



E News

March 2026

Issue 130

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Welcome to the March edition of Street Jesus e-news
It was interesting to read the criticism of Bedford borough council and their decision on February 17th to wish local Muslims a happy Ramadan and all those who are observing the fast, then a day later on February 18th wishing Christians a happy lent. A poster took issue with Bedford council that the Ramadan announcement appeared before the Christian one stating that we as a Christian country should take precedence. The council were rightly trying to represent all communities in the borough and as they pointed out in their rather mischievous response they cannot be held responsible for the decision taken at the council of Nicaea in 325AD where the Christian dates for the Easter period were set, nor for the formation of the moon 4.53 billion years ago. The crescent moon determines the start point for Ramadan. The term 'Happy lent' though is a misnomer and inappropriate. Beginning on Ash Wednesday the placing of ashes and dust mixed with



oil on the forehead represents a sense of grieving for what Jesus endured, the ridicule, abandonment, suffering and his execution for blasphemy. There is much in the biblical accounts leading up to the crucifixion that expose the reality of human sin. We see anger, violence, power, expediency, self interest, denial, lies, disloyalty and betrayal, to name a few.

Nothing much has changed in this respect. There are plenty of ashes (mixed with tears) in the burnt out buildings of Ukraine and Gaza. Lent is a time of prayer, fasting, sacrifice, and deep reflection, Humility and our flawed human nature meet in repentance and sorrow at the reality of human nature. The book of lamentations and the story of Job in particular connects us to this reality. Happy it is not, but lent represents an unpalatable truth which is totally at odds with the cultural zeitgeist. Some might say that this is all a bit too Eeyore and that we need much more Tigger. In the Christian life there is spiritual enrichment when we connect with truth, warts and all, but faith doesn't leave us there, it draws us to the grace love and connection that we can enjoy with God which culminates in the sheer joy of the resurrection which we celebrate on Easter Sunday.

The social media poster in Bedford may wish for lent to take preference over Ramadan but the bible tells us in the book of Matthew that he who is first shall be last and he who is last shall be first.

During lent we focus on the bad news before the good. Confident hope is essential to the Christian life and at this time we focus on what makes that hope possible. At Street Jesus we pray that you will all experience the fullest and deepest relationship with God this lent.



We might like to accuse the Bedford council of religious illiteracy as some have, but truly lent can only be fully understood from the experience of faith. We feel it because we love Jesus in a personal way. If Jesus is just an historical figure and the meaning of lent merely academic its almost impossible to conceive. It's the difference between head knowledge and heart knowledge. Besides we live in a society since the 1960's which has shifted its focus from the spiritual to the material and from common bonds toward individualism. With the rise of complexity and a more diverse culture we are distracted away from God. There is a whole panoply of activities including shopping that people can enjoy on Sunday mornings rather than attend Church services



Fifty years ago, councils by and large concentrated on delivering essential services, with multiculturalism they are now addressing the psychological needs of minority cultural identity groups in an attempt to foster inclusion and harmony. The result however seems to be fragmentation, as tribal instincts come to the fore. The extremes are amplified on social media which international state-actors manipulate in a very effective way in order to destabilise and sow division. Individuals and organisations get swept along in this tide. Naturally there are differences between cultural groups where problems and extreme behaviours may cause fear and a sense of unwanted change, this often leads to taring all in that particular group with the same brush.

This can be used politically. Zia Yousef of Reform UK believes the country is losing its Christian values, yet states all that is good in Britain is derived from our Christian heritage, and that some religious viewpoints are incompatible with the values we have built and go against the grain of tolerance equality and freedom.



Reform UK have pledged to give all Churches listed status (most have already) complaining that many have been converted to art venues, bars and café's but also mosques. What is interesting is the emphasis on Muslims and the fear of us being taken over but in truth the decline in church

attendance has more to do with the seductive nature of secular humanism. Very few people convert to Islam but many more either reject the Christian faith, are not exposed to it or are too busy to even think about it. Which is why those who identify as 'religious' were in a minority in the last census for the first time.

Very few Churches become mosques. Ironically immigration particularly from Afro- Caribbean countries are boosting the Christian faith as reverse missionaries.

At the recent Suffolk coastal filling station evening our Speaker Dave Preece touched on the theme of cultural change. As Christians we have not been bold enough in sharing our faith. We cannot blame Muslims. We have conceded spiritual ground out of fear. We struggle to convey our faith in a way that people can relate to but the upcoming generations need us to throw them a lifeline. They are often lost, disillusioned and dissatisfied. The analysis of Reform UK has more than a grain of truth in it but the political system is very limited in its scope to change it. Its down to us, lets make the most of opportunities to love people and speak of Jesus. Lets be excited about the task but most importantly pray frequently for divine appointments. Street Jesus will be embracing this task at our next outreach on the hill on Saturday March 28th for the Spring market. You are welcome to come and join us but if not please pray for our protection. Happy Easter to you all. God bless Graham



The Filling Station is an informal way of expressing the Christian Faith, using celebration meetings to encourage the local church, predominantly in rural areas across the UK.

The next meetings
will be on
March 26th,
April 23rd,
May 28th

What to expect when we meet:

A warm welcome with light refreshments... Contemporary worship led by local worship leaders... Stories of God at work today... Guest Speakers to refresh our faith... Prayer together for worldwide and personal needs...

The Riverside Centre, Stratford St Andrew
Refreshments at 7pm for a 7:30 start.

Everyone is Welcome

<https://thefillingstation.org.uk/>

All Saints
Wickham Market

SS Peter & Paul
Tottistree

OPEN DOOR

LOVE

Coffee, tea,
biscuits and
friends

Friday morning
Drop in from
10:00am

At All Saints Church
Every Friday Morning

Network SUFFOLK

Connecting Christian Communities in Suffolk

GOOD NEWS

www.goodnews-paper.org.uk

Evangelistic Newspaper

**All Saints Church
Wickham Market**

Prayer & Praise Evenings
3rd Sunday of the month
at 6:30pm

Informal service for all ages



Every third Sunday of the month at 11am
All Saints Church, refreshments from 10.30am

Oasis

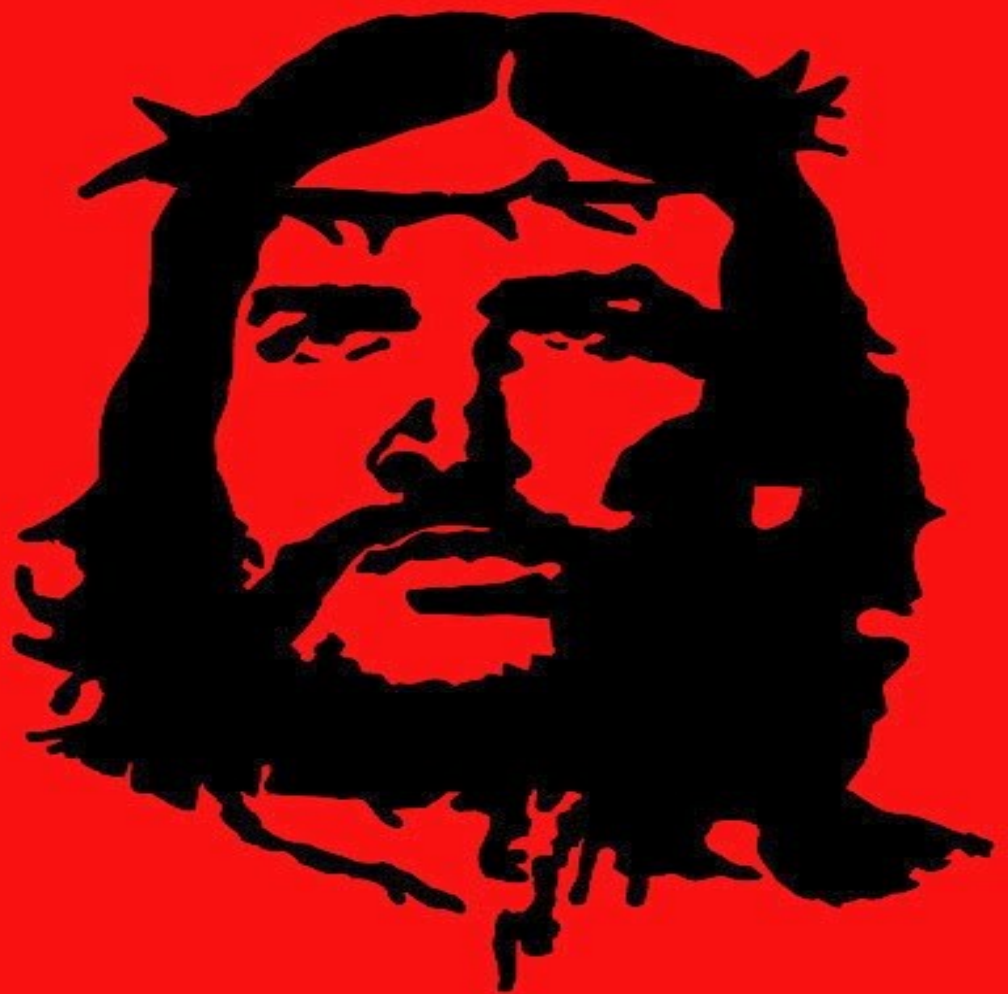
Informal Service @ All Saints Church
3pm every Second Sunday. All invited!

**A time of worship, fellowship,
and light refreshments.**

Meet old friends and make new ones



Bless us with strength
when faith is wounded
by the world around us.
Bless us with patience
when our prayers are
seemingly unanswered.
Bless us with peace
when daily schedules
start to overwhelm us.
Bless us with joy
in quiet moments
and simple pleasures.
Bless us with love
in sensing your arms
reaching to embrace us



MEEK MILD AS IF

Discover the real Jesus



Having taken over from Evangelina, Evangeline who has done six years stalwart service for Street Jesus is being retired. We have just purchased Grace who will be revealed to you in next months news.

Still Waters

In the style of Lectio Divina, time to dwell
together on God's word

Join us at the Wickham Market vicarage on the
second and fourth Mondays of each month

2 pm, all welcome, just come along and see if it

9th March 2026 Next meeting



Street Jesus New banner

Our next outreach is on
Wickham Market Hill
on Saturday March 28th 9am–3pm

Check out our
facebook page
[www.facebook.com/groups/
1246450225452294](http://www.facebook.com/groups/1246450225452294)