



**Title: Windsor Park Vision 2026 [Week 2]. Legacy.**

**Text: Hebrews 12:1-3**

### **Introduction: Heritage**

At the end of last year my Mum shifted from the family home into a care home, which has been great for her, but it means I'm at that stage in life when we're starting to sort out the things in my family home. I know many of you have been there! This also means that you find things tucked away that you never knew about. I recently discovered a little silver trinket box with a note inside that said it came from the Wahlstrom family home in Hudiksvall, Sweden. This is where my great-great-grandfather, Adolph Wahlstrom, emigrated from in 1862. I assume he brought it with him when he settled in Nelson and became a well-known shipbuilder. I love that this tells a little part of what my inherited legacy is now ... it connects one part of my family line to Sweden, which also means I'm trying to track any relationship with Ingvar Kamprad, who founded Ikea! Surely we're related, and I can get a discount?!

We all have an inherited legacy. Sometimes there's joy in discovering our legacy, and sometimes there's pain, for many different reasons. But nonetheless we can't change history, we can only learn from it.

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## **Biblical legacy**

The Bible has a lot to say about legacy. One of my favourite passages is found in Hebrews Chapter 12 Verses 1-3 which say, ***“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”***

In Verse 1 the author is referring to all the Old Testament figures listed in the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews Chapter 11: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, and others, They're a ***“cloud of witnesses,”*** not because they're watching us like we're in a stadium, but because their lives testify that faith is worth it. And then the author says, ***“So fix your eyes on Jesus,”*** because ultimately, the legacy that shapes us most is not simply the people who have gone before us, but Jesus himself.

## **Legacy at Windsor Park Baptist Church**

As we come to the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of our 2026 Vision series, I want us to think about legacy, not in terms of what we have inherited, but in terms of what we are creating.

Last week I talked about what we've inherited here at Windsor Park Baptist Church, an almost 75-year journey of a church that has constantly sought to go deeper in faith and wider in its application of faith. We've done this because a bunch of people have not only gone before us, but also a bunch of people are still with us who have demonstrated faithful perseverance through the rhythms of community life for many decades – those of us who have been part of this church for perhaps less than 20 years are deeply grateful for you veterans, those of you who have role-modelled doing life and faith, together. We thank you for your service. We're grateful to those who did that for many decades and who are now enjoying their reward.

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Today I also want to talk about the ongoing future legacy that many of us could be part of as we celebrate our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in May. And I want to do that by telling you a story.

### **The Grace Groner story**

Grace Groner was born in 1909 in a small farming community in Illinois. Upon being orphaned at age 12, she was taken in by another family who paid for her to attend nearby Lake Forest College. In 1935, Groner purchased three \$60 shares in the company she was a secretary at, a role she stayed in for the next 43 years. The company at that time was a small business called Abbott Laboratories. Over the decades, her shares split many times, and she reinvested the dividends each time. When she died in 2010, her shares had increased in value to be more than seven million dollars, which she gifted to the school that had shaped her, which to this day is used to fund internships and service projects at Lake Forest College.

I love stories like that, because they show the value of building a legacy that can only be achieved over time. And that's the key idea for today. Legacy is not built in a moment, legacy is built over time — through faithfulness, consistency, and courage. And Windsor Park has that in our DNA.

There are some very significant examples of this kind of legacy that benefits others all around the world:

- The earliest recorded endowment fund (which is what these kinds of funds are called) started in AD 176 when Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius established four endowed chairs for philosophy schools in **Athens**.
- The oldest and continuously active legacy fund is the bequest of William of Durham, who died in 1249 and left funds to support students at University College in **Oxford**, UK.
- **Harvard University** in the US has a legacy fund valued at \$56.9b. It all began with a gift of £780 from John Harvard in 1638, growing over nearly four centuries through donations and strategic investments.

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- Novo Nordisk Foundation in **Denmark** is perhaps the largest in the world with a value of approx. \$167 billion, created by Nobel Prize winner August Krough when he returned from the USA and Canada with the license to produce insulin in the Scandinavian countries in the 1920's. This is an incredible foundation that funds significant research and innovation projects that improve people's lives and working conditions.
- Interestingly perhaps, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a significant global endowment fund, which is interesting because if you've ever wondered where the funding came from to build the Auckland New Zealand Temple that stands proudly overlooking Manukau and South Auckland, well, look no further.

You probably know where I'm heading with this, right?!

As part of our vision here at Windsor Park, not only have we inherited a spiritual legacy from those that have gone before us that we hope to continue for the future generations through the ongoing process of spiritual transformation in our own lives, we're also wanting to build a spiritually significant resourcing legacy on the foundations of those who have already contributed to the tools that we use to be the missional church that we are. I often talk about the story that some of you were part of that has got us to our current site – 10 families mortgaging their homes with a midnight deadline to enable Murrays Bay Baptist to relocate and ultimately become Windsor Park Baptist. Faithful courage inspired by the Spirit ... and many of us are the benefactors of that.

We're also grateful for the courage that so many have showed over the years that have created spiritually missional ministries that continue to shape many lives. The volunteers that took a chance on a ministry to those with mental health illness back in the early 1990's, the volunteers who have continually poured into the lives of our teenagers through giving up Easters and long weekends to spend time with the next generations. The stories are numerous – courage and faithful entrepreneurship are part of our DNA from Day 1.

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## **Windsor Park Endowment Fund**

As we approach our 76<sup>th</sup> year I'm wanting us to start adding to the courageous decisions of the past by building a **Windsor Park Endowment Fund** that will create the opportunity for the next generations of people who will serve this church to be able to resource the courageous missional ideas and dreams that are still being incubated in the hearts of our children, or our children's children.

And this isn't just an idea either. We quietly did the work on this a couple of years ago and have now developed the structure and framework around it; we've used some donations that have come in from bequests, and a few of you have already generously tagged funds into this project. Most recently someone from outside the church saw this on our website and thought it was a nice idea, and they've started contributing. Currently we have \$85,000 in the Windsor Park Endowment Fund – a fund where the capital will be protected, an investment strategy will be implemented, and future earnings after CPI adjustments will be available to assist the mission of future generations.

And I wonder what God might do over the next year, or the next decade, if many of us decided to contribute to something we may never personally benefit from. So, here's what I want to invite you to do this week:

1. **Firstly**, pray and ask God what faithful stewardship looks like for you.
2. **Secondly**, consider perhaps a one-off gift, or a small regular amount, or as many charities are doing these days, consider including Windsor Park in your will.
3. And **thirdly**, if you want to learn more, go to our website under the "Give" tab and click "*Endowment Fund*." Like usual, there's no pressure — but I do believe this is something that can make a big difference in the future

I'm just planting a seed, encouraging you to think about this as part of the usual challenge I give every year – to ask God about what He's saying to you about the stewardship of whatever He has

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entrusted into your care ... it's not about the amount, it's about the heart. This Endowment Fund isn't instead of our regular giving; it's not about replacing anything. It's about building something so that future mission at Windsor Park doesn't rise and fall on short-term pressure.

What I do know is that when I think about leaving my own legacy, which includes my character and the stewardship of what I'm entrusted with, I live by the old proverb that originated in the mid 1880's, "*Blessed are those who plant trees under whose shade they will never sit.*" That sounds very altruistic, and it is, but the theme of sitting under trees has its foundations clearly in the Bible.

- Psalm 1:1-3 says, "***Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither - whatever they do prospers.***" We know that this psalm is time orientated, we can't rush the seasons, and fruit only ripens over time; time can't be rushed.
- Jeremiah 17:7-8, "***But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.***" Again, the roots of a tree do not just appear, they grow, over time – the strength of the tree that survives the seasons is found in its longevity because of ongoing growth.
- And perhaps most significantly, in a block of wisdom sayings found in Proverbs 13:22, "***A good person leaves an inheritance for their children's children.***"

A good person in the context of this proverb is someone who seeks the wisdom of God; not someone who is perfect and who has all the answers or who is wealthy, just someone who pursues the spiritual practices of allowing the Spirit of shape all aspects of our lives.

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I was listening to a leadership podcast last year and the speaker was talking about leaving a legacy of character. I thought about that quite a lot, and perhaps somewhat morbidly I was thinking about the day when my grandchildren will carry me out of the church in a box. My thought was I want them to look down at the box, look to one another and say, *'He was a good man and has left a godly legacy for us.'* When thinking about that, I felt God say to me, *'Well Grant, that process starts now – how are you continuing to allow me to shape you so that they'll say that.'* It's created an interesting discussion with God!

In that podcast the speaker said that great leadership is not charisma, it's consistent; it's not fame, it's faithfulness; it's not immediate results, it's lasting impact. To put that in an equation that we could remember:

**Consistency + Faithfulness + Time = Lasting Impact.**

May that be the vision that continues to imbed itself in a church that has a 75-year legacy and a church that I hope has a vision to continue to build upon that legacy, not to rest on the good old days, but to courageously rely on the inspiration of the Spirit of God to continue to drive us to be missionally engaged people, growing into all that God has created us for to build His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

In 75 years', in the year 2101, many of us won't be here – but my preschool grandchildren may be – it's weird to think about that. My hope and prayer is that those who are in the church at that time might look back at the faith and courage of those who lived in the 2020's and be grateful for what we put in place today.

- Grateful for what we built.
- Grateful for what we resourced.
- Grateful for the way we ran our race.

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And might we today desire to be the great cloud of witnesses who go before them, allowing our lives to show the long journey of becoming spiritually mature through all the ups and downs that this earthly life brings.

To Him be all glory, today and forever.

Amen.

### **Prayer**

*Lord Jesus, we thank You for the legacy of faith that has been handed to us, through Scripture, through the saints who have gone before us, and through the faithful people who have built this church over the last 75 years. And today, we ask that You would help us not only to honour what we've inherited, but to live in a way that builds a legacy for those who will come after us. Holy Spirit, form us. Shape our character. Deepen our faith. Grow our roots in You. Make us people of consistency, faithfulness, courage, and joy - not for our name, but for Your glory. And Lord, where You have entrusted resources to us - time, energy, influence, and finances - teach us to steward them with wisdom. Free us from fear. Free us from scarcity. Free us from selfishness. And give us the faith to plant trees under whose shade we will never sit. We pray for the generations to come, for our children, our grandchildren, and for the people who will one day sit in these seats and call this church home. May they look back and see that we ran our race well. That we fixed our eyes on You. That we lived for Your kingdom. And may Windsor Park Baptist Church continue to be a place where lives are transformed, the lost are found, the hurting are cared for, and Your love is made visible in our city. We give ourselves to You again today.*

Amen.

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These questions are intended to help you think more about this message. We hope they might enable conversation, encouraging you to wrestle with how God might be challenging us to apply what we have heard/read.

#### **Reflection from Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

One week on, where have you intentionally chosen 'depth over speed' by slowing down and saying yes to a quiet, unseen act of faithfulness with Jesus?

Arising from this week:

- What part of your inherited legacy (good or painful) do you sense God inviting you to learn from, rather than be defined by?
- If **“fixing our eyes on Jesus”** is the truest foundation of legacy, what would that look like practically for you this week?
- Where might God be calling you to plant a tree now, through generosity, service, prayer, or faithfulness, that you may never personally benefit from?
- When you think about “Consistency + Faithfulness + Time = Lasting Impact,” what is one small habit God is asking you to build for the long haul?
- Would you be willing to contribute to the Windsor Park Endowment Fund?

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](mailto: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](mailto:info@windsorpark.org.nz) and we'll direct your query to the appropriate person.

- A classic book that delves into issues of financial stewardship is Randy Alcorn's publication, **Money, Possessions, and Eternity**. This practical and refreshing theology of money contains topical and Scripture indexes, a study guide, and five helpful appendices. You can get hold of it here: <https://christiansuperstore.co.nz/products/money-posessions-and-eternity>
- On RightNow Media you'll find a study called, **Hebrews 11: Stories of Real Faith** by Laurie Polich Short & Ephraim Lindor. In this one-of-a-kind video series, you will not only learn from Hebrews 11 what faith really means, you will hear from a pastor in Haiti who worked for 32 years with Compassion International on how to live by faith. Here's a link to the series: <https://app.rightnowmedia.org/en/content/details/849415>
- The Bible Project has a wonderful series called **Wisdom**, that dives into the 'wisdom books' in the Bible (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job). Click here to find this excellent resource: <https://bibleproject.com/podcasts/series/wisdom-series/>