



Holy Spirit, fill me
There is nothing inside you
Open up, and in wonder
Show me what you are
As I walk with you
I will see in your heart
The things that are
In these second things



Church Planting News

SUMMER 2026

THE GROVE
NURTURING
ROOTED BELIEVERS

GOSPEL FRUIT
NEW BELIEVERS IN
OUR CHURCH PLANTS



Keith writes...

Dear Friends

Most of us can point to moments in our lives that changed everything. At the start of his first letter, Peter points to the greatest “before and after” moment in history – an event that changed everything for the whole world. *Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.*

“In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, soil or fade”. 1 Peter 1:3

Because of the resurrection of Jesus, believers can begin a new life that cannot be destroyed, have a new future that cannot be taken away, and a new living hope that will never fade.

We rejoice with our church planters in The Gathering (Belfast), The Grove (Newry) and in Bridgeway (Warrenpoint) for those who have recently come to faith in Jesus and have received that new life, future and hope.

In this edition, you can read about ways in which new worshipping communities are engaging with and serving their communities such as gardening projects, women’s only swimming classes, a Men Shed and a Church Flute Band. There is news of seasonal outreaches and missions in Castlewellan, Tullycarnet, and Warrenpoint and the vital work of growing mature and resilient disciples.

The new Diocesan Resource Church at St Patrick’s, Ballymacarrett will be known as Six:Eight – a name inspired by Isaiah 6:8 – “Here I am, send me”. While waiting for planning permission to upgrade the church building, monthly “Presence and Purpose” meetings have begun.

We are deeply grateful to Revd Stephen



Doherty and Revd James Crockett for their faithful leadership of new churches in Newtownards and Braniel. After 12 years of church planting in Newtownards (Glen since 2014; West Winds since 2022), Stephen has moved to St Andrew’s, Ballyhalbert, the church he grew up in, as Community Pastor.

James led Braniel for over 6 years and will be moving to a new ministry role at the end of June 2026. We ask for God’s richest blessing on Stephen and James in their new ministries. Please pray for Paul Hawkins as he leads West Winds and Glen and for Keith and Sharon Porter as they begin their new leadership roles in Braniel.

Every blessing,

Keith Gardiner

Fundraising Officer for Church Growth
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DIARY DATE *The annual church planting supporters event will be held on Tuesday evening 6 October 2026 at 7.00pm at The Gathering, 88 Newtownards Road, Belfast, BT4 1GW.*



Rooted, Not Rushed

In Newry, faith carries complexity. Many people haven't rejected Jesus, but they remain cautious of church. Still, the spiritual hunger is there.

We began The Grove with Scripture, with the image of a tree planted by water. A tree that bears fruit not because conditions are easy, but because its roots run deep. That vision shaped everything.

We chose to value rooted growth over rushed growth. Instead of asking how to attract people, we asked how to cultivate a Christ-centred community where people could belong and from that place, slowly and honestly become rooted.

Our life together is shaped by three simple practices: presence, story, and shared journey. Showing up without pressure. Honouring people's stories alongside God's. Walking together at different paces.

One of the clearest illustrations of this journey is Noel's. After more than fifty years away from church following childhood abuse, Noel found a place where faith felt safe again. With no pressure – just time, trust, and grace – he recently chose to give his life to Jesus and shared Communion for the first time in decades.

Alongside Noel is Alan's story. Alan's curiosity about faith was first sparked through TikTok videos exploring



Christianity. That curiosity led him to The Grove, where he completed Alpha and began exploring faith within community. What began online is now becoming embodied discipleship.

We also see this rooted growth in Ilona's journey. As Ilona became more deeply rooted within the community, she began to discover her gifts and sense a growing call to serve. Through intentional training and encouragement, her confidence and expectancy have grown, and she is now serving in prayer ministry, Sunday school and in our youth group.

Together, these stories reflect a growing culture within The Grove, where evangelism is shaped by prayer, service, and everyday discipleship.

This is what growth looks like for us. Not speed. Not pressure. But roots going deep enough to bear fruit in every season. Because when people are rooted in Christ, God gives the growth.

Natalie Trainor

PRAY with thanks for new believers rooted in Christ. Pray for the resources to allow The Grove to keep growing.



New leaders for Branial

We are privileged to be taking over Branial Community Church (BCC) from James Crockett who has faithfully served the people of BCC for the last six and a half years.

We have learned a lot from our involvement in Glen Community Church and West Winds Community Church in Newtownards, however, we had sensed for some time that God had a new chapter planned.

Our hope is for BCC to continue being a community of people - both believers and those seeking Christ. A safe place where people feel comfortable coming through the doors for the first time and where they will find a family. We are blessed that before we arrived James had already secured a polytunnel - a community



growing space - but we don't want this just to involve plants. We pray the church will also be a community growing space - for people! Together we want to encourage each other to 'grow' more like Christ and impact the community around us as more come to faith.

Let your roots grow down into Him and let your lives be built on Him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. Colossians 2:7 (NLT).

Keith & Sharon Porter

PRAY for God's blessing for Keith and Sharon Porter as they begin their new leadership role in BCC.

From division to worship

The streets around the Lower Newtownards Road and Titanic Quarter carry a proud, complex and sometimes divided history.

Marching bands are woven deeply into the culture. For some, they symbolise identity; for others, distance and division. Yet God has stirred something unexpected. One by one, bandsmen are coming to faith in Christ. What began as concern over sectarian associations near The Gathering church building has become a burden laid firmly on believing hearts.



Nine months on, the sound of melody-style hymns, worship songs, and gentle Irish airs now drifts through East Belfast. Where there were once suspicions, there are conversations. Where there were divides, there are shared songs. Through music, testimony, and biblical teaching, Church Flute Band Belfast (CFBB) proclaims Jesus, openly, warmly, and without barrier.

Open to all ages and backgrounds, the band is a living testimony that God can redeem culture, restore community, and turn even contested spaces into places of worship.

Ross Munro

PRAY for opportunities for CFBB to share the Christian message among those with little or no connection with church.

A fruitful season

Tullycarnet Church has enjoyed a really fruitful season of ministry over the last number of months. Two highlights come to mind.

Something that we have always prioritised and valued in our context has been small group ministry. This term, we have been able to deliver two small groups; one group looked at Rick Hill's book, "Resilient Disciples", whilst our other small group looked at Dane Ortlund's book, "Gentle and Lowly". What has been a particular encouragement has been the age profile of both groups, attracting people primarily in their 20s-30s, some of whom are relatively new Christians.

A second highlight was the visit of a mission team from Catalyst Church, Canyon City, Colorado. This was very



kindly facilitated by the organisation New International. The team enabled us to deliver a highly successful Easter Camp, door-to-door ministry and testimony evenings. Several families visited our church on Easter Sunday because of this outreach. It was particularly encouraging to see significant relationships forming between our own church members and the visiting team.

Matthew Gault

PRAY with thanks for the flourishing of discipleship groups and the partnership of the Catalyst Church mission team.

Blessing The Glen



We are blessed to have so many different groups, ministries, and activities where we can share God's love within the estate.

Our Sunday worship is passionate, authentic and deeply rooted in Jesus. Each month we have a specific invitational service, "Breakfast Sunday", where a light breakfast is available before a shorter all-age service. On Sunday evenings we have been working our way through the *Immerse* Bible series with informal discussion-based study.

Mid-week, we have a fantastic kids

ministry, and our youth meet every Wednesday and the last Friday of each month. Out of this group of young people, several have begun coming to church regularly on a Sunday and have asked for and been given their own Bibles. Recently they started their very own Bible study.

Our Men Shed and Ladies Group meet weekly and in partnership with Inspire Mental Health and the local community association we offer a free community lunch every Tuesday.

On top of these ministries, we have established a new community garden with a polytunnel for the whole community to enjoy.

Paul Hawkins

PRAY that God would open doors for the message of Christ through Glen's ministries and activities.



Summer Mission in Castlewellan

Our programme at The Well offers welcoming Sunday gatherings with food, worship, testimony, teaching and youth activities, alongside midweek Bible studies, prayer walks and a drop-in café.

We create opportunities for people from varied backgrounds to build relationships, explore faith, deepen their walk with God, and connect with the local church community.

Two weeks of mission and outreach are planned over the next 3 months. Between 15-21 June, a team from Cedar Creek Church in Illinois will be supporting The Well in a week of outreach in Castlewellan which will include prayer on the street, door-to-door visits, two kids' sports



evenings, a ladies art night, a karaoke evening and a men's darts evening. The second team is coming from 14-17 September in association with New International Mission and Ireland for Jesus.

Trevor & Lorraine Brimage

PRAY for God's wisdom as the team plan and prepare for the outreaches in June and September.

New Christians in Bridgeway

Blessings have continued at Bridgeway with good attendance and fruitful ministry at our bi-weekly meetings in Warrenpoint.

Six people have made a commitment to Christ for the first time and are continuing in their discipleship. Having completed our "Grace Course" we are now using the "Discipleship Explored" course each Sunday afternoon. We have community worship each Thursday night and now an amazing volunteer is teaching the Bible to the children who attend.

This Easter we had amazing support from



Holy Trinity Church of Ireland Banbridge as Ava and her young team supported us in family outreach including with catering and prayer ministry. We had great attendance with new families enjoying the crafts and Christian songs and activities. Most of the young people and adults who came were experiencing a Christian outreach for the first time.

Over the summer we have different mission and outreach events planned, one of which coincides with the "Waking the Giant weekend" where we plan to reach out to youth and teenagers as well as families in the Warrenpoint area.

Nevin & Lorraine Anderson

PRAY for God's protection and encouragement for the new disciples in Warrenpoint.



New doors opening

The past few months in The Suitcase Project have been a whirlwind of opportunity, new initiatives and connections with people and organisations.

We have restarted our gardening project in partnership with Glenside Farm and through funding from Belfast City Council we will develop the project this summer by planting our own garden at Emmanuel Hall.

The women's group is flourishing with a wide range of activities including macrame, storytelling and music lessons. We also have Saturday Women's Swimming in partnership with Templemore Baths, where recently we have been able to fund swimming lessons for women.

Our monthly evening meals continue, painting a wonderful picture of life together and restoration of the world that Jesus invites us into. In April we partnered with East Belfast Community Development Association and had a great evening of incredible food, music and art, with over 50 people coming



along. We will partner again in September.

On Wednesdays after lunch, everyone is invited to join us for prayer and to seek Jesus together as we read and discuss John's Gospel. We have people from all sorts of backgrounds, and it is a rich experience.

Tim Burns

PRAY with thanks for the opportunities to show God's love to so many newcomers in Belfast.

Six:Eight set for launch



The Diocesan Resource Church at St Patrick's Ballymacarrett will be known as Six:Eight, marking a bold new chapter for the East Belfast parish. The name is inspired by Isaiah 6:8, "Here I am, send me."

"Six:Eight captures the heart of the vision: to be a place where people encounter the presence of Jesus and are sent out to live for Him in every part of life," says Lead Pastor, Revd Mike Darbandi who was instituted on 13 April.

Alongside the name, Six:Eight has launched a website (sixeight.church) and social channels.

As we await planning permission to modernise the church building, Mike is organising "Presence & Purpose" gatherings in St Patrick's. These evenings are a space to meet with God, hear the vision of Six:Eight, and begin stepping into His purpose for our city. The next gathering is on Tuesday 7 July 2026 at 7pm and you would be very welcome.

PRAY for God's favour for the planning permission and contractor tendering processes for the refurbishment and reordering of St Patrick's.



Church Plant	Contact
Braniel Community Church	Revd James Crockett <i>Email: james.branielcc@gmail.com</i>
Glen Community Church	Mr Paul Hawkins <i>Email: phawkins1980@yahoo.co.uk</i>
Moneyreagh Community Church	Revd Rory Blake-Knox <i>Email: rory@moneyreaghchurch.com</i>
St Donard's Community Church	Revd Colin Morris <i>Email: stdonardsundrum@gmail.com</i>
The Gathering	Revd Ross Munro <i>Email: ross@thegatheringbelfast.com</i>
The Suitcase Project	Mr Tim Burns <i>Email: tim@thesuitcaseproject.org.uk</i>
Tullycarnet Church	Mr Matthew Gault <i>Email: tullycarnetchurch@icloud.com</i>
The Grove, Newry	Ms Natalie Trainor <i>Email: natalie.trainor@churcharmy.org</i>
The Well, Castlewellan	Trevor & Lorraine Brimage <i>Email: trevorbrimage@gmail.com</i>
Warrenpoint Outreach	Nevin & Lorraine Anderson <i>Email: lorraineganderson7@gmail.com</i>
West Winds Community Church	Mr Paul Hawkins <i>Email: phawkins1980@yahoo.co.uk</i>



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Cheques should be made payable to Down and Dromore Church Planting Fund and sent to:

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Diocese of Down & Dromore
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