

Is This Pack for You?

If you say yes to being any of these:

- not really sure and/or not really bothered if you are ‘saved’ or ‘born again’, but see yourself as a Christian committed to working in your local area for well-being for all and think that God wants that too
- inspired by Isaiah 61 and Jesus’ sermon in Luke 4
- see sitting chatting over cake in a tea or coffee shop, over pie and peas in a café or a pint and crisps in a pub as part of doing mission
- not afraid of being seen as committed to social justice
- better at getting on and doing stuff for people than talking about your faith



- a bit embarrassed by TV evangelists, but like ‘The Vicar of Dibley’ and ‘Rev’
- fired up by what Jesus, Martin Luther King and Greta Thunberg say
- like Stormzy more than Eminem
- someone who is aware that the Bible says far more against greed, injustice and misuse of power than it says about sex, and think that God’s more relaxed than the churches appear to be
- a fan of Garth Hewitt’s or Andy Flannagan’s or Tim Hughes’s songs

And you share these dreams with us:

- you’d like to see your local church as a place of unconditional welcome, that reaches out and works with local people and organisations to make your area a better place.
- you’d like to see individuals more at peace and comfortable with themselves
- and you think that God does too and that people knowing God’s love for them will help all that....

... then you’ll probably like and be encouraged and inspired by what’s inside. And if you don’t agree with us, you might still find we have something to offer...

... and either way please pray for our work that we, and Christians like us, will be doing effective catch-up with the Holy Spirit—growing disciples like Jesus.

We want to see this grow.
Contact office@utusheffield.org.uk to contribute or to take part in the supportive quarterly seminar series.

An Introduction to Kingdom Evangelism and What is in this Pack

1. Our purpose and audience

We are writing about evangelism/evangelisation and 'faith sharing'. We will use the words Kingdom and evangelism because we want to confront people with two concepts not often put together.

We are putting forward a positive case for evangelism based on the Kingdom paradigm: this set of articles, write-ups of group discussions, and poems explores the first, and what spreading good news looks like from within that paradigm.

We feel that evangelism does include reaching out intentionally and addressing real practical need by action and prophetic speaking out, at the same time expecting and inviting people to become seekers of or disciples of Jesus (rather than converting those of no faith or another faith – the Holy Spirit does that).

We look for an integration of action and words – holistic/integral mission or a Missio Dei approach.

We are writing for fairly well informed lay people and clergy who either want to explore a different basis for evangelism or who want to lead their congregation into active and intentional reaching out. Section F is designed to introduce the concept to congregations.

2. What do we mean by Kingdom Evangelism?

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. Rather, he illustrated it by means of stories, which, unless people were 'in on the secret' (Mark 4.10-12), led to ambiguities and misunderstandings among his hearers. Jesus wanted people to work out for themselves what it meant, both in concept and in action.



Then there was also the eschatological dimension to the phrase. Was the Kingdom intended to be realised here and now or at some future consummation? And was this future intended to be an earthly one or in some other 'place' beyond or after this life?

The realistic answer is one that paradoxically encompasses both these dimensions. The Kingdom is among you/near to you, able to be realised on earth, but also to be fully realised in 'heaven' i.e. that eternal world, which, envisaged potentially, awaits the whole of humankind.

Therefore evangelism based upon this concept sees that the crunch, decision moment of repentance (metanoia), as the point at which the individual responds in faith to the invitation of Jesus - 'Follow me' or 'Come and see'. Thereby they become part of the faith community, a member of the Kin'dom* of God and working to see it arrive in all its fullness. For some this point of commitment will be as dramatic as conversion or new birth. For others they will have a sense that living in this new way with a relationship with God through Jesus, gives their life new meaning and focus – they are saved from selfishness and self-absorption and are drawn to an outward-facing life which has a new, long-term and transcendent aspect.

This is a valid paradigm on which to build faith and discipleship. It relies less upon doctrinal belief and is more about a way of life. The new follower of Jesus becomes a member of 'the Body of Christ' (or Kin'dom), incarnate in the world, active in the causes of justice, freedom and peace, based on love, in the coming but not yet arrived phase of the Kingdom's life.

The convert's sense of worth as a person whom God wants and values as a contributor to the restitution of creation is about casting aside shame and knowing oneself valued. Salvation of human dignity in this way is indeed something that all Creation has been groaning for (Romans 8:18-25).

The Writing Group began our journey together in this project with the question, 'Where does evangelism fit into discipleship?' The answer is that the Christian pilgrim, rubbing shoulders with his/her contemporaries on this journey we call life, invites others to join in the adventure of faith in action in building that new kind of community which God desires, so we believe, inclusively, for all earth's people.

And in terms of inclusivity, we had an interesting and important diversion about how comfortable or not we felt about the term kingdom itself. We are not entirely comfortable with the gendered and authority/control ideas which can be within kingdom as a term, and so we also use kin'dom. This latter tries to encapsulate the humble, servant-kinship of Jesus alongside the fact that, rather than being Jesus' subjects, we are his and each others' family or kin, as co-heirs of the Kingdom.

* We realise this term is not widespread in use or understanding. For the moment the Kingdom is the term we use in the overall project title, but some pieces will use kin'dom and some use both.

3. What is in this pack?

Stories, poems, articles, essays and pictures that all attempt to shed light on how the Kingdom of God has inspired us to encourage others to become followers of Jesus. We hope you will be encouraged and inspired to do likewise.

All pieces are designed to be flexible and can be downloaded and copied as separate documents and passed on, or put in the recycling bin as you see fit. We trust the former!

Each section approaches Kingdom Evangelism differently and begins with a short summary of the pieces in it.

Section A has poems and pictures and prayers.

Section B lays out more about our understanding of the Kingdom, looking at the Bible and especially Jesus' words.

Section C shows how the Writing Group has applied this in our different church settings: Anglican, Baptist, Catholic and Methodist.

Section D is stories of people who've come to faith in this way.

Section E is opinion pieces that are personal and we don't all necessarily agree with!

Section F comprises two more condensed pieces that can be used with local congregations (thanks to Holly Adams of the Methodist Church for her help with this).

Section G is a long essay reflection on how this strand of evangelism has developed in the Church of England.

Section H is a selection of further resources that we have enjoyed and found useful.

We also hope that the Pack will grow, and be complemented with content in other media. We welcome contributions of all sorts from other people who feel our passion for kin'dom and Jesus-life-based evangelism, and a church that is working with the Holy Spirit and intentionally engaged with people's practical lives and relationships with God.

Call for Contributions

Please let us know about your ideas for additional contents by emailing office@utusheffield.org.uk by 1 November 2021. If you would like to join future seminars on Kingdom Evangelism please email us at the same address.

4. Who are the Writing Group and how did we work together?

- Richard Atkinson - CofE, Bishop of Bedford
- Rachma Abbott - CofE, Rector, Wiltshire; Bishop's Advisor in Minority Ethnic Concerns, Salisbury
- Andrew Crowley - UTU Trustee, RC, Deacon, Sheffield
- Erica Dunmow – Convenor, UTU Trustee, lay development educator, Sheffield
- Kevin Ellis - UTU Trustee, Church in Wales, Vicar, Angelsey
- Becky Farrell - Community of Aidan and Hilda, Sheffield
- Richard Firth - UTU Trustee, Methodist Minister, rtd, N Shields
- Joe Forde - UTU Trustee, Catholic, Sheffield
- Robin Gamble – CofE Diocesan Missioner, Leading Your Church Into Growth, Bradford
- Paula Hollingsworth - CofE, Chaplain, St Paul's Cathedral, London
- Glen Marshall, ('til Dec'20) - co-Principal of N. Baptist Coll., Manchester
- John Gladwin (Reader, from March'21) – CofE, retired Bishop, St Alban's
- Chris Sissons - UTU Trustee, Methodist, Sheffield
- Ricky Turner – ('til Dec'20) - CofE vicar, Dunstable, Beds

The Project grew out of a conversation between Robin Gamble of LYCIG (Leading Your Church Into Growth) and Erica Dunmow, Chair of UTU (Urban Theology Union) about the fact that some Christians run a mile from anything with the label 'evangelism' because of their (mis)understanding that it is associated with one particular theology (often labelled 'Evangelical') and one particular style of engagement – often seen as akin to sales culture.

In order to counter this, and ensure that the church continues to be a vibrant mix of traditions, they considered there needed to be a focussed piece of work around a different paradigm for communicating the Good News of Jesus, that had a different theological starting point.

Erica wrote a brief piece in summer 2020 for the UTU Certificate in Theology and Discipleship for Mission about where evangelism fits into discipleship, in which she coined the term Kingdom-based Evangelism. UTU agreed to endorse the project and a number of practitioners both lay and ordained - some UTU members, some not - began to meet together on Zoom, to put more flesh on the bones of the project, and to begin discussing and writing. This Pack is as far as we have got by July 2021.

Although some of us have studied to PhD level, this is primarily a practitioners' view of the issues. We hope it will help other practitioners develop their confidence in the Gospel and how to spread it in their situations.

Contents

Section A

Poems, pictures and prayers that live out what we understand Kingdom evangelism to be, rather than try to explain it.

A1. Kingdom Evangelism – Robin Gamble

A2. St Hilda's, Jesmond, Flower Festival 2018 – Erica Dunmow

A3. Building the Kingdom – Becky Farrell, artist and illustrator of this pack, 2017. A pictorial reflection on the variety of tasks and people engaged in kingdom building.

A4. Prayers – various

A5. The Sheffield Resurrection Octyche - Roz Norsworthy, 2008 - a sequence of eight painted panels commissioned for Victoria Hall Methodist Church, Sheffield, depicting the Gospel story of the inception of the Kingdom in real places in Sheffield.

Section B - Biblical Studies and Theological Matters

B1. Bible Sources for the Kingdom Paradigm - Richard Firth and John Vincent with Erica Dunmow. A short account of sources for the concept of the Kingdom within the Old Testament lays out how Jesus spoke of it in the Gospels (except for Matthew) and then examines the account in Acts of how the early church began to live it out.

B2. A Review of the References to the Kingdom in Matthew's Gospel - Andrew Crowley. A detailed examination of Matthew's complex range of ideas including the sometimes puzzling Kingdom parables.

B3. Thematic Old Testament Resources for Kingdom Evangelism - Rachma Abbott. This draws upon the Hebraic understanding of the Kingdom as an actual place as well as a conceptual rule of justice, and links this to issues in rural parishes.

B4. Location, Location, Listening and Learning: New Testament Letters to Communities. Rachma Abbott draws out the ways that we consider the kin'dom should be lived out, from the accounts of the early churches in the Pauline epistles.

[The other New Testament letters, both the Pastoral Epistles and those named for other senders, are not covered – we invite people to submit their ideas.]

B5. The Faithfulness of Jesus – an overview of the New Testament by Richard Atkinson, in conversation with Steven Chalke's recent book, "The Lost Message of Paul", examining what it is we have to have faith 'in'.

B6. Kin'dom-based Seasonal Themes for Speaking Good News, and Sermon Points Erica Dunmow's sequence of theological reflections from within this paradigm that can guide preaching through the main festivals in the Revised Common Lectionary calendar.

B7. What is the Key Message of the Cross Within a Kingdom Paradigm? A simple summary of the Writing Group's discussion. We do not refute Atonement theology. We reassert that there are other ways of viewing the 'Good' Friday and Easter Day events that have a long history in the church, which can also be 'converting'.

Section C - our understandings of evangelism

C1. What do we Understand by the 'Kingdom' and What is our Missionary Imperative? The summation of the Writing Group's first two meetings in which we wrestled with trying to explain what we sensed we had common ground about but struggled to find a way of explaining.

C2. Not Just Words Richard Atkinson explores the variety of ways in which communication of the Kingdom happens.

C3. Some Good News about 'goodnews-ing'. Glen Marshall's explanation of evangelism as being, doing and speaking.

C4. A Model for Kingdom Evangelism Shaped by Tutti Fratelli. Andrew Crowley explores Pope Francis' 2020 Encyclical, which uses a visit of St Francis to Sultan Malik-el-Kamil in Egypt as an example of confident speaking from within one faith to another.

Section D - Praxis

D1. Some Kingdom-based Thoughts of How we Speak to People from a Kingdom-based Paradigm when we First and Last Meet Them The Writing Group's composite pastoral ideas from one of our discussions. It covers ideas of how to broach the issue at initial contact, and how the paradigm informs our approach to death, including the delicate issue of how to support the non-believing dying relative of a believer.

D2. Parish Plan for Evangelisation by four parish members facilitated by Andrew Crowley: a comprehensive, ambitious, holistic strategy for reaching out into their community by a combined Catholic parish. It includes explicit speaking as well as doing.

D3. The Relationship Between Incarnational and Proclamational Mission by Glen Marshall is written for the Anabaptist Urban Expression network of Christians committed to incarnational living in tough, urban places.

D4. Kin'dom Prayer Walk Ideas by Erica Dunmow does what it says on the tin!

D5. Growing Good. Richard Atkinson considers the 2020 Church of England report on Growth and Social Action, and how it speaks into the Kingdom Evangelism paradigm.

D6. Using the 'space Inside and Outside the Building by Rachma Abbott, Paula Hollingsworth and Erica Dunmow looks at how a congregation can use its church space, inside and outside, to speak of, and with, people of the Kingdom.

Section E – People and Personal Viewpoints

E1. Four Stories. Kevin Ellis tells his own story as an evangelist who isn't Evangelical and of three people who are moving into relationship with Jesus within this paradigm.

E2. Testimony: A Caretaker's Story by S. G. A personal account of someone coming to faith through growing contact with her local church.

E3. Evangelism: Putting the 'E'-Word in its Place. Glen Marshall's take on how the Baptist tradition has fallen short in its model of evangelism in recent years. and we don't all necessarily agree or have experience of this.

E4. Living The Story. Becky Farrell shares her own return to faith through a more open understanding of God that spoke to her personal journey.

E5. Where does Evangelism fit into Discipleship? A polemical piece that Erica Dunmow sent around to a group of people, most of whom became the Writing Group.

Section F - Resources for Congregations

F1. A more condensed piece that can be used with local congregations (thanks to Holly Adams of the Methodist Church for her help with this).

F2. A Kingdom Evangelism Course for congregations and small groups.

Section G - Church and Kingdom

G1. Church and Kingdom. A longer piece by Stephen Platten reflecting on how this strand of evangelism has developed in relation to the ecclesiology of the Church of England, including its outworking in an ex-mining community in West Yorkshire.

Section H - Resources

A selection of further resources that we have enjoyed and found useful.



