



## Kingdom Overflow

Reaching young adults through attractive worship and extreme love  
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“I like bold,” leader Tom Lambert tells me as he explains the vision for Kingdom Overflow. Their values are certainly bold: extreme love, intimate worship, expectant pursuit and overflowing out. Their vision is to be more than a church congregation, and rather to be a community hub.

This is a far cry from the youth ministry that Kingdom Overflow started out as in 2009. So how did they reach this point?

This case study of Kingdom Overflow highlights:

- The importance of **one-to-one mission and discipleship** with young people
- The need to **make people feel valued** and give them a feeling of self-worth
- That **healthy churches reproduce and resource mission elsewhere**



## Introducing Kingdom Overflow

**Where:** Cranham - a peripheral London suburb, historically an Essex village

**Denomination:** Church of England

**Date started:** 2009

**Target group:** 15-30s, including older youth, graduates, young parents

**Number of people involved:** Weekly Sunday gatherings average around 90-110 people. There are approximately 150 people in the wider church community.

**Staffing / funding:** 1 full-time lay minister. Various volunteers and interns over the years, but all working voluntarily.

**Premises:** Church building and connected church hall

**Other points of note:** Kingdom Overflow is a church plant of a church plant. It meets in and maintains close links with St Luke's Cranham Park, though it is clearly seen as its own worshipping congregation.

**Website:** [www.kingdomoverflow.com](http://www.kingdomoverflow.com)



## Mission at Kingdom Overflow

In terms of making disciples, Tom says:

*"I've always found one-to-one discipleship, mentoring, coaching, whatever you call it, to be most effective."*

The focus at Kingdom Overflow is on one-to-one mission with young adults and building a community where every member plays their part in the mission of the church. Tom and his team spend most of their time during the week meeting with people one-to-one and the hope is that young adults will meet up with their non-Christian friends in a similar way.



Anecdotally, a lot of attenders who took part in the attenders survey as part of this research identified an invitation from a friend as the reason they started to attend Kingdom Overflow, so there is evidence that this is happening in practice.

Tom is keen to take this further, saying: “We’re trying to develop a one-to-one discipleship team who, as people give their lives to Christ, it’s their job to take people on the first stage of their journey through 5 or 6 sessions of mentoring.”

Inviting friends along to church on Sunday is integral to Kingdom Overflow’s mission. This is by no means a new or novel approach to mission, but at Kingdom Overflow it is done well. They even produced a video to demonstrate how to do it, which you can see [here](#).

Tom explains that getting the ‘feel’ of the Sunday gathering right is important, and in the early days Kingdom Overflow spent around £500 on drapes, decorations and other equipment to help give a modern feel to the worshipping space.

The results are noticeable - when you go to Kingdom Overflow on a Sunday, you receive a warm welcome, the passion and enthusiasm of the young people is tangible and it is clearly an environment that young Christians feel confident inviting non-Christian friends to.

*Sunday gathering is “not just church for young people; it’s church with, by and through young people”.*

It’s not all about Sundays though; Kingdom Overflow also runs a weekly Friday café to build community, has weekly home groups and runs regular events with a focus on social action, called The Flow.

Over the years the mission field has changed somewhat from youth to young adults, largely due to attenders staying on after reaching 18. Kingdom Overflow has had a presence in local schools since it started, offering mentoring and support services which still continue.



Kingdom Overflow aims to be a community hub, providing support for those in need in the community in line with the vision for the sending church, St Luke’s.

One example of this in practice is their work with a 19-year-old man who had a mental breakdown and was being moved out of the local town on a daily basis by the police.

Kingdom Overflow got involved, spent 48 hours with him and got him admitted to the local hospital, during which time they were able to minister to him and provide pastoral support. His life is now back on track, finding the right medication for his condition and he even gave his life to Christ.

Kingdom Overflow has also resourced mission elsewhere. 12 former interns and volunteers have now gone on to full-time ministry in various contexts across the country.

“3 people are at vicar college. 2 people are in Cornwall planting churches. We’ve got 3 people in Bethel at the moment. 4 people are running youth ministry up and down the country.” There are currently 3 interns voluntarily giving about 16 hours a week to the life of the church, with a view to moving into full-time ministry in due course.

## **Evidence of growth**

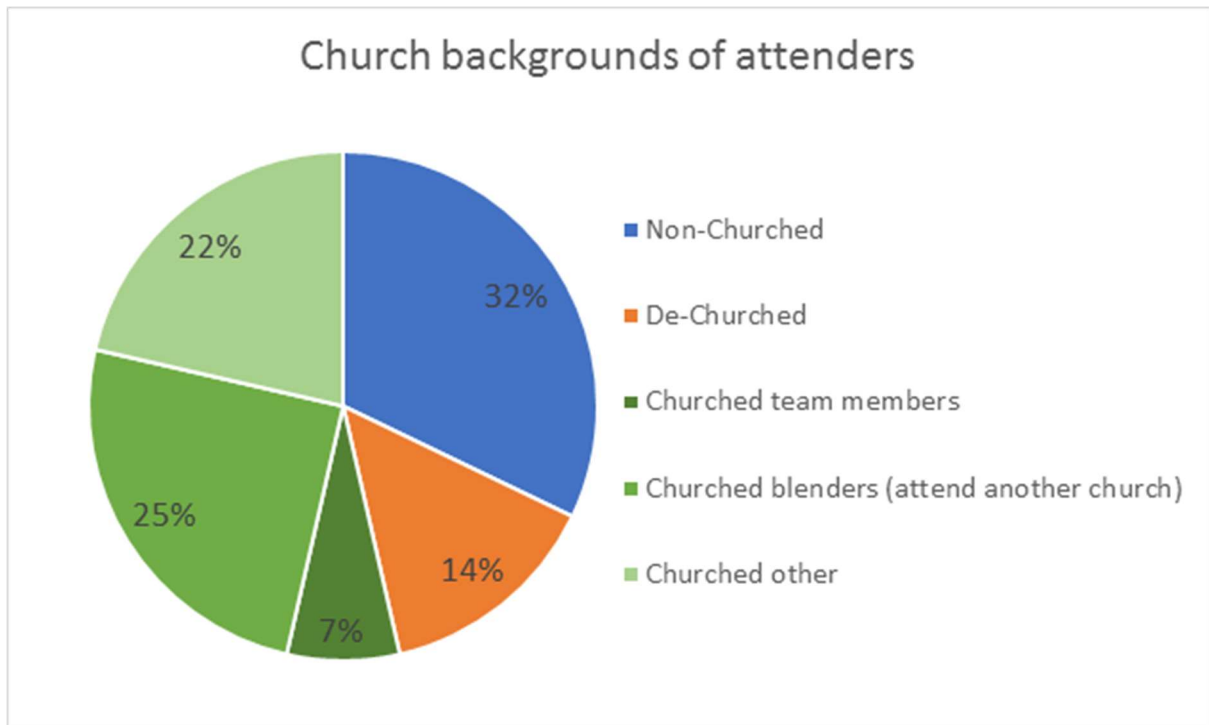
When it started in 2009, Kingdom Overflow averaged 25 people on Sundays, 80% of whom were 16 or under.

Over the years this figure has steadily grown, and now around 90-110 people attend on Sundays, with approximately 150 people in the total community. Under 16s now account for less than 10% of the Sunday gathering, with over 50% of attenders falling in the 18-24 age bracket.

In terms of church background, 31% of Sunday attenders are non-churched, with a further 14% de-churched and 3% growing up in Kingdom Overflow since before they were 10 years old.

Just over half of all attenders identify as either becoming a Christian at Kingdom Overflow (24%) or that Kingdom Overflow helped them rediscover a Christian faith they had lost (28%).

In addition, 21 people were baptised in 2017, and that was only up to September.



For a further explanation of the categories in the pie chart above, please see appendix 2 of our main findings report, available from the **Mission with young adults** home page.

### How have people come to faith?

*“What we find a lot is that there are real, huge issues around self-worth and value... What we’re finding is the root of almost everything that’s going on ... is people not realising what they’re worth.” Tom Lambert*

Tom reflects that many people’s experience of coming to Kingdom Overflow on Sundays is encountering a community where people are genuinely valued, and this underpins many young people’s stories of coming to faith. Tom has found himself repeatedly being given prophetic words and pictures for young adults under the theme of self-worth. He sometimes doubts whether they are intended for the recipient as they come around so often, but he is often told they are meaningful for people in very specific ways.

Some people start coming to Kingdom Overflow and find faith during their teenage years. Being a ‘youth church grown up’, this should come as little surprise. One attender, for example, told me of his conversion at Soul Survivor (a Christian summer camp); now 21, Kingdom Overflow has sustained and helped him grow in his faith ever since.



Others have come to faith as young adults. One attender told me of his dramatic conversion experience. Having been deeply involved in drug usage and dealing, he came along to Kingdom Overflow out of the blue with his partner one Sunday and has been coming almost every week since.

His life has now changed its trajectory and on Father's Day this year he was baptised - which was significant as he has a 1-year-old daughter.

Curiously, Tom explains: "The Alpha course, so far, hasn't really worked for the people we're ministering to... I've always loved the Alpha course, but it doesn't seem to be scratching where a lot of these guys around 15-30 seem to be itching at the moment, at least here where we are."

It may be that the Alpha dynamic of aiming to provide answers to difficult questions isn't as effective as a personal or individual approach to mission with this group of young adults.

## Conclusions

### What from this case study is reproducible or transferable?

Tom is adamant that the context in Cranham is not unique and the way Kingdom Overflow does mission is transferable.

Inviting friends to Sunday worship is certainly not a radical idea. Nurturing a congregation which young people feel confident and happy to invite friends along to is tricky, but it can certainly be reproduced elsewhere.

As mentioned earlier, it is important to get the 'feel' of the gathering right though. Mentoring and investing in people one-to-one is not radical either and can be done in a variety of contexts.

## Resources needed

Investing time in young people during the week is resource intensive and may be almost impossible for churches that can't afford to employ a full-time youth minister.

The Sunday gatherings at Kingdom Overflow also perhaps work well because the worship space doesn't look like a traditional church, and serves to dispel outdated stereotypes of what church looks like.



Traditional church services are not universally unpopular for all young adults, but they certainly aren't contextually appropriate for the cohort attending Kingdom Overflow.

## Top tips

*“Find and invest in individuals ... then pray in a place where you can make mistakes together along the way.”*

This is Tom's advice for prospective leaders wanting to start something similar to Kingdom Overflow.

Tom also says: “I want to make it clear to anyone I talk to that I have no idea what I'm doing.” This expresses humility, and also emphasises the importance of finding the right formula as you go along. Building a church is a long and difficult process and mistakes will always be made on the way. Tom says: “You have to be okay with that!”



## Healthy churches reproduce

Kingdom Overflow itself is a church plant from a church plant, and is testament to the notion that healthy churches are reproductive churches.

Kingdom Overflow is not the Tom Lambert show (this is a big compliment to Tom); young adults are invested in to be leaders themselves, and often lead the Sunday gatherings, preach and lead worship. 12 people have gone on from Kingdom Overflow to work in full-time ministry across the country.

## To find out more

Visit the Kingdom Overflow website

[www.kingdomoverflow.com](http://www.kingdomoverflow.com)