THE WINFREE STORY: 2026



SHARE CHRIST SERVE OTHERS

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A YEAR TO CELEBRATE

What a wonderful year we've had in 2026!

We're told in Isaiah 52:7, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" As you'll see in these pages, we've had an exciting and busy year of living into that calling God has given us.

From at home in our local community of Midlothian and Chesterfield, to Austria and Kenya, we have been at work either directly or through partner organizations, thanks to your faithful generosity and support. We've distributed hundreds of backpacks filled with food, encouraged one another with fellowship and song, served countless cups of coffee, given coats and clothing, and provided opportunities for people to deepen their knowledge of Scripture and their relationship with God.

We hope that you will be encouraged by what God has done in our midst this year and join us again in the year ahead to continue to faithfully minister to the people around us.



Grace and Peace,
Pastor Lee

ASH WEDNESDAY

We had 111 people in attendance at the Ash Wednesday service. The service included traditional and contemporary participation from leaders and staff. We heard a message on 2 Corinthians parts of chapters 5 and 6. We as a church body received the ashes, and were given the charge to forgive and to remember that we are dust and to dust one day we will return, for we are not for this world, but for heaven.



AUSTRIA MISSION TEAM

Winfree Church sent a team to Bad Ischl, Austria to serve along side our partner church Bad Ischl Baptist Church as they organized a community event. The event took place within Kurpark at the Theresia Presendorfer Plaz which is an outdoor theater.

The night consisted of singing, a testimony from the world's strongest man, stories of mission work by two missionary couples, (including our own Mark and Peggy), and free American BBQ made by our team who went. More than 600 people attended this event.





The Winfree Team was made up of:

1. Mark Rutledge
2. Peggy Rutledge
3. Abi Rutledge
4. Lorna Verlander
5. Lee Foster
6. Joshua Roberts
7. Lance Mason
8. Heather Thornton
9. Ava Edwards



BACKPACK MINISTRY



The Backpack Ministry's focus is to provide weekend meal support (breakfast, lunch and dinner) for elementary students and their families in need. This ministry serves during the school year. Currently there are 26 families representing 105 people being served. Below are the schools we currently serve:

- Bon Air Elementary
- Greenfield Elementary
- Reams Elementary
- Robious Elementary
- Watkins Elementary

In addition to feeding the hungry, as Jesus tells us to (Matthew 25:40), this ministry brings hope and caring to our local schools. We often hear from the schools that the food bags make a difference! This may be someone's first encounter with Jesus' love for them. There are about 20 volunteers who serve with the Backpack Ministry, and pray for the students, their families, our church congregation and our community.

Ways to serve include:

- Pack bags on Tuesday mornings
- Deliver meal bags to the schools immediately after packing
- Shop for groceries to stock the backpack pantry each week
- Donate paper grocery bags with handles
- Donate any of the following food items to the backpack pantry

For questions, please contact:
Terry Jones – terryljones5@gmail.com or Susan Oberschmidt – swoberschmidt@gmail.com





BAPTISMS

We have had 11 individuals make the decision to follow Jesus and be baptized here at Winfree this year. So far Dalton Maddox, Mia Knowlton, Ellie Koontz, Lily Baker, Hailey Foster, Doug Mullins, Jude Haynes, Elise Williams, and Dominick Meredith have been baptized. Rachel Hearle and Everett Sigler plan to be baptized sometime in the coming weeks.



CHRISTMAS AT WINFREE

A Night of Christmas Music

One of Winfree's favorite musical traditions, this year's celebration brought together bells, children, youth, horns, choirs, and the praise team for a memorable evening. With the theme "Carrying the Light," we saw the light of Jesus shine through every musical piece and performer. From beautiful performances by our preschool and children's choirs to powerful moments of worship and fun memories, it was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the season together as a church family.

Contemporary Christmas Eve Service

Our 4 p.m. Family Service was a joyful celebration of Christ's birth. The children delighted us with their nativity presentation, and our youth praise band joined the praise team to lead us in music. We are grateful to everyone whose time and hard work helped make this a special evening of worship for our church family.

Traditional Christmas Eve Service





Our 8 p.m. service brought our church family together in the Sanctuary to celebrate the birth of Christ. Through beautiful music, meaningful moments of worship, and the lighting of candles, we were reminded of the hope and light Jesus brings into the world. As we raised our candles together, we were encouraged to carry His light beyond the walls of the church and share it with others.

BIBLE STUDY GROUPS
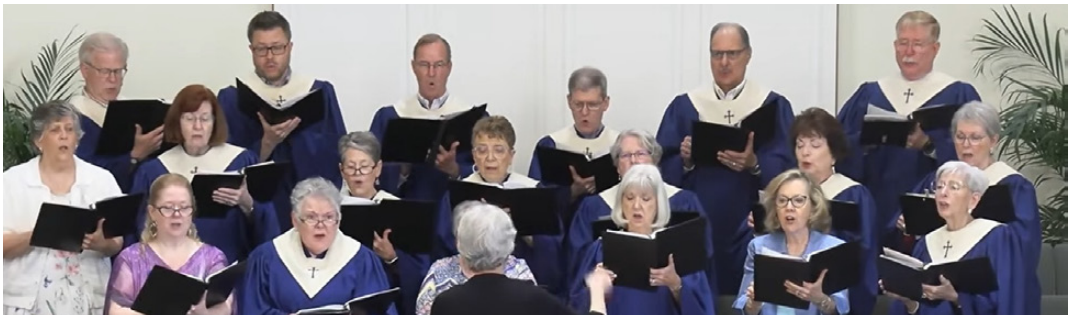




Bible Study Groups are an important part of the life of Winfree Church! On average 47% of Winfree Church attendees attend a Bible Study Group. This year, we have launched one new Bible Study Group and the following support and discipleship groups: Men's Alliance, Greif Care, Divorce Care. New technology has been introduced into classes by utilizing video conferencing platforms like Zoom and the NeatBar and Owl Labs cameras. This allows for new visitors and members to join a class online and be a part of the life of the church. We plan to bring more in the coming future. This year, new Discipleship Team lead Peggy Rutldge hosted a teacher training and offered new material resources for our teachers.

EASTER CELEBRATION

560 attended Winfree Church to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus! Our Sunday was filled with joyous handbell music, hymns and praise music, two choirs, and a sermon that pointed us to the hope of resurrection and life through Jesus our lord.







EASTER EGGSTRAVAGANZA

We had a community event for approximately 500 people before Easter that was fun for both preschool and elementary age kids. Activities included multiple egg hunts, inflatables, and play time on the park!



EXPERIENCE CONFERENCE

This year we took a group of 6 to the experience conference in Orlando Floridia. This is considered to be one of the top worship conferences in the country. We got to interface with the newest technologies in worship, data bases, ministry assistance, streaming, lighting, and more. We were able to go to over 30 different breakout sessions, learning about tech, worship technique, church strategy, social media, and classes on training and development.



FRIENDS OF THE HOMELESS

Winfree has been participating with the Richmond Friends of the Homeless ministry for 40 years. RFOH was created to help nourish the underprivileged in downtown RVA and has grown from handing out sandwiches a few times a week to a 6-day lunch program in five locations throughout the city. Winfree has prepared and served close to 100k meals since 1986! In 2026, we prepared and delivered over 1,050 lunches of either fried chicken or hot dogs and “sub” sandwiches in the summer.

For the last seven years, there have been urgent needs for emergency lunches in addition to the regular lunches. We will take approximately 850 bag lunches in 2026. Items for Emergency needs are being collected in the November Donation Bin located just outside the church office. Please see the list of needs in the HWH of the weekly bulletin or on the display by the donation bin. Contact Sara Nunn (saranunn@comcast.net) for more information or for ways you can help.









RICHMOND
FRIENDS OF THE HOMELESS





OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

November has been a busy and exciting month for Winfree's Operation Christmas Child ministry! The Sacred Connections class packed 24 shoeboxes, while our children and youth enthusiastically joined in the effort on Sunday, November 8.

Children ages 5–12 brought special "WOW" gifts and packed 50 shoeboxes during the morning activities. Later that evening, approximately 80 teenagers and youth gathered to pack an additional 80 shoeboxes, each contributing special gifts of their own.

It was heartwarming to watch the children thoughtfully select items for their boxes, knowing their gifts would bring joy to children around the world. Each group also took time to pray for those who would receive the shoeboxes—that the gifts would be useful and bring happiness, but most importantly, that each child would come to know the love of Jesus Christ.

This year we packed 470 shoeboxes!

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this meaningful ministry, helping share God's love and the true spirit of Christmas with children around the world!







MAUNDY THURSDAY

169 people attended the Maundy Thursday service. This service centered around Holy Communion and led the congregation to the death and burial of Jesus. This year, after Communion, members of Winfree read to the congregation John 18 and 19, during which the communion table was cleaned, and left bare with only the cross remaining. Winfree left in silence, waiting for the hope and fullness of Easter.



SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

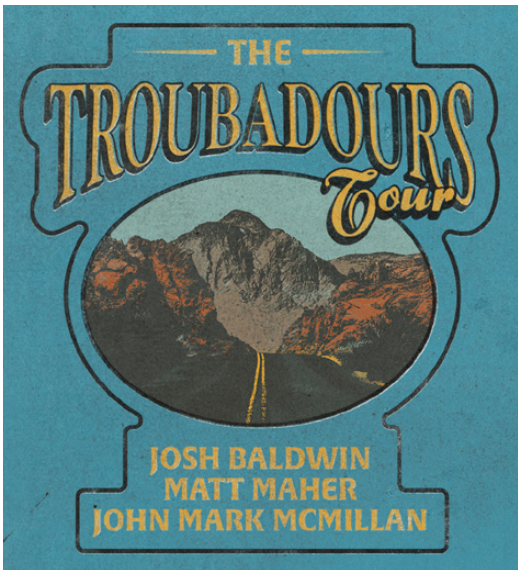
On November 1, we gathered in the Sanctuary for “A Service of Remembrance” to honor those who are no longer with us but continue to hold such significant meaning in our lives. It was a time of embracing, honoring, and remembering; a time of walking this journey of loss together and finding hope along the way.



THE TROUBADOURS TOUR

We had the honor of hosting Matt Maher, Josh Baldwin, and John Mark McMillan in concert here at Winfree. With a completely sold-out show and over 500 people in attendance. We had volunteers help from security, merch, and even building the set for the night of amazing worship. It was a true event in the community and let people see Winfree church as a church of its community.





TRUNK OR TREAT

Trunk or Treat 2026 was another success. We had over 600 people participate this year. The church collected over 30,000 pieces of candy and had over 25 trunks for kids and families. One of the great things about this event is that it allows people who normally wouldn't be around us have a chance to get to know us. Next year, we plan to expand on what we offer so that we can have more of these good conversations.







TRADITIONAL WORSHIP

Our Adult Choir and Handbell Choir have been hard at work filling our sanctuary with music, grace, and praise, as is their custom. Unlike most church choirs, the Adult Choir at Winfree continues to rehearse and sing throughout the summer, bringing special musical leadership to different services throughout the time when most are taking a break. Through the warm summer months and into a busy autumn, these dedicated musicians have faithfully anchored our worship life and brought our congregation closer to God through song.





Anchoring Sunday Worship

Every week at our 9:40 a.m. Traditional Worship Service, the Winfree Choir has lifted our spirits with anthems spanning centuries of sacred music—from timeless Renaissance pieces to moving contemporary arrangements. Alongside our vocalists, our Handbell Choir has added beauty and reverence to our sanctuary services with their musical precision and teamwork.

Fellowship and Faithful Preparation

Behind every Sunday anthem is a dedicated community gathering each week to practice, pray, and support one another. Our Adult Choir has kept up its steady rhythm of Wednesday night rehearsals at 7:00 p.m. in the Choir Room, balancing musical preparation with warm fellowship. On September 27, the Adult Choir began rehearsing music for the Advent and Christmas seasons.

As fall arrived, our music ministries also helped lead our meaningful evening Service of Remembrance on November 1—a special moment of reflection and comfort for our church family.

Looking Ahead to Advent & Christmas

With Thanksgiving around the corner and Advent rapidly approaching, both the Adult Choir and Handbell Choir are deep into rehearsals for the upcoming holiday season.

WINFREE KIDS

Share Christ • Serve Others

It has been a busy and fruitful year in our children's ministry!

In April we called and voted in our new Minister to Children and Families and Lisa Lynch started here in May. Thank you so much to all those who were involved in the search committee and to all the volunteers who helped during the 2.5 year interim period.

Sunday Mornings

We have eight children's classes that meet on Sunday mornings. We celebrated promotion Sunday this year with ice cream sundaes on the playground after church on August 30. All of our children's lessons come from The Gospel Project for Kids curriculum.





JAM (Jesus and Me)

In June we celebrated the end of the school year with our 3rd through 5th graders with a lock-in. We watched the movie David, played sardines, noodle ball, and had pancakes and eggs for breakfast.

WinShape Camps

Our week-long camp in partnership with WinShape Camps, for K through 5th grade had 185 children participate. 73 of the children who attended indicated on their registration that they do not currently have a church home. 15 children made the decision to follow Jesus that week. Our theme this year was Ascend, and we learned that God does not make mistakes so we can boldly step into where he calls us to go knowing that we are not alone. We have been selected to host WinShape again next summer, July 26-30.





WINFREE KIDS CONTINUED

Pre-K VBS



We had 65 children come to learn about the wonders of Jesus. 12 of the children attend Winfree Church. 40 of them do not have a church home. 37 of them attend Winfree Memorial Preschool. One family agreed to have us contact them with follow up information about the church, so we have followed up with them a few times. Thank you so much to our 42 adult and 12 youth volunteers for making this week possible! Special thanks to Beth Stevenson for directing VBS this year!

SPARK





Our discipleship group for 4th and 5th graders meets once a month. This fall we have been talking about peer pressure and looked at how Peter, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and Daniel handled situations in which they were under intense pressure. We have dinner together, play games, and have time to for the kids to connect with one another to build strong friendships.

WINFREE KIDS Club

For Pre-K through 5th grade. We meet on Wednesday nights after church dinner and we dive deeper into the Bible and learn more about the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, prayer, worship, evangelism, fellowship, rest, service, generosity, and celebration. We play games, do crafts, and learn about music with Beverley Edwards (our Traditional Worship Director).

Children and Youth Volunteer Training

Glenn Maddox led a training session for all of our Children and Youth volunteers. You can read more about the training program called Darkness to Light at www.d2l.org.



Outreach to Local Schools



We have been working to find ways to better connect with our local schools. In Children's Worship this fall our children painted over 60 kindness rocks to add to the local school's rock gardens to welcome back new students who might be feeling anxious about starting back. We also stocked the teacher's lounge at Old Hundred Elementary in November in partnership with the PTA.

Preschool Chapel

We have chapel for all our preschoolers twice a month. We are working our way through the New Testament using the Hey-O Stories of the Bible Children's Bible. Matt Knesal leads our worship music, and we are working on learning some new songs this year. The parents of our preschoolers are invited to join us for chapel. Last week we had 35 parents and siblings of preschoolers join us for Chapel.





On Tuesdays when we do not have chapel for our preschoolers, we host a playgroup for parents/caregivers and their little ones in Room M220. We set up the space as a playroom, provide coffee and treats, and spend a couple of hours getting to know our preschool families better. We have had 12 moms and their children join us so far this year.

Family Christmas Movie and Craft Night

On November 13 we hosted a movie and craft night where we showed the movie King of Kings. We invited all our preschool families, all those who attended WinShape and do not have a church home, and all those who filled out guest forms during Trunk-or-Treat. We offered popcorn and candy for movie snacks, and we showed the movie in the Worship Center. At the beginning of a busy season of holidays, it was nice to pause and remember why we celebrate both Thanksgiving and Christmas. We look forward to more movie nights in 2027!



WINFREE YOUTH
YEAR IN REVIEW

Mission Madness
We joined with 20 churches and over 275 students and chaperones who participated in Mission Madness around Richmond! Together, we put in around 875 service hours spread over 13 mission sites and partners.

Graduation Sunday
We celebrated the accomplishments and heard directly from four seniors about what Winfree Youth ministry has meant to them and their walk with Jesus.

FUGE
We took 22 students and 3 leaders to Regent University for a weeklong camp where they got to do different tracks in the afternoon to learn more about God and their faith!

IMPACT
We took 6 youth and 2 leaders to Roanoke for a week of home renovation work, and our youth praise team also led worship for the camp!

IMPACT Fall Retreat
We took 17 youth and leaders (mainly middle school) to Eagle Eyrie for IMPACT's fall retreat in October. It allowed them to join with other churches and grow closer to God with different break out options.

Fall Retreat
We also have our own Fall Retreat in November, we took 40 students and leaders to Camp Kehukee for the weekend. It is packed full of Bible study, worship, hanging out, and games with other students from Winfree.



Mission Madness



IMPACT



IMPACT
Fall Retreat

Fall
Retreat





Graduation Sunday



FUGE