

University of Suffolk: 2020 Faith Lecture

Wednesday, 18 March 2020 6.00 pm
Waterfront Building
University of Suffolk, IPSWICH, IP4 1QJ

The University of Suffolk Faith Lecture is presented in partnership with Ipswich Faith and Community Forum.

Title: The Changing Landscape of Religion and Belief: Standing at the Crossroads

By Dr Ed Kessler MBE, Founder Director, Woolf Institute, Cambridge.

Dr Kessler discusses the changing religious landscape in Europe (and beyond) and demographic trends, highlighting, for example, the financial and human cost of conflict. He considers the implications of the changes on society focusing:

- on religious pluralism and diversity and ; and
- religion, citizenship and the nation state.

What is the consequence that, in Western Europe at least, Christianity can no longer be portrayed as the dominant 'host' religion and a previously intrinsic relationship is being weakened? He argues that belonging to a minority is the norm and that the increasing interdependence of the modern world means, to adapt the words of John Donne, that neither country nor religion are an island, entire of itself.

He also includes regions beyond Europe such as India with resurgent Hindu nationalism, marginalising Muslims and Christians; the Middle East where religion can be dangerously viewed as constitutive of national consciousness. The lecture ends by returning closer to home, reflecting on the religious transformation in the UK. Kessler proposes 4 tasks which, he suggests, need to be fulfilled to avoid tribalism and separation from one another and to help ensure a more integrated and inclusive society.



Dr Edward Kessler, MBE is Founder Director of the Woolf Institute, which is recognised around the world for the excellence of its research, teaching and public education programmes He is a leading thinker in interfaith relations, primarily, Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations. Much of his academic work has been examining Scripture and exploring the significance for Jewish-Christian relations of sharing a sacred text He has written or edited 12 books and regularly appears in the media commenting on religion and belief issues of the day.