



75 not out. The Aroma of Grace (2 Corinthians 2:14-16)

1. Introduction: Remembering the Faithfulness of God

In April 1941, the Murrays Bay Progressive Association volunteer executive wrote to a Mr Horspool who owned a section adjacent to the Tairorahi Stream opposite Murrays Bay beach asking him if he would sell his section for a public hall. His reply was yes with two conditions:

- It would cost £50.
- The hall would have to named Outram Hall as Outram was his middle name.

'Fair enough', they said, and Outram Hall in Murrays Bay was opened on 23rd March 1941 - Easter Saturday.

By 1951 Outram Hall was being used by a variety of community groups. The total membership of the hall (they had membership back then) was 102 - which was over 50% of the population of Murrays Bay.

In 1951 New Zealand was rebuilding after the war - politically, economically, and socially. Sidney Holland was the 25th prime minister - he was instrumental in the creation and consolidation of the National Party. As we know, the streets of Murrays Bay have a blue tinge.

In 1951 Auckland was dominated by the Waterfront Dispute, the most bitter industrial conflict in our history. At its peak 22,000 waterside workers (wharfies) and other unionists were off work after a dispute with British-owned shipping companies over a wage increase that followed a soaring post-war cost of living crisis - there's nothing new under the sun.

In 1951 Auckland saw troops depart for the Korean War and the Harbour Bridge was still in the design phase.

Moving back slightly, in November 1948 two missionaries who had been running a non-denominational Sunday School in Outram Hall returned overseas. At that stage Norman & Marjorie Manley and Arthur & Jean Duncumb agreed to take over the Sunday School and the seeds of a new Baptist work began. Encouraged by Milford Baptist Church at a meeting of 12 people on 26th June 1950, it was resolved to form a small fellowship that would be called **East Coast Bays Baptist Fellowship**; this small group prayed that this might become a local church and on 27th May 1951 the first official Sunday service under the new name of **Calvary Baptist Church** was held in Outram Hall with 19 adults and 10 children present.

What we know as Windsor was born in a turbulent post-war New Zealand — during industrial conflict, economic uncertainty, and global instability. Yet in the middle of all that, a small group of believers gathered together, believing Christ still wanted a witness in this corner of Auckland.

After a few years the church became **Murrays Bay Baptist Church**, and in 1997 became what we now know as **Windsor Park Baptist Church**.

And here we are on the 24th of May 2026, three days short of seventy-five years after a small group of people gathered in a community hall.

It's a remarkable milestone. But our anniversary today represents more than time passing.

- There were early days where gatherings were small, but prayer was large.

- There were seasons when resources were stretched, but faith was steady.
- There were leaders who carried responsibility in ways that were often unseen.
- There were families who gave what they could, and sometimes more than they could, because they believed the gospel mattered. Some even mortgaged their own homes to enable us to sit where we are today.
- There are people in this room who hammered nails into buildings and wiped beer off the floors, who did the hard mahi on behalf of others.
- Some of you taught Sunday School and volunteered in a myriad of ways for decades without applause.

And as the years unfolded, this church moved through seasons of change. Buildings were built, renovated, expanded. Leadership changed hands. New generations stepped forward. Ministries formed and re-formed. The city around us grew and changed dramatically and the world has fed us a constant diet of media that is mostly opposed to the things of the kingdom of God, and yet Christ has remained faithful to His people.

Personally, I'm humbled to be the 7th, and now longest-serving, Senior Pastor of what is today known as Windsor (it's quite hard to get rid of a Baptist pastor!). Jo and I arrived here in 2008 with our four youngish children thinking we'd be here for 10 years. But the story and vibrancy of this church has become deeply embedded in us. You are our people. 17½ years later, our children have grown up here, taken on faith for themselves, some have found spouses here, and now we have a special interest in pre and primary school ministries because our grandchildren are today learning the beauty of God's ongoing story in this community.

But anniversaries like this are not only about looking back. In Scripture, remembering is never meant to trap God's people in nostalgia; remembering is meant to release people into renewed faithfulness.

If there's one Scripture that's constantly in my mind as we both look back and look forward, it's 2 Corinthians 2:14–16, a passage that I've talked about quite regularly that captivates me when I

think about who we are as a local expression of God’s global church. In writing to the church in Corinth, Paul writes: ***“But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing ... And who is equal to such a task?”***

2. The Identity of the Church: The Aroma of Christ

When Paul mentions a ***“triumphal procession”***, those reading his letter would have immediately recognised that he was drawing a direct parallel with the lavish parades that were so regularly conducted in Rome to celebrate great victories in significant military campaigns. Crowds lined the streets. Incense filled the air. Conquered enemies marched behind the victorious king. They were ostentatious celebrations, filled with valiant soldiers, the spoils of war, and the most theatrical pomp and ceremony Rome could muster.

Moreover, the triumphal procession demonstrated Rome’s prowess as the victor not only by parading the spoils of war, but also by leading in triumph the most important leaders and intimidating warriors of the enemy, now as conquered slaves, signalling their complete defeat.

When we understand those dynamics, we’re confronted with the somewhat startling truth that Paul is writing about **us**, Christians, being captives in Christ’s triumphal procession. Paul is saying that we now belong wholly to Christ and willingly follow where He leads, and because of that willingness, **we are a pleasing aroma** to those around us, thankful to be in the position of representing the One who ultimately has the eternal victory.

Of course, the image of a triumphal procession is not one that takes place in a temple, or in a church, the image is of a procession that takes place in public spaces, where people are. Two thousand years later, the picture is still the same. The church carries Christ publicly into the world, and the world notices as if we are the aroma of Christ – and the aroma is evident in how we go about living our lives, with thanksgiving, because we are willing to die to ourselves for sake of Christ.

Aroma, or fragrance is powerful because it lingers. Long after someone leaves a room, the scent remains. And for seventy-five years, the aroma of Christ has lingered through this church — in prayers prayed, meals served, children disciplined, tears shared, songs sung, and lives surrendered to Jesus.

The aroma that is Windsor Park

What I deeply believe is that this is what God planted 75 years ago, and since then, many faithful people have marched to the beat of the Spirit's invitation to follow Christ.

And while the aroma always needs refreshing, our history shows how the Spirit has continually led people here to courageously reimagine how the church serves its community. Our stories are numerous, the breadth of our ministries is supernaturally wide and the depth of the people who invest their time, money, and skills into who we've grown to be is something profoundly significant.

Christ has been leading His church. Windsor didn't begin with perfection, or power, or prominence. It began with faith. With people who believed that Jesus Christ would build His church in this part of Auckland.

And so today we say together: thanks be to God. Not thanks be to us.

Thanks be to God.

3. Recommitting to the mission ahead

As much as we're grateful for the past, we also look forward, knowing that the best is yet to come as we reflect on what Paul writes to the church when he says that Christ ***“uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere.”***

Paul shifts the image, from a parade ... to a fragrance; from something visible ... to something carried; from something structured ... to something experienced. The **aroma** of Christ. That means the church is not only defined by what it does inside its walls, but by what it carries into the world.

We've carried that well, but the challenge for today remains the same as it did 75 years ago, and fifty years ago, and twenty-five years ago, and six years ago as we faced the global pandemic with the need to innovate and pivot and do things in ways we'd never done them before. Carrying the aroma is the ongoing work of the church. Every generation faces challenges previous generations never imagined. Today's generation faces challenges such as secularism, loneliness, disconnection, spiritual confusion, distrust of institutions, digital fragmentation, and rising anxiety among young people.

And to this generation at this time, the church is still called to carry the aroma of Christ head-first into the world we live in today and into what it will become tomorrow. And it is into these challenges that Paul finishes this section with a tough question: ***“Who is equal to such a task?”***

This is not despair. This is humility. Paul is recognising the weight of what it means to carry Christ into the world. And in that sense, this question is also ours today. After 75 years, we could easily become comfortable. We could easily look back and say, *“What a story we have had.”* *“Look at those good old days.”* It is a good story. It is a God story. But Paul won't let us stay in the past. He brings us into the present moment of responsibility.

Who is equal to this calling? Who is equal to the task of being the aroma of Christ today? The answer, of course, is not us by ourselves, but Christ in us by the Holy Spirit.

And so, this anniversary becomes not only a celebration of what has been, but a recommissioning into what will be. Because there were moments in our history when previous generations had to make courageous decisions. There were times when people gave

sacrificially so that buildings could be built and bought, ministries could grow, and future generations could have space to encounter God. There were moments when leaders stepped forward into uncertainty. When change was not easy. When faith required risk. People, at some point, made decisions that we now benefit from.

And so, the question comes to us:

- What will we build that others will stand in?
- What will we sow that others will harvest?
- What kind of church will we hand on to the next generation?

Using language that is perhaps familiar, **What trees will we plant under whose shade we will not sit?**

Last Sunday three people gave powerful testimonies of new or fresh encounters with Christ as they were baptised. In thinking about Scott, new to faith, what kind of church do we continue to build that nurtures his faith and provides a safe and loving environment for his and Jess' two children, aged 4 & 1, to learn and experience the aroma of Christ in a way that when we celebrate our 100th anniversary in 2051 they'll benefit from the decisions we make today.

We don't honour 75 years by preserving a museum. We honour it by continuing a mission.

My prayer is that people we will never meet may one day thank God for the decisions we make today.

So today, I hope that we recommit ourselves:

- To be a church that still carries the aroma of Christ.
- To be a church that still reaches the next generation.
- To be a church that still serves the poor, welcomes the outsider, and speaks hope into a weary world.

- To be a church that still believes the gospel is good news for the world.

And we do this not because we are sufficient. But because Christ is.

And so:

- We still need spaces where people encounter grace and truth together.
- We still need to walk through life and faith together, because no perfect people are allowed.
- We still need to strengthen communities by putting our faith into action.
- We still need generosity to sustain the mission of God through making provision in our Endowment Fund that we've recently developed with an eye on the next 75 years and to regularly sustained the regular rhythms of our faith community.
- We still need people willing to serve faithfully in all the ways that volunteers contribute to our daily life.
- And we still need to worship the God who holds all things together.

Conclusion

For 75 years, Christ has been leading His church, and Christ has been making His presence known through His people. And today we honour that history by continuing what He has called us to as we look forward. Not into nostalgia and not into maintenance. But into mission. Because the aroma of Christ is not meant to fade, it's meant to spread.

And so, I leave you with Paul's question one more time: ***Who is equal to such a task?***

The answer is not us alone. But Christ in us. And so today we pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, today we thank You for Your faithfulness over these seventy-five years. Thank you for every person who prayed, served, gave, sacrificed, and carried the mission of this church so faithfully. Thank you for every life transformed and every generation shaped by Your grace.

And now, we recommit ourselves to the future You are calling us to.

Do not let us become comfortable looking back.

Lead us forward in faith.

Renew our love for You and our compassion for people.

Help us to carry the aroma of Christ into our homes, our communities, and our city.

Give us courage to reach the next generation, to serve the vulnerable, to live generously, and to proclaim the hope of the gospel with humility and conviction.

And may the decisions we make today create space for future generations to encounter Jesus Christ through Windsor Park Baptist Church.

Lead us again.

Use us again.

And let the aroma of Christ continue to spread through us for years to come.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.



Reflecting on Sunday 17th May 2026

Throughout Scripture, the Holy Spirit is revealed as God's life-giving presence ... creating, empowering, renewing, and transforming people through Jesus Christ. The same Spirit who moved throughout the biblical story is still at work today, inviting us to make room for His presence in our lives.

Where have you noticed the Holy Spirit bringing life, renewal, or transformation in you this week?

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

1. Where have you seen the "aroma of Christ" through Windsor Park or in your own life?
2. What will help us as a local church stay focused on mission instead of nostalgia?
3. What does it look like to carry the aroma of Christ into our everyday life?
4. What is one way you can invest in the next generation of faith?

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**.



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. Windsor Parks new Endowment Fund is an intentional project to provide ongoing funding for missional purposes for the next generation (it takes time to grow). Would you consider making a one-off donation to the Endowment Fund or making a regular contribution? More details can be found here: <https://www.windsorpark.org.nz/endowments>
2. Windsor Park has only ever fully functioned because of the hundreds of volunteers to chip in in so many ways. Are you able to volunteer in some capacity? Click here for more information or connect with us to have a chat about how to can volunteer: <https://www.windsorpark.org.nz/serving>
3. The best way to connect with others in an ongoing meaningful way is through growing friendships with a small group of people. There are many ways to do this at Windsor Park. If you'd like to connect in and help create the spaces of belonging we deeply value, click here for more details: <https://www.windsorpark.org.nz/groups>