

March 2026

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert, so the devil could test him. After Jesus had gone without eating for forty days and nights, he was very hungry [Matthew 4:1-2] ...

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
[Matthew 5:6]

Lent, unusually, started at the same time as Ramadan this year. In Ramadan Muslims fast from dawn until sunset abstaining from food, drink, and certain behaviours to enhance spiritual growth and self-discipline. (Thank you Copilot!)

In the Christian tradition Lent has been a time of abstinence. "I'm giving up crisps for Lent," is the sort of refrain we often hear. Yet, as we read of Jesus fasting in the desert, I can't help but admire that Islamic dedication to a time of fasting, enabling spiritual growth. I really feel I should put much more effort into Lent. 'Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.' [Luke 18:13]

Lent is a time for pausing, for reflection, for gaining spiritual strength for the post-Easter period where we are empowered by the risen Christ and the breathing in of the Holy Spirit to be a blessing in this world, on behalf of the God of blessing we encounter in Jesus Christ.

A Lent course can be of great benefit for this reflection. The Frodsham Churches Together are focussing on issues of 'Justice,' stemming from the Prophet Amos; 'Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.' [Amos 5:24]

So far, after just two weeks, the depth of discussion and awareness of so much injustice in the world has been eye-opening. From racial justice to inflicted poverty, it will go from people-trafficking to the degradation of the earth, there are countless examples of how far we have to go to fully see the Kingdom of God that Jesus spoke of. Hopefully, we will be filled with a hunger and thirst for righteousness as the days ahead come upon us.

One of the sessions has focussed on the 40 years since the 'Faith in the City' report. Primarily a document within the Church of England, it has somewhat diminished as time as gone by. This is a shame. It's emphasis on ecumenical partnership and strengthening local churches and communities allowing a 'bottom-up' process of radical change in localities, particularly in place of what were described as areas of 'urban-

deprivation.' On a personal level, I am hoping we can have increased conversations around this in our Chapels, in the Circuit and with our ecumenical partners.

We reflected that the 'Church' seems to have fallen a long-way short of this hoped-for transformation, that the church has become marginalised and pushed to the edge of consciousness of many, irrelevant to more and having little influence in their communities.

And I want to shout NO! Just around 'our' Circuit we see so many positive, understated contributions our Churches and Chapels are making; from Warm Hubs to Chatty cafes; from Places of Sanctuary to Foodbanks; from Bereavement Groups to Toddler Groups. From work with Asylum Seekers to Open Table worship. The Church, in all denominations have a social value far higher than many realise. Well done, good and faithful servants.

Let us journey through Lent, seeking spiritual growth that we will have the strength to tackle the injustices in this world, from the local to the global, and may we continue to be faithful servants of the Living God, that the world may believe.

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