

Jesus saves – and He'd do it at Asda or Aldi, says bishop

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The Church of England must shed its middle-class “Marks & Spencer” image and become more akin to Aldi, according to the Bishop of Reading.

The Right Rev Stephen Cottrell described his frustration that the established Church is regarded as the option for the “suited and booted” only. Jesus, he said, would probably have shopped at Aldi and Asda.

Bishop Cottrell, 51, who confessed to *The Times* that he shops in Marks & Spencer for clothes, was speaking as churches of all denominations prepare to mark “Back to Church Sunday” this weekend. Thousands of people are expected to receive invitations from friends to give church another go.

Bishop Cottrell said: “Even today I meet people who think you have to be highly educated or suited and booted to be a person who goes to church. That is so frustrating. How did it come to this, that we have become known as just the Marks & Spencer option when in our hearts we know that Jesus would just as likely be in the queue at Asda or Aldi?”

“Jesus got us started with church



simply, sitting us down in groups on the grass and telling simple stories — not simplistic, but certainly not complicated. All his first disciples were down-to-earth people who wanted to know what life was all about.”

Bishop Cottrell said that church was “not about how you look, what you do, how you sound, how well you sing”. It should be a place “where people can be just as they are,” he said.

An Asda spokeswoman said: “It may surprise the Bishop to know that for some years Asda has run Britain’s largest workplace chaplaincy scheme and we’d welcome any men or women of the cloth into our stores to get closer to their flock. Many stores have chaplains walking the aisles for a few hours each week looking for colleagues and customers who might want to talk.”