



Thy Kingdom Come & Churches Together in England: Ecumenical Participation session – feedback notes

NB: These notes were taken from the online workshops jointly held by Thy Kingdom Come and Churches Together in England early December 2024.

About Thy Kingdom Come 2025:

The theme for 2025 is the Lord's Prayer. There will be resources for all ages in previous years:

- Adults – Print resources: Prayer Journal and the Novena and Digital resources: Films x 11 days
- Children – Cheeky Pandas animation series & activity packs
- Youth- videos from 'The Way' UK and discussion plans for young people.

*This year's Novena has been written by Archbishop Stephen Cottrell and the Prayer Journal will feature a range of ecumenical contributions.

All the main content will be on the TKC App.

Purpose of the sessions:

- Provide ideas and inspiration to help resource you to participate ecumenically in your context.
- 'What's the one thing you can do for Thy Kingdom Come 2025?'

Case studies/examples shared in the sessions re. ecumenical participation in TKC 2025:

1. **Nottingham City Prayer (NCP)**- they have organised an annual, ecumenical prayer gathering since 2017- mobilising many across the city. For example, most recently, over 1,000 people from 100 churches attended the beacon event. This journey began in 2015 when they had a vision to pray and bless the city and unite Christians in the area. This started with monthly prayer meetings. Building good relationships between church leaders was incredibly important in establishing trust, which is foundational – 'coffee and connection'. Through regular prayer and then planning together, the first event happened in 2017. They have been very intentional in their efforts to engage with the breadth of church denominations and traditions in the region including Catholic, Anglican and Black Majority churches for example. Other important points: their approach to these gatherings is 'Inter-church' rather than 'multi-church'. For example, having a mixed band from across different church backgrounds rather than different bands from different churches. For the event, the focus is on unity rather than having "my stage time" for a particular speaker / denomination and they are always keen to ensure this unity is visible.

They have worked hard to ensure diversity of representation such as age, gender, ethnicity, church type.

Key tip from NCP: Don't over plan. Leave space and focus more on what's happening across people / those gathered than what is happening on stage. Provide plenty of moments for those in attendance to gather in prayer together.

2. **Black Country Churches Together** - Robert Mountford, Ecumenical Officer for Birmingham, the Black Country and Staffordshire, shared a brief overview of TKC activity in the region since 2018.

In 2018, they held an ecumenical event with senior church leaders from across Stoke On Trent which was broadcast on local BBC radio on Pentecost Sunday. They also 'Beat the Bounds' of Staffordshire which included different churches/denominations and traditions hosting events each evening throughout the 11 days, uniting



people from across the area. They also held an outdoor Pentecost event in Dudley Priory with prayer stations and with a time of prayer and worship, gathering hundreds of people.

In 2019- a day before Pentecost, senior church leaders went on pilgrimage to Lichfield Cathedral – walking 19 miles. It was a wonderful time of fellowship, praying for the towns & villages and countryside then culminating into praying together in the Cathedral.

During the Lockdown years – in 2020 and 2021 –events moved online which continued for the next few years. This included video reflections from senior leaders in Birmingham including Archbishop Bernard Longley from the Catholic church.

In 2023 – they held 48 hours of continuous prayer at the Beacon house of prayer in Stoke on Trent.

In 2024 – they held a Civic prayer & worship breakfast in Stoke on Trent held on Ascension Day. Almost 400 people attended including the Lord Mayor, Lieutenant, MPs, city councillors and church leaders. The event was focused on praying for the city. They are planning to run this event again for 2025, which also coincides with the date of the city's Centenary– focusing on the Lord's prayer in the context of the city.

- 3. Pray for Schools** – they encourage Christians throughout the year to pray and support local schools. For Thy Kingdom Come, they encourage people to 'Pray for 5' schools or teachers and / or children. They host events locally in Shropshire and across the country.
- 4. East Grinstead-** they held prayer meetings throughout the 10 days of TKC- with different churches taking it in turn to host a prayer meeting. They are building on this for 2025.

Ideas:

- **Outdoor prayer stations** – Could you host prayer stations / outside prayer spaces at bus stops to encourage people to join in prayer as they wait for the bus? Or try praying outdoors in other spaces such as car parks – be it a supermarket or pub or in another outside space such as a public park.
- **Continuous prayer** - from 12/1; 24/1; 24/7 or 24/10. This works well ecumenically and also across small churches or large churches, in rural or urban contexts.
- **Pilgrimages** – This is very popular. Everyday journeys could be turned into prayer walking – praying blessings on people and places. They could also be more formally organised gatherings. Again, this works well for different group sizes and in different locations villages / big cities.
- **Preaching sermons on 'Thy Kingdom Come' / 'The Lord's Prayer'**-- sharing sermons from the pulpit could be a good way to engage people in a deeper way – perhaps even a series of sermons across a particular period including the 11 days.
- **'Pray for Five'** – not just praying for people but extend this to specific groups. For example – 5 schools / teachers / children or workers or praying for 5 roads in the local area.
- **'TKC into schools'** – creating a 'Thy Kingdom Come' theme section in a prayer space in schools for example (Prayer Spaces in Schools would be a great resource for this).
- Prayer WhatsApp group – Why not consider creating a WhatsApp group or open up an existing one for other churches to join (make it ecumenical) for the period of TKC?



Tips on how to build relationships ecumenically:

1. The best ecumenical work starts with friendship. This is reflected in all aspects; praying and planning together from the outset will lead to an truly ecumenical event.
2. Ensure commitment from other churches to avoid just one person / church doing it all. Ensure each church has a representative from their church on the planning committee.
3. Use existing contacts / build on the existing set of relationships you already have, in order to organise a gathering. For example –if there is a regular Men or Women’s Prayer breakfast, could you organise one for TKC? Or perhaps where leaders have gathered for prayer at another time in the year, such as Remembrance Sunday or the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – could you build on this network to do something for TKC?
4. Develop a practical ‘how to’ guide for local churches to engage ecumenically.
5. Importance of buy-in from senior church leadership team. Having support from a Senior church leader of a church / churches can really help efforts to push things forward.
6. Start where you are. If for example, it has been challenging to engage ecumenically, why not get involved and support another church / different denomination who is already organising a TKC event in your area and then build from there?