

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.

Section A - Poems, Pictures and Prayers

This section has 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

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.

A2. St Hilda's, Jesmond Flower Festival 2018

Erica Dunmow

This was held as part of The Race for Life, the Bishops' Mission to the North East.

The snake crept unexpectedly
into people's hearts,
with glinting rose-hip eye.
Not quite done intentionally –
but it must have been a charmer
to lure Eve walking by!
Whether there were owls in Eden,
trees with apples or
even such a garden,
the blessing of a difference
by grapes and flowered-waters flow
was God's living pardon.

And runner beans rang
and young people sang;
there were scones and tea and mirth.
And St Hilda's folk
as they shared and spoke
were building God's kingdom on earth.



A3. Building the Kingdom

Becky Farrell



I am an artist and writer and the illustrator of this Pack. To contact me regarding Christian art and writing/blogging please email fh1art@gmail.com. My website, fh1art.com, is under construction. Please email me for updates on where you can see my art and resources.

Becky Farrell
Faith Hope Love Art

A4. Prayers

Gracious God,
we thank you for the witness of John of
Patmos
whom you inspired to challenge and
encourage the church.
We open ourselves to the liberating power
of the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
whose Spirit still works within and
amongst us
bidding us take heart and live out
your kingdom here and now. Amen
(Rev'd John A Young, Giffnock URC,
Scotland. 21st Century)

We beg you, Lord, to help and defend us.
Deliver the oppressed,
pity the insignificant,
raise the fallen,
show yourself to the needy,
heal the sick,
bring back those of your people who have
gone astray,
feed the hungry,
lift up the weak,
take off the prisoners' chains.
May every nation come to know that you
alone are God,
that Jesus Christ is your Child,
that we are your people,
the sheep that you pasture.
(Clement of Rome. 2nd Century)

Loving and Almighty God,
Who lived among us to declare that the
Kingdom was near;
May your Holy Spirit inspire and resource
us
to be faithful and fruitful in:
following Jesus,
living out justice and joy in our
communities,
shaping the reality of life in all its fulness
for all people,
and in encouraging others to become
Jesus-followers and kingdom-builders
too.
(Erica Dunmow. 21st Century)

Lead us, Lord, to the heart of your
kingdom;
to a destiny which embraces the cross,
to a way in which we lose ourselves,
to a mission tongued with fire
and to a life which reveals your glory;
through Christ our Lord, Amen.
(Toyohiko Kagawa. 20th Century)

Gracious and merciful God,
We give you thanks for the work of
reconciliation
through your Son, Jesus Christ,
that has been taking place in Rwanda
since the tragic genocide of 1994;
for every individual and group of people
you have raised up to help Rwanda be
reconciled again.
We pray for the complete healing of
Rwandans from their inner wounds by
your words;
for love to replace hate; generosity to
replace selfishness; concern to replace
indifference;
for Rwanda to be a caring family where
helpless people find help, and hopeless
ones find hope;
for the Church in Rwanda to be a sign of
your kingdom, where there are no
strangers, but everyone feels at home.
(Anastase Rugirangoga, Director, Peace-
building, Reconciliation and Healing
Programme, Rwanda. 21st Century. MPH
2012/13)

We give thanks for the development of
fresh worship and development resources.
We pray for your wisdom as the people
seek to use their resources to your glory;
for your love as they endeavour to care for
and to witness to those around them;
for faithful courage as they seek to
demonstrate the values of your kingdom.
(Jeremy Dare, Methodist Minister, 21st
Century. MPH 2012/3)
Jesus, is this what you say to us today?

How blest are those who abhor easy
 pieties; the kingdom of heaven is theirs...
 How blest are those who see enemies as
 human; mercy shall be shown to them.
 How blest are those who live what they
 profess; they shall see God.
 How blest are those who show outcast
 people that someone understands; the
 kingdom of heaven is theirs.
 (Peter Matheson, Christian Conference of
 Asia, 21st Century)

From your compassion help us to show
 love,
 from your grace help us to show mercy,
 from your power enable us to continue
 your ministry,
 from your revelation of the Father
 may you, in us, draw all people to him.
 Your will be done. Your Kingdom come.
 Amen
 (Peter Pillinger, Methodist Minister, 21st
 Century)

Dear Lord, we pray for things to come
 quickly:
 to hungry people, food;
 to weeping people, joy;
 to thirsty people, water
 to people living in war, peace
 to people in poverty, a truly human life.
 Give us patience to work for your
 kingdom.
 Give us hope, that we may not be weary
 proclaiming it.
 Give us vision to see your kingdom in the
 ordinary.
 Give us light to see the horizon where your
 kingdom is fully known,
 in Jesus Christ, Amen
 (Richard Teal, 21st Century)

Lord, you have called us to be a people of
 hope who offer a rescuing hand to people
 in dark places. Give us the courage to
 make ourselves vulnerable, in order that
 those we serve may come to know the
 light of your love.
 (Richard Hall, Methodist Minister, 21st
 Century)

Be to us Lord, the closest of our
 companions:
 may our lives spill out your kindness;
 may we be sensitive and courageous in
 speaking and being the good news of your
 Kingdom of justice and joy;
 may we be generous and open-hearted in
 sharing the treasure of forgiveness;
 that our words and deeds will encourage
 others to become followers of Jesus.
 (Erica Dunmow, 21st Century)



Lord God, may your church be as a
 violin's body,
 ready to resonate with the sounds of your
 Kingdom
 eager to have Jesus' fingers touch us to
 keep us in tune
 and longing to play the harmonies of your
 love
 so that all who have ears may hear.
 (Harvey Richardson, Methodist Minister,
 21st Century)

God of Compassion,
 in the mess we have made of your world
 we ask for your grace.
 God of Life,
 in our need for courage to take the risk of
 serving you
 we ask for your grace.
 God of all,
 in our darkest places and on our joyful
 mountain peaks,

fill us with your fire of truth and love,
that we may share our life with all the
world.
(Alison Tomlin, Methodist Minister, 21st
Century)

Good God, may we not be shy or
embarrassed about our faith;
May Jesus' words and vision give us new
heart.
Encouraged by your Holy Spirit let us be
people who speak with respect,
confidence and compassion;
as lights for celebration,
as beacons for hope,
as candles for sorrow,
as torch-bearers for justice,

and cat's eyes for the road of the
Kingdom.
(Erica Dunmow. 21st Century)

God our Saviour, your care for us has
neither measure nor end.
Help us to respond to your love in our
daily living;
to pray more fervently,
to share our faith more openly
and to seek first your Kingdom and its
righteousness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen
(Michael Townsend, 21st Century)

How you can take part in this work

1.

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 by 1 November for consideration by the Writing Group.

2. Seminar/support group

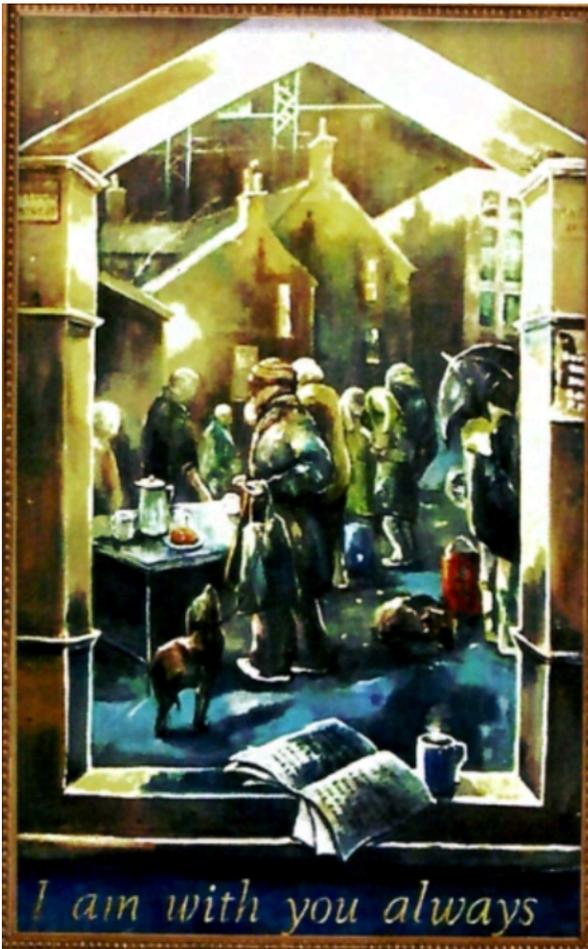
The Writing Group recognises that some ministers who come from this perspective can feel very isolated and/or frustrated that their understanding of what is Good News and how to share it is not valued by colleagues.

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 and help shape how this develops.

A5. The Sheffield Resurrection Octyche

Roz Norsworthy, 2008

Eight panels, each seven feet high, depicting the Easter and Kingdom story set within the outreach activities in Victoria Hall Methodist Church, Sheffield, and identifiable places around the city centre, using street-sleepers, service-users and residents as models.

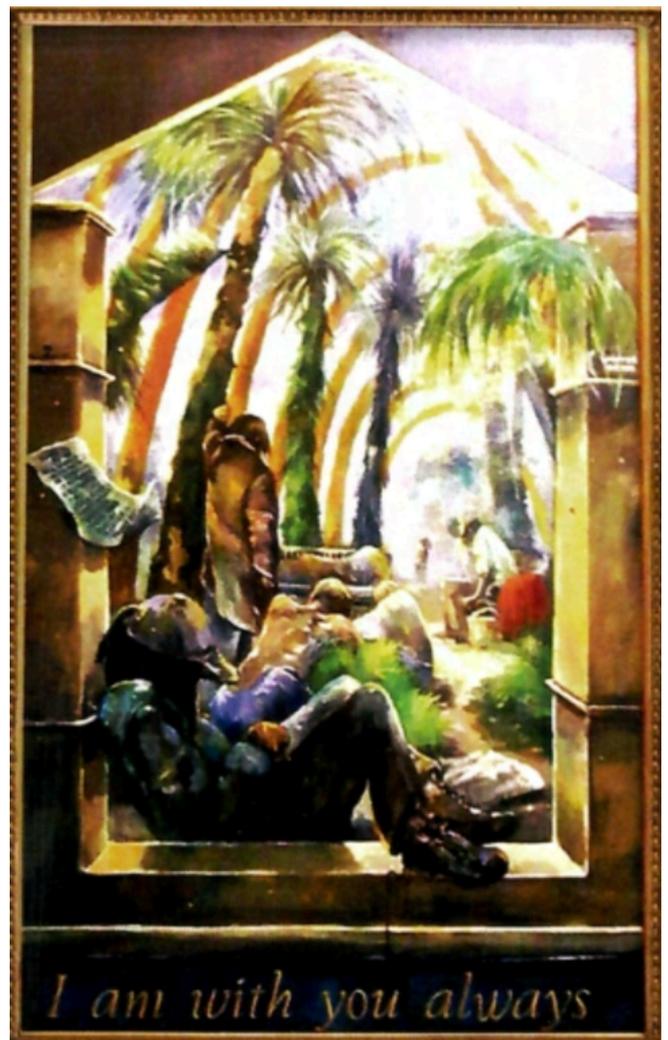


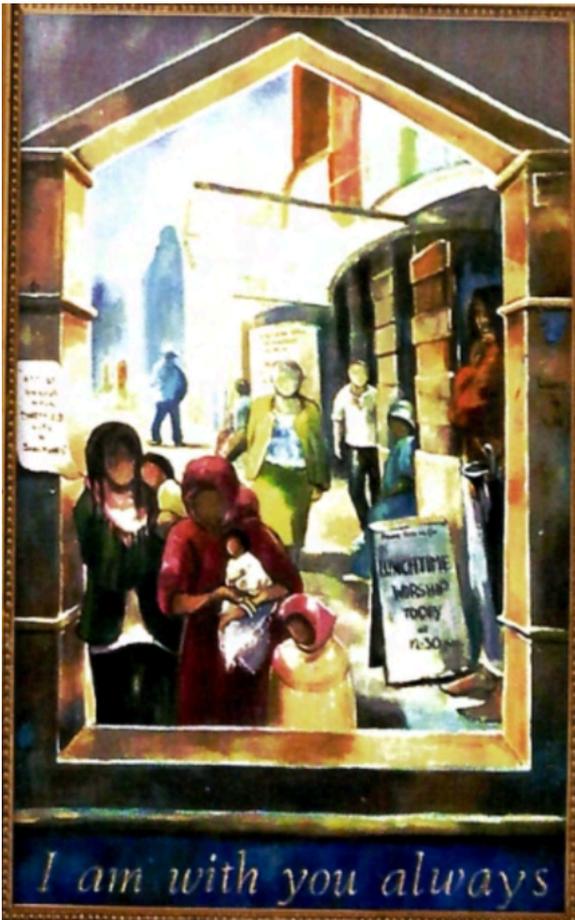
The Lord's Supper (Mark 14:22-26)

As Christ shared bread and wine with his disciples, so churches provide supper nightly at Eldon Street Cap Park off West Street. All who have need are welcome. It was a cold January night when I did the sketches for this. The notes at the bottom of the painting got worse as the year went on and the recession increased.

The Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:34-36)

I have set this painting in the Winter Garden. I used friends and family as models. I felt anguish myself when I painted this, more than the other works.





The Arrest (Mark 14:72)

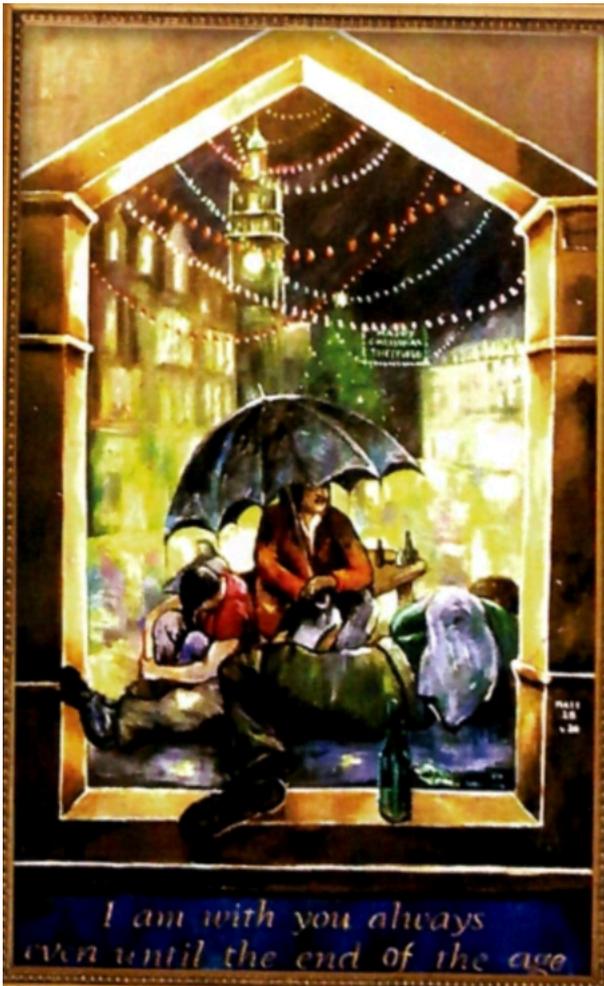
Set outside the City Hall. Peter remembered Christ's words and broke down and cried.

The Crucifixion

This is viewed from the Roman hill fort at the top of Wincobank Hill, showing the industrial Don valley. Hidden in the grass are dice thrown to see who would get Christ's robe.

Alongside is the crown of thorns. His scarlet robe, no longer needed, is hanging from the column. The sign above, written in Hebrew says ~King of the Jews"





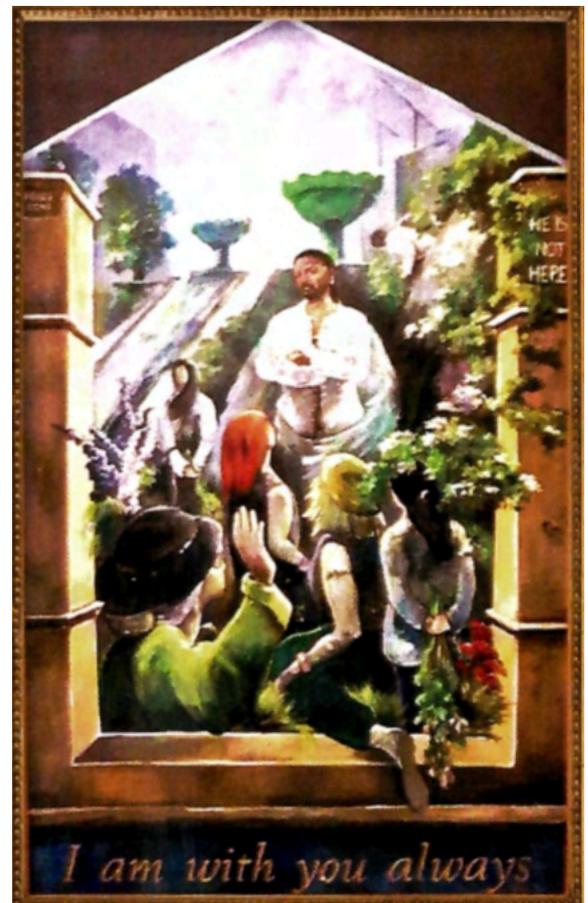
The Resurrection (Matthew 28:6)

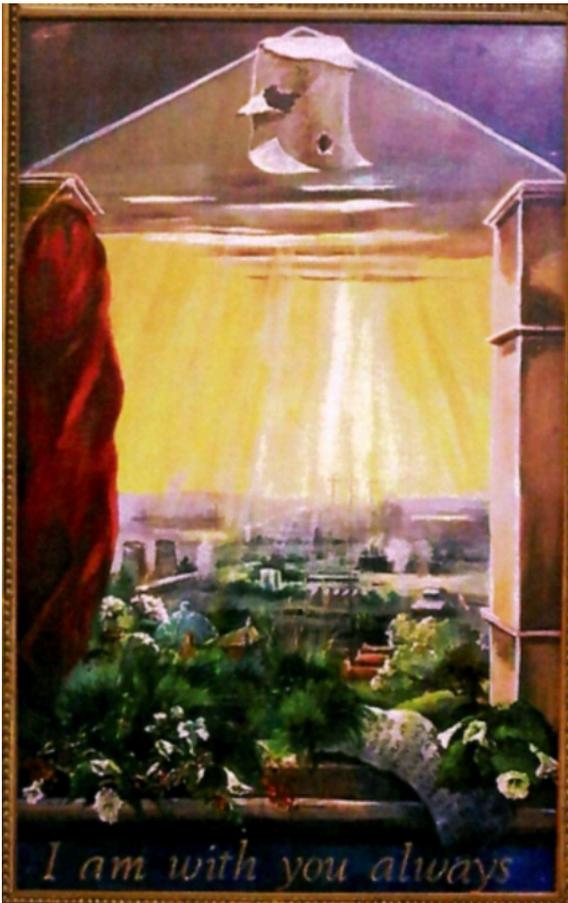
The tomb is depicted in the aptly named Peace Gardens. All the models for this, including the rather awesome angel, are members of my family. It was the women who had such faith.

The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13)

When Christ appeared he was not recognised. I have put him in the shadows outside Victoria Hall, wearing an orange jacket, and looking concerned at a homeless refugee family. Victoria Hall is home to ASSIST. In 2000 years some things have not changed. In the distance is a Big Issue seller.

Depicted in the Lower Hall of Victoria Hall, the Sunday Centre, staffed by volunteers, provides hot meals for guests who have need. Some of the faces are blank for those who did not wish to be identified.



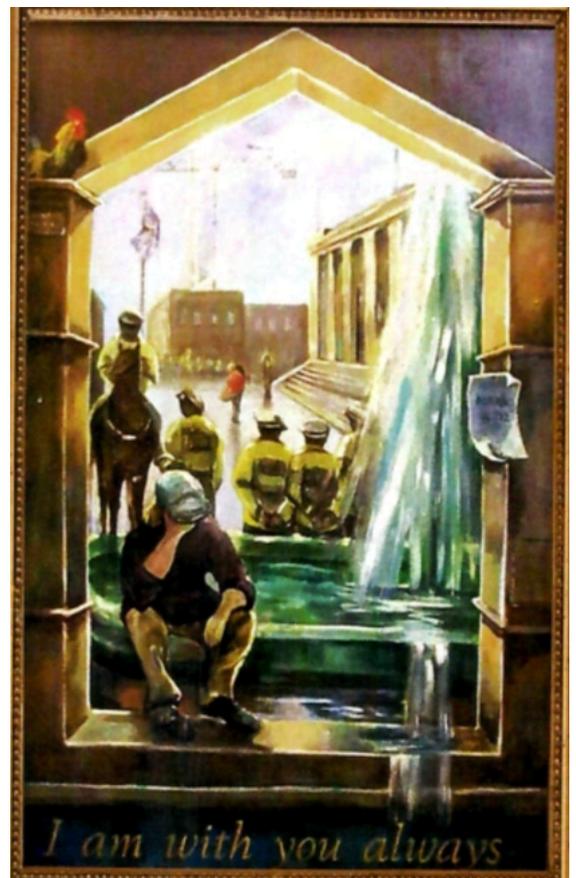


Peace be with you (Luke 24:36-43)

The gentleman on the left is spilling his tea, thinking that he has seen a ghost when Jesus shows him his hands. Note the fish Jesus ate with them. The dog, who usually has to stay outside for hygiene reasons, is happily sitting under the table, for with Christ all are welcome.

I will be with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20)

Christ's last words are depicted on Fargate at Christmas. He has now opened his umbrella to give protection to all. He is not an observer. He is with us and amongst us til the end of the age.



Section B - Biblical Sources and Theological Matters

This section covers an overview of the Biblical texts from which we derive the Kingdom paradigm, focussing mainly upon the Gospels. We also take a more thematic view of the Old Testament and the way that the early church seemed to be living out the Kingdom as derived from Paul's letters to the churches. There is some guidance on how Kingdom themes can be incorporated into sermons for the liturgical calendar, and a short Writing Group piece on how we understand the cross.

B1. The Biblical Sources for Kingdom Evangelism

Richard Firth and John Vincent with Erica Dunmow

The word Kingdom (basileia in Greek), which is key in much of Jesus' teaching, does not occur in the Old Testament. It means the rule or reign, or sovereignty, of God. It is characterised by the parallelism in the Lord's Prayer: Your Kingdom come Your will be done on earth, as in heaven.

However, the Old Testament does establish that God is a King, generally seen in an exclusive sense of being a King for the Israelite/Judean people, where God is their defender against other peoples and their gods.

1. THE OLD TESTAMENT

God in the Old Testament is described as King of Israel (Deut 33:25, Jdg 6:3, Is 43:15), whose throne of David is God's seat (II Chron 17:14, 28:5, 39:11).

The coming 'Day of the Lord' would re-establish Israel/Judah, and bring in a time of everlasting peace, of justice and mercy; which would also involve other nations (Amos 2:4-3:2). The prophets foresaw this 'Day of the Lord' (Jer 30:3, Ezek 37:15-72, Dan 2:44).



The nature of God's realm is usually seen in particular actions or activities which manifest God's presence, rather than in 'spiritual' attitudes. God is known to people by actions. The Torah is basically God's actions described, for human imitation.

The nature of God as King is explored in many places in the Psalms. They are written after the period when Israel itself had successfully petitioned God to have an anointed ruler who would lead, and to some extent have power over, people, as opposed to a judge who had wisdom to adjudicate between people.

The realm of God is seen as universal in many passages eg: Ps 8:1, Ps 22:28, Ps 26:1, Ps 47, Ps 96, Ps 99:1- 4, but also particular to the Israelites: eg: Ps 21, Ps 44:4-8, Ps 105, Ps 136. In terms of the Project's understanding we follow the inclusive and universal understanding of God's realm.

2. THE NEW TESTAMENT

Here the Kingdom concept is established as the core of Jesus' message. Jesus teaches in the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke that following Him involves completely forsaking a previous lifestyle and embarking upon a new way of being and living. Through living in that Way (the term that John's Gospel prefers to Kingdom) disciples are embodying God's realm.

3. THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Jesus' Work

Mark's Gospel opens: "Here begins the Good News of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God," and goes on: "Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the Good News of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come. Change yourselves, and trust yourselves to the Good News." (Mk 1:14)

The word 'Gospel' is a secular word used at the beginning of decrees of information, sent out by a Roman emperor. So here, Mark announces his divine proclamation of Jesus - the Messiah/Christ for the Jews and the Divine Son for the Gentiles.

Immediately, the actions of Jesus indicate his status and authority. He casts out demons, heals a leper, cures illnesses, and forgives sins - all of them divine activities (Mk 1:21-28).

Disciples

At the same time, Jesus begins to get together his 'troops', his fellow workers, his companions, his disciples. "Jesus said to them: Come with me, and I will make you fishers of people." (Mk 1:19). In Mark 2 the doors of discipleship are opened to tax collectors and sinners; Levi, son of Alphaeas, is called (Mk 2:14). "Many bad characters sat with him and his disciples - for they were numerous." (Mk 2:15).

The lines are clearly drawn - the 'Kingdom celebrators' on the one hand, and the doctors of the Law, who were Pharisees, on the other hand (Mk 2:15).

From this point, disciples become fellow-workers, co-healers, co-proclaimers. "He appointed twelve as his companions, whom he would send out to preach the Gospel, with a commission to drive out devils." (Mk 3:14-15).

When Jesus is 'alone', he has disciples with him (Mk 4:10). Nowhere is there any content for the preaching, either for Jesus or for the disciples. The reason is that in Mark's Gospel there is only one message - that of Mark 1:14: "Behold, the time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God has arrived. Change yourselves, and trust yourselves to the Good News."

Discipleship is thus identification with Jesus, going with him, doing what he does (healing, exorcism), saying what he says - the standard Kingdom proclamation.

The final commission in the disputed ending of this Gospel - Mark 16:15 "And [Jesus] said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation." - is a clear evangelistic injunction that has universal consequences. In becoming disciples,

people can respond to the Kingdom, just as they can with Jesus. Evangelism is the good news of God's realm and its presence is now available to all.

4. THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

At the same time as Mark was writing, around CE 66-69, (we give the dates because of references to the Jewish War of Independence, CE 65-70), we can imagine another group producing a different Gospel. They wanted to write not so much a Gospel of Action, like Mark, but rather to put together some of the Sayings of Jesus. We call their work Q (from German, Quelle), and it was the document which Luke and Matthew put beside Mark's Gospel and one or two unique pieces, as they wrote.

Luke's Gospel begins with poor people - priests working in the temple, Joseph and Mary, shepherds, old people, a prophet, the slaughtered children (Lk 1-2). Then John the Baptist appears (Lk 3:1). John announces the 'Good News' (Lk 3:18). Then Jesus, around thirty years old, begins his ministry with the temptations (Lk 3:23-4:13). Finally, Jesus returns to Galilee and declares in the synagogue:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Lk 4:18-19).

Luke's Gospel tells stories of how Jesus himself embodied actions that put all this into practice. Jesus is *autobasileia* - the Kingdom in himself (Origen, CE 250). The passage from which Jesus quoted was Isaiah 61:1-2. But the historical thread to which it gives witness is that of the Jubilee - the feast of every 49th year, as in Leviticus 25. The Jubilee Day declares:

- Release for each community member from debt (Lev 25:35-42)
- Return of appropriated or forfeited land to its original owners (25:13, 25-38)
- Freedom for any who had become slaves (27:47-55)

The result is a 'Jubilee Community'. "Blessed are the poor - the Kingdom of God is yours!" (Lk 6:20).



The conclusion is that the whole legislation of Leviticus 25 constitutes a striking challenge from the point of view of practice. Obvious problems are that slavery ends every seventh year, and that debt and land ownership reversals are possible under Sabbath rules.² What a place to begin Kingdom of God practice! The Kingdom is the Jubilee for all!

When the twelve disciples are sent out on the first, internal, evangelistic journey, their injunction was to "proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal." (Mark 6:7f). Right from the outset, the word and the deed meant that the Kingdom values were enacted and not just spoken. Likewise the seventy sent out as proclaimers for Jesus' work in the wider area (Luke 10:1-11) were instructed to give peace and to announce that the Kingdom is coming near to the towns, whether they were welcoming of the idea or not.

The words of Commission in Luke 24:47 are that "repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in {Jesus'} name to all nations", one of the passages that clearly points to

the worldwide rather than exclusively Israelite nature of the Kingdom, which compelled the first evangelistic diaspora of Christians.

5. MATTHEW’S GOSPEL AND THE KINGDOM PARABLES

See separate Study of the Kingdom Parables in Matthew’s Gospel by Andrew Crowley

6. THE JOHANNINE TRADITION

The Johannine tradition complements that of the Synoptics by describing the company of the disciples as part of His “flock”, that is the caring company of his disciples. Of himself as its shepherd Jesus says, “The sheep follow him because they know his voice.” (Jn. 10:4) “My sheep listen to my voice, I know them and they follow Me” (Jn 10:27). John’s Gospel also emphasises the Way of Jesus. Kingdom language is less explicit, but we can, by linking it with the Synoptic Gospels, see that The Way is the pattern of life that God as sovereign sets out for us to follow.

This following involves a life of service:

“Whoever wants to serve me must follow me, so that my servant will be with me where I am.” (Jn 12:26). This is illustrated by the incident of the foot-washing in the upper room: “I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you.” (Jn 13:15). Following also involves a life of obedience. In the Synoptics Matthew 28:21 links the making of disciples with the need for them to obey all that Jesus has commanded. This is expressed, presumably in the two great commandments: to love God with heart, soul, mind and strength and neighbour as oneself, coupled with the further rider to love those who are enemy. (Mk 12:28-31; Lk 10:27; Mt. 5:44), which is complemented by Jn 13:34, “Now I give you a new commandment; love one another”.

Obedience, in Christ’s mind and in the Kingdom of God, is successor to Old Testament expectations, those of obedience to the Ten Commandments and to the binding terms of the Covenant, in which a faithful God expects a consequent faithfulness and obedience from his people.

The establishment of the New Covenant in Christ’s blood, as initiated in the institution of the Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion) in the upper room, means that for disciples obedience is implicit in this new state of affairs. “And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples” (Jn 13:34f), words which express the inextricable link between following, obedience and evangelical witness and service.



For true disciples of Jesus, ‘Following’ also implies that there is a ‘Way’ to be followed. The Old Testament hope was that there would be a historical personage, as anticipated by Isaiah, whose ministry it was to prepare the way for the coming of One who was to be ‘The Way’. So John the Baptist announced: “Prepare the way of the Lord and level out the road for him to travel.” (Mk 1:3, Is 40:3-5). The Gospel writer then attributes an astounding claim to Jesus himself: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life”. (Jn 14:6).

7. OTHER VIEWS OF THE KINGDOM

As a very small footnote, it is worth remarking that Satan claims kingly power over all earthly kingdoms (Lk 4:5-6), and to being the ruler of the world (John 1:31, 14.30).

8. ACTS

The members of the Early Church were known as “followers of the Way” (Acts 9:2) for it was as such that Saul of Tarsus persecuted them. Other references substantiate the description (Acts 18:24f; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14) which persisted into the first few centuries of Church history.

‘Followers of the Way’ is still a valid descriptive phrase of Christians today. It expresses a truth born of experience in that ‘to follow’ involves both an initial decision of the will and then a determined persistence to continue on the path. The word ‘journey’ also comes to mind, that of progressing onwards through life, ever willing to learn through new insights and experiences, pressing on to that maturity of faith to which we are all called, whilst on the journey being a good neighbour to others in various aspects of Christian service and witness, joining in the struggle for justice, freedom and peace in the world at large.

Evangelism consists of inviting others to join in the journey, accepting them as they are, recognising and using their gifts as they are able to contribute, and involving them in the growth of the Kingdom of God, God’s Domain.

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 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 and help shape how this develops.

B2. A Review of the References to the kingdom in Matthew's Gospel

Andrew Crowley

METHODOLOGY

I read through Matthew's Gospel, taking note of the references to the word 'Kingdom'. My purpose was to get as broad a view as possible of the notion of the Kingdom, and to see if there was a bigger picture that we might miss if we only look at particular references or parables.

I noted all the references and at a later date reviewed them to identify any characteristics. I have listed the references below and against each have tried to summarise the key characteristic being portrayed. I have made a conclusion which may be helpful when we convey the Kingdom to others.

| Reference | Text | Characteristics |
|------------------|---|--|
| 3:2 | <i>Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is close at hand.</i> | It is near to us; accessible; not far away |
| 6:9 – 10 | <i>Our Father in heaven, may your name be held holy, your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven</i> | We yearn for it |
| 7:21 | <i>It is not the person who says Lord, Lord who will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father</i> | Open to <u>all</u> who do the will of the Father |
| 11:11 | <i>In truth I tell you, of all the children born to women, there has never been anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. Since John the Baptist came, after this present time, the Kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence taking it by storm.</i> | Prophetic |
| 12:25 | <i>Knowing what was in their minds he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is heading for ruin;"</i> | A warning |

| | | |
|----------|---|----------------------------------|
| 13:18 | <i>So pay attention to the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom without understanding it the evil one comes and carries off a person in his heart: this is the seed sown on the edge of the path.</i> | The Father's generous invitation |
| 13:24 | <i>He put another parable before them, "The Kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep his enemy came, sowed darnel among the wheat and made off</i> | Living in the world |
| 13:31 | <i>The Kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it is grown it is the biggest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air can come and shelter in its branches.</i> | Life giving |
| 13:33 | <i>The Kingdom of heaven is like yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour til it was leavened all through</i> | Contains a dynamic for life |
| 13:37-43 | <i>An explanation of parable of the darnel.</i> | |
| 13:44 | <i>The Kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in the field which someone has found</i> | To be discovered |
| 13:45 | <i>The Kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls</i> | To be longed for |
| 13:47 | <i>The Kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that is cast in the sea and brings in all kinds of fish</i> | For all people |
| 13:52 | <i>Every scribe who becomes a disciple of the Kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom new things as well as old</i> | Bigger than us; our vocation |

| | | |
|-------|--|---|
| 16:17 | <i>...and the gates of the underworld can never overpower it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven</i> | The church's responsibility for the Kingdom |
| 18:1 | <i>The disciples said, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" So he called the little child to him whom he sat among them. Then he said, "In truth I tell you unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. And so, the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven."</i> | Humility and trusting |
| 19:12 | <i>There are eunuchs who have made themselves so for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven.</i> | Radical lifestyle |
| 19:23 | <i>In truth I tell you, it is hard for someone rich to enter the Kingdom of heaven. Yes I tell you again it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone rich to enter the Kingdom of heaven</i> | Countercultural, becoming poor in spirit |
| 20:1 | <i>Now the Kingdom of heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard</i> | Generosity/Invitation/Life giving |
| 21 | <i>(The entrance into Jerusalem.) Look your King is approaching humble and riding on a donkey.</i> | Jesus as King |
| 21:43 | <i>I tell you then that the Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to people who will produce its fruit</i> | Fruitful/Life giving |
| 22:1 | <i>Jesus began to speak to them in parables. "Again the Kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who have been invited, but they would not come</i> | Invitation for all |

| | | |
|-------|---|--|
| 23:13 | <i>Alas for you, Scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You shut up the Kingdom of Heaven in people's faces, neither going in yourselves not allowing others to go in who want to</i> | A warning for church leaders and ministers! |
| 25:1f | <i>The Kingdom of heaven will be like this: Ten wedding attendants took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom ...</i> | Be alert to the signs and possibilities |
| 25:31 | <i>When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by his angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory ...</i> | The way to salvation for ourselves by what we do, <u>and</u> for the the world in the way it treats Christians |

COMMENTS

The Kingdom references suggest that there is a range of different characteristics:

- The Kingdom is close, and we are all invited to it.
- The Kingdom is life-giving and dynamic.
- The Kingdom is open to all.
- The Kingdom is something we yearn for, that will satisfy our hearts.
- The Kingdom is demanding of us.
- Being in the Kingdom requires a new way of living, of being prophetic, humble, and poor in spirit.
- The Kingdom places a big responsibility on us.
- The Kingdom is not ours, it belongs to the Father.

I was struck by the opening of Chapter 21 (entry into Jerusalem). At first sight this did not seem to convey much about Kingdom, but later on it became clear that this was a powerful image of the Kingdom (an echo of Zechariah 9:9). Jesus is portrayed as the King, entering Jerusalem in meekness, heralding peace, a servant to all, faithful to his Father, ushering in a Kingdom of joy and peace. If this is what his Kingdom looks like, how do we convey this to others?

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

B3. Thematic Old Testament Resources for Kingdom Evangelism

Rachma Abbott

Christian missional focus tends to draw on New Testament resources. The Hebrew Scriptures are the greater proportion of our bibles and they were sufficient to prepare the way to Jesus both as spiritual resource, guide to ethical living and writings of the promise of God. However, Christians, even long-serving faithful members of churches, can often lack confidence in the articulation of their own spiritual lives of faith and in their bible knowledge.

I hope this piece might help people see that the “Old” Testament provides foundations, depth and support to a richer understanding and usage of the New(er) Testament and for our own writing of our lives, by the grace and gift of the Holy Spirit into the currently being written testaments of faith.

This is a very swift and erratic drone flight across the riches and resources of the Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament to see:

1. Awareness of what and where there might be scriptural resources for Kingdom Evangelism
2. Broader arcs of meaning (metanarratives) that might be a support to Kingdom Evangelism
3. Challenges that the Old Testament poses for us and ways of looking at this.

1. AWARENESS

Within the Christian tradition of many church members, the Old Testament comes closest to being a natural part of their worshipping inheritance. Through stories of individuals, predominantly among the narratives of the patriarchs in Genesis and Exodus; through a sense of the fulfilment of prophetic voices, in particular Isaiah, not least in the liturgies of Advent and Handel’s Messiah; through the Book of Psalms, especially as they have been influential on our hymns, songs and prayers. Isaiah is sometimes referred to as the Fifth Gospel and plays a role as the foundational scripture for Jesus’ Nazareth Manifesto and the Psalms are the most quoted and referenced part of New Testament writings.

This has often been influenced by fragmented telling and retelling of stories of individuals within Sunday Schools, Open the Book, musicals, cinema, etc. Fragmented because the offering of these stories for children means they often lose aspects that add ambiguity to these stories of the heroes of the faith.

Noah’s ark and its rainbow is often a story that children and adults know (sometimes unaware that it is a biblical narrative) but the complex legacy of the stories after the flood with Ham and Canaan and the use and misuse of alcohol does not, as far as I know, exist in picture book format.

Moses begins in the basket of bullrushes and leads the people of Israel from slavery to freedom, but we hear less often of his murder of the Egyptian or of his willingness to work with people from other religious traditions to explore how to serve people well. David's story is almost always the story of David and Goliath, not of David and Absalom, even less often of David and Tamar or Abigail.

The place of these stories in religious education in schools, and the reminder that many of these stories are shared in some form with Jews and Muslims, offers a resource in multiple ways. They can be the beginning of conversations of presence and engagement. They remind us that, dramatic as the differences that may have arisen, there is a shared foundation which can assist us in shared community work.

A long-held aspect of mission that still has worth and value has been the testimony of individuals' faith journeys. Biblical stories of faith heroes give a context for the



interweaving of our own faith stories. The more complicated aspects can offer enrichment and a reminder that God works with the failing as well as the holy hero, often in the same person. As we learn less familiar narratives of escape from oppression and freedom in God we can find that they speak into modern contexts of the possibilities and places of redemption. Jael and Sisera, within the narratives of Deborah in Judges, offer powerful ways to speak of God in action in a situation of sexual exploitation and domestic

abuse. The uncomfortable stories many can offer people a place in which their experiences, which may feel unspeakable, are shown to be joined into the narrative of God's ongoing working out of compassion and judgement with mercy and transformation.

It is worth noticing that many stories in the Old Testament show God working with individuals and cultural contexts that are not those of the people of Israel – Joseph works with the frameworks of Pharaonic Egypt for the betterment of the people of Israel as well as the tribes of Jacob. Moses works with the Midianite priest Jethro. Daniel works with the rules of Babylon in the Exile. This should encourage us in activities around justice and community engagement that God works with people outside of the faith community, and we should too. This includes living out our lives of faith with and for people of other faith and cultural habits and practices – the promise of Jubilee, practises of using garments as surety and celebrations are clearly mandated to include slaves and sojourners i.e. outsiders as well as insiders. Inclusion in mission is often seen as starting with the Ethiopian eunuch – the narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures show us that people who remain outside of the faith are inside God's loving purposes, including God's loving purposes for his people.

2. BROADER AREAS OF MEANING AND NARRATIVE

Kingdom

What does the Kingdom look like? In the New(er) Testament, the new heaven and the new earth crystallise in a heavenly city. In the Old(er), but still current for Christian faith, Hebrew Scriptures the new heaven and the new earth are expressed in images of

abundant agricultural growth and harvest and the promise that those who plant will get to enjoy their fruit (Isaiah 55:1-54, Isaiah 65:17-25). This is alongside the peaceable kingdom where wolves and lambs lie down or feed together and the snake's poison can no longer injure a small child (Isaiah 11:6-9, Isaiah 65:25 and by contrast in Isaiah 5).

Kingdom as a single word may not be easily found in the Hebrew writings of the Old Testament but concepts that enrich our understanding of what this might mean are underpinned within these scriptures. Ideas such as the anointed one (messiah); the narrative arc of Davidic kingship including the implicit criticism of those who choose kingship like other peoples in the kingship story of Saul; and in the place and promise of land.

There is an additional depth to these ideas in the metaphorical uses of the Shepherd, closely linked to political and religious power and leadership in both Jewish and Christian traditions. For Christians this is deepened in the rich ambiguity of a Jesus who is both Shepherd and sacrificial lamb (Isaiah 53:4-7; Psalm 23; John 10).

Call and Task for the whole community

The narrative of Abram begins with God's call – a call that leads to change, physical journeying alongside spiritual and faith transformation and a place where the promise can be fulfilled. Samuel's call happens within the religious context but comes from beyond the religious leadership. Although Samuel needs Eli's support with discernment, the vocation to mission and evangelism is God's call. As in Isaiah, it begins with a message of challenge to religious and political authority that is hard. For both Abraham and Samuel there are times when others play a role which may be supportive or otherwise (Hannah, Hagar, Sarah) and when outsiders may provide the nudge which moves us back into line with God's path (e.g. Abram, Sarai, Pharaoh).

Alongside call and task for individuals, the Hebrew scriptures remind us time and again that there is a collective and communal nature to vocation. The vocation to freedom during the years in the wilderness makes clear that there is difference in understanding where God is, or even that God is in these experiences. There is no suggestion that Moses should stop working with the people – even though he sometimes finds that possibility appealing!

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. These narratives may encourage us to live and work with people without expecting a complete unity of purpose – Sarai laughs but provides the meal. Hagar sees God even in her exclusion. Hannah's fulfilment is in letting go of Samuel so he can travel his own journey.

Prophetic Lives of Holiness

Throughout the writings of the prophets there is a reminder that our lives need to be lived as people who work to overturn injustice, and who do not use the patterns and rituals of our faith to evade the need to care for widows and orphans over our religious respectability. There is in Amos a reminder of the gifts of those who haven't been 'bred for' religious leadership. There is a willingness to offer hard truths to insiders about the failure to lead lives of commitment to God. Although our activity in seeking and working

for justice for the poor 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 of hierarchies and established practices – it is a radical reordering of how we know things to be. The danger implicit in wolves and leopards should encourage us to be engaging with whatever might be profoundly other to us. There is a radical inclusivity in these images.



3. CHALLENGES

Separation or inclusion

The Hebrew Scriptures offer an ongoing challenge to our tendency to either/or polarities – in the beginning God made the heavens and the earth. Western Christianity has often postulated these as opposites - heaven v earth - but the Hebrew pattern in language terms has used pairings of opposites to emphasise inclusion and totality. God’s making of the heavens and the earth is not the creation of two destinations for the human being but a reminder that all was under the sovereignty of God. Christian evangelism has sometimes majored on sin and forgiveness – Kingdom evangelism will need to recover the language of original goodness from our readings of Genesis, and to notice the radical nature of this in the context of a people who have in exile encountered Babylonian and Sumerian creation stories, and chosen not battle but unity and inclusion as the model for expressing their understanding of God.

I think that in Genesis there is a similar parallel that can be drawn from a translation of Genesis 1:27 as “male and female created they it” that recognises that there was a similar unity in the human creature, encompassing rather than polarising gender and sexuality.

Our surroundings

Images of a new heaven and a new earth in the New Testament also speak of a city, a new Jerusalem. The imagery and narratives of Zion and Jerusalem are rich and complex in the Hebrew Scriptures. The poet William Blake imagines his Jerusalem as a contrast between the dark satanic mills and the green and pleasant land. The idea of pastoral idyll is still a deeply held mythology in the cultural life of this nation.

What might both a new and old heaven and earth offer Kingdom evangelism? Are there ways in which Kingdom grows from ideas about the nature of the land?

During Covid-19 the place of outdoor access has been shown to have mental and physical health benefits, has been the place of encounter when indoors has not been accessible to people, and the spaces of freedom and stretch for those in urban constraint.

Issues around the environment/creation continue to be important aspects of shared action for justice and the imperfect betterment of our current situations. Land use relates to housing as well as green spaces. The place of food (food banks, feasting, coffee mornings, interfaith gatherings such as iftar meals, harvest suppers) is profoundly

connected to land. In many rural settings, access will require a new movement to give fair access to footpaths, as in the past on Kinder Scout.

Making choices

Throughout Exodus, and implicit in the writings of the prophets, is a call to choose. If we believe our own choices of faith have shaped us, there is a balance to be found in respecting individual pathways, that may include other and no faith choices, with offering opportunities to choose and follow Jesus.



The biblical injunction in the Hebrew Scriptures is always to ‘choose life’: an important key to Kingdom evangelism is to offer life as the choice, rather than death as the outcome of failing to choose what we offer. The perpetual reoffering, in the Old Testament narratives, of further and deeper ways to redeem failure and offer the choice of life afresh, should energise us to work actively but with patience, and allow choices to be regularly offered and repeatedly rejected without losing heart in either the value of the offer or the value of continuing to work with those who may be other from our perspectives of faith.

B4. Location, Location, Listening and Learning: New Testament Letters to Communities

Rachma Abbott

The focus of this section is on the lessons that might be found for Kingdom Evangelism from listening to 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. Can we learn how to enact and proclaim Kingdom Evangelism from considering the communities who received these letters, and does this help us to imagine what Kingdom Evangelism might look like in our local contexts, delivered and received by and among us?

I am indebted to my Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible for some of the background I offer here. I am reading scripture as a parish-based priest (Church of England, currently rural), and so as a practitioner who is committed to the importance of mission as a local, context driven activity. For biblical scholarship and detail on the disagreements and discussions within these letters you will need to go elsewhere!

In terms of Kingdom Evangelism and the calling to missional proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ, the letters offer a glimpse of diverse and distinctive Christian communities in development. None of these communities could, in those early days, be considered established or institutional churches. Place, ethnicity, faith, class, and culture provide context to the issues that Paul and the other evangelists found. The letters' specific application to particular communities should encourage us to develop evangelism and respond to what is local and specific in our own contexts.

It can be useful to remind ourselves that the order of these places in a bible contents page is often the reverse of the order of the missionary journeys that Paul undertook, and which gave him reason to write to them. I have, for convenience, tackled them in their NRSV biblical order.



When the letters were written all of these communities were new, small and developing in terms of Christian identity, many were house churches – an encouragement for anyone facing small, fragile projects, or working with people in the early stages of discipleship or on the fringes of faith and encounter with God. For this reason, I have referred to them as Jesus followers, rather than as Christians.

1. ROME AND THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

The letter to the Romans was sent in advance of Paul's arrival there, and so was to a community he knew by repute/hearsay. It was of course the capital city and seat of the Empire, but this community was very much on the fringes of political and economic power.

Many of the Jesus followers had been within the Jewish communities of Rome. Disputes between groups of Jews including disputes about Jesus (but probably, given the differences between Pharisees and Sadducees in the biblical record, about much else as well) led to the emperor Claudius expelling the Jews from Rome, some of whom, including Priscilla and Aquila, later returned after significant encounters with groups of Jesus followers elsewhere. The Jesus followers that remained in Rome were therefore newer to an encounter with the stories of Jesus, and may not all have had experience of, or familiarity with, the Hebrew scriptures and Jewish traditions of monotheism, dietary practice, etc. The challenge of those called to lead communities (who were still relatively new Jesus followers themselves) and then to integrate the returnees, led to disputes about relationships.

The integration of these groups gives a context of change, perhaps in worship as well as in culture, that may be very familiar to us. Economic and other aspects of insecurity, the experience of migration, the nostalgia for return, coupled with the discovery that the church and its community are not as they remembered, and the reminder that these communities remained on the fringes of the 'Rome' of power (although impacted by the decisions of Emperors), made for psychological fragility and fractiousness.

The challenge of balancing evangelism with a church forming cultural groupings that can easily become factions, of pastoral care for both new members and old stalwarts, and the legacy of the impact of the decisions of a distant government on a local people are not unknown contexts for our own day. The several house churches implied in this letter may hearten those juggling ecumenical or multiple church settings now. Paul's challenge to the weak and the strong in this letter has this context.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What issues of both new and established connections impact the proclamation of the Good News in your context?
2. Where are strengths and weaknesses in your congregation? (You might consider this in terms of newness to faith, the neighbourhood or connections to power and wealth).
3. How might "good news" be different for migrant communities, returning residents, or for those 'pushed out' of community in your location?
4. How can you support young (whether in faith commitment, knowledge, or age) leaders to be nurtured and enabled? Is this always at the expense of elders?

2. CORINTH AND TWO LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIANS

Corinth was reputed to be the richest port and the largest city as well as the capital of its province. It was possible for some to achieve significant wealth and social mobility.

The seaside city and gateway to trade was also known to be a place of sex workers, migration and blocks of flats filled with the poor who included escaped and freed slaves. No doubt, as in the seaside towns of our own context (such as Blackpool, Morecambe, Penzance, Brighton), for some, work was seasonal, open to exploitation, and poorly paid. For others, the city was a place of leisure, recreation and the ease of being away from the constraints of home. The gulf between the successful, well educated, the newly wealthy, and those from the "other side of the harbour" offered both resource, opportunity, and potential for growth and for conflict. Some of the negative descriptions of Corinth in terms

of sexual behaviour may have been influenced by regional prejudices or stereotypes. The reality that the Jesus followers could only meet together in homes that belonged to the wealthy may have kept the contrast and challenge of their diversity highly visible as they learned to live and worship together.

These letters are clearly written to multiple groupings and are responses to failures and breakdowns in relating together. The letters also hold three of the most powerful and well known of Paul's calls to how to proclaim the good news:

1. The cross (1 Corinthians 1) is presented as a complex and difficult issue to understand: folly to Jesus followers among the Gentile, predominantly Greek, communities; a stumbling block to Jesus followers of Jewish communities; and as something which, transformed by vocation, faith and the experience of spiritual/mystical encounter, can have a profoundly transformative and different impact on people.
2. The body, both its gifting and its brokenness, as the gathering of Jesus followers and its perfection in the resurrection body of Jesus himself (1 Cor 12).
3. The primacy of Love as the focus for proclaiming the good news (1 Cor 13).

Among the ideas about how people come to faith is a sequence of 'belong, believe, behave'. It may be worth noting that the dispersed groups of Jesus followers in Corinth are all treated as if belonging and believing can be taken for granted (although with some matters to reflect on – such as Chloe's people/'I belong to Apollos', etc), and the focus is on how they can behave across their diversity in worship, background, economic status, ethnicity etc in order to share and experience their gifts together.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. If proclaiming the good news should be spoken from love, then relationship is key to earning permission to speak about Jesus. Where in your context do relationships need to be repaired, built, or enabled, so that love can be the driving force for evangelism?
2. Note: ideas around relationship may be a useful reminder why for some people it is important to speak not only of Kingdom, but also of kin'dom (in addition to its referents in feminist theologies).
3. Across the Jesus followers of Corinth there are groupings living very different lives and worshipping in a variety of ways – this isn't always easy. How can you work with difference within Jesus followers in your context to live out the good news for your communities?
4. Where do different groups in your community sit on the 'belong, believe, behave' spectrum? How does this affect the way in which you share the Gospel with them?

3. GALATIA AND THEIR LETTER

It seems that the Jesus followers in Galatia (modern day Turkey) were predominantly from pagan backgrounds (Galatians 4:8), and the letter was written in response to the arrival or presence of Jesus followers from Jewish backgrounds, who were desiring conformity to Jewish practices, specifically circumcision. The letter's beautiful and most well-known

passages (Galatians 3:25ff; Galatians 5:21) have an emphasis on freedom, the Holy Spirit and faith as a gift which should not be undermined by coercion around cultural practices.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What work on racial justice, cultural awareness and self-awareness (about our own prejudices in those seeking to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ) might be influenced helpfully by the reminder that Paul desires the Jesus followers in Galatia to be freed from cultural impositions of practice, tradition and the customs of different Jewish backgrounds?
2. It is worth noting that the Galatian Jesus followers need to be encouraged to have confidence in their own faith, giftings and vocations. Do those from UKME/ GMH/ BAME* in your context need to be doubly encouraged to share these gifts, especially if they feel vulnerable to culture oppression?

4. EPHESUS, PHILIPPI, COLOSSAE: THREE LETTERS

I have taken these three letters together for two main reasons – some scholars suggest these weren't written by Paul himself, but if so, all three were written by him from a place of imprisonment or (in the letter to Colossians) 'suffering'. The fact that when he wrote these letters, Paul's travelling ministry of evangelism was constrained, offers a possible explanation of the change in tone.

Ephesus was famously a place of significant craft and skill in the production of sculpture and idols. Colossae is about one hundred miles to the east of Ephesus.

The two cities seem to have been places of pilgrimage, trade and mixed populations in terms of ethnicity and culture, although Colossae was no longer as wealthy and successful as it had been. By contrast Philippi, in Macedonia, was the first community of Jesus followers that Paul established in Europe. All three communities seem to have been primarily gentile in culture, although the cultures of each city would not have been the same. All three of these letters seem rooted in gratitude for the faith of these communities and to highlight Paul's prayer – praise and constant intercession are hallmarks of the opening chapters of each letter. There is also a shift to a more public encouragement of those who are exercising leadership and sharing in the proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom of God, e.g. Philippians 4:2ff, Colossians 4:15ff, Ephesians 6:10ff. All three letters have liturgical and/or theological content: Ephesians (throughout), Philippians, most famously in chapter 2, and Colossians in 1:15-20 and Chapter 3.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Paul's time in prison seems to have given him space for depth and reflection in both intercession and theological teaching in these letters. What space do you give to intercession as part of your proclamation of the good news in your setting, and where might there be a need or an opportunity to teach aspects of the faith such as the incarnation?
2. Are you developing new leaders from a range of backgrounds, ethnicities and cultures to sustain the work of proclamation of the good news?

5. THESSALONICA AND TWO CHURCHES

Thessalonica was a large Roman city, capital of the province of Macedonia. It was significant for both its Balkan trade routes and Mediterranean Sea routes. The Jesus followers were predominantly Greek hand workers and tradespeople: “the lack of reference to slaves or slave owners indicate a congregation of predominantly of low but free social standing (Robert K Jewett on the letter in Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible editors James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson, a book to which I am generally indebted). Paul both asks for economic support for this community of Jesus followers and encourages others not to belittle those who work with their hands, 1 Thess 5:12. It may be that these concerns for both financial help and respect for working people are useful reminders to us that social justice is a necessary element of proclamation of the good news. Paul’s own experience of handwork (2 Thess 3:7) gives encouragement to those in voluntary and self-supporting ministries and should encourage institutional churches to recognise and encourage vocations both from and within such communities.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Paul’s letters to the Thessalonians speak clearly about end times and the second coming of Jesus. What impact does the urgency of the evangelistic task shown here have on your own work?
2. Are there similarities or differences in the communities that are poor or hand workers in your own context? What work might you be called to do alongside them as part of proclamation?

The remaining New Testament letters both the Pastoral Epistles and those named for other senders are not covered in this article. The writing group hope to add resources to this over time.

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

B5. The Faithfulness of Jesus

Richard Atkinson

Steve Chalke’s recent book, *The Lost Message of Paul*¹ invites the reader to hear afresh the voice of St Paul. Open about the fact that he is drawing on the writings and insights of others, Chalke uses their material to debunk Paul as “the author of structural social inclusion”. Instead, he describes Paul as “a revolutionary who saw a new inclusive world dawning and gave his life to help bring it in”².

Asking us to scrape away the accretions of Christian history and scholarship over the centuries that have hidden and distorted the words of this first century Jew, and to revisit the original texts, Chalke revisits several central Pauline themes. For instance, the ‘Wrath of God’ is not about God ferociously angry at the sin of humankind, but rather a Biblical revelation of a God “who is taken aback, troubled, pained and broken with sorrow by our rebellion and rejection of his ways”³. It is the God of love who knows the cost of loving us, as so brilliantly expressed in William Vanstone’s hymn,

‘Morning Glory, starlit sky’:
Open are the gifts of God,
gifts of love to mind and sense;
hidden is love’s agony,
love’s endeavour, love’s expense.”⁴

But amidst the revisiting of original sin, the meaning of the cross, the nature of salvation and so much more, each re-examined against the belief that God is love, there is one theme that stands out as we explore the relationship of evangelism and the Kingdom. It is what is meant and implied by the word *pistis*.

Traditionally in many churches the translation has been ‘faith’. The reference is to our faith in God, that essential precursor to salvation. Saved ‘by faith alone’ salvation is, in part, what we do. “It all boils down to your ability to believe; to muster the right thoughts, enough of the right thoughts, and with the right intensity”⁵. This, suggests Chalke, is a mistaken translation.



Building on the insights of E P Sanders and others, Chalke invites us to translate *pistis* as ‘faithfulness’. Referring, for instance, to Romans 3:21-22, he notes that even Tyndale, despite his backing for so many aspects of the theology of Luther and others who made ‘faith’ paramount, translated *pistis Christou* as ‘the faith of Jesus Christ’ rather than

‘faith in Christ’. A similar issue of translation exists with Philippians 3:9, which in the King James Version is translated as “through the faith of Christ” rather than ‘through faith in Christ’. He refers to Tom Wright’s assessment “When Paul speaks in Galatians and Romans of *pistis Christou*, he normally intends to denote the faithfulness of the Messiah

to the purposes of God rather than the faith by which Jew and Gentile alike believe the gospel ...”⁶.

For Chalke this ‘changes everything’. “If *pistis* is ‘faithfulness’, it is of a different nature from ‘faith’. It is a firm commitment to a narrative or story in which you live – whatever you may feel or believe at any particular moment in time”⁷.

The story is now about the faithfulness of Christ. His willingness to live a life of love, of sacrifice, of obedience, whatever the cost. It is about the crucified and risen Lord. It is the gospel invitation to walk with Christ, to take our cross and follow, always knowing that whatever our doubt and times of faithlessness, God remains faithful in his love for us.

For our theme of Kingdom and evangelism, it asserts that what is the heart of discipleship is God’s love for us, that love that is so beautifully described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 and elsewhere, and our readiness to live within that faithfulness and to invite others to journey with us. The self-giving love that is the essence of the topsy-turvy Kingdom of God, is the discipleship we are to inhabit. As Chalke summarises, ‘Biblical ‘faith’ is not an intellectual assent to a concept, a commitment to a set of doctrines and theories, or a mystical sense of peace and well-being. Instead it is a risky commitment to a radical way of living; a call to action, a way of walking, a summons to loyalty and allegiance. This, only this, is *pistis*.’”⁸

Introducing this exploration of the nature of *pistis*, Chalke refers to the life of Anjezë Bojaxhiu. Better known as Mother Teresa of Calcutta, she was, in her lifetime, the epitome of Christian faith and service. After her death, much of her private correspondence emerged, which revealed that for fifty years she had struggled with faith, often feeling cut off from God. At times, she even doubted the existence of God. For some, this suggested she was a fraud, for others, more importantly, this reflected her journey with Christ, a Lord who was eternally faithful to her in his love. Were it a matter of her ‘faith’, then it is a sad situation, but under the ‘faithfulness’ of Jesus she was able to live faithfully. She contributed to the Kingdom and certainly invited others to walk the Way.

Towards the very end of the book, Steve Chalke writes of how we are to collaborate in the extension of the Kingdom. It is not, he says, that we are waiting for God to act, but rather that the faithful God is waiting for us to collaborate in the agenda of righteousness and justice. The ‘faithfulness’ of God, the *pistis* of Christ, puts the Kingdom right at the heart of all we do, not least inviting others to walk with us in faith and discipleship.

B6. Kin'dom-based Seasonal Themes for Speaking Good News, and Sermon Points

Erica Dunmow

The way the following seasonal themes have been approached is to search for those elements that:

- speak of hope and joy
- give a message that will lift up people who feel lowly
- give a sense of possibility to people who feel powerless
- are included as forgiven agents as well as recipients of the Kingdom and are sisters and brothers in and to Christ.

This is fed by a prayerful engagement with the Biblical text – searching, through the Holy Spirit, for what reflects the God I love and trust as a bringer of justice and reconciliation to Godself and between humanity. Occasionally they derive from renewed study of the language of the text where a traditional reading leads to something that is oppressive. Sometimes they stem from the learning of scholars and sometimes from discussion and reflection over the years.

As most of this has been done as a practitioner, there has been little noting of sources along the way, so I both give thanks to those whose work I have built upon, and apologise that they are not properly acknowledged.

1. ADVENT

If you follow the traditional pattern for the Sundays in Advent, there are lots of good kin'dom readings and points of connection with the themes. There are usually several good Advent campaigns by charities and other networks that can be supported as an accompaniment to a daily Advent calendar window, which can speak into the kin'dom of justice.

The people of God

This week focuses on how we as the people of God engage with the world around us in service and in peace and justice issues. The Exodus narrative of liberation is helpful. This sort of theme can draw in people who themselves have a concern for the common good.

The prophets

There are lots of kin'dom themes throughout the Prophets, and it is good to pick up on the images of God which demonstrate the nature of Jesus' reign – he is a wonderful counsellor, not a controlling dictator, a Prince of Peace and not a mighty warrior.

John the Baptist

The metanoia – repentance – John calls for is actually a turning of direction of travel for one's life to face the way that is kin'dom congruent and Christ accompanying. As well as personal behaviour, this can be the collective behaviour of the congregation, to urge a more outward facing, social holiness and faith-sharing approach.



Mary

Preach on the Magnificat in Luke: Mary is not just a passive bearer of God-with-us but an active participant in the kin'dom enterprise which is one of empowerment and subversion of the order based on greed and selfishness. A parallel can be drawn between other significant leaders and the influence of female nurturers in their political and theological upbringing.

There is also the theme of the trustworthiness of humanity to encompass and carry God in vulnerability.

2. CHRISTMAS

The key theme here is that of incarnation: God's self-emptying to become as divine as can be in a human being. This is again about trusting human processes, and in pretty inauspicious circumstances.

The Christmas Eve Evening Service can be a good one to reflect on how God makes good and can transform apparently messy and chaotic circumstances. This can chime with the lives of those who feel hopeless. Mary would not have planned the birth to take place in such a way – we do not know whether she was able to pack whatever she had laid aside for the new-born, and she would be missing her cousin Elizabeth and probably there was no birth support woman present either. But despite all the messiness of human reality the child is born, the angels do sing, the shepherds do come.

The disreputability of 1st century Palestinian shepherds is much better known now, but always worth stressing – it can be the poorest and neediest people who are first to respond to the needs of others.

The gift of God breaking into the world and the possibility of the kin'dom being known on earth is an important one to put against the acquisition of gifts. Encourage the congregation to be hopeful and joyful about the nature of the King who has been born.

3. COVENANT

If this service is to be observed at the start of the Methodist Church/calendar year, then the nature of our relationship with the King who can be trusted and whose kin'dom is one of life and hope is a possible theme. The shift from God's promise in the OT of the future nation to its leader-to-be, Abram, to Moses the leader making the covenant with God on behalf of his people, to us all making our individual covenants, is congruent with the expansion that Jesus, and then Paul, make to the Kingdom concept. It is no longer a national particularity but a universal, where all are equal children and inheritors of God, and able to make a personal and collective response to God's promise.

The Covenant Prayer in the Methodist tradition demands a response not just of faith, but of a faith that underpins an immersive commitment to discipleship, trusting in the promises God has made and responding to the "call to love and serve God in all our life and work" (Methodist Worship Book, Introduction to Covenant Promise, p287) and thus join in with kin'dom expansion.

4. EPIPHANY

The key kin'dom theme here is that of inclusion, in the revelation to the Gentiles. The recognition of the Christ as the coming Messiah is first acknowledged in a theological

way by a number of outsiders from other countries, who are 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. This does not detract from Jesus' mission of salvation, because that is an event without time, the impact of which is once and for all (as Paul has it) and therefore is not bound by linear history or spatial geography.

In the Orthodox tradition and some European countries, this is the day for present-giving because we are giving back to the Christ we see in others.

5. CANDLEMAS AND THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

This is the third occasion when prophetic words about Jesus are spoken by devout people. Both Simeon, a righteous resident of Jerusalem, and Anna, a prophet who lived in the Temple, have longed for the coming of the one who will bring about the consolation of Israel (although the Messiah is not named as such in the Luke passage). Both are inspired to recognise in the infant Jesus that he is the one, and importantly Simeon, as with Elizabeth and Mary before him, declares the universality of the light of revelation to the Gentiles, which will reflect well upon Israel. The Kingdom, although centred in one place and people, is for the benefit of all.

6. JESUS' BAPTISM

As with the birth narrative, this is an instance of the human side of Jesus – he wants and maybe needs to be alongside us in his need for connection to God. Coming after his temptations, it is the moment where he seals his commitment to leaving aside miraculous support and living in a human way, with human limitations. That act, for him, will be a turning in the direction of a tough path. It will be one of self-emptying to be alongside people, one of challenging authorities through debate and humour rather than violence, and of submitting to injustice, torture and death with remarkable quiet dignity and forgiveness. This is the kin'dom approach that God wishes for the wonderful Counsellor, the Prince of Peace.



The London East Ender in me loves the translation (Mark 1: 11, NRSV) which has the voice of God saying that he is 'well pleased' with his beloved Son. What a wonderful endorsement at a point of probable loneliness. And the kin'dom evangelism message says that those who also turn to walk in a Godly direction, in Jesus pattern, can also hear God's voice speaking that love and endorsement to them.

The descent of the dove is often seen as the presence of the Holy Spirit as encourager and guide - again a gift promised to those who choose to follow Jesus on the kin'dom way.

7. MOTHERING SUNDAY

If Mary as the archetypal mother is preached, then make sure you look at her probable influence on the young Jesus - the singer of the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) would clearly have communicated that aspect of her vision to her son. It is a foundational document in the New Testament kin'dom understanding, which preludes Jesus' own sermon based on

Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:16-21. Her willingness, as with every birth mother, to endure the pain of childbirth for the goal of new life, can be drawn as a parallel to Christ's willingness to endure torture and death for our rebirth and reconciliation with God.

The mothering aspects of the nature of God tie in with the kin'dom paradigm's inclusivity - if male and female are made in God's image (Gen 1:27) then the female must be found in God.

8. HOLY WEEK

1. Palm Sunday

The key kin'dom point here is the nature of the kingship of Jesus, his accessibility to the ordinary people who fete him because of what he has done for them. 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?

2. Maundy Thursday, Last Supper

The foot-washing and the servant-kingship emphasised in Matthew and John are good points for raising the nature of the King who leads the kin'dom. We are not to lord it over each other and we are not to jostle for prime positions. It is both heartening (in terms of a shared fallibility with the disciples) and salutary (in terms of the fact that we always need to guard against drifting into worldly patterns of power-over) that the disciples still need to hear this, so close to the end of Jesus' time with them. Jesus' knowledge of, and continued hospitality to, Judas the betrayer are points of contact for people who feel they want to hide their true selves from God and also fear they are not good enough to receive Holy Communion.

3. Gethsemane

The struggle to accept a harsh path is one which Jesus shares with us, which can give heart to those who find life difficult. The kin'dom is for the scared who overcome their fears. The struggle is common to us all, and is about our free acceptance of behaving in a way which God wants, not acting as automata insulated from harm. God does not guarantee an easy road to his followers, and this can give a real sense of the nature of discipleship to seekers.

The betrayal of Jesus by a close follower can chime with people who feel let down by friends or family members and be a way of creating a connection with their lives. Jesus' rebuke of Peter for striking off the soldier's ear is a clear kin'dom gesture about the renunciation of violence.

4. Good Friday

The rigged trial and the fickle crowd who have been turned from waving banners to calling for Jesus' execution (although it is possible that the demographic of the daytime Palm Sunday entry is younger and has come into the city with Jesus, whereas the evening crowd could be resident citizens of Jerusalem who have had almost no exposure to Jesus' ministry of preaching and teaching), can be preached as connecting points to people who feel that life has treated them unfairly. God through Jesus knows how that feels.

The powerful kin'dom themes here are the fact that Jesus sticks to the resolve he made in the wilderness after his baptism, in his wrestling with the temptation to use his Godly power for his own benefit. God or angels could, of course, have descended and smitten

Romans and Pharisees right, left and centre, but God’s way is to let humanity do what we will. The rainbow after The Flood is the promise that drastic events will no longer happen at God’s instigation, but because of sinful humanity’s destructive behaviour. Jesus is the ultimate innocent victim of human violence: the Lamb to the slaughter.

The replacement of young Isaac by the ram, when Abraham so nearly sacrifices him because he understands it to be God’s will, is the Old Testament story that says that God no longer wants such sacrifices. The killing is not licit nor required by God, and the reign of the Prince of Peace abhors killing. So the kin’dom approach to this part of Jesus’ story, does not see the crucifixion as a good, but as a necessary consequence of humanity’s sinfulness. Points of connection can be made with people involved in campaigns against the death penalty, against war, against the carrying of knives, and against other forms of violence and abuse which need to be resisted.

Jesus’ words of forgiveness from the cross to those persecuting and taunting him as he suffers show the amazing extent to which God will forgive us appalling actions, and also the extent to which love is able to overcome violence and hatred when held onto with divine power. However, it is probably helpful to remember that it is God’s prerogative to forgive at this point and we should not be forced into forgiving those who hurt us and cause us to suffer when we are not ready or able to do so.

Jesus’ reassurance to the man crucified with him, who shows kindness in rebuking the scoffer on the other side, can be preached to give reassurance that it is never too late to align oneself with God.

Jesus’ cry of dereliction is again a point of connection for those in despair – anyone’s pain can be so great that they lose all sense of God – but it doesn’t mean that God has disappeared. The cry is heard, and Jesus can speak words of faith at the end.

The declaration of faith by the Centurion that Jesus truly was the Son of God is another example of the breadth of inclusion in the Kingdom.

5. Holy Saturday

This has long been a popular theme in Orthodox Christianity and there has been an upsurge of academic and lay interest in it in more recent years in the UK. The idea of being stuck in a place of desolation and unknowing can be one that will strike chords with those uncertain of their relationship with God. The power of hoping in the waiting, of having confidence in a place of potential despair, can all be important good news.



9. EASTER

Resurrection

Quite how this mystery is preached depends upon your view of the Trinity. It can be preached as the Father rescuing and saving the Son, it can be preached as the divine in the Son being able to overcome death, but the version that is perhaps most interesting from a kin’dom perspective is the idea of the Holy Spirit working within the truly dead Christ to achieve new life. This interpretation of the unknowable can give us hope that the Spirit - God within us – can enable new flourishing from desperate situations. This then gives us a model for working with other people. We are not God and are not to fix things for them. They sometimes just do not have the power to change themselves or their situation - we can sit alongside them in their helplessness as Jesus descended into the place of death, which does have a pastoral and powerful place. The third option is that we work with them, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, give them a sense of hope, communicating energy and the possibility that prayer-fuelled change is achievable.

Forgiveness

It is striking how often Jesus uses words of reassurance – do not be afraid - in the resurrection appearances. This was often preached about along the lines of there being something scary about Jesus' physical appearance, but it is equally possible that having all failed Jesus to some extent (with the possible exception of John who is at least in the group keeping vigil at the cross) and therefore being complicit in Jesus' very painful death, the disciples are all expecting a pretty major rebuke ... but far from this, Jesus' tone and approach shows no anger. This gives hope to the people who feel that there is something in their life which puts them beyond the pale, and that they can never bring that particular thing to the foot of the cross and ask for it to be forgiven. They can be reassured that God does not take revenge, and the even causing the death of the Son of God can be forgiven.

Reconciliation

What follows the forgiveness is a mending, a renewal and an utter reconnection with God, to the extent that we humans can manage that. The Lakeside meal and the commissioning of Peter, the denier, is a moving story of a renewed trust being put into a fallible person. The commission **is** given, even though Peter cannot love Jesus in quite the total way that Jesus hopes. This again is a message of hope that we can be disciples and do our bit, even when we know we fall short of the ideal, even when our love for and faith in God wobbles and is not as wholehearted and unfailing as God's love for us. In kin'dom theology it is these Easter Day appearances and the themes of forgiveness and reconciliation which are the 'good news'. The resurrection which literally heals and restores Christ is also the healing and restoring of our relationship with God. It is both the sign and the act. It is the culmination of Christ's mission of bringing about the kin'dom, and effects the re-sealing of the bond of love between humanity and God that neither death nor hell nor princes nor powers can sever.

10. ROGATION SUNDAY

Rogation was traditionally a time when people prayed for God's blessing on their growing crops and on their work on the land. After a service, the congregation would go out of church and say prayers at a number of key agricultural sites in the parish. Sometimes this was combined with 'beating the bounds' – walking all around the boundaries of the parish and praying for people and places en route.

Aspects of Rogation can easily be applied to non-rural contexts as well, and involve people in the community. In addition to general prayer for the coming of God's kingdom, you can use the route to seek the welfare of, and ask God to bless, different people groups. The occasion can also provide an opportunity to reach out to local industries and institutions on the route, and ask them what they might want praying for, for their thriving, and invite them to come out as you arrive at their place, as well as prayers for the land and all it produces.

11. ASCENSION

This feast is a reminder of the 'otherness' of Jesus, and also the one where we are reminded of the universality of the message of repentance and forgiveness, and charged to bring it to the world. It is at the core of the Kingdom Evangelism paradigm.

It is no longer about the restoration of Israel – Jesus ducks that question in the Acts version – but it is about giving witness to a life-changing gospel to all. We follow Jesus as part of the Godhead. He does not forsake us, but provides the Holy Spirit to work with us.

This is the moment at which the disciples finally seem to accept that the awfulness of the crucifixion event is truly over, that they are forgiven and released and will be supported. It is like the stage in a young person's life when they are no longer reliant on the physical presence of adults, but grasp the reins of their own journey, knowing that adult advice and guidance will still be there to support them. The King reigns not by diktat, but by guidance and resourcing.

12. PENTECOST

This great feast of the arrival of the Holy Spirit on a large scale is the point at which the church begins in an international setting. Those who had shouted for Jesus to be crucified rather than Barrabas are convinced that Jesus is the Messiah and has risen. They come forward for baptism to accept forgiveness and a new relationship with God through Jesus. The power of the message to bring many to faith cannot be denied at this point. We are challenged to trust in the Holy Spirit's provision that where Jesus' Kingdom of servant-power, healing and reconciliation is preached many will hear and believe.

Yet Peter's sermon hasn't quite got the full breadth of the message – he is here addressing himself to [men of] Israel – i.e. believers in Yaweh/Jehovah – and it is only through the later encounter with Cornelius (Acts 10) that he finally grasps the inclusivity of the mission he has been given – that all are to be offered their rightful place in the Kingdom.

13. TRINITY SUNDAY

The theme that can be brought out here is Christ's kingship as integral to the Godhead. The kingdom to be established, that Jesus came to proclaim, is the same as that declared by God earlier in our Scriptures. Jesus' mission was to bring reconciliation between God and humanity and necessitated his voluntary giving up of his Godliness and power (kenosis) to engage with humans directly.



Whilst Jesus on earth prayed to Abba (perhaps best translated as Papa – a personal and warm but semi-formal form of address), ascended he is part of the triune Godhead. We now can rely on the third person – the Holy Spirit – to be the practical way in which God works through us.

Recent Trinitarian understandings emphasise the community within the Godhead between the three expressions – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Rublev's icon is familiarly used to represent this in the Orthodox tradition, although it is formally of the three angels who visit Abraham. At the time of the painting, the Holy Trinity was the embodiment of spiritual unity, peace, harmony, mutual love and humility. Some talk of the interplay between the three persons in terms of dance (perichoresis). The ambivalence of gender in the depiction is also seen as helpful in terms of debates about the feminine within God, and gender identity.

For those in the Kingdom evangelism tradition who find the Cross a vexed symbol, the triple-sided Celtic knot symbol of the Trinity is a more comfortable expression of our faith in God as a united, collaborative and complex whole.

14. TRANSFIGURATION

Jesus is here revealed in all his majestic kingship, and as at his baptism is declared the Son of God. Whilst our kin'dom paradigm emphasises the Christ with us as brother and friend, here we need to acknowledge the power and authority which God has, but chooses to exercise with us and through us, rather than over us. Sometimes we can be in danger of domesticating God: here is a feast which recalls that God is infinitely bigger than we are and has a power that brings out fear, awe and wonder in the disciples (clearest in Matthew's account – Matt 17:1-8) and which we do well to remember.

In our paradigm this is not preached as a warning reminder of that withheld power, but primarily as a message of great encouragement to those who feel that they battle against overwhelming odds, of the limitless resources that we have to support us when we are working in concert with God's purposes.

15. HARVEST

This is a festival that fits relatively easily with the Kingdom paradigm. God's bounty is not exclusive to any one group, and the idea of privileged access to resources can be seen as contrary to the kin'dom approach, which is always drawing people in and including them. The King who rules in righteousness will ensure that the harvest is sufficient and is shared with the widows and orphans - shorthand for all in need.

It can be tied in to the notion of the Jubilee where debts are cancelled in order for people to be able to start again.

The harvest is also connected to our need to be good stewards of the earth, to rest the land and balance our need for food with a respect for the other species on our planet.

16. ALL SAINTS

The universality of sainthood is good to emphasise - the ordinary person who has lived a faithful life in Jesus' pattern is to be counted amongst the exulted alongside those often seen as more worthy in the eyes of the world. Encourage your congregation to celebrate their own saints.

If you also commemorate the martyrs on this Sunday in your tradition, then preaching on Jesus' willingness to be a martyr in order to fulfil God's purposes and his instruction to his disciples to be willing to "take up your cross" (Matthew 16:24-26) can be connected with political martyrs such as Oscar Romero who have been killed because of their adherence to a Kingdom which is here as much as hereafter.

17. REMEMBRANCE

It has recently become harder to separate Remembrance Day from a more nationalistic celebration of the dear departed heroes of WWI and II.

Whilst not offending those who may be present who can remember such individuals, as they become fewer it is more possible to return to the Kingdom paradigm, emphasising the need to remember all who have died in conflicts, and move away from a nationalistic

view that some deaths are more worthy than others, for God is a God of all nations and peoples.

An emphasis on the horror of warfare and of ‘never again’ and how we can all be peace-makers in our homes and congregations within a kin’dom of justice is also worth making. Jesus could have raised a human or angelic army to defeat the Romans, or looked for appeasement or conciliation, but his mission was to stand against the regime in a moral sense and demonstrate that there are other forms of power and victory. The crucifixion was a deeply immoral act of killing for political expediency, following a rigged trial, which one of the criminals accompanying Jesus acknowledged (Luke 22:40:41). The belief that it was part of a God-given process of overcoming death and salvation should not let us forget that. Injustice and misuse of power do need to be challenged – but life rather than more death is to be desired.

B7. What is the Key Message of the Cross within a Kingdom Paradigm?

The Writing Group

WHAT DO WE SAY ABOUT THE KING WHO DIED?

What is the challenge of “For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Cor 1:18)?

- The idea of the King who dies – and dies a very public and degrading death - is an important element in establishing the nature of God’s reign, as one where power is relinquished to be alongside humanity, and is not used oppressively.
- There is power for some in realising that Jesus was a victim – of betrayal, abandonment and denial by his followers; of a false accusation, a rigged trial and a miscarriage of justice; and of maltreatment and mocking by his executioners. He therefore understands what it is like to be a victim and can bring reassurance about God’s love for those in similar circumstances.
- The shame and shockingness of a symbol of execution as a symbol of faith is a complex one – we perhaps have over-spiritualised it and cease to see it as we would a guillotine. It is also a compelling and powerful image, particularly in its crucifix form.
- It is a model of self-giving to the uttermost – doing what must be done and staying true to a message of peace, and forgiving even in the last moments.

WHAT DO WE SAY ABOUT THE KING WHO RISES?

- There is triumph over death and evil – and the love of God brings all things back to healing and wholeness.
- The first thing that Jesus says in several of his appearances is “do not be afraid”.
- The disciples may be all too aware of how they have failed Jesus in the last days of his life. Jesus’ words of peace and reassurance show that failings are forgiven and all is restored. If the disciples and others around Jesus’ arrest, trial and death can be forgiven their actions of betrayal, denial, abandonment, miscarriage of justice and ultimately killing God’s Son, then there is hope for all.
- Jesus models a form of power through his death and resurrection which is about reconciliation between people and God against all odds, about countering violence with dignity, not more violence, and about the healing of divisions between life and death.
- Jesus will be and is the Christ in Majesty in heaven, there is no lessening of his essential power, but that power is devolved to us through the Holy Spirit to be co-builders of the kin’dom.
- This once-for-all illicit killing is forgiven and is all that is needed for all people to have an unbroken connection with God through life and after death.
- The message of the cross and resurrection is the same as the message that Jesus has been giving during his ministry about the possibility of relating to God as loving Father. God does not need to be bought off, or paid off, by the death of a son, but is the merciful one who mends and heals the hurts that humanity can wreak.



WHAT KIND OF CROSS?

The Orthodox cross, which has moved away from a more direct representation of the instrument of torture, can, for some, be more helpful as it becomes more clearly a symbol.

We have also found the Medieval symbol of the Tree of Life that grows out of the cross of death to be helpful in picturing our understanding of the Crucifixion.

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

Section C - Our Understandings of Evangelism

These four pieces address the issue of what we understand by evangelism, and introduce some of the ideas of how to do it, which we feel are particularly congruent with the inclusivity of the Kingdom paradigm.

C1. What do we Understand by the ‘Kingdom’ and What is our Missionary Imperative?

The Writing Group

- The Kingdom* is something that expands through time and space. It can be experienced partially in the here and now and is only fully realised in the future.
- God is generous and eternally reaching out to people, so God’s realm is not something that is bounded, because it is not a place but a way of living.
- Because God is a good, merciful and just God, God’s kin’dom is the expression of that as experienced by the whole of creation.
- We start with Jesus’ instruction to bring about the fullness of God’s Kingdom of justice and joy and ‘shalom’ on earth and for people to be joining in with that enterprise and getting closer to God. We understand the nature of the realm through the mission of Jesus, as recounted in the Gospels, and the action of the Holy Spirit.
- People of goodwill join in with the enterprise of enacting the realm of God without believing in God, or in knowing God through other faiths. We believe that a relationship with God is a treasure which enhances life, which is therefore to be shared. That relationship is fullest and most intimate through faith in Jesus’ mission of healing, reconciliation and forgiveness, seen in his life, crucifixion and resurrection, and we expect our lived lives and our words to speak of that.



*We are aware of the complexities of using the English word Kingdom for the Greek *basileia* in terms of its genderedness and the secular understandings of what a kingdom consists of in terms of control and authority. Our preference would be for realm and kin’dom and we will use these terms too.

C2. Not Just Words ...

Richard Atkinson

Much reflection on evangelism is focused on what is said and heard. The invitation to faith and personal response can often seem to be predominantly a matter of getting the words right. For does God not promise to provide the words we need in challenging situations: “do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say” (Luke 12:11f). It is the words of Peter, in the power of the Spirit, that result in mass baptism on that first Pentecost. We as Christ’s disciples are exhorted to always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks us to give the reason for the hope that we have (1 Peter 3:15). At first sight it is a matter of ‘asking’ and ‘answering’, of speech and hearing.

Two recent and different contributions highlight, in contrast, the importance of what is seen and received, rather than just what is said and heard. The first was a conversation with a priest who has a profoundly autistic son whose engagement with faith and church is grounded in what is seen and experienced, rather than what is said. He is representative of those who do not think in words, for whom response to faith is not verbal articulation. His mother, who has done research in this field, remarked that the church, even in its work with people who are disabled, tends to focus on those who can speak such as those with Downs Syndrome. Whilst online church has enabled some who were previously excluded to be involved in church, her stark comment was: “My son at present cannot access Church at all”.



The second contribution was in a reflection on liturgy and worship. A former principal of a theological college was reflecting on his own interests in the non-verbal aspects of liturgy, especially those with cross-cultural origins. It is that long established, but sometimes overlooked, recognition that good liturgy engages the whole person in both offering and response. Worship has all the potential to be converting, but this is not just because of the words. Symbol, sacrament, action, colour and sense all have their place; all can evoke response.

The task of evangelism is not just that of the right use of words, or else those like the disabled son I mentioned would have no place. The reality of conversion is not just the correct expression of faith but response to Jesus, through the power of the Spirit, because we meet him in action, rite and symbol.

This should not surprise us. In Matthew 11 when the disciples of John the Baptist come to Jesus to enquire, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”, the response is not primarily that of words but rather the invitation to see what is happening. Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see”. The emphasis is on what is seen of the presence of the Kingdom: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is preached to the poor. The Kingdom of God is present. That is what

confirms the authority and identity of Jesus; that is what calls forth response and discipleship.

It is the reality that action and symbol are evangelistic. The preaching of good news to the poor is as much healing, reconciliation and restoration as anything else.

At one of my Confirmation services I met a very excited churchwarden who was thrilled that one of the candidates was her neighbour, and that she had been instrumental in bringing her to faith. As someone who was hesitant to speak of her Christian faith it wasn't words that had been key, but rather simple acts of kindness. Her neighbour had recently been bereaved and she had simply gone round with a meal. That in turn opened the door to other acts of compassion. In time there was a place for words and for a nurture group, but the action – what was 'seen' – was critical.

It is recognised that if millennials are to come to faith then belonging to a church that is rooted in love of neighbour, concern for the environment and commitment to social justice is likely to be key. It is certainly true for someone close to me where the words of faith are uncertain, but the opportunity to witness and be engaged with Kingdom building is life-changing and discipleship creating. It is not that this is second best to verbal articulation of faith, but rather it is grounded in the response of heart and soul.

The Revd Derek Maddox, Vicar of St Andrew's Church on the deprived Hartcliffe Estate in Bristol describes in the report 'Growing Good: Growth, Social Action and Discipleship in the Church of England', published recently by Theos and the Church Urban Fund, describes some of the work that the church has been doing to alleviate food poverty. He comments: "I felt that we really needed to feed people, because that was the need here. We didn't have any expectations of them signing up to be believers. It was about supporting people." But he adds, "Some people have been mightily touched by God". It is not just all about words.

In a very different setting, Revd Richard Coles' description of his encounter with God in St Alban's, Holborn speaks powerfully of the impact of non-verbal rite and symbol, "We sang, we stood, we sat, we bowed our heads in unpredictable places, we knelt and then something extraordinary happened. Three robed men stood at the altar, and the one in the centre lifted with both hands a small white disc. The thurifer raised his smoking silver pot, a skein of smoke began to rise in the sunlight slanting through a window, and a chime rang out unexpectedly. I think it was the chime that roused me ... But I was pierced to the soul at that moment." He goes on to say, "And I realised, too, that I was one of the very few people in the Church of England to have gone to a Solemn High Mass at St Alban's Holborn and there experienced a classic Protestant conversion."ⁱ



The New Testament provides one other emphasis that points to the converting power of acts of the Kingdom. When people experience the presence of God they are often filled with awe. Those who witness the healing of the paralytic let down through the roof are amazed and are filled with awe. (Luke 5:26). It is a

similar response to the healing of the widow's son. Again, those who see are filled with God and they praise God (Luke 7:16). The reality of the kingdom in those healings evokes response – the kingdom is converting.

This impact of the Kingdom in drawing forth response and discipleship continues into the early church. In Acts 3 the lame man outside the Beautiful gate is enabled to walk. God is present and at work. His response is that of jubilation and praise. Those who see this are filled with wonder and amazement.

Words are important. They are indeed often key to the articulation of invitation and response, but not always. They are not the whole story, and for some like those who don't think in words, not even part of it. It is true of both social action and worship.

Kingdom evangelism reminds us that it is always God who converts and that this is often a response to what is seen and experienced of the wonder of the Kingdom. As St Francis is alleged to have said: "Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words."

How you can take part in this work

1.

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 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 and help shape how this develops.

C3. Some Good News about ‘goodnews-ing’

Glen Marshall

If you are not a fan of some of the evangelism that you’ve seen, here’s some good news - not the good news, but 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.
- You don’t have to invite them to hear some minor celebrity who’s pretending to talk about being a celebrity when really that’s just an excuse to preach the gospel.
- You don’t have to wear a wrist band and explain what the heart, the X, the cross and the question mark stand for, or be able to draw The Bridge to Life, or memorise The Four Spiritual Laws, or any other formula for that matter.

Those things aren’t what evangelism is. They are just some of the ways that people have gone about evangelism.

OK, then, so what is 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 goodnewsing, getting on with life in such a way that people have a chance to discover Jesus for themselves.

If I’m right, and this is what evangelism is, another bit of good news is that it’s best not to limit evangelism to verbal proclamation.



We can communicate the good news as individuals or as churches by the way we are, and the stuff we do as well as the things we say. Being, doing and speaking are all important modes of evangelism. When we are the kind of church that is welcoming, friendly, outward-looking, generous and forgiving, we communicate the good news by embodying it. When we work to shelter the homeless, feed the hungry and campaign for the oppressed, we communicate the good news by enacting it. When we explain to our friends why we pray, how we came to follow Jesus or what God means to us, we communicate the good news by articulating it.

Of course these three modes of communication work best when they work together. That way they make for a richer expression of the gospel. Being, on its own, is too passive. Doing, on its own, is too ambiguous. Speaking, on its own, is too facile. Get it all together though and our message is more likely to ring true.

The next piece of good news is that evangelism doesn't always have to be the thing at the front of our mind, the thing at which we are consciously aiming. In fact it often happens best when it happens obliquely. Ironically, if evangelism is always the primary motivator for everything we are, do and say, we will end up actually undermining our evangelism because we will make it inauthentic, twisted, less than genuine.

So, for example, when the way we are bespeaks Christ, when our churches are hospitable, honouring the least and including the outsider, this is indeed evangelistic, it communicates the good news, but our primary intent here is not to communicate but rather, together as a church, to live a Christ-like life. Evangelism in this mode is more often than not a blessed by-product of trying to be faithful, Jesus-type communities. Similarly, if we only ever care for the needy or work for peace and reconciliation so that we can let everyone see what the way of Christ looks like, there's something about our motivation that is not true to the Jesus we hope to communicate. Gospel communication in this mode happens best when we are focussed on something else, such as loving people, irrespective of whether or not they are interested in our message.

This also applies when we speak of our faith. When we explain to friends why we pray, when we offer a Christ-informed perspective to colleagues at work chatting about an event in the news, even on occasions such as these it is not that we think, "OK, now I am going to evangelise." No, we just do it because part of what it means to live as a Christian is to speak as a Christian and therefore to speak of Christ.

Now don't get me wrong here. I'm not against intentional proclamation of the gospel as one means of communicating good news. There will, of course, always be those times when our primary purpose is indeed to get the good news across. But these are evangelism's special occasions, not its everyday way of being. This is evangelism in its Sunday best, not the kind of 'come as you are and take us as you find us' evangelism which is the staple of ordinary goodnewsing. This matters because when we allow disciples to believe that the exceptional is what defines evangelism we run the risk of putting them off.

Nor am I suggesting that we don't have to speak about our faith. I don't think St. Francis ever actually said, "Preach the good news and if you must, use words" but I wish it hadn't got round that he did. Piping up about Jesus is a crucial part of evangelism. But it's a part not the whole. And it's at its best when it's not contrived but rather when we just tell our friends about Jesus, when we say what we say because that's who we are, not because we are targeting someone, seeking to assuage our guilt or trying to get the pastor off our back.

I don't know if these thoughts will help. Some might think I'm watering down evangelism. In which case I've not made myself clear. I think I'm trying to beef it up. I'm also trying to help people see that it can be a commonplace part of ordinary Christian living; something everyday for everyday disciples; something that everyday disciples just get on with; something for which the Baptist flavour of disciple becomes known – in life and not just on paper. If that were to happen, that would be good news.

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C4. A Model for Kingdom Evangelism Shaped by Fratelli Tutti, a Papal Encyclical (October 2020) on Fraternal Relationships with All of Humanity

Andrew Crowley

In my article, **B2. A review of the references to the kingdom in Matthew's Gospel**, I suggested that the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on a donkey was an image of the Kingdom. This article attempts to develop how we proclaim this type of Kingdom.



There is an ‘interior response’, an attitude of heart that is shaped by our humble King on the donkey. It shapes the way that we are with ourselves (and God) and with others. 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.

However, people do need to know the source of this internal joy (spring of living water). We are called to witness, to be known as Christians; not to hide our light under a bucket or keep the talent securely hidden in the ground; to communicate the Kingdom requires relationship, not a facile one in the anticipation of ‘catching someone’ for Jesus - such relationships are conditional and above all not genuine or respectful.

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, without us consciously working on it and feeling responsible for it. After all, the Kingdom is not ours, but belongs to the Father. The question that we ask ourselves, therefore, is how do we relate to others, to those who are different from us, to those who we see as our enemies, and to those in need?

In his recent Encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis, sketches a way ahead for us. His starting point is an incident in the life of St Francis:

“3. There is an episode in the life of Saint Francis that shows his openness of heart, which knew no bounds and transcended differences of origin, nationality, colour or religion. It was his visit to Sultan Malik-el-Kamil, in Egypt, which entailed considerable hardship, given Francis’ poverty, his scarce resources, the great distances to be travelled and their differences of language, culture and religion. That journey, undertaken at the time of the Crusades, further demonstrated the breadth and grandeur of his love, which sought to embrace everyone. Francis’ fidelity to his Lord was commensurate with his love for his brothers and sisters. Unconcerned for the hardships and dangers involved, Francis went

to meet the Sultan with the same attitude that he instilled in his disciples: if they found themselves “among the Saracens and other non-believers”, without renouncing their own

identity they were not to “engage in arguments or disputes, but to be subject to every human creature for God’s sake”.^[3] In the context of the times, this was an extraordinary recommendation. We are impressed that, some eight hundred years ago, Saint Francis urged that all forms of hostility or conflict be avoided and that a humble and fraternal “subjection” be shown to those who did not share his faith.

4. Francis did not wage a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines; he simply spread the love of God. He understood that “God is love and those who abide in love abide in God” (1 Jn 4:16). In this way he became a father to all and inspired the vision of a fraternal society. Indeed, “only the man who approaches others, not to draw them into his own life, but to help them become ever more fully themselves, can truly be called a father”.^[4] In the world of that time, bristling with watchtowers and defensive walls, cities were a theatre of brutal wars between powerful families, even as poverty was spreading through the countryside. Yet there Francis was able to welcome true peace into his heart and free himself of the desire to wield power over others. He became one of the poor and sought to live in harmony with all. Francis has inspired these pages.”

The Good news of the Kingdom is communicated without judgement and within a relationship of respect and trust. The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem in humility, peace and trust resonates with the attitude of St Francis described above. This is all he is called to do.

Later in the Encyclical Pope Francis writes extensively about the Parable of the Good Samaritan – a story in response to the question of “Who is my neighbour?” This parable is characterised by genuine compassion for someone in need. This is the Kingdom in action.

“106 Social friendship and universal fraternity necessarily call for an acknowledgement of the worth of every human person, always and everywhere is each individual of such great worth.”

Pope Francis concludes with an inspiring call to us all:

‘285. In my fraternal meeting, which I gladly recall, with the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, “we resolutely [declared] that religions must never incite war, hateful attitudes, hostility and extremism, nor must they incite violence or the shedding of blood. These tragic realities are the consequence of a deviation from religious teachings. They result from a political manipulation of religions and from interpretations made by religious groups who, in the course of history, have taken advantage of the power of religious sentiment in the hearts of men and women ... God, the Almighty, has no need to be defended by anyone and does not want his name to be used to terrorise people”.

For this reason I would like to reiterate here the appeal for peace, justice and fraternity that we made together:

“In the name of God, who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the values of goodness, love and peace;

“In the name of innocent human life that God has forbidden to kill, affirming that whoever kills a person is like one who kills the whole of humanity, and that whoever saves a person is like one who saves the whole of humanity;

“In the name of the poor, the destitute, the marginalised and those most in need, whom God has commanded us to help as a duty required of all persons, especially the wealthy and those of means;

“In the name of orphans, widows, refugees and those exiled from their homes and their countries; in the name of all victims of wars, persecution and injustice; in the name of the weak, those who live in fear, prisoners of war and those tortured in any part of the world, without distinction; “In the name of peoples who have lost their security, peace and the possibility of living together, becoming victims of destruction, calamity and war;

“In the name of human fraternity, that embraces all human beings, unites them and renders them equal;

“In the name of this fraternity torn apart by policies of extremism and division, by systems of unrestrained profit or by hateful ideological tendencies that manipulate the actions and the future of men and women;

“In the name of freedom, that God has given to all human beings, creating them free and setting them apart by this gift;

“In the name of justice and mercy, the foundations of prosperity and cornerstone of faith;

“In the name of all persons of goodwill present in every part of the world;

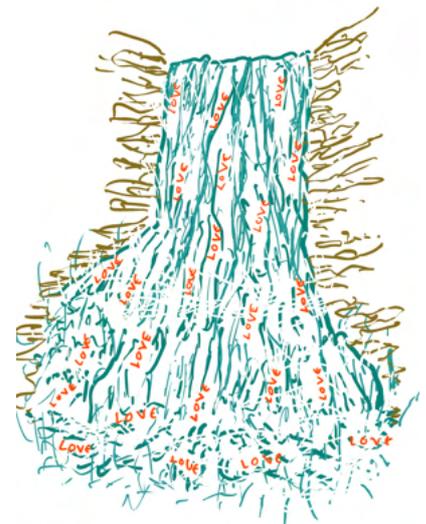
“In the name of God and of everything stated thus far, [we] declare the adoption of a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard”.

Pope Francis concludes with a prayer:

O God, Trinity of love,
 from the profound communion of your divine life,
 pour out upon us a torrent of fraternal love.
 Grant us the love reflected in the actions of Jesus,
 in his family of Nazareth, and in the early Christian community.

Grant that we Christians
 may live the Gospel,
 discovering Christ in each human being,
 recognising him crucified
 in the sufferings of the abandoned
 and forgotten of our world,
 and risen in each brother
 or sister who makes a new start.

Come, Holy Spirit,
 show us your beauty,
 reflected in all the peoples of the earth,
 so that we may discover anew that all are important
 and all are necessary,
 different faces of the one humanity that God so loves.
 Amen.



Section D - Praxis

This section looks at what doing evangelism from a Kingdoms paradigm looks like on the ground, drawing on the experiences of the Writing Group in local ministry: rural and urban.

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

These are notes taken from a Zoom conversation between the Group members part way through the process, and give a flavour of our responses in certain pastoral situations.

1. WHAT IS THE INVITATION THAT IS MADE?

If we and congregations are out and about in amongst people, there may be a point at which an invitation to further engagement/involvement is appropriate - so what is the invitation?

- invite people to a group that is exploring what it means to believe in and follow Jesus, and is a learning community (i.e not one that has all the answers) – ‘Come and hang out with us’.
- draw people into relationship – (how to develop relationship with new people coming to a Covid-distanced church with no ‘mingling’ may be difficult) – through relationship with other people, people can discern what a relationship with God might be about.
- groups should be both about sharing faith and helping people feel comfortable.
- non-threatening questions that allow space for negative views – ‘Where are you with God?’ ‘I’m a follower of Jesus, would you like to find out what that might mean for you?’
- we have to have greater intentionality to make the invitation.
- finding common cause and working together with those who have similar concerns, and through them connections, can be made with people who are seeking to know God (cf the writings of Ann Morisy). Causes might include food poverty, climate change, improving a local open space, where practical issues and the causes of problems are addressed alongside others; where we work with others, as Elaine Graham understands it, to create a greater horizon of hope.



What scriptural passages are we drawing upon?

- The call of Jesus to “Come and see” (John 1:39). Note this is in response to a person’s question to Jesus.

- Parables of invitation to feasts – we are asking people to join in with something that is about joy and peace and transformation.

D1

WHAT ARE THE FINAL WORDS OF COMFORT?

What do we, as ministers, say to people who are dying with no acknowledgement of, or resistance to, God? What do we say to Christians who are scared that their unbelieving relatives will be suffering after death?

To the dying person who doesn't believe

- when you ask people what kind of God it is they don't believe in, you often find you don't believe in that kind of God either – they are frightened by a vengeful God rather than attracted by a merciful one.
- demonstrate the love of God through the way that you behave towards them.
- remember that unbelief can come about because of hurt, harm or lack of care done to people by the church or those identifying as Christians: do we have to make reparation and apology for that?

To the believing relative of the unbeliever

- Tom Wright talks about God's kingdom being the hope of Easter coming forward into the present, so God can act in ways that are unfathomable to us.
- Consider Matthew 25:31-46, the parable of the sheep and the goats. Many have lived as Jesus bid us live even though they have not consciously believed.
- emphasise the love of God from which nothing can separate us - Romans 8:38-38.
- John 14:1-3 - the generous provision of God in providing many rooms in his house.
- the Kingdom is something that expands, God is generous and eternally reaching out to people, it is not something that is bounded, because it is not a place but a way of living.
- Colossians 1:15-20, especially verse 20; Jesus' mission is effective in reconciling all to God.
- there can be no forcible inclusion. Pressure on the person, even if well intentioned, is not part of the Kingdom paradigm.

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

D2. Parish Evangelisation: An Approach by St Patrick’s and St Thomas More’s

Facilitated by Deacon Andrew Crowley with four parish members

“The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelisers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their Journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented.”
Evangelii Gaudium. 2

PRAYER FOR EVANGELISATION

Loving Father,
 You so loved the world that you sent us your only Son,
 that we might believe in him and have eternal life.
 May we encounter Jesus Christ anew this day
 and live the Good News with joy.
 Through the power of your Holy Spirit,
 help us to “go out to the whole world and proclaim”
 our faith with confidence.
 Give us the courage to witness to the Joy of the Gospel
 by our words and actions.
 Help our parish to become more welcoming and missionary,
 so that you may be known and loved by all people.
 We make this prayer through Our Lord Jesus Christ Your Son,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God for ever and ever,
 Amen.

Our Lady, Star of the New Evangelisation, **Pray for us.**

Blessed John Henry Newman, **Pray for us.**

St Thérèse of Lisieux, **Pray for us**



INTRODUCTION TO PARISH EVANGELISATION

In July 2015, the Bishops conference of England and Wales held a conference on evangelisation. It was called “Proclaim 15”. Some people from our parish joined others to go to Birmingham, to meet others and to learn what evangelisation might look like in 21st century Britain. Proclaim 15 was a response to Pope Francis’ call for a new evangelisation within our parishes, for us to become missionary people, outward facing, and confident in spreading the joy of the Gospels.

“Christians have a duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet. It is not by proselytizing that the church grows, but ‘attraction.’”
 Evangelii Gaudium 15.

A small group in the parish of St Thomas More's and St Patrick's met weekly from July 2016 to March 2017 to consider what evangelisation is for us and how our parish could become missionary, evangelising and outward facing. We have prayed together, shared our faith stories, and looked at simple ideas as to how we can create an evangelising parish community.

As part of our discussions we have looked at a document produced by the Diocese of Southwark, which challenged us to consider how our parish life could be developed and how we could serve the needs of those who live in our area. It was clear, during our discussions, that in order for the Holy Spirit to be allowed to work in our parish, we must take some action to facilitate this. We are called to put in some effort, some labouring in the vineyard, but at the same time trusting that the owner of the vineyard will look after us and provide us with what we need. We realised that our efforts are not dependent upon our own energy or enthusiasm, but instead are dependent upon the grace of God. We have to make a deliberate and intentional step forward in faith, always trusting that it is the Holy Spirit who calls people to faith.

There is already a lot of activity within our church which does strengthen our faith and is a witness to others. Our deliberations have shown us the significance of what we're doing at the moment, and emphasises its importance. What we have discovered is a more holistic approach to our parish life, with all the different elements feeding in to creating a fully alive and loving experience for ourselves, and for those amongst whom we live and serve.

We have broken down our plan for the parish into the following headings:

1. Making our church more welcoming
2. Deepening our faith
3. Making our liturgy live
4. Caring for our neighbours
5. Caring for ourselves
6. Building our life together
7. Deepening the relationship between the school and the parish
8. Spreading the message
9. Administrative and IT tasks to support our work

MAKING OUR CHURCH A WELCOMING CHURCH

Because we are so familiar with coming to church and knowing what happens, it is difficult for us to see how our communal parish life looks through the eyes of someone new. To show that we care about welcoming people, about making them feel at ease and giving them all the support and information they need, what changes do we need to make? Is it clear where the disabled access is, the toilets are, what we are doing in our services and who to contact?

DEEPENING OUR FAITH

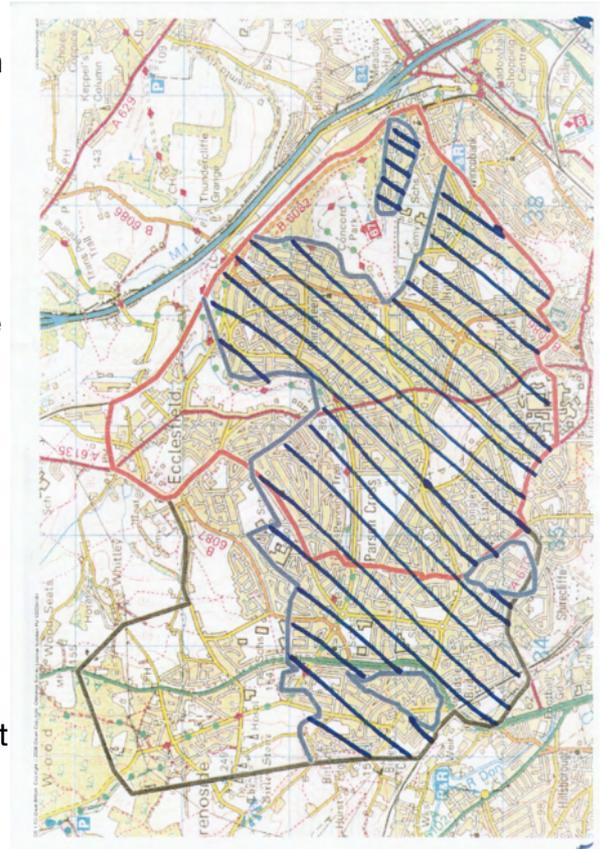
Part of becoming an evangelising community is for ourselves to be evangelised. There is no point in welcoming people into a church in which people, as Pope Francis has said, look as if they're attending a funeral. Evangelisation of ourselves demands that all parts of our lives are touched by the gospel values. How can we deepen our faith and how does it affect the way we live?

MAKING OUR LITURGY LIVE

Our liturgy is a lived experience. When we come to church we not only worship God with our mind and soul, but also with our senses. The way that we conduct our services should point towards the mystery of God, and be characterised by reverence, simplicity, care, humility, and love. How are needs of our world and of ourselves addressed in the way that we worship together? What does our liturgy convey?

CARING FOR OUR NEIGHBOURS

It is also easy to overlook the area in which our parish is, and the needs of the people amongst whom we live. In our group we looked at the needs of the area, and noted with concern that most of the area is part of the 20% most deprived areas in Britain. (See the map). Deprivation is not just lack of money, but also poor health, education, housing, and high crime levels. As a servant church we must consider how we can meet some of the needs of our neighbours. How can we reach out to those who live in our parish but do not attend a church? How can we demonstrate our love for others?



CARING FOR OURSELVES

As we consider caring for our neighbours, we should also consider how we care for ourselves. What is it that we can do that increases our sense of well-being? How can we help each other to live a fulfilling life? How can we make real and practical the way that we care for each other?

BUILDING OUR LIFE TOGETHER

We are called to be the body of Christ, not just as a worshipping community but as a community of people who worship together. How can we deepen our relationships with each other during the week? What opportunities can we create to build community with each other?

DEEPENING OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR PARISH SCHOOLS

We have been blessed with two junior and infant schools in our parish. Part of their work is to deepen the spirituality of their pupils. How can we as a parish support them in this work, and work with the schools to deepen the spirituality of each one of us and of our families?

SPREADING THE MESSAGE

Within our parish area there are many organisations such as care homes, colleges, schools and doctors surgeries. How can we best communicate with them about what we do in our parish, and how we can support them in their work?

ADMINISTRATIVE AND IT TASKS TO SUPPORT THE PARISH COMMUNITY

To help our parish function effectively we do need some good administrative systems. IT can be used to develop a parish database and improve the way in which we communicate the message of Christ to others. How can we develop our resources to promote the Gospel?

OUR LEGACY

What kind of parish are we passing on to the next generation?

THE EVANGELISATION PLAN

Making our church a welcoming church

1. Have open days and make use of Heritage Open Days (usually in September).
2. Look at times when the church can be open for part of the day, which is welcoming and accessible and not a service. Possibility of a quiet time/time for peace, forgiveness, etc. We need to ensure that there is someone in the church to welcome and supervise. Visitors would be encouraged to experience the stillness. light a candle, etc.
3. Develop leaflets for visitors explaining what happens in church, who to contact, etc.
4. Develop a guide and formation for welcomers to ensure that visitors are welcomed and provided with suitable information.
5. Consider developing welcomers who have had some formation, who are clearly identifiable by name badges and a welcome desk.
6. Review the welcome experience.
7. Have a sign outside the church indicating when the church is open.
8. Look at improving visibility and access to the church, with a specific focus on the appearance of the church's entrance lobby.
9. Improve notices about facilities in the church such as toilets, hearing loop, room for noisy children, disabled access, etc.
10. Consider ways of making the liturgy more accessible to the hard of hearing and the visually impaired/blind.
11. Consider how the liturgy is welcoming to all, especially newcomers. Ensure that at each Eucharist there is a welcome for those who cannot receive to come forward for a blessing.
12. Consider printing leaflets explaining how the parish works, our purpose and vision. Include information about administration, weekly meetings, brief history, who to help with transport, etc.
13. Consider occasional events to invite people, such as 'coffee and cake', 'meet the priest', and how there can be some fun and relevant activity for children.
14. Review the signage outside church to ensure that is inviting, informative, providing contact details and witnessing.
15. Leaflet to guide newcomers through the mass, with all the relevant responses, and some basic guidance.
16. Ensure that newcomers are advised to make contact with a welcomer.
17. Provide booklets for children to use during the service.
18. Improve the signage at St Patrick's as to where the entrances are, including the disabled entrance and parking. Also improve signage for access to the presbytery.

Deepening our faith

19. Look at using more IT resources for catechesis.

20. Develop a programme of ongoing faith and spiritual formation for adults.
21. Review how we do Catechetics and look at opportunities for evangelisation. e.g. use of prayer and witness to run alongside instruction
22. Develop programs for parishioners to deepen their faith so that they can explain it cogently and sensitively to others
23. Look at sharing our faith stories, and setting up a system for people to accompany each other on their faith journey
24. Consider opportunities to have tea after mass to discuss the readings and homily
25. Consider ways in which we can help parents teach their children
26. Prepare short biographies for the saints' statues in the church
27. Prepare a simple explanation of the stations of the cross
28. Consider how we can make the Word more prominent in what we do
29. Draw attention to opportunities for house blessings
30. Consider a programme to explore the relationship between family life and spirituality
31. Consider the use of Godly Play within the parish
32. Consider a Parish retreat
33. Develop a Film night/Book club to ask, where was God in the story or the film?
34. Establish small groups for ongoing faith development, for sharing spiritual journeys and for learning how to share our beliefs
35. Consider having an outside speaker coming to give a talk/series of talks to the parish



Making our liturgy live

36. Constantly look at ways of how we can improve the celebration of the Sunday Mass to make sure it is the best we can do
37. Involve more people in the singing, preparing the bidding prayers (see below)
38. Be more open in church about real life issues.
39. Utilise the outside of church as a bit of a 'shop front', e.g. start the Palm Sunday procession outside
40. Review the Children's Liturgy to see what improvements can be made
41. Have an occasional healing mass/International mass with a shared meal afterwards – Pentecost?

Caring for our neighbours

42. Set up a Justice and Peace group
43. Ensure that there is a clear focus on our relationship with those in our parish who live in the 20% of the most deprived areas in Britain. Consider what little steps we can take to help people out of deprivation
44. Consider how we create a place of belonging and hope for people, particularly those isolated, bereaved, and those on the edges
45. Get someone to talk about homelessness and the refugee situation in Sheffield
46. Work with other churches to meet the needs of the area
47. Consider the viability of a food bank in the parish
48. Make sure the church is represented at local festivals and meetings
49. Ensure church is represented in local forums and consider how we can develop links with the local councillors

50. Deepen links with people of other faiths
51. Have a drop in at the St Patrick's presbytery.
52. Recruit more members for the St Vincent de Paul (SVP) to ensure that there are enough people to visit those on the margins

Caring for ourselves

53. Look at occasional workshops to improve our sense of well-being, e.g. stress management, anger management, healthy eating, walking group
54. Develop life skills to help people to move on from any of the 5 indices of poverty
55. Consider the 8 week Family Care Parenting course
56. Consider the needs of the bereaved in our parish
57. Arrange an annual party for all those baptised during the previous year
58. Look at ways of celebrating marriage, e.g. the renewal of vows, etc
59. Consider how we can develop the SVP to encompass visiting those on the margins in our community
60. Celebrate and deepen the existing links with Saint Wilfred's, Mount Tabor Food Bank and Northern General Hospital chaplaincy. Arrange for speakers to come and address the parish community
61. Look at ways to engender a spirit of pastoral care for all those in need in the parish
62. Display safeguarding information in suitable places in the church
63. Consider an audit of the skills that parishioners would be willing to share with others.
64. Assess ways of involving young people in Church life
65. Consider developing an Open House for parents after dropping children off at school or before they collect them
66. Purchase a drinks dispenser to provide tea and coffee for meetings in the presbytery

Building our life together

67. Arrange for drinks and refreshments after Sunday Mass to welcome visitors and newcomers
68. Consider developing small house groups/cell groups
69. Arrange occasional meals together/day trips/socials
70. Create an environment which develops confidence and empowerment

Deepening our relationships with our parish schools

71. Deepen the relationship and level of cooperation between the school and the parish community.
72. Consider how we can support the teachers and catechetics in the school
73. Encourage families to use the prayer bags sent home with the children

Spreading the message

74. Have a clear witnessing focus on the website and in the newsletter
75. Consider using local newspapers as a means of communication
76. Consider leafleting the area and how this could be done ecumenically.
77. Develop links with Longley Sixth Form College
78. Develop links with all the local schools advising them that the parish is open to visit
79. Make the parish better known to all the residential homes in the area
80. Consider having a sign outside the church with a simple proclamation message on it, which would be changed at regular intervals, e.g. at Easter, "Jesus is Risen"
81. Consider using local cafes for meetings

Administrative and IT tasks to support the parish community

82. Set up a parish database to ensure that we know the parish community. The database would be confidential for use by the parish clergy.
83. Look at how we can use the parish rooms and hire out to others on a reasonable basis. Note: we would need clear policies and procedures
84. Consider how the website can be developed so that it provides a witness of faith
85. Consider using IT to ensure that the newsletter and other material is distributed more widely. Investigate use of email addresses and MailChimp
86. Investigate streaming the Mass and/or uploading the homily to the website. Stream the Mass via the website (Shalom to advise)

Our legacy

87. Consider what kind of parish we are passing on to the next generation

PARISH BOUNDARY OF ST PATRICK'S AND ST THOMAS MORE**Key**

Red line = St Patrick's Parish

Black line = St Thomas More's Parish

Blue shaded area = parts of our parish which are part the 20% most deprived areas in the UK.

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

D3. The Relationship Between Incarnational and Proclamational Mission

Glen Marshall

Incarnational church planting begins when a small group of Christians lives and grows church in a particular place, taking shape as it attends to the gospel, engages with the wider community and actively seeks the Kingdom. The old approach to planting was for one church to send twenty or more people to start a service in an under-churched area and then arrange evangelistic events and activities.

The incarnational approach is a definite improvement. However, incarnational planters run the risk of repeating a mistake made so often by the church throughout history and especially in recent years. We see weaknesses in an established way of doing church, initiate change, and in the process utterly overreact and neglect real strengths in the old approach. So, for instance, the charismatic movement's stress on experience led to a regrettable disdain for learning and serious theology; the early/mid 20C reaction against the Social Gospel led to an unbiblical exclusion of social and political action from its understanding and practice of mission. The examples are many.

There is no reason on God's earth why an incarnational approach to mission and church planting should neglect a deliberate, intentional and strategic approach to proclamation. Evangelism is at heart about communicating good news, expounding the gospel, making it public, rendering it manifest, causing it to become apparent and present by doing, saying and being. Not all of these dimensions have the communication of good news as a deliberate intent at the forefront of our attention. Evangelism suffers when we turn it into nothing more than a thing that we do and distinguish it from the doing, saying and being of following Christ.

We evangelise when the stuff we do in pursuit of peace and justice, such as providing shelter for the homeless or campaigning against poverty, gives expression to the way of Christ, but our attention is not directed to getting across a message but to the needs of the people who are homeless and/or poor. 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. All good incarnational stuff.



However, none of this is to say that this richer, more integrated, more natural understanding of evangelism has to exclude deliberate, intentional, planned goodnewsing when our primary purpose is indeed to get a message across. As long as such activities

D3

are appropriate to their setting and faithful to the gospel, refusing imposition and resisting distortion for the sake of 'success' then they absolutely have a place. Why not?

Of course the most important thing about evangelism is that, whether it be our primary concern or a gracious byproduct given as we pursue other priorities; whether it is doing, being or saying. it has to arise from lives given over to knowing and following Christ. Otherwise our doing is so much busyness, our saying mere words and our being an empty shell.

© Glen Marshall, 2008 taken from his Nah Then Blog, 2020

D4. Kin'dom Prayer Walk ideas

Erica Dunmow

Prayer walking (generally in twos or threes) is on the increase, as a very good way of 'listening' to and observing your locality and tuning in to what God might be asking of you. Casual conversations along the way help to give a benign and friendly presence on the streets. They are especially helpful during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, as reaching out and contacting people through building-based activities is so much more limited.

You may ask what is kin'dom about the following examples. They are all based on the idea that God and the Holy Spirit can break into situations and hearts where there is no prior commitment of faith, and that God wants us to bless irrespective of belief.



This does not mean imposing a belief on anyone, but a simple offering of good wishes.

If you do encounter other people on your walk, a simple 'Hi, how you doing?' or 'You'll'ri?' or 'Good morning, nice/chilly/blowy weather' depending on your style and the locality, can be enough to show a friendly connection. And if they show an indication of wanting to answer the question or chat, do stay and listen, and maybe if it feels right, offer them a simple word of prayer, or to put them on the church prayer list. But keep it very relaxed and trust that the Holy Spirit will be at work in the conversation.

Some people will pray in advance for God to show them and bring them into contact with the people God wants them to engage with, which is a way of ensuring that we do not place too much of our preconceptions and agenda onto the process.

Giving thanks

Whenever you see something of beauty or justice or kindness or flourishing, give thanks for it as a sign of the kin'dom already present.

Listening

If you are in the listening phase, simply stop every now and then and talk to God about what and who you have seen, asking God to let you know what might be there for you and the congregation to support, provide or lobby and pray for.

Blessing

You might also pray a very simple blessing such as 'Peace/Shalom/Well-being be upon this house/shop/business/office/factory/garage etc.' as you walk past.

If walking around institutions like schools, solicitor's offices, police stations, courts, DHSS Offices etc, 'May this place be one of justice and joy'.

You may even want to 'anoint' a building or place where there has been dissent or difficulty, with a simple prayer and some oil. (See the writing of Ann Morisy about apt liturgy, and her example of simple service on the street to acknowledge a place of pain and ask for God's renewal and cleansing).

D5. Growing Good

Richard Atkinson

The launch on 10th November of ‘Growing Good: Growth, Social Action and Discipleship in the Church of England’¹, a report by Theos and the Church Urban Fund, is timely. Originally commissioned to reflect, at least in part, on the current priorities for ministry thirty-five years on from Faith in the City, it is all the more relevant at this time of pandemic.

Exploring the relationship between social action, church growth and discipleship it is a helpful stimulus to reflection for all Christians, not just Anglicans. It is clear that “social action can be a route to church growth in both numerical and spiritual terms”². It provides content to the reality that evangelism and discipleship are intrinsically related to the presence of the Kingdom of God.

A contributor to the launch was Revd Graham Hunter, the Vicar of St John’s, Hoxton, where there has been significant growth and the church mission statement includes: “Transform Hoxton – We hope to contribute to the renewal of our neighbourhood and the flourishing of every person who lives or works here”.³ Among those drawn in has been David, who is now free from his background of drug addiction and currently is employed as an outreach worker for the church.

At the heart of the report is the importance of relationship, and the opportunity for people to connect through involvement in social action. It highlights six characteristics that are shared among the churches that are growing numerically and flourishing through their engagement in social action. These are:

Presence The importance of being there connected to the local area

Perseverance The opportunities that come from staying there

Hospitality & Generosity A culture of openness and willingness to engage with and invest in the local community as it is. The importance of sharing food.

Adaptability The ability of the local church to adapt and embrace complexity

Participation The importance of invitation and opportunities to participate in church community.

Whilst not new to those involved in mission and ministry, particularly in areas of deprivation, they remind us that faith and discipleship usually only emerge when people come into relationship, not least by joining others in social action.

It is Kingdom-based growth, where engagement with righteousness and justice reflects the priorities of Jesus, as in the Nazareth Manifesto of Luke 4, opening the



D5

door to Christ. As the report acknowledges it is not social action purely for the sake of growth. The report refers to Luke 14:12bf and Jesus’ words on not expecting a return on your invitations to dinner. Rather it is love in action because we can do no other. However,

“in a secularising society where people no longer feel an inherent sense of warmth towards the church, it helps people cross barriers of religious identity and non-identity”.⁴

It is this Kingdom-based growth that is reflected in transformed lives. The report quotes Archbishop Stephen Cottrell: “Instead of talking about bums on seats, let’s instead talk about disciples being made and hearts changed; or best of all, let’s talk about lives transformed. It seems to me that the best way of answering the question, what sort of growth do we need, is not to say shall it be numbers or shall it be impact, or even to say shall it be both, as if these things were different from each other, but to say let it be growth in transformation.”⁵

Does this report answer all our questions about Kingdom Evangelism and the relationship of social action to growth? That’s an unreasonable expectation. However, it is a shame that the pandemic curtailed the quantitative data and there is an absence of enquiry as to how involvement with the work of the Kingdom flows through to discipleship. Having said that, as already stated, the relationships and participation in church community that are enabled are key in providing the launching pad for faith. The report’s recommendations, including the establishment of a Church of England volunteering service, the re-definition and contextuality of the metric of church size, a more prominent place for social action in church funding schemes, and a greater emphasis in teaching and resourcing on the relationship of discipleship and social action, seem to me to only go so far.

The report opens with what I think is a contentious paradox, namely that the Church of England is, on the one hand, declining in terms of attendance (that is not disputed) and also that “the contribution the Church of England makes to society through its social action has increased.”⁶ Whilst the commitment of many is impressive – the Church Urban Fund identified in 2017 that 93% of church congregations were involved in some way with food banks or food bank collections – the sheer capacity of churches to respond, especially because of numerical decline and an ageing demographic, has diminished. In some areas, such as work with the young, the impact is very significant.

At its heart, however, this report is very helpful in reminding us that church 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 and the purpose they inspire. This report confirms that and explores it.

Some years ago now I was a Vicar on a tough housing estate in Sheffield. We knew then that we had to be involved in the community and to put social justice at the heart of our work. This was not a separate action, but essential to our mission, outreach and evangelism. All too often, larger evangelical churches from across the city would dismiss what we were doing as ‘merely social action’. It was never that and always had the teaching and example of Jesus at its heart. It is encouraging that most traditions are now on the same page and recognise that preaching good news to the poor and proclaiming the year of the Lord’s favour ⁷ are a priority for all.

1. <https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/GRACE-CUF-v10-combined.pdf>. 2. Ibid, p12, 3. <http://www.stjohnshoxton.org.uk/transformhoxton> 4. Ibid, p144, 5. Ibid, p28, 6. Ibid, p12. 7. Luke 4:19.

D6. Using the Space Inside and Outside the Building

Rachma Abbott and Erica Dunmow

All these ideas are about creating things that will attract people into a building, give the congregation interesting conversation openers with strangers or neighbours, all of which can lead naturally to God-related, gossipy conversations or maybe sympathetic listening and a gentle offer of prayer if they trigger difficult memories. If your congregation is big enough to have volunteers to be quietly in the background just to smile and raise an eyebrow to show they are open to talk, that is great. Even better, in a mixed use building, keep the sanctuary door open, or at least unlocked, whenever the building is open for bookings, and ideally have clear glass windows so people can see in. Article E2 shows that this last was part of one journey to faith.

1. INSIDE

Static displays

Churches often underestimate how visitors look at their displays inside the church, especially those older buildings open to visitors. The sort of charities supported, the photos of church leaders, etc, will all help say to people; you too can belong here and be welcome. Please do update them fairly regularly though, or at least put newer versions up. Photographs of children and adults will need to comply with safeguarding policies and other permission issues. Seeing images of your church community can help you notice your diversity (or the lack of it) in generational, ethnic, ability, and gender terms. If the congregation is a diverse community, this may gently speak to people who often excluded, showing that this is a place for them. Displays can relate to more recent 'history' as well – photos of the most recent harvest supper, or displays of Christening gowns through the ages, or the connection of your church with particular employment or industry.

Interactive displays

Flower Festivals and Harvest Festival displays can bring people in. Making sure there are always people around to smile and give a welcome, and with a little imagination, some interactive displays to be looked at are good. A large tray filled with earth and a range of different flowers and twigs can very easily become a miniature allotment, with people invited to 'plant' something and perhaps have a chat about growing and new life.

Displays that evolve or change and that visitors or participants can contribute to also show that the building houses a living community. This can connect with history. During commemorations of the 2018 centenary of WW1 a rural church worked on a village exhibition: "100 days, 100 years", in which knitted and crocheted poppies were added over time, flooded down from the altar as the death toll increased, with white poppies and forget-me-nots made in a local care home. This could also be linked to an online set of photographs – in this case there were black and white pen and ink drawings produced by Kate Slater <https://www.kateslaterillustration.com/100-years-100-days-1>

A Flower Festival about aspects of belief, maybe the sacraments, can have explanations as well as flower arrangements, and an area where people can, for example, make extra buns/bread cakes (for the display of the bread and wine) out of flour, salt and water

dough, and have conversations about what they are thankful for as they make them. One with a festival theme, e.g. a Christmas Tree Festival inviting people to present a tree that represents a Christmas Carol and inviting lots of community groups and local schools to take part, also brings people in so that they are comfortable in the building and see it as a fun place to be. (The winner at one such (votes cast by all visitors) was a vast pyramid of individually decorated six-holed food containers called, inevitably. ‘Gloria in Eggshellsis’)

Prayer stations

These can always be there. Examples include: the traditional votive candle holder stands; pebbles to place in a water fountain (washing away of regrets, bad things); heart post-it notes for people we love; a tree of remembrance in a side chapel where people fix a leaf onto the tree in memory of someone (can be done in the context of a memorial or funeral service). If you have a wildlife-friendly space outside this is a good place to both explain and invite people to give thanks for natural beauty or commit to climate justice.

2. OUTSIDE

A large decorated cross



As well as the dolorous Cross of Good Friday (you may want to drape it with a purple cloth, etc) how about a celebratory Resurrection one covered with yellow daffodils, forsythia and whatever else you have to hand, in a joyous celebration? During lockdown 2020 one inner city church had a sequence of different arrangements on the outside cross from Maundy Thursday through Easter to Pentecost and Trinity. Part of the point was having the flower-arranging happening at a time on a Sunday when there could be engagement with curious or appreciative passers-by ...

A Palm Sunday procession

Processing around the Church can get a bit ragged if the congregation isn’t used to singing and walking and if the organ can’t be heard from all round the building, or there isn’t an instrument with a strong beat in the procession. How about kazoos and a drummer rather than singing, especially if you are a small group? The spectacle of joyous palm-waving helps to counter the fact that church worship is staid and dour.

If you are walking through your community with palm crosses to give away, or packs of paper kits for making one at home, this enables engagement. It can also help to have explanations to offer. St Matthew’s, Bethnal Green, used to give with the palm crosses a bookmark shaped short explanation headed: “What on earth are we doing?”

Good Friday

Think about the message that you are conveying in a Good Friday procession with the cross (see Article B7 for more on this). However, this form of witness has a long connection with ecumenical working together, so it may be that there will be a diversity of theologies within those walking together.

Easter Eve

The Fire in a churchyard on Easter Eve, or as a Dawn Fire service, is not only a mysterious and moving service of the lighting of the new light that can become the Church candle for

the rest of the year, but if done near enough a footpath, is another way of taking worship out at least a little nearer to where people might be able to see and hear something of the message of hope, joy and new life in the risen Jesus.

Easter Day

This is THE day of joyous celebration and yet we often keep ourselves to ourselves. How about coming out of the building at the end of the service, yelling the Easter Alleluias* several times together can be effective if the church is on a street, or perhaps at the top of a valley where the sound will carry. Stand with your backs to the church, maybe by a buttress or alcove, so the sound really projects away from the building. You probably need to warm up to this by inviting people to do the Alleluias more times than the initial one at the beginning. Six to eight times thrown in unexpectedly e.g. before and after the Bible readings, after a hymn, before the address, etc will probably do it. Warn people you'll be doing this, the young and young at heart will enjoy it! How about everyone having a bottle of bubble liquid and blowing bubbles of blessing around after the church service, too? You might want to check the wind direction!

One small chapel, St Peter's-on-the-wall, Othona, Essex, surrounded by countryside, regularly lets off a volley of sky-rockets at its Easter dawn service, and another inner city group of churches persuaded the local pigeon fanciers to give them a basket of homing pigeons to release.

*Easter Alleluias

Call: Alleluia! Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Response: He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!

All Souls and Remembrance Sunday

Not only do some churches have a War Memorial nearby or maybe in their grounds, but some are using really imaginative ways for people to interact with memorial prayers for those who have died. The use of knitted objects, such as red poppies that people can place intentionally around a cross, or in one case cascading down the side of the church tied to a fishing net, can bring a visual prompt that again, if people are willing to take up talking to neighbours and friends, is a gentle starter into a God-talk conversation.

3. BEYOND THE CHURCH GROUNDS

House blessings

These can take place as a response to a haunting or some sense of a malevolent presence, or offered to people moving into a new place and, perhaps, feeling daunted by what their life there will bring; or simply a liturgy of commitment by Christians to being a household of hospitality and a light to the neighbourhood. It is usually a simple, informal service of blessing – generally with prayers said in all the rooms, (don't forget the bathroom and kitchen) and can be a powerful way of integrating a sense of God into the home. Invite the children of the house to help saying some of the prayers (maybe writing the one for their room). If cleansing is pastorally needed, then a bunch of sweet herbs and twigs dipped occasionally into a bowl of water (that has maybe been blessed in advance) and the water gently flicked hither and yon (check with the household first that they are OK with this – water splashes aren't always appreciated by those with delicate furnishings!), and over the people as well, can be fun for children (and adults) present,

and help the occasion to be serious without being solemn. Carrying a Christ-light candle can be an alternative winter symbol, or the lighting of little indoor sparklers at some point.

Apt Liturgy

This is a term coined by community theologian Ann Morisy (see Section H. Resources), to refer to a special short service with prayer at a specific site, to which the general community, or just those affected, are invited. It can be a joyful thing – perhaps thanks for someone as a new memorial or statue or road name is instituted. It can also be very helpful at a place where there has been a fatal car accident, a murder or a suicide. Police or local councillors will sometimes help with this, especially if laid flowers need to be cleared and the neighbourhood, as well as relatives who may live nearby, need to be enabled to feel that they can move on.

Worship Outside in your church grounds or local amenity spaces

During the constraints of Covid-19 restrictions, worship outside the building brought freedoms such as being able to sing carols that could not happen inside. It also brought an awareness that for many people the freedom to socially distance comfortably was not only about mitigating viral risk but meant families could participate or not as they chose, and feel free to walk away or move around in ways that church buildings often do not enable. Make sure your event stewards and congregation are relaxed and ready for this sort of coming and going, giving a simple smile of goodbye as people leave.

At Lyneham, Wiltshire, the usual Good Friday Walk of Witness did not look possible with the regulations so Methodists and Anglicans together used the larger churchyard for a service with stations. This worked well for some of the ministers with mobility issues and we noticed that people felt more relaxed about arrival and departure times that suited them – easy to arrive part way through or leave early without being noticed. ‘Dipping into’ worship is not easy in some of our more traditional buildings, and denominations vary in how this practice is perceived. There was also greater relaxation for people about how their children chose to respond (people can be concerned if they think that the usual behaviour of children is not acceptable within a sacred space). It also enabled people to move away if they wanted greater privacy for their emotional response (also helpful at services involving veterans and military personnel at occasions marking loss or Remembrance in some way) or simply for movement and conversation. The weather also meant that these services were almost always shorter than the normal local church offering. Services that focus on the creation season might seem natural for outside activity.

However, if people’s expectation or experience is the more overtly evangelistic or parade services, it may be important to be clear at the outset about the freedoms to participate or not. It is also important to think about accessibility issues including outdoor amplification and so on, which can have resource implications. If the outdoor space does not belong to your church there will be additional arrangements that may take time in terms of risk assessments and local permissions.

Rogation Sunday

Rogation is connected with ‘asking’ and so with prayer, but also with very old ceremonies of ‘beating the bounds’ in the Church of England to enable people to know the boundaries of their parish identity. This has the potential to be excluding or imperialist/

colonialist in feel - “we are claiming our territory”. However, in some rural churches it has been used as an opportunity to walk between churches gathered into a group as a reminder of the sharing and connection. Stops for a picnic lunch and ending with tea can be punctuated with very short services of the word, with prayers marking each church or other local landmarks as stops and prayer stations. This can include focusing prayer on, e.g. farmers at a local farm, or education outside a school. Often people have walked or joined the picnic group who might not usually attend church. However, if you are walking as a community it is worth thinking about the balance of fast and experienced walkers and those for whom the joy of pilgrimage needs to be measured and slow as well as those whose focus is arriving at the destination and refreshments. Many small rural churches do not have toilets so it is good to plan for those stops.

Christ Church and St Luke’s in the East End of London have a boundary on the river Thames and have had a church and community boat trip with lunch as they travelled for Rogation. This was accessible for a wider range of people. In other urban settings the local park or canal might be a place to enjoy a local walk with a faith focus - a different intention such as a sponsored walk could be included or adapted for a local or national charity. Section E - People and Personal Viewpoints

This section presents testimonies and stories of how individuals have come to faith through Kingdom-based evangelism and more polemical pieces with which the whole Writing Group doesn’t all necessarily agree or have experience.

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E1. Four Stories

Kevin Ellis

1. THE RELUCTANT EVANGELIST

I have been an evangelist for as long as I can remember. I am, however, sometimes a reluctant one. I love speaking about Jesus. It is a long time since I did any street preaching, but I enjoyed that, whether that be outside the Tower of London or near the Big Market in Newcastle or, indeed, outside of Rotherham Minster.



I have never understood why people think evangelistic activity is offensive; after all, people try to persuade us to do things that we do not necessarily want to do whether that is to buy something we do not really need or vote for a particular party. All sorts of opinions are - and should be - welcome in the public square. I suppose there are questions about this when public proclamation turns up uninvited on your doorstep. Yet I spent over two and a half years as a shy and hesitant teenager doing just that in London and was rarely rebuffed aggressively for doing so. Cold calling might have decreased significantly, but I have lost count of the number of times callers have tried

to remind me of accidents that I have not had. Indeed, as a priest, whether in Birmingham or Amlwch, I have never not been given a warm welcome when I have just turned up to offer to pray for people or share a little of the story of Jesus with them.

Given that it is something that I enjoy, why would I be reluctant about it? Maybe I am naturally hesitant about telling people what they should do. Yet the point of evangelism is to get to a decision isn't it? I recall being on a mission weekend with the then Archbishops' Missioner, Michael Green. I was asked to share my Christian story at a particular event. I did so. Afterwards, Michael simply asked why I had not asked those listening to become Christians.

Similarly, when I was a curate in Gloucester, I was part of the suffragan bishop's faith sharing team. With a couple of others, we developed some Murder Mystery events that were focused on proclaiming the faith. The Bishop asked me why I had not been more specific about those present becoming Christians. I began hesitantly to explain that my goal was to introduce people to a story, and the story would attract people. I think I still believe that to be true.

I remember talking to Ann Morisy, community theologian and engagement specialist, about evangelism many years ago. She loves football, as do I. I remember her comparing the evangelist to the centre forward, whose job is simple: to score goals. I have never

seen it as being as clear cut as that. I create space and opportunities for the stories of God to blossom and grow. Maybe evangelism is a bit like the Kingdom, it grows, initially hidden like the mustard seed, hidden like the yeast, or haphazard as the seed that has been thrown by the sower.

2. WANDERING INTO FAITH

Before going to train for ordination, I worked at the Cheltenham and Gloucester College of HE. I was a biblical scholar by training and went to the local parish church. I got to know J through his wife who attended the same church. Our wives were firm friends. All J knew about me was that I was a professional Christian, and he was quite clear he did not want to know anything about religion. We became good friends. Over a period of 18 months, J would begin to turn the conversation to matters of faith. Sometimes I replied. Often, I would switch the conversation to the garden, football, or politics. We would talk about elements of my work, even about the apologetics course that I was leading with a group of ordinands, but not about personal faith as it related it to him. It created frustration on the one hand, in that J wanted to talk so that he could refute what I was saying. The not saying anything approach is not an Alpha-like strategy, but for J it allowed him space and time to wander into a life of faith. Eventually this led him to attending his local church regularly with his wife.

3. INCLUDED WITHOUT QUESTION

R was part of the film club that I was running in a local school. His family did not go a particular church but were connected to the local chapel for occasional offices/life events. The film club was not explicitly Christian. We were as likely to watch Toy Story, Shrek, or Star Wars as the Miracle Maker. R needed to be persuaded by his teacher to come to the club. He did not like school particularly. But given that all we did was watch films, share lunch, and allow each other to say how we were doing, he came and enjoyed it.

The film club was deliberately called 'Q' for Question. It deliberately allowed children space and time to be themselves. R is now in his mid-20s. He and I are still in touch. He is the first person in three generations to have a job. And yes, he is a member of a church now. How did it happen? It was not all to do with the club, and it was not a specific conversation. Like J, it was about creating space for R to relate to faith. It is messy because faith is not offered to people as something pre-packaged within Kingdom Evangelism, rather it is a gift given and people open it at their own pace. R knew from Q Club he was valued, and heard me tell stories of Jesus, who included without question. It was a beginning, and R's story is still ongoing.

4. MEETING GOD ON THE BEACH

T is a mum of 3 and married to S. They met me because they wanted to get married in church. This is a common story for ordained ministers. You do not need to take an overtly Kingdom Evangelism approach to offer welcome. Where it is different from what I might call a flat pack evangelism strategy, with easy steps and straightforward progress, is that

Kingdom evangelists acknowledge that people come in different ways. I imagine, in the life of Jesus, that Matthew the tax collector came differently to Simon and Andrew, the fishermen. T had had some sort of church background. This was obvious in arranging her wedding service. Her children come to Messy Church, and occasionally attended the Parish Eucharist. They were often the only children there. This young family were not there every week.



T and S confess that sometimes getting three primary aged children ready for an hour-long service seems too much. Their honesty is refreshing, and their lives, like mine, are sometimes messy. They sometimes read in church or lead prayers, challenge what I say on social media, or talk about meeting what feels like God on the beach rather than in a church building.

They use some of the materials prepared by the Diocese for families, teaching their children to pray and engage with the Bible stories, and sometimes they will not use them, because a faith that is not them is required.

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 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 and help shape how this develops.

E2. Testimony - A caretaker's question

S.G.

S.G. is in her 60s and lives and worships in an inner city area. The church would probably describe itself as 'open evangelical' in Anglican terms, with years of Kingdom work in its local community, some from a radical viewpoint (in S's early years). This is her story:

I was Christened at St John's, X is where I was born but I grew up in Y where I now live. My family were never churchgoers. We had a wide extended family and our gatherings were in pubs, clubs, parties in our homes and big family trips to Lincolnshire.

However, the church was part of my life with Whitsuntide and Easter parades, gatherings in the park, jumble sales at church and the Salvation Army playing every Sunday morning right outside our house. I remember at school the Bible stories and Jesus and singing in assembly. The church didn't figure in my life at all once I had grown up and gone off to college and work, getting married and having a family.

I had gone to the local primary school and my children attended the same school, Church was the place for Christingle, and Holiday Club. The vicarage was next door to school and both me and my children had a feeling that we were somehow included in the flock.

The vicar took my father's funeral, and during the service I experienced the presence of God. I brushed it aside, accepting it as a great comfort in my grief. It took me over 5 years to walk into the church to my first Sunday Service after my father died.

It was a Tai Chi class that led me into church. I attended a class there for exercise and walked through the building once a week, seeing into the worship area through the big glass doors. I had started to want to go inside the worship area but I again kept brushing it off.



E, who was the caretaker, was a friend of mine, and he often said "You come in here a lot, why don't you come to church?", and one day I said "OK, I'll be there on Sunday"!

I came in as an outsider but the readings, the welcome, prayers, the communion, the sermon and the coffee struck a chord in me. I was amazed by a parable which was read, and as I began to read the Bible and attend more services, I was amazed. I was amazed that the disciples were amazed too!!

So, the wonderful congregation at church embraced me! I wanted to help out serving coffee and welcoming on Sundays, as I had been welcomed. I helped at Lunch Club on my day off from work and when I retired I became Church Warden and more involved in

Bible study and coffee mornings, weekly prayers, connecting with the community and church council.

It was a defining moment when I knew I wanted to be a follower of Jesus and it was on that first Sunday in the service. It has rolled on and out from then.

It is a challenge. I've had many mentors and role models at church and beyond. I have watched and listened and been pointed by my generous teachers, always, to the Bible as my guide.

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

E3. Evangelism: Putting the ‘E’-Word in its Place

Glen Marshall, for Urban Expression Gathering, Nov 2011

“I no longer believe in evangelism. To be post evangelism is to live our lives in Christ without a strategy but with compassion and the servant posture of Jesus Christ. We do not do evangelism or have a mission. The Holy Spirit is the evangelist, and the mission belongs to God. What we do is simply live our lives publicly and as a community in the way of Jesus Christ, and when people inquire as to why we live this way, we share with them an account of the hope within us. We are to love one another, and that creates its own attraction. Taking care of people who are sick and needy creates all the evangelism we need.”

Karen Ward, Church of the Apostles, Seattle.

WHAT HAVE WE [BAPTISTS] DONE TO EVANGELISM?

Among other things:

1. We have allowed revivalism to become normative: Wesleys, Whitefield, Edward’s [...] Moody, Graham, Pilau
2. We have instrumentalised it and thereby corrupted it: an obsession with results and numbers
3. We have turned it in a thing (reified it) and thereby mystified it: a thing apart primarily for special people at special times

WHAT’S TO BE DONE IF WE ARE TO PUT EVANGELISM IN ITS PLACE?

We should:

1. Commit to dialogue and mission in bold humility. neither arrogance or diffidence
2. Rehabilitate persuasion: Neither ‘so that’ nor ‘regardless’ but ‘in hope’
3. Integrate Being, Doing and Telling: Being too passive, doing too ambiguous, telling too empty
4. Prioritise faithfulness
5. Contextualise and personalise: ~~To whom it may concern~~ To Alex, 34 Yourstreet, JC20 0AO.



E4. Living The Story

Becky Farrell

In 2011/12 I had some experiences which I could not explain in any way other than that they were experiences of God. I realised that I needed a religious framework for my renewed relationship with God, and I fairly dispassionately considered my options. I didn't ask myself which religion is true. I knew that I could make a convincing argument for or against most things. Instead, I asked myself, which story am I prepared to live within? Which story will I allow to change me?

Christianity was in my background so it would seem the obvious choice. I was aware that the tradition holds much treasure along with all that had made me walk away from it in the past. I did, however, consider other religions. The thing that made me settle on becoming a part of the Christian story was one simple but mysterious thing: incarnation.

As Christians we intuitively use themes from the story of Christianity as stories of ourselves and our situations, such as Good Friday and Easter framing our understanding of getting through a difficult situation with the hope of better times following. Another theme we might apply to ourselves is that of exile and restoration, or perhaps a long wander in the desert before reaching the Promised Land. These could be said to be metaphors but it's more than that. This is the story that we inhabit and that inhabits us.



Jesus taught by telling parables, which often become more mini stories inside which we can live. He is also a living parable as the Way for us to live. We believe in Jesus as historical figure, Jesus as second Person of the Trinity, but also we believe/trust in him as story. The story of Jesus is our story. It's the story of how we are to live. The great themes: incarnation/kenosis, the extraordinary in the ordinary, the flow of God-humanity-humanity-God, resurrection into a new kind of life, concerns for those on the edge, the beatitudes and so

on ... these become our story too. These are the stories, the themes, the movements/ rhythms by which we live. We read, are puzzled by, learn from, Jesus' parables, but we also learn from the story of who he is, how he lived, what he cared about, his sheer ordinariness as well as all the rest. Part of following Jesus is to live his story. Part of following Jesus is that he, in some way, lives ours.

This is what it is about incarnation that hooked me into the Christian story. Having lived through many intense periods of suffering, there was something compelling about a God who, through living a human life, had suffered firsthand. This was not a God who was compassionate but ultimately distant. The Christian story into which I have thrown my lot is one of a God whose nature is, fundamentally, relationship, coming to dwell among us as a vulnerable human, experiencing firsthand all the joys and sorrows that human life entails, and taking this human experience into the heart of God. Incarnation is the story of self-emptying, defenceless love. We see this in the Christ of eternity becoming the Jesus of history. We are invited to make space for God in ourselves and take part in the incarnation of this unfolding story.

E4

Too often, Christians talk as if Jesus only needed to come to earth to die, and neglect to consider his life, teaching and incarnation. Such a view impoverishes us and leads to exclusivism, dualism and a lack of generosity of spirit. How is that good news? With more emphasis on incarnation and joyful participation, the gospel actually sounds like good news. It's an invitation to love and be loved, and a mission to live within and be transformed by the unfolding story of love that is the heartbeat of the universe. Living within this story is not only transforming personally. It draws us to reach beyond ourselves to join with God in the incarnation of the Kingdom.

E5. Where does Evangelism Fit into Discipleship?

Erica Dunmow

Jesus stated his mission in three main places (there are others):

Mark 1:14 "... and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'"

Luke 4:18-19 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

He instructs the disciples in their mission:

initially in Matthew 10:6-8a (cf Luke 10:9) "... but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near'. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons." in John 20:21-23, "Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you". When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven ..." in Matthew 28:19-20a: "Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." In Luke 24:46-48: "...and he said to them, "Thus it is written that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.""

The working out of what these passages mean in practice has been the task of Christians ever since, and partly centres upon two key things: what is the 'gospel' or 'good news', and what is the Kingdom? And in our current 21st century Western context we are challenged by the expectation of healing.

The concept of the Kingdom is that prefigured by the Old Testament prophets as a place of justice and joy, where God reigns and all live by God's commandments and values.

The term gospel itself simply means 'news to gladden the heart' – it doesn't actually have any other content. But over the years its use has been truncated to mean a specific belief statement. That is not Biblical, and needs to be challenged.



‘BIG E’ EVANGELISM

Evangelism has become narrowed in its most popular usage to mean a body of theology centred upon the cross as the key event of Jesus’ ministry, which can be summed up as ‘the three hours that saved me’.

Evangelical theology with a big E requires that, to be identified as a Christian, a person needs to believe that the crucifixion is *the* point at which Jesus paid the price for our sin (Penal Substitution Theory of the Atonement - PSAT), as the Evangelical Alliance has it: “The atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross: dying in our place, paying the price of sin and defeating evil, so reconciling us with God.” That point is seen as *the* good news - belief in Christ is equated with belief in the efficacy of the cross to cancel out a person’s sinfulness and save their eternal soul. Leading a person to making a personal faith statement is seen as *the* point of evangelism.

THEOLOGIES OF THE CROSS

The penal substitution understanding of the cross event is taken mainly from Acts and the Epistles rather than the Gospels and Jesus’ own teaching. Jesus does not use salvation language often. His nearest statements are in John 10:27–28, “My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life; and they will never perish.”, and in Mark 8:35 (paralleled in Matthew 16:25, Luke 9:24 and John 12:25) Jesus says: “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.”

The theological understanding of the cross event within the Bible is actually quite varied – and the Christian community as a whole has never come to a firm conclusion as to whether there is just one way to interpret it. The Apostles’ Creed – the oldest agreed document of the faith of the Church of the mid 200s - merely states belief in the events: “[Jesus] suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again”. The Nicene Creed of 325 CE is similarly an account of events with the additional preface that Jesus: “for us and for our salvation came down from heaven...”.

OTHER POSSIBLE BASES FOR GOOD NEWS BASED ON JESUS

The Christian community needs to reclaim the fact that the ‘good news’ that Jesus brought and that we are required to spread is wider and richer than just personal piety based upon three hours of Jesus’ life.

Alternative paradigms for good news from our theological understandings of Jesus can centre on:

- the forgiveness and reconciliation demonstrated by and after the Resurrection (three days)
- the mission of Jesus as described in his life (three years)
- the validating of humanity in the virgin birth and incarnation as signs of God’s entrusting to humanity of our own destiny (thirty-three years)
-

- the eternal Word that speaks the wonder of the world into life (3.3 gigayears and counting!)

We will each have our favourite that speaks to us and that we can therefore speak about, with authenticity.

KIN'DOM OR REALM EVANGELISM

A model that we are particularly interested in exploring is that which Jesus initially proclaimed – evangelism based upon the Kingdom or realm of God. It needs to take into account the more inclusive Gospel statements contained in Matthew 25:31-46 where Jesus promises that those who *do* rather than *say* will enter heaven, and John 10:16 where there are sheep not of this fold who will also hear his voice.

The Luke 4 passage given at the start (quoting Isaiah 61:1-2) is helpfully more explicit about what the good news *is* – it's about restoration for people who are oppressed and something that will gladden the hearts of poor people.



The Kingdom that Jesus proclaimed is a place where not only people will know that God loves them and that the relationship is an eternal one of life in its fullness, but a Kingdom where there is a sense of parity and justice before God and between people. Belief is tied to actions that follow Jesus' example.

What we do about the instruction to heal needs careful thought, but the task of bringing about reconciliation, of enabling people to feel forgiven and to be able to cast aside shame is a huge task that we can definitely offer from within the churches. The Samaritan Woman at the well – arguably the first evangelist outwith the twelve called Disciples – believes that Jesus is the Messiah because he knows who she is and still treats her with respect and asks her to serve him. “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done!”

HOW DO WE 'PROCLAIM' THAT?

How do we attract people to engage in discipleship and a faith journey of following Jesus that is beyond personal piety, and to be part of a Christian community holistically addressing the life of the world and working to bring justice and joy to all?

There have been various moves in the last 20 years to enrich Christians of all theologies in their faith, and encourage them to engage with and explore how they can witness out of their own experience and understanding of God in their own lives. All Christians who have a reasonably active faith can tune in to God's promptings and 'gossip the Gospel' 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.

Even our wrestlings with God, or with trying to see kingdom values lived out, can speak because they are making the concept of the kingdom known, because they are making God real and relatable. It is not for us to convert or convince or persuade or pressurise other people. The attempts that Christians have made to ‘bring their children to faith’ or change the hearts of dying relatives are not models that need to be followed. We trust in God’s providing and not in any efforts of our own.

As we “love justice, do kindness and walk humbly with our God” (Micah 6:8): as we “love God and love our neighbours as ourselves” (Matthew 22:37-39) and “love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34) and are known to be followers of Jesus, that will attract people to become intrigued by the Jesus who inspires us. Then, just as we would share good news about our sports team’s victory, or becoming a parent, or progressing a task we’ve been putting off, so if we simply share on Twitter that a campaign in our workplace for greater pay parity is progressing, or with people outside our household that we are adopting a simpler lifestyle, or with friends at a distance that we have found reconciliation and forgiveness; and indicate that’s a cause for thankfulness and rejoicing as part of God’s Kingdom, we can let God do the rest.

(all Bible texts NRSVA)

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

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).

F1. Kingdom-shaped Evangelism on the Ground

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 or visit utusheffield.org.uk/KingdomEvangelism/hh

F2. A Kingdom Evangelism Course

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 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 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.

Section G - Church and Kingdom

Church and Kingdom is 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.

G1 Church and Kingdom

Stephen Platten

What is the point of mission? There is undoubtedly a real divergence in the way this question is answered, which is perhaps most clearly seen in contrasts between certain expressions of ‘evangelical theology’ and theological reflection emerging from ‘catholic’ expressions of the Christian faith. It is often described by making a relatively sharp distinction between Church and Kingdom, which we shall encounter a little further on, and which concerns what the Church is and what it understands itself to be for.

This divergence was captured classically in an article in the journal ‘Theology’, back in 1979. The article was by Paul Gibson, a Canadian Anglican theologian and was titled *A Partisan Plea for Liberal Mission*. We shall not try to précis the piece here, but instead simply describe the aim of the article. Paul’s key point is that *liberal* and *liberality* imply an essential freedom to choose. Surely a liberal theologian would not want to press anyone or indeed proselytise anyone since surely that stands in absolute contradiction to the very word liberal. But the irony, at the same time, is, of course, that the liberal Christian would hope that as many others as possible might also be attracted to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, clothed in the same liberal garments that she herself displays. Now that may feel to be something of a caricature, but it is not far from the essence of the ‘partisan plea’ for which Gibson argues.



The divergence implied here often focuses on whether the Christian faith requires each individual to give his his/her life to Christ or whether it is about the cosmic transformation of our humanity. But the disagreement is not simply about individual versus corporate salvation, although that is part of the story. This bifurcation between the individual and the full mass of humanity is itself an over-simplistic and distorted view of the nature of the

Christian message. Instead, the two things seen together are very clearly reflected as far back as in the theology of St Paul. So, for example, in Romans 7, Paul sharply defines that battle which goes on in each individual’s soul:

“I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate ... who would deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

G1

Here Paul directly acknowledges the individual challenge and the promise of ‘justification’ or ‘right-wising’ as Rudolf Bultmann put it in rather ugly terms. Individuals are challenged to respond to Christ. But Paul also sees the crucial significance of the corporate or universal aspect of what God has done for humanity in Christ. It is perhaps most richly stated in the much-quoted words from the fifth chapter of the Second Letter to the Corinthians:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and entrusting to us the ministry of reconciliation.”

A similar message emerges in the first chapter of the Letter to the Colossians, whether we believe it to have been written by Paul or by a very close disciple. Here we are challenged by the entire ‘Christ Event’, or what Bultmann, in equally ugly words to those I quoted earlier, described as the ‘salvation occurrence’. This was an event of cosmic, universal proportions; it was nothing less than a transformation of our humanity into the nature of Christ himself.

But thus far, in all that has been said, there has been no reference to *Church* or *Kingdom*. Where do we find it in Holy Scripture? Of course, in the later New Testament writings, some notion of the Church, *ecclesia*, that is a gathered community, does emerge, and certainly in the gospels, Kingdom is an essential concept, although it is not immediately translatable into a ‘kingdom theology’ such as that term is so often used in Christian social ethics. Nonetheless, without doubt the concept of *reconciliation* is central in both Testaments. This in itself implies an imperative issuing from the gospel.

This brings us to the work of a key theologian who speaks to this whole debate, namely one Frederick Denison Maurice, an Anglican writing in the nineteenth century and one of the founders of a proto-Christian socialism. Maurice was ever the controversialist. Son of a Unitarian minister, he became an Anglican and initially embraced the teaching of the ‘Oxford Movement’. Later he rebelled against Tractarianism to some extent. He taught in a number of institutions, eventually becoming Professor of English Literature and History and then Theology at King’s College, London. Later he was stripped of his Chair – partly on account of his Christian Socialism, but perhaps more importantly because of the impact of his writing in both *The Kingdom of Christ* and in his *Theological Essays*, which were both seen as falling short of orthodoxy. Almost certainly, too, misunderstanding arose from his writing style, which is extraordinarily convoluted and notable for its prolixity.

In terms of our focus here, perhaps most crucial of all was his writing on ecclesiology, that is, his understanding of the Church and sacraments. His teaching on baptism takes us to the heart. In a letter to a Quaker friend, he broaches the subject head on, rejecting what he sees as the claims of Evangelicals and then similarly offering a critique of Pusey and the Tractarians, whom indeed he misrepresents to a degree or perhaps simply misunderstands. Evangelical teaching is rejected because of its rootedness in the faith of the individual; what he believed to be the Anglo-Catholic approach is rejected because of its apparent insistence on baptism bringing about a change in the nature of our humanity. But what did Maurice himself believe? In this letter to his Quaker friend, he writes:

‘In my last letter I maintained that Christ, by whom, and for whom, all things were created, and in whom all things consist, has made reconciliation for mankind.’⁸



So, for Maurice, already established in Christ’s work is a relationship between every human being and God in Christ, right from that person’s birth onwards. In other words, we are born into a state of grace. Baptism pours further grace into that relationship as the person becomes part of the community of the Church. Such teaching dismisses the terror of infant children dying outside a state of grace having died before being baptised. Jeremy Morris summarises F D Maurice’s view thus:

“Baptism begins the believer’s life in the *Kingdom* and instantiates for the believer a union with God already true through the reconciling life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Baptism, for Maurice,

was egalitarian, in that it dispensed with the idea of all spiritual gradations between human beings. All human beings had a spiritual ‘eye’ which could be closed by self-will, or opened through baptismal fellowship.”⁹

Thus, every individual effectively is welcomed into the Kingdom at birth but not sacramentally incorporated into the Church. Church and Kingdom are not the same – Kingdom is a broader concept and does not bring with it the sacramental elements of faith which are essential to any ecclesiology.

Elsewhere Jeremy Morris writes:

“It was a fundamental axiom of Maurice that God had created human beings for communion with each other and with himself. This relationship constituted the primary truth of theology under which all other doctrines stood.”¹⁰

Having, then, set out Maurice’s approach, this offers a foundation for our understanding of the sharp division of opinion on personal and corporate salvation, which we encountered earlier. Maurice argues that God’s love is there for us from our birth, God is already working for the Kingdom, going before us; we do not establish the Kingdom for God. We are offered the choice of working with God for the Kingdom into which we are joined in baptism.

How might this affect our view of the Church? Let us bring on the next witness in the person of the German Protestant theologian, Ernst Troeltsch, who was writing in the early years of the twentieth century. Troeltsch’s work straddled the boundaries between theology and sociology. Here we shall focus only on his understanding of sociological models of the Church and the implications of these for ecclesiology. Troeltsch saw two main divergent models which he believed described different understandings of the Church – he calls these the *communal* and *associational* models. The communal pattern assumes, after the mould of F D Maurice, that all human beings are, from the beginning, created in and for God’s grace – we are all born into a relationship with God in Christ. Thus, the communal model assumes both that God is already in the world working to establish the Kingdom, and that therefore every human being is the responsibility of, and

lies within the focus of, the Church's apostleship and ministry. Of course, individuals may deliberately exclude themselves from the Church's purview either by 'closing their spiritual eyes by their own self-will' (to use Maurice's phrase) to the path of faith, or by being adherents of a different creed or faith community. This inclusive approach has been very much the pattern followed by the Church of England since the Reformation.

The *associational* view of the Church is rooted in differing models of a gathered community, of an eclectic church. Here, in its most extreme form, the church sees its role as the agency that snatches individuals as brands from the burning fires of hell or brings them safely into the ark of the faithful and thus into a 'personal relationship with Jesus'. As the impact of secularisation has increased, so has the attractiveness of this second model correspondingly increased. The implied 'liberalism' of the communal model is seen to be too complacent, insufficiently proactive in terms of the salvation of individual souls. Effectively it was this associational model that governed the drafters of the Church of England report *Mission-Shaped Church*. Undoubtedly, when well organised, churches founded on this model can be highly 'successful', albeit exclusive in approach and unashamedly understanding themselves as a gathered church. Baptism is the one and only gateway to salvation.

Each of these models will perforce beget a different pattern of mission. The associational modus operandi will focus primarily on increasing the numbers in the pews – that is the aim and effectively the starting point: mission means more people. Other implications will follow but this is the primary focus, alongside the nourishing of the internal life of the community. Such an approach most often uses the phrase *being church* – it is crucial to note the omission of the definite article there. Through that omission, 'church' becomes an end in itself. It produces an inner-directed pattern where all the rigmarole of church (too often seen as a club for those of a like mind) consumes the life of the community. The aim was outreach but effectively the result is 'in-reach'. In a moment we shall see the impact of retaining the definite article and speaking of 'the church', or better still 'the *Church*', by which one is identifying with the Church universal and not one self-contained local community.

The *communal* model sees mission through the lens of care and engagement with the whole community, working for the Kingdom – being *the Church* – now applies. Such a phrase requires a predicate; what are we being the Church for...? To leave the phrase 'the Church' hanging with no predicate is vacuous – the Church is called to be the instrument of God in Christ in the world, working with God to build the Kingdom. That is what the Church is for. Through care and witness to Christian values - sometimes requiring political action - and often challenging assumptions in the ambient culture – then, the Church, it is argued, will draw others to Christ. The curtains opened in the last generation, in terms of the Church of England, with an initiative set precisely within this perspective in the form of the report commissioned by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, *Faith in the City*. It is a classic derivative of the communal approach which led to the establishment of the Church Urban Fund and provoked government to take action in the inner cities.

On my arrival in West and South Yorkshire as Bishop of Wakefield, similar challenges beckoned. Grimethorpe, the place where the film *Brassed Off* was set, is one of the most

powerful examples of the challenges which the local church, that is the diocese, had to face at that time. Grimethorpe had been a thriving community of some 13,000 souls. By the time of my arrival, twenty years after the divisive Miners' Strike, with deep mining now almost gone, Grimethorpe was down to just 7,000 inhabitants, with a decimated community spirit. Those who had work drove off daily to warehouses on the M62, but many were *workless* and not *unemployed* – by now there were some families who had been living through two generations with worklessness. The impact on the social psychology of that pit village was devastating. Here, then, was the first focus for the Church and its ministry and mission.

Its only immediate resources were the parish priest and a rather barn-like Victorian church building. Father Peter Needham was a charismatic character (using that word in its non churchy sense) and he immersed himself in the community. Early on I was invited to preach at Evensong and then carry the Blessed Sacrament through the entire village, finishing at the Working Mens' Club, the old miners' gathering place, where I gave benediction to a packed house. All along our route, people had crowded in the streets to be part of this spectacle, but more than that, this was a symbol of renewal. Alongside this we worked with local doctors, social services and community groups – most of them led by women. (Arthur Scargill's estranged wife was a GP and churchgoer – Scargill himself was by now 'persona non grata' in much of the former mining community of this part of South Yorkshire). We were able to assist in the process of drawing down grants for renewal and social support. Eventually the interior of the church building was adapted for other uses without interfering with the main worship space. Here was a communal church pattern exemplified. Here there was a clear sense of working for the Kingdom; the local church saw its role as seeking out God's presence and working with the God of our Lord Jesus Christ in the community. Interestingly enough, gradually the congregation grew, not exponentially but significantly, in what had before seemed a very Godless climate.

Alongside what I have described thus far, we all also owe much in this area to Roman Catholic social teaching, reaching back for more than a century to Pope Leo XIII's ground-breaking encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. Teaching issuing from the concept of the Common Good has been seminal and is rooted in a communal view of mission. Two other notable writers outside the Roman Catholic Church showing a similar communal focus include Reinhold Niebuhr in the USA, with his emphasis on Christian Realism, and with his challenging, seminal 1932 book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, which indicated a radical difference in the behaviour of groups as opposed to individuals in relation to politics and social ethics. From the Anglican stable, perhaps the key contributor was William Temple, who was a member of the Beveridge Committee whose work presaged the emergence of the Welfare State and the 1944 Education Act. Temple's *Christianity and the Social Order* sowed the seeds for this development, and Temple and Niebuhr were reciprocally interdependent! Temple's concept of 'middle axioms' attempted to apply a Kingdom theology which allowed Christian values to be applied to the life of society as a whole – a thoroughly communal model.



Of late, another challenging model has emerged with the work of the American theologian, Stanley Hauerwas. Hauerwas is trenchantly critical of 'liberal' models, including those of Niebuhr and Temple. He argues that engaging with the values of contemporary culture compromises the challenge of Christian theology and, indeed, Christology (ironically there is overlap with the very different starting point of John Milbank and the 'radical orthodox' school). Instead, Hauerwas argues, the Church must simply 'be the Church' and, if its life and witness has a challenging impact on society, then so be it, but the essence of the gospel can be the only starting point. Such an approach has different implications once again. Nonetheless, these two models need not be entirely confrontational or mutually exclusive, as has been demonstrated recently.¹¹

As a Church of England deacon, priest and bishop, I admit to remaining entirely committed to the communal model of the Church and the patterns of mission that it implies. All people fall within the gracious love of God in Christ, all are part of the responsibility of God's Church – not, of course just the Church of England! Nonetheless, there is no doubt that an ideological application of this principle will have its own serious flaws. A concern for a growing Church with a healthy and growing kernel is essential if the gospel is to survive. We can learn from elements within the associational model and should not simply discount all concern with the salvation of individuals and their relationship with their Creator and Redeemer. New ways of attracting more to the Church community are essential, perhaps through pilgrimage and other initiatives, including street theatre, political engagement, performances of *The Way of the Cross*, etc. These may catch the Zeitgeist. There is no philosophy more illiberal than that of the fundamentalist liberal! We must remain open to learn from those with whom we most vehemently disagree!

1. *To Build Christ's Kingdom: F.D.Maurice and his Writings*. Edited by Jeremy Morris. Canterbury Press, London.2007.p.95. 2. Jeremy Morris, *F D Maurice and the Crisis of Christian Authority*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.2005.p.82. 3. Op cit.p.64 4. Cf. for example Matthew Bullimore 'Public Theology or Ecclesial Theology', in *Theology Reforming Society: Revisiting Anglican Social Theology*. SCM Press, London.2017. pp.144-166.

How you can take part in this work

1.
 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 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 and help shape how this develops.

Section H - Kingdom Evangelism Resources

Section A - Creative things

Faith Pictures - Church Army

Pictures of Jesus – Christian Aid

The of Andy Flanagan

Sheffield Resurrection Octyche: To borrow the Octyche for an exhibition in your church please contact in the first instance The Administrator, The Foundry at Victoria Hall, Norfolk Street, Sheffield S1 2 JB, 0114 272 1749, admin@victoriahallsheffield.org

Section B – Biblical sources and theological matters

The Lost Message of Paul. Steve Chalke (SPCK 2019)

Growing Good: Growth, Social Action and Discipleship in the Church of England Hannah Rich (Theos 2020)

Jesus' Plan for a New World: The Sermon on the Mount, Richard Rohr (with J. Feister) (St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1996)

Miranda Threlfall-Holmes, How to eat Bread: 21 nourishing ways to read the Bible, 2021.

Section C - understandings of evangelism

Journeying Out: A new approach to Christian Mission. Ann Morisy (Continuum 2006).

Beyond the Good Samaritan: Community Ministry and Mission. Ann Morisy (Continuum 2009)

Faith Beyond Doubt. Brian MacLaren

Liberal Evangelism. John Saxbee (SPCK 1994)

Going for Growth. Jeffrey John. (Affirming Catholicism).

Not Religion, But Love: Practising a Radical Spirituality of Compassion. David Andrews (Lion Publishing, 2001)

Pilgrim Course Book 8, Church and Kingdom. (Church House Publishing, 2015).

Section D – praxis

HOPE Together - all sorts of resources based around the liturgical year, for connecting with your local community. https://www.hopetogether.org.uk/Groups318984HOPE_Together_in.aspx

Living His Story. Hannah Steele (SPCK 2020)

Hey, Be and See: We Can be the Change We Want to See in the World. David Andrews (Authentic Media, 2009)

Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the Twelve Steps. Richard Rohr (Saint Anthony Messenger Press, 2011).

The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation. Richard Rohr with Mike Morrell (Whitaker, 2016).

Section E – discipling and faith-sharing tools

The Journey – following Jesus through Mark's Gospel. John Vincent (Ashram Press 2008, new edition due 2022).

Talking of God together

<https://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk/books/TOG0118/talking-of-god-together>

Talking of God with others

<https://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk/books/TOG0219/talking-of-god-with-others>

SMART Course LYCIG – (Leading Your Church Into Growth) revised 2021
She too – Bible Study, Bible Book Club

Luke 4:18-19.

