FOR THE KINGDOM

ONE PEOPLE, MANY NATIONS

Kingdom Community

John 15:1–7 • Part Four

Kensington Temple London City Church
Energise Conference • 7.00 pm • 22 October 2026

THE CENTRAL VISION

Many branches. One vine. Many nations. One people. The life of Jesus makes a diverse Church into a kingdom home.

HOME: SHELTER, BELONGING AND SENDING

The message opened with "The Twenty-Fifth Door", a poem shaped by the experience of repeated moves and the longing that a borrowed manse might become more than an address. Home is imagined as a place where restless furniture can remain, love can put down quiet roots, family can find "beds prepared, warm bread and time enough", and every room can say, "You are dear". Yet the poem refuses to make home a private refuge. The desired dwelling is both shelter and sending, a rooted place with an open table and an unlocked door.

This personal longing becomes a theological lens. Home is the place, community and condition of the heart in which people are received, known and formed. It is embodied in shelter and stability; created through recognition and shared life; formative of identity, memory, faith and vocation; hospitable towards the stranger; inseparable from questions of poverty, migration, violence and housing; and provisional in the light of the renewed creation where God will dwell with humanity.

A multicultural church as a sign of home

Against that backdrop, 135 nations gathered in KTLCC become a living picture of the kingdom. People arrive with different languages, foods, music, histories and experiences of migration. Some were born in London, some chose it, and others were pushed towards it by circumstance. Their unity does not depend upon sameness. It is created by their shared participation in Christ.

> *"I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit."*
> John 15:5

The vine and branches image gives the message its controlling metaphor. Jesus is the one source of life; believers are many branches. One Spirit animates many cultures, one gospel is proclaimed in many

languages, and one kingdom embraces many nations. Redeemed diversity is therefore not an obstacle the gospel must overcome. It is part of the beauty the gospel displays.

ONE PEOPLE	ONE AMBASSADOR	ONE VOCATION
In Christ, many nations become one people.	Through one person, the kingdom can reach a community.	Kingdom people build and extend community.

KINGDOM COMMUNITY

1 IN CHRIST, MANY NATIONS BECOME ONE PEOPLE

The Church is not first an organisation that individuals join. It is a life into which they are incorporated. Because the same life of Christ flows through every branch, nationality, passport, language and inherited culture cannot determine a believer's value, access to God or standing among God's people. Galatians 3:28 does not abolish human difference; it removes difference as a hierarchy of worth.

Unity without uniformity

Pentecost provides the pattern. The Spirit did not impose one language upon the gathered peoples. The mighty works of God were heard through many languages. Cultural difference was not erased but drawn into Spirit-filled communion. Revelation 7 carries the same vision into the kingdom's future: one multitude worships before the Lamb, while remaining recognisable as people from every nation, tribe, people and language. The kingdom's miracle is unity without uniformity and diversity without division.

BELONGING

At KT, 135 nations are not merely represented in one building; in Christ, they are being formed into one people.

Sociologically, belonging requires more than proximity. Alberto Gasparini describes it as an active attachment involving place, shared values and social relationships.[1] A crowd may share a room without sharing life. Jesus offers something deeper: believers share his life, love, Spirit and mission. Christians from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and Europe are not guests in somebody else's church. In Christ, this is our family, our table, our mission and our inheritance.

Theologically, the source of this communion is the triune God. Cyprian describes the Church as a people made one in the unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[2] The Father gathers, the Son reconciles, and the Spirit indwells. Miroslav Volf consequently argues for a community that protects both personal identity and communal belonging: persons are not dissolved into the group, yet neither do they become themselves in isolation.[3]

Cultures received as gifts and submitted to Christ

Kingdom belonging does not require a person to become less Nigerian, Indian, Irish, Jamaican, Brazilian or British. It does require every identity to come under the lordship of Jesus. Culture may enrich the community, but it must never displace Christ from the centre. The vine is not Britain, Africa, the Caribbean, Asia, Europe or the Americas. Jesus is the true vine.

This keeps diversity from becoming either tokenism or tribalism. We do not merely tolerate one another's differences. We receive them as gifts, learning new ways of praying, celebrating, grieving, welcoming and serving, while bringing every practice to the judgement and renewal of Christ. Ephesians

2 names the result as "one new humanity": Christ breaks down hostility and creates a reconciled people whose common life witnesses to the gospel.

THE FATHER	THE SON	THE SPIRIT
gathers a people	reconciles enemies	forms communion

KINGDOM AMBASSADORS

2 THROUGH ONE AMBASSADOR, THE KINGDOM CAN REACH A COMMUNITY

Redemption does not remove believers from human relationships. It sends them back into those relationships as representatives of Christ. "We are ambassadors for Christ," Paul writes, "since God is making his appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5:20). An ambassador lives in one territory while representing another kingdom. In the same way, God places believers within families, streets, workplaces, schools, hospitals, businesses, universities, the arts, government and public life. For a transnational congregation this vocation has unusual reach. Many people carry a nation of birth and a nation of dwelling, remaining connected across continents. Someone rooted in London may retain deep relationships with Lagos, Kingston, Accra, Belfast, Delhi, Seoul, Bogotá or Warsaw. These ties are not incidental to mission. Redeemed by God, they can become channels through which the life of the kingdom travels into families, communities and nations.

The biblical pattern: one encounter opens a network

CORNELIUS	LYDIA	SAMARITAN WOMAN
gathers relatives and friends; the Spirit falls	believes, is baptised, and opens her home	testifies, and a city comes to Jesus

Acts repeatedly shows encounters becoming communal openings. Cornelius gathers his relational network to hear Peter (Acts 10). Lydia's household is baptised and her home becomes a base for hospitality and mission (Acts 16). The Philippian jailer hears the word with his household, and the whole household rejoices. In John 4, a Samaritan woman returns to her city with an invitation to "come and see", and many respond. One person meets Jesus, but the encounter does not remain with one person.

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE ONE PERSON

One ambassador can open a family, a workplace, a community or a nation to Jesus.

Research on conversion helps explain why relationships matter. Ines Jindra argues that conversion involves biography, trusted relationships and social networks, without reducing faith to network influence alone.[4] This does not replace the Holy Spirit; it identifies a common means of the Spirit's work. People may resist an institution but listen to a sister, mistrust a preacher but watch a colleague, or refuse a service while accepting an invitation to dinner.

Representation, not domination

Christian ambassadorship is not domination but representation. Believers make the King visible through work, leadership, conflict, money, honour, truthfulness, generosity and concern for the common good. Every vocation can therefore become a sphere of kingdom witness. The teacher and entrepreneur, nurse and civil servant, artist and scientist, carer and lawyer are no less sent than the pastor, evangelist or missionary. Lesslie Newbigin insisted that the gospel becomes publicly credible through a believing community whose life makes God's reign visible.[5] Scripture supplies vivid examples: Joseph preserves a

family and feeds nations; Esther's courage helps deliver a people; Daniel's fidelity confronts imperial power; Philip's preaching brings joy to a city. When God saves one person, he sees a potential gateway into homes, institutions and communities. The first Christian in a family need not be the last.

"One branch connected to the vine carries the life of the vine."

Kingdom vocation

FRUITFUL COMMUNITY

3 KINGDOM PEOPLE BUILD AND EXTEND COMMUNITY

Abiding moves towards fruitfulness. God has not planted the Church in London merely to hold Christian meetings or extract individuals from their communities. The Church is sent to bless, serve, strengthen and build community. Jeremiah's command to the exiles, "Seek the welfare of the city" (Jer. 29:7), gives believers responsibility for the nation of habitation as well as love for the nation of origin.

London's peace, families, loneliness, poverty, violence, housing pressures, education, healthcare and social fragmentation therefore concern the Church. A hyper-diverse congregation can become a bridge between peoples and places. Research by Mark Cartledge and his colleagues shows how London megachurches can act as significant agents of social engagement, linking congregational theology, globalisation and practical service.[6] This is public theology in practice: the Church becomes a sign, instrument and foretaste of God's reign.

From crowd to communion

Acts 2 describes not only a worshipping community but a sharing one. Believers pray, eat, notice need and share resources. This answers the wound of isolation. In true community, someone knows your name, notices your absence, shares your joy, carries your grief, tells the truth in love and prays when you have no words. Sunday gathers the many; smaller communities enable the many to be known.

Christian belonging is formed through shared practices, stories, meals and memories centred on Jesus: Scripture, the Lord's Table, the cross and resurrection, hospitality, prayer, burden-bearing and welcome. As Hilton Scott argues, worship, belief and life together are inseparable.[7] Worship must form a community more beautiful than the divisions around it. Communion with God creates responsibility for one another, for those who suffer, and for the city's common life.

HOSPITALITY	SERVICE	MISSION
make room for the stranger	seek the welfare of the city	extend kingdom relationships

The porch light: church as provisional home

The closing poem, "The Porch Light", gathers the message into one image. People arrive carrying roads, displacement and stories interrupted. A chair moved, bread set out and patient listening can turn a borrowed room into mercy. The Church is not yet the completed house of God, but it is a lamp against the darkness and a table laid in anticipation of the feast. It learns forgotten names, welcomes those at the threshold and discovers that Christ is already beside them.

THE CALL

Abide in Christ. Receive one another. Build community. Bless the city. Represent the King. Extend the kingdom.

The final vision is clear: one people drawn from many nations, living for the glory of one King. Many branches share one vine; many gifts are animated by one Spirit; many ambassadors serve one kingdom. The credibility of the gospel is displayed when this diverse people refuses both uniformity and division, practises hospitality and reconciliation, seeks London's welfare, and carries the life of Jesus into every sphere of society. KT is called to be a house of prayer for the nations and a porch light of the coming creation, keeping welcome visible until every exile hears, "You now belong."

The Twenty-Fifth Door

Malcolm Duncan

We turn the key, as we have done before,
And carry all our journeys through the frame;
Two dozen houses lie behind this door,
Each holding some old sorrow, joy or name.
But here, within the shelter of the manse,
We pray our restless furniture may stay;
That we may learn belonging, not by chance,
But slowly, as the light inhabits day.

May this be home for both of us, a place
Where years need not be folded into crates;
Where love grows quiet roots, and ordinary grace
Is found in shared routines and garden gates.
May children, family, all who travel here,
Find beds prepared, warm bread and time enough;
May every room say plainly: You are dear,
And every welcome make the distance soft.

A manse is borrowed ground, yet it may bear
The weight of prayer, of laughter and of tears;
A house whose open doorway learns to share
The joys and wounds entrusted through the years.
So, Lord, make this our dwelling and our rest,
A refuge, yet a table opened wide;
And when our family comes, may they be blessed
To find us rooted, waiting there inside.

We have become practised in the lift and carry,
the sorting of a life into marked boxes,
the last look back at rooms already losing us,
our voices fading from their emptied walls.
Twenty-four doors have closed behind our leaving.
Now this old key lies heavy in my palm,
and the manse waits, its stones holding their silence,
as if the ground itself might let us stay.

Here, may my wife and I will unpack the years again,
set down what travelled wordless between us our time,
and find, beneath the duties of a house the safety of a home.

This is not ours, and yet the earth is God's.
We borrow walls, as we have borrowed days,
and press our hope into this patch of ground
like bulbs entrusted to the dark of winter.
Lord, root us deeper than an address.
Make of this manse a shelter and a sending,

a place where those we love may come and find us,
the lamp still lit, the door unlocked, at home.

The Porch Light

Malcolm Duncan

We come with weather on us, carrying roads,
the dust of places where we were not known,
our names mislaid, our stories interrupted,
our hearts still packed in boxes from the leaving.
Then someone moves a chair and makes a space,
sets bread before us, listens without hurry.
A door held open can become a mercy,
a borrowed room begin to feel like home.

This is the church: not yet the house completed,
nor all the wide domain of God made whole;
only a lamp set out against the darkness,
a table laid before the feast has come.

Here we display the welcome of the Kingdom,
learning the names that others have forgotten,
making room for those still at the threshold,
and finding Christ already stands beside them.

For we are travelling towards a firmer country,
a city whose foundations cannot shift,
where no one lives beneath the threat of leaving
and every exile hears, You now belong.
Until that day, Lord, make of us a doorway,
not keeping grace within, but opening wide:
a people who, as harbingers of hope advance the Kingdom,
keep its porch light burning through the night.

NOTES

1. Alberto Gasparini, "Community and Territorial Belonging," Comparative Sociology 9, no. 4 (2010): 433–62.
2. Cyprian of Carthage, On the Lord's Prayer, 23.

3. Miroslav Volf, After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).
4. Ines W. Jindra, A New Model of Religious Conversion: Beyond Network Theory and Social Constructivism (Leiden: Brill, 2014).
5. Lesslie Newbigin, The Gospel in a Pluralist Society (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989).
6. Mark J. Cartledge, Sarah Dunlop, Heather Buckingham, and Sophie Bremner, Megachurches and Social Engagement: Public Theology in Practice (Leiden: Brill, 2019).
7. Hilton Scott, A Sense of Belonging: Being Church in Pluralistic Society (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2022).