



Title: **Windsor Park Vision 2026 [Week 1]**

Text: **Genesis 37–50; Luke 22; John 21; Acts 2–4**

Introduction: God of wonders beyond our galaxy

A few weeks ago, Jo and I were staying at a little Airbnb between Hamilton and Cambridge, out in the country near the Waikato River. I was down there as the celebrant for a wedding, and one evening, just before heading to bed, I stepped outside to see what the night sky was like. I looked up, saw the familiar “pot” stars, and thought, “*All is well with the world, I can sleep now.*” But I felt this little nudge, nothing dramatic, just a gentle prod, to stay outside a little longer.

So, I did, and as my eyes adjusted from the indoor light to the darkness, I began to see more. More stars. Fainter stars. Stars across the sky. Then ... the Milky Way came into focus. And then the depth became obvious — layer upon layer of light stretching further than I could comprehend. At one point I saw a satellite dancing across the middle of the North Island sky.

After about twenty minutes, everything had changed. The sky hadn’t changed, but my view of it had. What I thought I saw with a quick glance from the doorway was only surface level. Time had given me depth. Time had given me perspective. Time had given me a sense of my smallness in the density of the galaxy. And powerfully, time had given me a sense of peace, a reminder that in the midst of the chaos of this world, profound beauty can be seen if

*Text of a message delivered by Grant Harris for Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 8th February 2026.
The written text may vary from the spoken/video version due to time and flexibility reasons.*

we look for it in something that only God could have fashioned from his own hand. *God of wonders beyond our galaxy, you are holy. The universe declares your majesty, you are holy.*

I wouldn't have had that moment without ... stopping; without allowing myself to respond to a little nudge to not rush. Maybe that was in response to our **Summer Slowdown** series that we've just finished, although we should have called it **January Slowdown** as it's debatable whether we had a summer in January!

God's speed vs Auckland speed

In our January series, we affirmed that we're generally not very good at slowing down. We like fast internet, fast coffee, fast answers, fast growth, and fast property value increases. We live in a city that measures success by what can be built quickly, scaled rapidly, and noticed immediately. And if we're honest, church life can reflect that too. We quietly ask: *Are we growing fast enough? Big enough? Visible enough?* We count attendance and compare it week-to-week (and often judge our pastors based on that!), our finance team compares our offerings month-to-month, and we track momentum with key performance indicators and strategic objectives.

Scripture measures life differently

But Scripture consistently shows us something different. It shows us that:

**God is far more interested in who we are becoming,
than how quickly we are arriving.**

Or to put it another way - God is committed to seeing us grow in him, but that growth almost always slow, deep, living, and most effective the more we allow the Spirit to lead us. The kind of growth that God is interested in is:

- Not rushed.
- Not shallow.
- But formed and formational.

*Text of a message delivered by Grant Harris for Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 8th February 2026.
The written text may vary from the spoken/video version due to time and flexibility reasons.*

Today I want to talk about God's vision for formation — slow, deep, lifelong shaping. And I want to talk about it particularly as we celebrate 75 years as a community of faith in three months' time. Three quarters of a century. That's a long obedience.

- That's now generations of prayer.
- That's now generations of faithful giving.
- That's now generations of unseen service.
- That's now generations of kids loved and grounded in the Bible.
- That's now generations of marriages supported.
- That's now generations of funerals held.
- That's now generations of meals cooked.
- That's now generations of Scripture read.
- That's now generations of doubts wrestled with.
- That's now generations of hope stubbornly clung to.

And for almost 75 years, through changing culture, changing leadership, changing music styles, changing buildings, and changing neighbourhoods, one conviction has quietly remained near the centre:

God's primary work is not simply growing a church ... but forming a people.

He mahi whakatipu tangata.

When we think about church, we know that buildings matter, programmes matter, music matters, and technology matters. But all of these things are tools for which **formation is the purpose**. We exist to be formed to be with Jesus, to become like Jesus, and to do as Jesus did, so embedded in the foundation of this church is a vision that values:

- Depth over speed.
- Character over platform.

*Text of a message delivered by Grant Harris for Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 8th February 2026.
The written text may vary from the spoken/video version due to time and flexibility reasons.*

- Faithfulness over flash.

And the Bible shows us, again and again, that this kind of formation always takes time. Let's look at two familiar lives.

Joseph – formed in the hidden years.

In Genesis 37 Verse 2 we're introduced to Joseph, aged 17, who enters the big story of God's mission in the world tending flocks with his brothers: a teenager with big dreams and not much wisdom. He's gifted. He's confident. He's full of dreams. And let's be honest ... he's not particularly wise in how he expresses that vibrancy of life!

Within a short time, he's betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, falsely accused, imprisoned, and forgotten. And the important detail Scripture keeps repeating is this: Years pass. Not weeks. Not months. Years.

By the time Joseph stands second-in-command over Egypt, around thirteen years have passed since he first dreamed of leadership. And when he finally faces his brothers again, the ones who ruined his life, he says these extraordinary words in Chapter 50 Verses 19-20, ***“Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”***

God didn't just prepare Joseph for a position; he prepared him for power. The sort of power that wouldn't corrupt him; the sort of success that wouldn't hollow him out and the kind of influence that wouldn't make him cruel. The pit and the prison weren't delays. They were discipleship. And yes, his story became a famous musical, performed to tens of millions of people since Andrew Lloyd Webber released it in 1972 on the world stage, but the deeper story is this: **God was forming someone who could suffer without becoming bitter and lead without losing compassion.**

And the same is true at Windsor Park. Some of God's deepest work will never happen on this stage. It happens:

*Text of a message delivered by Grant Harris for Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 8th February 2026.
The written text may vary from the spoken/video version due to time and flexibility reasons.*

- In Windsor Kids small groups.
- In many of your lounges as part of Life Groups.
- In hospital corridors.
- In quiet prayers no one hears.
- In faithful service that never trends online.

Hidden faithfulness produces visible fruit, **but only when the tree is allowed to grow slowly.**

Peter – formed through failure and grace.

When we jump into the New Testament we see a totally different story in the life of Peter. While Joseph is steady and quiet, Peter is loud, impulsive, confident. He promises Jesus loyalty and then denies Him three times. If Peter was applying for a staff position in the church today, his reference check would be ... concerning.

But after the resurrection, Jesus does something beautiful. He doesn't lecture Peter, he cooks him breakfast. And then he asks him, three times: *"Do you love me?"* Not to shame him, but to restore him. The man who was afraid of a servant girl becomes the man who stands in Jerusalem and names Jesus publicly. The man who collapsed under pressure becomes the man who strengthens the church.

Jesus doesn't replace broken disciples. He restores them. He reshapes them. He forms them. Which is why one of the most important things we say around here is that we do life and faith together. Because that means that we're a church where people are allowed to fail and grow, where mistakes don't disqualify you, they disciple you; where grace is not the reward for maturity ... it's the pathway to it.

Vision restated + practical shape.

*Text of a message delivered by Grant Harris for Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 8th February 2026.
The written text may vary from the spoken/video version due to time and flexibility reasons.*

Joseph shows us **deep roots** and Peter shows us **patient grace**. Together they tell us that fast growth builds crowds, but that slow formation builds churches that last. So, our vision is not simply more people in seats. It's:

- People with a deeper faith.
- People with stronger character.
- People with gentler hearts.
- People with resilient hope.
- People with quiet courage, and
- People with long obedience.

Practically, that means that we value children's ministry as much as what happens in the auditorium. We value Life Groups as much as preaching, prayer as much as strategy, and faithfulness as much as fruitfulness. And it means we encourage you to make some very ordinary but powerful choices:

- To stay when it's slow.
- To serve when it's unseen.
- To pray when answers seem delayed.
- To practice when progress feels invisible.

Conclusion

Auckland will keep telling us that faster is better, that bigger is better, that louder is better and that newer is better. But the Kingdom of God keeps whispering something older ... and truer:

- Deeper is better.
- Kinder is better.
- Faithful is better.

Windsor Park, for 75 years this church has quietly chosen depth over display. While the world chased speed, many of you taught children. While culture shifted, you prayed. While

*Text of a message delivered by Grant Harris for Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 8th February 2026.
The written text may vary from the spoken/video version due to time and flexibility reasons.*

trends came and went, you gathered, and sang, and served, and many of you have stayed, for many decades. You didn't always get it right, but you hung in there, and you kept showing up. You kept choosing formation over fashion. **And now many of us (including me) stand on the shoulders of those who planted trees they would never sit under.**

So, Windsor Park, as we approach 75 years, let's resist the temptation to chase what looks impressive. Let's choose what lasts. Let's be a church that grows roots before it grows branches; that values character more than charisma, and let's be a church that measures success by love for our neighbour, love for the marginalised, love for those who our society puts at the edges, let's measure love, not likes. This kind of love,

- Is not rushed.
- Is not shallow,
- But it is formed, over something we have no control over ... time.

Because long after trends fade, buildings age, and programmes change, people shaped in the likeness of Christ will still be the greatest testimony we offer this city.

And that kind of church is what I hope we'll be known for another 75 years, after many of us here, including me, will be playing our harps in the clouds!

Conclusion

So, Windsor Park Baptist Church, may we be nudged to slow down, to look at the stars, to know that the best formation is one that takes time; that allows questions and doubts to coexist with hope and grace as we continue to learn and experience the presence of Christ, crucified and resurrected, in greater measure as we mature and are formed to be Christ-like witnesses to those around us.

Amen.

*Text of a message delivered by Grant Harris for Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 8th February 2026.
The written text may vary from the spoken/video version due to time and flexibility reasons.*

*Text of a message delivered by Grant Harris for Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 8th February 2026.
The written text may vary from the spoken/video version due to time and flexibility reasons.*



Reflecting from Sunday 1st February 2025: Last Sunday we heard from 4 people who told us stories about how they were encouraged to slow down over summer. What about you? What would your story be if you were to tell someone (with a 2-minute timeline). Practice on someone!

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

- Where do you feel most tempted to rush right now — and what might it look like to trust God with a slower pace there?
- Can you name a season where God formed something in you over time rather than quickly? What did that season teach you?
- Which ordinary, unseen practice (prayer, serving, staying, gathering, giving) do you sense God inviting you to keep choosing this year?
- How could your Life Group help one another play the long game of faith — especially when it feels slow or discouraging?

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**.

*Text of a message delivered by Grant Harris for Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 8th February 2026.
The written text may vary from the spoken/video version due to time and flexibility reasons.*



- 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.
- **The Abbey Podcast** is produced by Anglican Youth here in NZ; it provides some challenging topics to think about – which is all part of the spiritual formation process. Check out the podcast here: <https://www.theabbey.co.nz/the-abbey-podcast>
- **Carey Baptist College** belongs to us, the Baptist Churches of NZ. Carey provides significant learning opportunities for you to go deeper in your faith and equip you to serve God in mission and in the marketplace. Click here for this year's timetable: <https://www.carey.ac.nz/study/timetables/>
- Recently, Pastor Grant mentioned a book he read over summer called, **Slow Theology: Eight Practices for Resilient Faith in a Turbulent World**. Click here for a link to this book (which may be offered in a 'book club' context this year at WP): <https://www.amazon.com/Slow-Theology-Practices-Resilient-Turbulent/dp/1587436434>