

WILLOWFIELDCHURCH

NEWSLETTER

February 2026



WELCOME!

Welcome to the February edition of our monthly magazine.

As we step into a new month, we are delighted to share this latest edition of our monthly Magazine with you, packed full of encouragement, information, and opportunities to connect, grow, and serve together as a church family. Whether you've been part of our community for many years or are newly joining us, we hope these pages help you feel welcomed, informed, and inspired.

February brings with it the approach of the season of Lent, a meaningful time in the life of the church that invites us to slow down, reflect, and realign our hearts with God. As author and teacher John Mark Comer often reminds us, spiritual formation is about becoming more like Jesus, not just in belief, but in the whole of our lives.

Lent provides a unique opportunity to lean into this formation: to lay aside distractions, reorder our priorities, and open ourselves to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. May this Lent be a season where we are formed more deeply in Christ, growing in love, faith, and obedience, and becoming a people who reflect His grace and truth to our city and beyond.

In this edition, you'll find helpful resources to support you in making the most of Lent. Don't miss the Pop-Up Life Groups starting at the end of February. Perhaps this could be the perfect time to consider joining one.

There is also information about two upcoming opportunities to which you might invite friends, neighbours, colleagues, and family members to come and hear more of the good news of our Lord. You'll find details of both events later in this edition.

We pray that this edition of the Magazine blesses and encourages you as we journey together into this meaningful season.



Clive Atkinson
Rector | Willowfield Church



SERVICES IN FEBRUARY

Sunday 1st February

- 10am & 11.30am Worship for Everyone with Holy Communion
He's Worthy of it All - Hebrews for Today | One Way Jesus
- 5pm Evening Prayer
Finding Your Place | How Can I Build Up Willowfield? Unity (Ephesians 4:1-6)
- 7pm Worship, Teaching and Ministry
Finding Your Place | How Can I Build Up Willowfield? Unity (Ephesians 4:1-6)

Sunday 8th February

- 10am & 11.30am Worship for Everyone
He's Worthy of it All - Hebrews for Today | My Confidence is in Jesus
- 5pm Holy Communion
Finding Your Place | Spiritual Gifts (Ephesians 4:7-12)
- 7pm Worship, Teaching and Ministry
Finding Your Place | Exercising my Spiritual Gifts (Ephesians 4:7-12)

Sunday 15th February

- 10am & 11.30am Worship for Everyone
He's Worthy of it All - Hebrews for Today | My Trust is in Jesus
- 5pm Evening Prayer
- 7pm Worship, Teaching and Ministry
Guest Service with Andy Williamson

Sunday 22nd February

- 10am & 11.30am Worship for Everyone
He's Worthy of it All - Hebrews for Today | I am Relying on Jesus
- 5pm Prospects Service
Preparing for Lent
- 7pm Worship, Teaching and Ministry with Holy Communion
Essentials: Next Steps (2) | Joining a Church
Finding Your Place | Reaching for Maturity (Ephesians 4:13-16)



ASH WEDNESDAY + LENT

Reuben Johnston

This year, the 18th of February marks Ash Wednesday, and on this day, all around the world, Christians will be found with small crosses drawn on their foreheads with ashes – probably a bit strange to the onlooker!

But of course, there is such depth of meaning and significance in this moment. The ashes remind us that we are made by God, needing his love and forgiveness. The cross reminds us of Jesus and the particular way he has shown and provided us this love and forgiveness. And having this little ash cross drawn on our foreheads is the very beginning of a season of saying, "I want to intentionally come back to God's great love"

This strange little act propels us (personally and corporately) into the season of lent. Roughly 40 days of concentrated prayer, repentance, and simple living during which we prepare to experience the resurrection joy of Easter!

Many people associate Lent with fasting from food or other distractions, but it's important to remember that fasting is not an end in itself. Its purpose is to cultivate deeper dependence on God and greater openness to his will.

Setting aside forty days before Easter is an ancient practice, and while there are subtle differences in its practices across the Christian tradition today the intention remains.... Preparing our hearts and returning to God.

I once heard lent compared to an annual physical exam. In an ideal world, we care for our health all year, but a scheduled appointment forces honest assessment and careful listening to the doctor's instructions. In the same way,

Lent invites honest self-examination as we search our hearts and listen to the Holy Spirit, and careful attention to the areas of our souls that need healing and growth.

Although Lent emphasizes our neediness and the reality of sin, it's actually not meant to be gloomy. The word "Lent" means "springtime," emphasizing renewal and growth! Following Jesus's retreat into the desert, we too enter a figurative desert ourselves. We say no to certain habits or comforts and we create space for a deeper awareness of God's presence and purpose.

We rarely choose the desert, yet the Spirit led Jesus there because he had something to receive. Lent invites us, by that same Spirit, into the desert to listen, watch, and discern what God wants to speak into our lives. It's a time to clarify our identity, strengthen our sense of mission, and confront the fears and temptations that we face.

Throughout the Bible, the number forty signifies periods of deprivation that lead to new life: the flood, Israel's wandering, Moses's fasting, and Elijah's hiding. Even a woman's pregnancy follows this pattern, marked by discomfort and pain but culminating in birth. Viewing Lent as a season of pregnancy and labour can help us persevere, trusting that joy lies beyond the struggle!

In Willowfield this year as we journey through lent, may we know his still small voice, may we search our own hearts, and may we prepare ourselves for the joy that is just around the corner when we celebrate and declare that Jesus is RISEN

WILLOWFIELD WOMEN

Curry Night Reflections

It was over coffee one day that Jen Hamill and I decided to organise an event at Willowfield. We often meet for a chat and this time we got on to the topic of women's ministry, and how we really wanted to see events being put on. Specifically, ones that would allow us to grow in friendship, grow in faith, and feel seen and appreciated. Willowfield is a church that, in my opinion, excels at putting on events.

These range and cater for many demographics within the church, but in recent years, it has not had the resources to hold many just for women. However, one of the things I love about Willowfield is that it is a church which encourages each member of the congregation to step further into faith, and dare to grow something from it.

From that first conversation it surprised me just how straightforward it was to organise the first event; a walk around Ormeau Park, followed by a coffee break. We prayed over the event we were planning, and wanted to give it over to God to see what he would do through it. Even though it was just a few hours one Saturday in July, it was really lovely to be spending time with a small group of women, chatting and laughing over this, that, and the other, and discussing what we would like to see happening in Willowfield for women like us.

The second event was a curry night which started small and then grew, and continued to grow, although so did the team around us. Women who would volunteer to spend evenings discussing the cycle length of an industrial dishwasher, and how to

mass prepare rice. Women who would work in the background researching, encouraging others, and advertising the event. Willowfield staff members supporting and encouraging us through every single step. I am so incredibly grateful for the help that everyone offered. We prayed over the event and tried to take things one step at a time. And it was an amazing evening where over 100 women came to eat delicious food together, and talk to others that they had never met before. We had a time of fellowship together which allowed us to get to know others more.

We are hoping and planning to host future women's events at church. Talks and walks that will focus on continuing to grow our faith and fellowship. Events that will give us time dedicated to speaking to others we don't know, and encouraging us to focus on those relationships that make church even better. Ones where everyone can grow together, developing skills and furthering our knowledge of the Lord while supporting one another through life.

These particular events started because two women met for coffee, had an idea, and were supported by many others. After each meeting our volunteer numbers seem to grow. Women who see others starting something, and then using the talents they have been blessed with to create a space where they and others can grow. Willowfield is a church absolutely bursting with creativity and care with a rector, a curate, a staff team and members of the congregation who are all willing to step up and create opportunities to benefit the surrounding community and build the church.

So watch this space. Please come along, bring a friend, lend a hand and come up with your own ideas too. Can I encourage you to set some time aside to learn more about each other and about God!



EVERY MAN A WARRIOR

JOHN MENAGH

Every Man A Warrior
Beginning Saturday 28 February

We are delighted to announce that Willowfield Church will be launching another Every Man A Warrior discipleship course for men on Saturday 28 February, meeting in Starbucks, Connswater, from 7.45am–9.00am.

Several men in our church family have already completed this course and can testify to the significant impact it has had on their walk with Christ, their confidence, and their daily discipleship.

Every Man A Warrior (EMAW) is a globally recognised discipleship and leadership programme designed to help men face life's challenges with biblical wisdom and practical tools. Since its inception, the course has equipped more than 80,000 men across 60 countries and has been translated into over 25 languages.

At its heart, EMAW is built around three key themes: discipleship, leadership, and multiplication.

The curriculum is structured around a three book series containing 27 lessons that address real life issues men encounter — relationships, parenting, work, personal integrity, and spiritual growth.

Each session combines solid biblical teaching with practical skills such as developing a consistent quiet time, learning to pray effectively, and applying Scripture to everyday decisions.

A distinctive strength of the programme is its emphasis on small group community. Men journey together, sharing experiences, challenges, and victories in an environment that encourages honesty, accountability, and encouragement. This relational aspect has proven to be one of the most transformative parts of the course.

With its global reach and proven impact, Every Man A Warrior continues to be a vital resource for men who want to grow spiritually, lead well, and live out their faith with confidence.

We warmly invite men of all ages to join us for this next course. It's an ideal opportunity to deepen your discipleship, strengthen your walk with God, and connect with other men on the same journey.

There is a sign up sheet at the back of the Church on the welcome desk or for more information speak to John Menagh.

CHURCH FLUTE BAND

We are delighted to welcome the Church Flute Band to join us on Thursday 12 February at 7.30pm.

Formed just over a year ago, the band brings together Christian members of local loyalist flute bands, several of whom have come to faith only recently. While each musician continues to serve in their own band, they felt called to combine their gifts to create a group dedicated to performing hymns and marches with a clear outward focus — travelling across the country to share music and testimony.

Since its formation, the band has also attracted a number of men who are not yet Christians,

but who value the camaraderie and are inspired by the band's vision and purpose. Their presence has added to the group's sense of community and shared mission.

During the evening, the band will perform a selection of their pieces, and a few members will take part in interviews to share parts of their personal stories.

We are also pleased to have local singer-songwriter Gary Simpson with us. Gary will perform several of his own songs and, as always, bring some of his trademark humour to the night.

This promises to be a fantastic opportunity to invite friends and guests to enjoy quality music and hear powerful stories of how God is transforming lives.



SERMONS THROUGH LENT

Hebrews for Today Jesus is Worthy of it All

A New Series of Talks for AM Services

This February and March, join us on Sunday mornings as we dive into Hebrews for Today — a powerful, eye-opening journey into who Jesus really is and why He is truly worthy of everything we are and everything we have. This series will stretch our minds, stir our hearts, and challenge our wills as we explore the deep meaning of the cross and the life of faith it calls us into. Whether you're exploring Christianity for the first time or have followed Jesus for years, Hebrews offers a compelling, hope-filled vision of discipleship marked by confidence, trust, and courageous obedience. Come ready to be inspired, strengthened, and transformed — because Jesus is worthy of it all!

Finding Your Place

A New Series of Talks for the 7pm Service

At Willowfield, we believe everyone has a vital part to play — and this new talk series, Finding Your Place, is all about helping you discover yours! Born out of our recent Staff Discernment Time and a shared passion for building up the body of Christ, this series will explore how God has uniquely gifted each of us to serve and strengthen the church. Journeying through Ephesians 4:1–16, we'll unpack the five ministry areas of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher, helping you uncover your "sweet spot" and step confidently into serving others. Come ready to be inspired, equipped, and empowered to find your place and make a real difference!

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

Join us on Wednesday 18th February at Church, as we mark the beginning of Lent.

Tea and Coffee will be served from 7.30pm with a formal start at 7.45pm. This will be a service of worship, reflection and response as we enter this significant time of the year. Everyone is welcome.

GUEST SERVICE

Guest Service with Andy Williamson | Sunday 15th at 7pm Service

You're warmly invited to our next Guest Service at Willowfield Church. This is a great opportunity to invite friends and family who have no faith to come and explore church in a welcoming, accessible setting.

Our guest speaker will be **Andy Williamson**, Community Pastor at Shankill Parish Church, Lurgan. Andy will share his story of coming to faith and the life-changing impact it has had on him.

Come along. Bring a friend. We'd love to see you there!

EVERY MAN A WARRIOR

We're launching a new Every Man A Warrior discipleship course for men on Saturday 28 February, meeting in Starbucks, Connswater, from 7.45am–9.00am.

This globally recognised programme equips men to grow as disciples through practical Bible study, real-life application, and small-group accountability. Many men in Willowfield have already completed the course and speak highly of its impact.

All men are welcome to join us for this new round.

There is a sing up sheet on the welcome desk or for more information speak to John Menagh

We're delighted to welcome the Church

LENT POP-UP LIFE GROUPS

This Lent, we're excited to launch Pop Up Life Groups, a dynamic series of short-term Life Groups running over the six weeks of Lent, designed to help you connect, grow, and go deeper in your faith.

Open to everyone and especially ideal for anyone trying a Life Group for the first time at Willowfield, these groups offer a range of engaging options, including a family-friendly group for those with young children, an in-depth study of Ephesians, and a preparation group for anyone considering Baptism this Easter, with more options to be announced very soon.

Life Groups are smaller gatherings of 10–15 people who meet weekly or bi-weekly to build meaningful relationships and grow together in the Christian faith. Sign Up Sunday is 15th February, and with limited spaces available, this is your inspiring challenge to step out, try something new, and be part of what God is doing this Lent — don't miss out!

Flute Band, formed by Christian members



PALM SUNDAY LUNCH

Back in September, we combined our morning services to celebrate Harvest together, followed by a church lunch. Over 400 people joined us for the service and nearly 250 stayed for lunch — it was a brilliant day!

Well... we're doing it again!

On Palm Sunday, the start of Holy Week, we'll be combining our morning services once more for a special time together as

one church family. The service will begin at 10.30am, and we're delighted that Bishop David will be joining us.

We believe this will be another fantastic opportunity to gather, worship, and celebrate together as a congregation. Make sure to save the date and come along!

BAPTISM & CONFIRMATION

Are you considering Baptism and Confirmation?

Baptism and Confirmation classes will take place during March 2026 with Baptisms taking place on Easter Sunday and a Service of Confirmation in the Spring.

To register please contact Clive, office@willowfieldchurch.co.uk.