

A public gospel should not be kept off the streets

15 October 2026

Richard Lalchan reflects on Bread of Life Community Church’s street ministry after we delivered our 27,000 signature petition to Colchester City Council in defence of their street ministry

“The gospel belongs on the streets” was the message that anchored the day as we joined Bread of Life Community Church on Colchester High Street to stand up for their right to freely share the full gospel in public.

Next week, the church will be in the Magistrates’ Court appealing a Community Protection Notice (CPN) which seeks to silence their freedom to share the full gospel with the community.

Council wardens issued the CPN against Bread of Life, prohibiting the church’s use of amplification as well as warning them about the content of their preaching in relation to divine judgment and hell.

Our petition backing Bread of Life amassed over 27,000 signatures from supporters across the country who believe in a public gospel.

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It was wonderful to see so many turn out on Colchester High Street to stand alongside Bread of Life Community Church and show the council that churches should not be restricted on preaching the gospel.

Pastor Stephen Clayden shared the gospel and exhorted Christians from Romans 10:

“And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”

“...We will never stop preaching the gospel. We’re not using amplification, so abiding by the CPN. But the gospel belongs on the streets.”

Andrea Williams followed that up by pointing to the joyous, friendly atmosphere, filled with Christians who love their community, and are desperate to see more people come to know the hope of Christ.

“It’s really important to keep the streets open to the gospel, because when we keep the streets open, we’ll also keep the pulpits open and we’ll reach those that need this eternal message.”

From no amplification to wrong message

Bread of Life Community Church has been preaching on the streets of Colchester for over 6 years. Prior to the CPN, there had been no complaints against the church as they put their faith in action – as the Apostle James encourages us (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James%202%3A14-26&version=NKJV>) to do. They provide a regular foodbank collection and have bought warm clothes for people who need them.

The CPN states that they were to “stop using amplification or loudspeaker” and to “stop intimidating behaviour.”

They were also told to stop “religious messaging” mentioning “hell.” Their preaching was labelled as “unreasonable” and having a “detrimental effect on the community.”

We saw for ourselves that this is not an aggressive community causing “harassment, alarm and distress.” Yet, this is what they have been accused of.



(<https://christianconcern.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/standard-picture-andrea-williams-bread-of-life-stephen-clayden-petition-delivery-20261014-720px-390px.jpg>)

Long tradition of open-air preaching

The kind of open-air evangelism practised by Bread of Life Community Church belongs to a British evangelical tradition that can be traced back at least to 1739, when George Whitefield and John Wesley began their famous open-air preaching ministries.

That’s at least 287 years of solid history where the gospel message has been proclaimed on the streets in the UK, and it can be argued that the history of gospel preaching goes back much further.

This is not an issue about amplification and noise level. This is very much one that suggests the gospel message itself should be shut down for causing intimidation.

When has a pride march been shut down for being too noisy or for proclaiming its full message?

We should not stand for this.. There will always be people who do not like the message. But the ability to speak it is vital for the benefit of society.

Act for the future

It was an inspiring time to come together with one voice to proclaim the truth of the gospel. It is a public gospel and should not be kept off the streets.

We had conversations with many of the team. The Colchester outreach of Bread of Life Community Church, led by Tony Needs, had several people who regularly share the message of Christ with passersby. The consistent message in talking with them was of the importance of being out there. Of showing Christ’s love to all of Colchester.

Overall, it’s encouraging to see more people hearing this message and standing up for freedoms that have long been part of our national heritage and have been enjoyed for nearly 300 years.

We don’t know what the final verdict will be when the case is heard on 22 and 29 October, but we do know that God is in control. And whilst he has it in his hands, please pray for success in court over the next two weeks. Pray that God’s will will be done and that preaching on the streets will be able to continue for the next 300 years and more.