Refresh** evenings create a welcoming space for mums parenting alone—a place of friendship, encouragement, good food and practical support. Sometimes that support looks like advocating for them at WINZ, attending medical appointments, court dates, behaviour management meetings at school or simply standing beside a mum while she watches her child receive an award, so she doesn't have to celebrate alone.*

Recently Windsor Park Baptist celebrated their 75th anniversary. That day I happened to sit beside a woman who had attended our Refresh group many years ago. As part of the celebrations, we were asked to turn to the person sitting next to us and share something significant that had happened over our years at this church. She turned to me and quietly told me that her significant moment had been being part of Refresh during one of the hardest seasons of her life. It was such encouragement to me and reminded me that we never fully know the impact of simply walking alongside someone.

One of the many highlights is being involved in our PowerUP graduation evening. Watching a child's coach read a letter describing the strengths, courage and potential they see in their buddy is incredibly moving. You can see confidence beginning to replace fear, and hope replacing uncertainty.

Over the past sixteen years, we have walked alongside a couple of hundred children and families.

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To every one of you who has cooked a meal, coached a child, prayed for a family, welcomed someone through the door, or supported this ministry financially—thank you. You are part of the team building stronger communities by putting your faith into action.

As you journey with us, every child who discovers hope, every parent who finds strength, and every family who begins to heal is part of your ministry too. What an awesome privilege we have to serve together in this way for this moment in time.

For Gayle, the kingdom of God is visible when a child or someone who is doing it a bit tougher than others discovers they are not defined by their circumstances.

Let's hear from **Marina Young**:

Kia Ora, I'm Marina, the Service Manager for Haven Pregnancy Support, a dedicated service under the Windsor Park Life Care Trust. Our mission at Haven is to create a free, non-judgmental, and compassionate space for women, men, and families navigating the journey of unintended or unsupported pregnancies, baby loss, and post-abortion healing. We understand that these experiences can be incredibly challenging, and we are here to offer support every step of the way.

We align with the Ministry of Health's first 1000 days initiative, recognising the importance of supporting mothers and babies from conception through the first two years. This period is vital for nutrition, health, and development, and it significantly impacts lifelong outcomes. Having someone to walk alongside in this journey—providing emotional and practical support—can truly change lives. We want everyone to know they are not alone, that they matter, and that their experiences are valid.

Our Haven Aunties are a group of compassionate volunteers, with their own lived experiences and professional backgrounds, who journey alongside mums and do home visits to support

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mothers during and after their pregnancies. An important part of our practical support is Chars Place, led by the amazing Nicky. This service offers high-quality new and gently used baby clothes and gear, such as bassinets, prams, cots, and bedding. We are deeply grateful for the generous donations we receive, including the beautiful handmade items that warm our hearts. We can give out from one to three bundles a week to families. We also network with several other organisations who do amazing work and provide them with gear when needed.

It is a privilege to witness the joy and relief on the faces of mothers and families as they receive these cherished items. Their appreciation often comes in the form of tears and heartfelt thanks, which remind us of the significance of our work. Each person comes to us with their own unique story, often facing daunting challenges. Some are escaping situations of domestic violence, others are struggling with addiction or isolation, some have no family/whanau support, some are immigrants, and some are simply trying to navigate financial hardships after recent job losses.

Life can be incredibly tough, but being able to offer a thread of hope is transformative and encouraging for the family. It fills our hearts with warmth to watch a mother flourish and embrace her role with newfound strength and confidence. This is why we do what we do, and it is what makes our work so meaningful. Together, we can make a difference, one family at a time.

The need is great, and we are always looking for more Haven Aunties to fill the gap of much-needed support for these families. We often serve as an extra layer of wraparound support and work alongside other agencies that may be involved.

I love what I do because I have my own story of an unintended pregnancy, and if something like Haven was available then, my life and mental wellbeing would have looked a lot different in a positive way. We need to walk gently in people's lives as everyone has a story of what has brought them to this place and time. Time is a precious thing, and giving someone time and

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allowing them to be heard helps them feel valued and that they matter. Some situations are heartbreaking, but being able to unpack their fears, bring hope, and then see a sparkle return to their eyes fills my cup with joy and purpose.

For Marina, the kingdom of God is visible when vulnerable people encounter compassion without judgement.

And finally, let's hear from **Caleb Finlayson**:

Kia ora everyone my name is Caleb. I'm the project lead for Lifecare's 24-7 youth work. We are all about being local. We focus on sending youth workers into Rangitoto College and Murray's Bay Intermediate. Our mission is to see young people thrive.

In a world where life is demanding for our young people, the pressures are higher than ever, both in the real world and in the online space. From pressures of bullying, study, mental health and all aspects of wellbeing, our youth workers offer a presence-based approach. Incarnational. This focuses on the person and not the outcome or the programme.

Yes, our youth workers use different programmes as tools, but the key for us is being a consistent presence in an inconsistent world.

What does this look like, it's one on one mentoring, group work, coaching, connecting. The 5 things we focus on are:

- 1. Supporting students,*
- 2. Building positive relationships,*
- 3. Leadership development,*
- 4. Encouraging school spirit and*
- 5. Integrating into out of school activities.*

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Why do I love what I do? Because I know that we are planting seeds that we will never sit in the shade of. We are investing into the lives of young people, who feel lost, down and out, and we are the hands and feet of Jesus, being salt and light. It's about putting our faith into action and not settling for second best for our young people. It's about seeing them thrive!

One of the stories I love to share, is of a young person a few years ago, facing some traumatic events, we were able to pick and identify the need in this student, refer to the counsellors, to journey alongside and support. In what we like to call "hand holders not problems solvers."

That meant each new space our youth workers were able to be a part of the solution. Support the student. Years on, that young person has gone from strength to strength, getting the support they needed and confidence to do so, and one of the contributing factors was our youth worker, gentle being present journeying alongside them the whole way, to see them thrive.

Stories like this and many more, are why I love our youth work.

For Caleb, the kingdom of God is visible when young people discover they are known, valued and not alone.

On top of these ministries, we're in the process of adjusting the operating model of the **Windsor Park Christian Counselling Centre** as we introduce new counsellors to continue the ministry of accredited and professional counselling for people who need some more intentional help to get through the life challenges they're facing. I'm grateful to **Pastor Holly Walton** who has assumed oversight for the counselling centre.

For our counselling ministry, the kingdom of God is visible when people find a safe place to bring their pain and discover they don't have to carry it alone.

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What does this look like year-to-year? Here are some of our impact statistics from last year. These are impressive numbers, but more importantly they represent individual people and families who, in one way or another, have encountered something of the kingdom of God breaking into their lives:



From all the things that make up LifeCare, and everything else that's part of the Windsor Park Group, I think it's fair to say that **the Gospel is not merely something we believe, it's something we seek to embody.**

Jesus repeatedly teaches that Kingdom people notice, love, and serve people who are vulnerable, isolated, struggling, or unseen. LifeCare is one way Windsor seeks to make that calling visible.

The Invitation

Of course, you know that I'm not just going to finish with saying good job to the LifeCare team. Anytime we talk about who God has enabled us to become we always talk about how you can be part of that. There are four ways, three of which you can probably guess, and one that you

might not guess but will apply for some of you. Here are four pathways through which you could be involved:

1. Notice: This is the one we might not think of but is perhaps the most important way for some of us to be involved, because before there's a programme, there's a person who's noticed. Every ministry you've heard about today began with someone noticing something.

- Someone noticed families under pressure.
- Someone noticed young people needing support.
- Someone noticed people struggling with unexpected pregnancies.
- Someone noticed people carrying burdens they couldn't carry alone.

Our history as a church is one of noticing needs and having the courage to step up and find a way to help. What are you noticing? Who is God bringing across your path? What ideas do you have? What dreams and visions has God placed in your mind? What might God be inviting you to notice and respond to?

2. Pray: Everyone can pray, and it's the foundation of all that we do. Maybe you could join the email database and commit to praying for the team and all those who encounter the ministries of LifeCare.

3. Give: As always, kingdom ministry requires the investment of resources. LifeCare stands with and beside who we are as a church but requires a team of committed financial backers to help it function. Thanks to those who do that but maybe you could join the team of regular givers – at whatever level God might nudge you with.

4. Serve: LifeCare needs people who can walk alongside others. Every Monday at the moment we have a team of 11 coaches helping an individual child through PowerUP. That's awesome

– but we always need more, from coaching of children to becoming a Haven Aunty, to perhaps helping with social media, there's always the opportunity for involvement.

To talk about the Windsor Park LifeCare Trust doesn't interrupt our series on the Gospel of Luke – today is about acknowledging that people in this faith community take the imperative of being active participants in the kingdom of God seriously – even when it's deeply challenging to do so. Windsor Park has always, and hopefully will always, seek to live out the Kingdom ethic Luke has been teaching all along. Might we continually think less about the organisation but think more about how our discipleship and stewardship drives us to put our faith into action.

That is the kind of Kingdom Jesus describes, and that is why LifeCare exists. Not simply to run programmes, but to make the love of Christ visible.

Every time a lonely person finds friendship, every time a family finds hope, every time a young person discovers they matter, every time someone receives practical love in a difficult season, we see the Kingdom of God among us — the very thing Jesus taught us to pray: ***"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."***

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Reflecting on Sunday 2nd August 2026:

Last week Pastor Aidan Wivell spoke from Luke 17:7-19. Where have you consciously chosen the posture of “*owed nothing, given everything*” instead of entitlement or bargaining with God, and what difference did it make? As you reflect on the past week, have you been more focused on God's gifts or on deepening your relationship with the Giver through gratitude, obedience, and faithful service?

These questions help you think more about this message. We hope they might be a conduit for conversation and reflection, encouraging us to wrestle with how this message might practically work itself out in our lives.

1. Who is someone in your world that Jesus may be inviting you to notice more intentionally?
2. When have you experienced someone walking alongside you in a difficult season? What difference did it make?
3. Why is simply being present with people such a powerful expression of God's kingdom?
4. Which of the four invitations, Notice, Pray, Give, or Serve, do you feel most drawn to right now, and why?

If you'd like to chat with someone about your spiritual journey or anything else going on in your life, please contact us at care@windsorpark.org.nz; **we're better together** and **no perfect people are allowed**.

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Below are some further resources that may take the message further and deeper and enable you to explore other viewpoints on the same theme. We also encourage you to engage with the preacher if there are further questions you have or if you'd like clarification on anything. Email info@windsorpark.org.nz and we'll direct your query to the appropriate person.

1. Take a look through the **Windsor Park LifeCare Trust** website, <https://www.wplifecare.org.nz/>, and consider how you could contribute to the life of the Trust, through **Noticing, Praying, Giving, or Volunteering**.
2. We talk about a lot about the kingdom of God in our Luke series. This language is common in the Gospels. Click below to watch a video by The Bible Project that introduces **The Gospel of the Kingdom** narrative that runs throughout the Bible.
<https://bibleproject.com/videos/gospel-kingdom/>
3. John Piper is a well-known pastor and theologian who in this audio sermon talks about **What Is The Kingdom of God?:** <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-the-kingdom-of-god>. There are some great links at the bottom as well to follow if you'd like to hear more.