

## Section F - Resources for Congregations

A short condensed piece and a study guide using this approach, both written to be used with local congregations (thanks to Holly Adams, the Methodist Church's Evangelism and Contemporary Culture Officer, for her substantial help with this).

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### F1. Kingdom-shaped Evangelism on the Ground

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#### The Kingdom Evangelism Writing Group\*

**We hope that followers of Jesus may find this short article useful, especially if you are unsure about the idea of evangelism.**

When Jesus starts his ministry, he reads from Isaiah (Chapter 61:1-2 in our Bibles) and says that he is bringing good news (literally 'news to gladden the heart') for poor people and freedom from oppression. (Luke 4:17-21). Later he sends out his disciples to prepare the way for him. He tells them first to say 'Peace to this house'. Then they are to proclaim: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near to you' and to cure sick people (Matthew 10: 5-15, Luke 10: 1-12). How can we best sow that Kingdom of joy, justice, peace and healing in which the world and its systems are bettered (saved) through people believing in Jesus as self-giving, servant-King, and turning their lives Godward to follow him?

**How we can encourage other people to follow Jesus and become co-builders of the Kingdom of God?**

**By listening to and watching** what is happening in our local community and what people are saying about it. (This process is often called a community audit and several organisations in the Resources List can help you shape this.)

- Where are people suffering disturbance, hurt or illness?
- Is there unfairness or injustice that makes their situation worse?
- Where do you see things happening that are not peaceful or life-giving?
- Which other organisations are working on this, either service provision or campaigning?
- Are we linking with them as a church, or members of them as individuals? If not, where could we join in?
- Is there unmet need or unaddressed injustice our church could help with, or that needs addressing in our church?

**By praying** to God, asking God to bless those people and those situations, and then tell us how we can be a blessing to them. We need to expect to see God at work ahead of us, and maybe even casually point that out to people – things like God-coincidences when things slip into place more easily than might be expected, or when there is unexpected movement on the part of an authority to right a wrong.

- Offer prayer to people for their needs: for peace, justice, inclusion and good health.
- Encourage people themselves to give thanks to God for prayers answered.
- Ask people of other faiths to pray for us.
- Pray also for the other organisations meeting local need and pushing for change.

This all shows Jesus as generous, real and relevant.

**Be clear how much God cares about the whole world by caring for it too.** Our aim can be to make sure that every situation or person or thing that we come across, we leave it in a better state. That in itself will be attractive. That bettering can be as simple as a sympathetic smile or a quiet word to a person often despised or overlooked. The good news we try to give is that we are alongside people, as God is alongside us and them, deeply committed to the enterpriser of working towards the vision of the better world of peace, justice, joy and healing (God’s kingdom). We can work with anyone and everyone who thinks roughly along those lines, of any faith or none.

**Be honest about what your faith gives you.** Followers of Jesus are fuelled by God’s Holy Spirit, the power of prayer and the close love of Jesus as brother and friend, in the one family that is sheltered under the wings of God, our Good Father/Mother. We find that this gives us hope and courage in the face of trouble. It helps us to do kingdom-building things with others in the local community far more than we can do by our own efforts, such as campaigning for a better national care system, picking up litter, having a great time in our local lunch club, supporting human rights organisations, living a more eco-friendly lifestyle, enjoying human variety and going to their parties, helping bring reconciliation between families and groups, providing resources and services that bring support, healing and well-being. We know some people have very similar values. We believe that we have two precious gifts to share that we’d like others to have too. Following Jesus, trusting in him and knowing the self-worth that comes from God’s forgiving nature is one. The other is the gift of the community and common endeavour of fellow kingdom-builders, that helps people feel valued and esteemed.

**Love people whoever they are.** There are plenty of things we can do together with other people to improve our neighbourhood and people’s lives, whether they follow Jesus or not.



**Ask God for opportunities** to say something like: “If you ever want to know more about the God-stuff that keeps me going, just ask, and I’ll try to show you how it provides the fuel and vision for all that I, and the church, try to do in this community to make it a better place for everyone. Jesus was pretty clued up on a good way to live in the world and help to make it a better place for everyone. Why don’t you come and see?”

**Point to God in our local communities.** Look for and point out to others where kingdom actions are taking place.

Introduce God into the life of the community e.g take part in community celebrations where a situation has been healed or, for example, a long-serving district nurse is thanked on their retirement, and offer to say a brief prayer of thanks and/or blessing; attend

gatherings for a campaign and quietly offer prayer for the cause; hold prayers for the local people and community. Gently invite those with a kingdom-heart but no stated sense of God to such events.

**Look for changes of heart.** Coming to the point of being a declared follower of Jesus can be a very gradual process. People who are building their life around Kingdom values are part of the Kingdom which God envisages will be for the benefit of all the world (Mark 16:15; Romans 8:19-22). Those of us who are Christians will be able to identify (even if only when looking back) that we are now inspired by Jesus and have a sense of God in our lives, and that we are now living in a Kingdom-ward direction in kin-dom relation with other followers of Jesus. In addition to community events with mentions of God, invite people on that journey into the Kingdom, to prayer and/or worship services to 'Come and See' and get involved more deeply. Hopefully, they will get to a point where they want to make a faith commitment – but engagement in prayer and worship should never be dependent upon that, and the church/community boundaries will ideally be very porous.

Their change of heart and turning to walk towards Jesus will be something that the Holy Spirit does - we can only make the offer. It may not be us who is the asker when they finally reply 'yes, I'll come', or 'yes, I'll start trying to love God, my neighbour as myself and even my enemy'. Nor may they come to our church. But that doesn't matter as God's Kingdom grows as each situation is healed, and as each person turns to work with hopeful joy for justice, peace and healing.

**\*This short piece is a taster for a Pack of varied resources (pictures, articles, poems) about evangelism from a kingdom perspective which was created out of conversations, prayer and writing by a diverse group. We don't all share the same church, academic or geographical backgrounds or theologies. We are looking to encourage more people in and outside congregations and church membership to become followers of Jesus through this work.**

If you would like to order the full pack or to join the quarterly seminar on the topic or to contribute something to the growing resource and thinking, please contact [admin@utusheffield.org.uk](mailto:admin@utusheffield.org.uk) or visit [utusheffield.org.uk/KingdomEvangelism/hh](https://utusheffield.org.uk/KingdomEvangelism/hh)

## F2. A Kingdom Evangelism Course

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Holly Adams, with additional material by Erica Dunmow

### HOW TO USE THIS COURSE

This study guide is mainly written from the perspective that your congregation is one that is already well connected to its locality and may well be engaged in practical things of service or working for justice, but where people are more wary of speaking about God. It can also be used to challenge and develop the understanding of people who have an older model of evangelism as simply street preaching or house-to-house cold-calling with tracts, etc.

You can use this six-session course in groups of 4-10, or in larger groups which break off into smaller discussion groups. It can be facilitated by a leader, or self-guided by the group. There are not separate materials for leaders. Participants don't need access to the Kingdom Evangelism Pack (KEP - July'21 edition) , although where extracts are used they are cited in case participants wish to read more.

Each session is designed to last an hour - (the timings are guides only - and contains an opening activity, a reading with a reflection question, some discussion questions, and a call to action which is a homework task to complete between sessions. We recommend you open or close with prayer and worship – there is ten minutes set aside in each session for you to use for this as you wish. There are prayers in section A4 of the Kingdom Evangelism Pack (pp.10-12) you may wish to use, and songs/hymns suggested for each session. People may wish to reflect on the pictures during worship and/or during their prayer times at home.

The discussion questions in each session can also be used as a stand-alone resource (for example, in café church, at house groups, or as openers at a Church Council or wider mission and evangelism exploration meeting). Similarly, the first and second sessions can be used as one-off introductions to the Kingdom, and to evangelism if you take out the 'act' homework tasks.

Session 1 can also be missed out if your congregation is one that is very familiar with the theology of the Kingdom.

**Session 1: What did Jesus mean by God's Kingdom?**

**Opening music:** *The Kingdom of God is Justice and Joy* (Bryn Rees).

**Opening activity** (15mins):

Write the word 'Kingdom' on a big piece of paper. As a group, consider what comes to mind when you think of this word in relation to Jesus and his ministry, and write or draw on the paper. This is your main list about the Kingdom.

How might the idea of working with God to build the Kingdom change the way you think or feel about how people become followers of Jesus?

What helps that to happen?

**Read and Reflect** (10mins):

Read Luke 4:15-21, which is a sermon Jesus preached at the start of his ministry, setting out his stall. What can we learn about the Kingdom of God from this passage?

**Discuss** (25mins):

1. *"The 'Kingdom of God' and 'Kingdom of Heaven' are synonymous phrases used over 80 times in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Jesus used the term 'Kingdom of God' but he never defined it although he embodied it."* (KEP p.2)

*"By living our ordinary lives, we are signs of the kingdom by what we do and how we do it. We unconsciously transmit to others a sense of life that is at the heart of the kingdom."*

(Andrew Crowley, KEP p.46)

*"Any person or situation or thing we come across, we should leave in a better state"*

(Kevin Apreh, at a study session trialling this guide, June 21)

How do you represent the Kingdom of God for people who don't follow Jesus?

2. Becoming a Christian involves responding to Jesus' invitation to 'follow me' and therefore a commitment to becoming a member of the Kingdom of God and working to see it arrive in all its fullness. Living in this new way, with a relationship with God through Jesus, gives life new meaning and focus – the new follower of Jesus is saved from shame or self-absorption, they know themselves to be loved and worthy to participate in God's Kingdom work of justice, freedom and peace, based on love. (KEP pp.2-3, paraphrased)

What difference does being a follower of Jesus make to you? Why might it make a difference to other people who don't know Jesus or understand about God's deep care for them?

**Closing music:** *Jesus, be the centre* (Michael Frye).

**Act:**

Before the next session list all the places where you chat with people who may not know about or follow Jesus – both as a church group and as individuals. (Think of your relationships with friends, family and neighbours; your workplace; the school gate; any clubs or activities you take part in; local corner shops and pubs if you have them, people you meet on regular bus or train journeys; think of projects, initiatives and events you run as a church).

How might you be able to see, together with the people you chat to, something of God's Kingdom of justice and joy at work in your setting?

Before the next session ask God to help to show you how you can do this.

## Session 2: Evangelism: Praying, Saying or Doing?

**Opening music:** *We have a gospel to proclaim (Edward Burns).*

### **Opening activity:** (15mins)

Share your lists that you worked on between sessions, about where and when you could speak or show good news of God's Kingdom of justice and joy. Make a second 'main list' together on a piece of paper and talk about the ideas.

Is it better (or just easier) to make the things that Jesus said God cared about known in these settings by doing rather than saying? And where does prayer fit in?

### **Read and Reflect:** (10mins)

Now look at the main list of words and pictures about the Kingdom/kin'dom that you made in Session 1, and the new one you've made about evangelism. What might it mean to put the two main lists together?

Helpful Hint: Remember that the Gospels have different instructions from Jesus about what his followers should do. First he sent them out to proclaim the good news and heal people of diseases and things that oppress and control them (Matthew 10:6-8a and Luke 10:9). Then, after his resurrection, Jesus told them to "make disciples" (Matthew 28:19), "preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15), proclaim "repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations" (Luke 24:47), "forgive [the] sins" (John 20:23)).

Essential Hint: The most important things to know about evangelism are:

1. The Holy Spirit is ahead of us, working in people's hearts. We are just witnesses; we don't change people's hearts, God does that.
2. It can take many encounters for a person to come to be a follower of Jesus and have faith in him and know God's love – we can only ask to be signposts and pointers to Jesus, as he is the signpost to God (John 17:20-26)
3. The best evangelists 'gossip the gospel' – i.e. make their relationship with God/Jesus, and how God cares passionately about our lives and circumstances, a relaxed and natural part of who they are.
4. In all we do as Kingdom builders we should be a blessing – "*any person or situation or thing we come across, we should leave in a better state*" (Kevin Apreh, at a study session trialling this guide, June'21).

Read Robin Gamble's poem 'Kingdom Evangelism' below (also on p.7 of the Kingdom Evangelism Pack) and share your reflections. How and where do words fit into Kingdom-building?

*There are words,  
There is a message  
In fact, more than a message,  
A proclamation  
Not our words, message or proclamation  
But his,  
entrusted to us.*

*A proclamation of goodness,  
Of truth,  
Of the opening of doors  
The beginnings of journeys*

*And the living of eternal life,  
Full of forgiveness, joy and peace.*

*His proclamation,  
Proclaimed by us.*

**Discuss** (25mins):

Consider Jesus' ministry – what relationship do his words have to his actions?  
*"We evangelise when the way we are bespeaks Christ, when our churches are hospitable - honouring the least and including the other. Our primary intent here is not an act of communication but the living of a Christ-faithful life. We evangelise too when we speak of our faith and the one in whom that faith is placed, when we explain to friends why we pray, when we offer a Christ-informed perspective to colleagues conversing about an event in the news. Even here it is not that we think, "OK, now I am going to evangelise." Rather, because we live as Christians we also speak as Christians." (Glen Marshall, KEP p.58).*

Do you think saying and doing are equal partners in helping people see Jesus and the good news of forgiveness and freedom from suffering and oppression he brings?

*"Paul's time in prison seems to have given him space for depth and reflection in both intercession and theological teaching in his letters." (Rachma Abbott, KEP p.30).*

How is our evangelism enriched by prayer? What space do you give to praying for other people's needs and the needs of your neighbourhood, village/town/city and the world as part of your proclamation of the good news?

**Closing Music:** *Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love (Anon. N Ghana).*

**Act:**

Before the next session think of a few people you know who aren't followers of Jesus. Ask God to bless them.

Ask God to give you the opportunity to do something for one or two of them, that will show them that you - and therefore God - care about them and their lives.

Ask God to give you at least one opportunity to talk about Jesus and the Kingdom of justice and joy with someone you know.

Be ready to respond if they ask you to help with something, or just be ready to listen with good attention. Don't try to take over and 'fix' things for them, except maybe to offer for the local church to pray for them, if they are in real difficulties.

It might feel daunting, but trust God and see what happens – you might be surprised by who you have the conversation with, and how it starts.

**Session 3: Everyone a (Kingdom) Evangelist, Even Me?**

**Opening Song:** *Jesus Christ is waiting, waiting in the streets (John Bell).*

**Opening activity** (15mins):

Share how you got on with praying for people and what happened.

As you listen to each member of the group, consider what are this person's gifts for evangelism?. For example, have they listened well? Were they good at following God's promptings? Were they able to connect something in ordinary life to how Jesus worked? Did they connect with what the other person said rather than impose their own views? When each person finishes telling the group about their experiences, the group should share with them what they saw as the person's gifts.

**Read and Reflect** (15mins)

Break into pairs and each pair discuss one or two of the following verses of scripture which are where Jesus 'commissions' people to take action: Matthew 10:6-8 / Matthew 28:19-20 / Mark 1:14 / Mark 1:19 / Mark 16:15 / Luke 10:8-9 / Luke 24:47 / John 13:34. Consider the questions: What is it that Jesus asks of his disciples? Are all followers of Jesus asked to do this today? How can you put those commissions into practice as a church? Share your thoughts with one another when you come back together.

**Discuss** (20mins):

1. "call and task for individuals, the scriptures remind us time and again that there is a collective and communal nature to vocation ... The call and activity of the community also needs evangelism that brings the Kingdom closer. The realisation of the good news isn't only when it is taken on board by individuals." (Rachma Abbott, KEP, p.25, paraphrased) Is evangelism the vocation of the whole church or just some disciples?
2. *"If you are not a fan of some of the evangelism that you've seen, here's some good news about the Good News. You don't have to stand on street corners shouting at people. You don't have to pretend that you want people to be your friends, just so you can evangelise them. You don't have to devise a cunning strategy to get your friends to come to church even though you are pretty sure they don't want to. Those things aren't what evangelism is. They are just some of the ways that people have gone about evangelism. To put it simply, evangelism is the communication of the gospel. It's all about helping people to find out about and understand the good news of Jesus in the hope that they, too, will want to follow him. Evangelism is 'goodness-ism', getting on with life in such a way that people have a chance to discover Jesus for themselves."* (Glen Marshall, KEP pp.44-45). There are as many ways of going about evangelism as there are followers of Jesus. God gifts us all for evangelism in different ways. What are your ways?

**Closing Music:** *I am a child of God (Hillsong)*

**Act:**

No matter what our gifts for evangelism, one gift we all have is our own experience of God in our lives. The most powerful witness we can give is to talk about our own experience of the Kingdom of God coming near, of the difference God's love, peace or goodness makes in our lives.

Before the next session, think of a time when God has made a difference in your life.

Think about how you felt and why it was a significant moment.

Write this story down or draw a picture of it.

## Session 4: Being Good News people

**Opening Music:** *There's a wideness in God's mercy (Frederick W Faber).*

### Opening activity (15mins)

In small groups of 2-3 share the stories you wrote for your homework with one another.

### Read and Reflect (15mins)

Read Luke 1:46-55, where Mary proclaims the good news. This is a testimony – her own known and lived experience of God. What does it tell you about the Kingdom? What do our own stories that we shared earlier say about the Kingdom?

### Discuss (25mins):

1. “*Social justice is a necessary element of proclamation of the good news.*” (Rachma Abbott, KEP p.30). What do justice issues (e.g. climate justice, racial justice, anti-poverty campaigns., etc) have to do with evangelism? Being people of good news means to be people of justice and evangelism. Is it possible to follow Jesus without doing both?
2. Throughout the writings of the prophets there is a reminder that our lives need to be lived as people who work to overturn injustice ... Although our activity in seeking and working for justice for people in poverty should be rooted in our sense of what it is to follow Jesus, there is nothing in the prophets that limits the recipients of justice to insiders. No farmer or landowner should be able to read the passages of Isaiah with wolves and lambs cohabiting without being aware of the challenge this is to the status quo – it is a radical reordering of how we know things to be. The danger implicit in wolves should encourage us to be engaging with whatever might be profoundly other to us. There is a radical inclusivity in these images. (Rachma Abbott, KEP p.24, paraphrased) How do you see God in people who are different from you? How might they see God in you? Is this evangelism?
3. Think about any social action projects or campaigns you're involved in – being known as a follower of Jesus in those settings is Kingdom evangelism. How can you point more clearly to Jesus in those settings?

**Closing music:** *Send down the fire of your justice (Marty Haugen).*

### Act:

Before the next session, think of somebody you know who is ‘profoundly other’ i.e. very different from you in life experience or background.

Ask God to bless them.

Ask God to give you an opportunity to have a chat with them about their lives.

**Session 5: Building relationships: including all in the Kingdom.**

**Opening music:** *Let us build a house where love can dwell (Marty Haugen).*

**Opening activity (5mins)**

In pairs, briefly share your experiences of starting a conversation with somebody who is different from you. What was positive about your conversation?

**Read and Reflect (15mins)**

Read John 4:4-30, 39-42. What can we learn about evangelism from this scripture? What can we learn about the kingdom?

Hint: Samaritans were really despised by many Jews at the time of Jesus, and note that the woman was fetching water on her own, separate from the rest of the village women.

**Discuss (30mins):**

1. *“growth, discipleship and evangelism are not distinct from social action and the work of the Kingdom, but rather are right at the centre. People come to faith and churches grow for many different reasons, but so often it is about the right relationships.”* (Richard Atkinson, KEP p.61)

*“Our mission is to enter into full relationship with others, getting to know them and letting ourselves be known by them. The heart of this relationship is love. Within this environment the message of the Kingdom will spread by itself.”* (Andrew Crowley, KEP p47).

*“If proclaiming the good news should be spoken from love, then relationship is key to earning permission to speak about Jesus.”* (Rachma Abbott, KEP p.29).

How are we called to come alongside people in justice and evangelism? How do the things you do as a church prioritise relationship building?

2. In the Palm Sunday story, the key Kingdom point is the nature of the kingship of Jesus, his accessibility to the ordinary people. (Erica Dunmow, KEP p.35, paraphrased)

How might our churches be viewed by the local community – are we a group of people that engages in local issues and blesses and celebrates the other organisations who also serve the common good in our area? Would the local community come out to celebrate our churches and help us fundraise for a new community room?

3. *“learn lessons for Kingdom Evangelism from the letters that Paul, and possibly some others, wrote to communities that are named, and so connected with specific places. If we think about ourselves as locally resident communities that want and need to become Kingdom Evangelists, we may no longer be expecting or relying on visiting evangelists.”* (Rachma Abbott, KEP p.29).

Why are we the best placed people to be evangelists in our local communities? Why is context important in evangelism?

**Closing Music:** *God of this city (Chris Tomlin)/Army of Compassion (Solvieg L Henderson)*

**Act:**

Before the next session, go back to the list you made between sessions 1 and 2 of all your opportunities for being Jesus’ hands, feet or mouth. Pick a few things from the list

that you really enjoy doing. Think about the other people you see there that you get on best with, and how well you know them. Are any of them interested in the justice issues that are part of the Kingdom, or impacted by injustice?

Ask God to bless them. Ask God to make you ready for a chance, in your relationships with those people who care about justice issues, to talk about how Jesus cared about issues of injustice and prejudice. They might end up being the same people that you thought and prayed about after Session 2.

Write down three action points you are going to take that will help that place be a bit more like the Kingdom of God, and attract people to Jesus.

#### How you can take part in this work

##### 1. Contributions

We welcome additions to this resource, which will be available as a website which can include sound files.

Please email your piece to [office@utusheffield.org.uk](mailto:office@utusheffield.org.uk) by 1 November for consideration by the Writing Group.

##### 2. Seminar/support group

The Writing Group recognises that some ministers who come from this perspective can feel very isolated and/or frustrated that their understanding of what is Good News and how to share it is not valued by colleagues.

We are looking to hold an online get-together to share ideas, encouragement and prayer, some of which might become items for the website if people want that, quarterly on Monday afternoons for 1 1/4 hour. Please check dates and book via [office@utusheffield.org.uk](mailto:office@utusheffield.org.uk) and help shape how this develops.

**Session 6: God as Kin'dom Builder****Opening activity** (15mins)

In groups of 2-4, share with each other your action points. Then in your small groups, pray for each other and their action points.

**Read and Reflect** (10mins)

Read Genesis 12:1-2, Matthew 4:18-22 and Luke 1:28-38.

What are the common themes?

**Discuss** (25mins)

1. It is not for us to convert or convince or persuade or pressurise other people in evangelism. We trust in God's providing and not in any efforts of our own. (Erica Dunmow, KEP p.70, paraphrased). Evangelism and kingdom building both require you to step out of your comfort zones and trust in God's provision. Have you had an experience where you've had to depend on God? Share it with the group.

2. *"In the Epiphany story the key Kingdom theme is that of inclusion in the revelation to the Gentiles. The recognition of the Christ as the coming Messiah was first acknowledged in a theological way by three outsiders from other countries, who were most likely not Jewish. This tells us that people who are not followers of Jesus can receive revelation from God, and of God, without first being believers, and can come to worship too."* (Erica Dunmow, KEP p.34)

The Writers of the Kingdom Evangelism Pack think that the idea of the kin'dom as well as Kingdom of God can be helpful. This comes from the statement in Genesis that all of humanity is made in the image of God. It's not up to us to make people have an awareness of the Good Father God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit in their lives. God is the only one able to do that and is already at work.

We can, though, go where other people are and open up awareness of God, and also create safe spaces and invite people in: to conversation, to worship, to scripture, to community, to encounter. How might we do this?

2. *"All Christians who have a reasonably active faith can tune in to God's promptings and drop God into the conversation at some point, if they prayerfully expect the opportunities to arise and don't expect to have to do anything more than honestly answer any questions that follow. That is all that it takes – the Holy Spirit goes before us and does the rest. Our answers will be just part of what that person will be hearing about Jesus, and if they are ready to hear, they will hear."* (Erica Dunmow, KEP p.70).

How might you all practice tuning into God's prompting?

Think about the ways you notice God in your everyday life and respond.

**Act:**

Commit to praying regularly (once a day or week) to ask who God is nudging you to reach out to in some way, or who is going to need you for a Kingdom act. If you feel the nudge as you go about your life, reach out or respond to that person. It might just be a simple conversation, it might be an act of service, it might be something that engages with their commitment to justice, peace or combatting climate change, and it might be a time of faith sharing, but it should always be in response to their needs and leave them in a better place than they were. Be attentive, be faithful, and see what happens.