



The Benefice of St Mary's Bocking & Panfield Church



Sunday 10th September 2023
The Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Staying in Contact

The Very Revd Rod Reid - Incumbent (*usual rest day Monday*)

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or on Facebook, search for 'St Mary's Church, Bocking', or 'Panfield Church'

Forthcoming Services

Hymns

St Mary's, Bocking

Sunday 10th September	8am	Said Mass
	10am	Sung Mass
Wednesday 13th September	9.30am	Said Mass
Sunday 17th September	8am	Said Mass
	10am	Sung Mass

Tell out my soul

485

399

412

Panfield Church

Sunday 10th September	11am	Morning Worship
Tuesday 12th September	5pm	Evening Prayer/Office Hour
Sunday 17th September	5pm	Songs of Praise

Gospel Acclamation

*Your word is truth, O Lord,
consecrate us in the truth*

NOTICES

Coffee Morning - Thank you to all those who supported the recent fundraiser, we are pleased to say that nearly £175 was raised, which is a fantastic result.

Heritage Open Weekend - Both churches will be marking the Heritage Open Days next weekend. St Mary's will be open with events running on **Saturday September 16th 10-4pm**. Panfield Church will be open on **Sunday September 17th from 2pm to 5pm** with a Songs of Praise service to close.

Junior Church - A new term of Junior Church starts next Sunday with the first session on Sunday September 17th meeting in the Church Hall. There will then be further sessions on October 15th, November 19th and December 17th. Please let any local families know as all are very welcome to join us.

Stepping Stones - After the success of these sessions in the Spring, we are running another set which will begin on Tuesday 26th September, 6-7pm in the church. We plan for there to be five sessions, concluding on October 23rd, everyone is welcome. For more information please speak to Fr Rod.

Confirmation - We are thrilled to be hosting a Confirmation Service at St Mary's on Monday October 30th at 7.30pm, and will welcome Bishop Roger to lead the service. Have you thought about being confirmed? Want to know more? Then please speak to Fr Rod in the coming few weeks. It isn't often that candidates are confirmed in their own church, so please don't miss this opportunity.

Harvest Supper - The Friends of St Mary's are arranging a Harvest Supper for Saturday September 30th, 6.30pm for 7pm in the Church Hall. Tickets are £12 for adults and £6 for children, available from today. Your ticket will include your two course meal and entertainment too.

Friendly Friday Cafe - The Summer Sessions have now come to an end. They will re-start on Friday October 6th after those involved have had a well earned break.

Fellowship - A reminder that there is no session this month, due to the outing on September 28th to Cromer. The next meeting will be Thursday October 19th in the Church Hall.

Prayers - We keep in our prayers Ron Cole, Peter Hopkins, Jean Goodwin, Sue, Roger, Frances, Jo Meech, Tony & Ann and Margaret Everitt. We remember our care homes Millard House, Fern Lodge, Aspen Grange, Larchwood, The New Deanery & St Mary's Court. In our Years Mind, we pray for the families of Percy Willshire, Grace Fewell, Simon Freer, Cyril Rowe, Louise Green and Dorothy Jenner.

The Collect for The Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Almighty God,
who looked upon the lowliness of the Blessed Virgin Mary
and chose her to be the mother of your only Son:
grant that we who are redeemed by his blood
may share with her in the glory of your eternal kingdom;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Epistle Reading - Colossians 1:15-20

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Gospel Reading - Luke 1:46-55

And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

Address

On Friday, we marked a year since our longest reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth II died. I imagine it was one of those rare days when we remember clearly where we were when we heard the news. Initially, we were told she was seriously unwell, but the sombre mood meant that it felt like we were on the verge of something more significant than a serious illness. As family flew in to be by her side, we grew all the more anxious. The news of the late Queen's death followed a few hours later. September 8th 2022, undoubtedly a significant day in the history of this nation.

September 8th as you may well know is also one of the feast days the church uses to celebrate, and indeed venerate Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary. Of such significance, that I have transferred our celebration of it to today.

Who is the Blessed Virgin Mary for you? Is she important as you reflect on your faith? Does she inspire, encourage? Maybe even challenge you on her role? Or is she not important at all?

Almost everywhere you visit, you will find a church dedicated to Mary. Some of you, when you are on holiday have even taken pictures next to a St Mary's Church and sent them to me with words like, you just can't get away from St Mary's!

In this Benefice both churches are dedicated to Mary. Panfield with the addition of St Christopher too. This is actually my first church dedicated to St Mary. I have been at St Andrews, an All Saints, a St Lawrence, St Thomas, and Holy Innocents. So, thank you to both churches, but not least to St Mary's Bocking, to which I was licensed 9 years ago, on yes September 8th. I remember it well!

My goodness the time since has flown by, but what a privilege to serve the Benefice and both churches. I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to you for your support, prayers, encouragement of me and the family too. There have been many, many highlights, and some low moments too, but that is life, isn't it?

Why St Mary's when the church was first dedicated? Well, I suspect that of all the Saints her story was probably the most widely known, and likely spoke to the widest group of people too. Arguably something that hasn't changed. When I asked, who is Mary for you? I wondered whether you turned to an image of her as 'meek and mild' as our Victorian carol writers often referred to.

For me it is her witness, her faithfulness to God that inspires me. If we look around us, so often when the going gets tough, the tough get going. When things are difficult, challenging, seemingly impossible, people give up or they turn away. Too quick to try something new, in the hope they can stick at that, rather than really wrestling with something, holding the tension and seeing where it leads. I am not suggesting that in all things we doggedly hang on and remain committed when for our own wellbeing we need to stop, but rather we seek to be inspired by those who consider giving up but decide to keep at it, however tough the road may be.

I think if we are honest with ourselves, and the church more widely is honest, that this is what we are seeing when it comes to faith and believing in God. It is too easy when the going gets tough, when we are challenged by life, to assume it is all a load of nonsense and turn away and try something new.

For me, that is why Mary is so key. She is resolute, despite her circumstances, resolute in her faith despite all she was asked. If we step into her shoes, in her time, what was asked of her must have seemed impossible. But Mary knows this is God's will, and despite that doubt, that temptation to turn away, instead she draws upon a deep resilience, determination, and a perspective to see beyond the day to day.

Last week at Panfield I spoke about stumbling blocks and I know it really resonated with those I was with. That as we seek to follow Christ and be the best we can be, we feel we need to do so perfectly and that any stumbling blocks should just be brushed aside. Except that was Christ's perfect example, not ours. We are human, to be human is to err, to doubt and so those stumbling blocks can become something of a blockade in our faith, and another temptation to give it all up.

Mary was human, she faced stumbling blocks but her faith in God was resolute, that he would guide her through them, and her call was to hold on. The same is true for us. Those stumbling blocks we face, will look different for us all, but we must be encouraged to see beyond them and know that one day they will pass.

The other part of Mary's witness I want to draw upon is how she went about following God, and how she responded to what was asked of her. 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour', the opening of the Magnificat using traditional words from the Book of Common Prayer. Despite it all, Mary rejoices in God.

I think there are times when we don't know how to be, or to live out our faith, especially when it has been challenged. Let us seek to rejoice, for joy is catching, it lifts others, inspires and is infectious too. Whether it be a smile, brighter eyes or just a kinder approach to the world, we can all find ways to rejoice!

Mary's life was one of service. Through the weeks that followed the death of Queen Elizabeth II we spoke rightly of her unwavering service. Here in this Benefice, I look forward to more years too.

I hope in these last 9 years I have served you well, I have certainly sought to do so to the best of my abilities. At times, how to do that hasn't always been clear but that is for God to reveal. At my licensing I was asked, commissioned by Bishop Roger to love you, and to love this place, and I commit my continued service here to continue doing just that.

As we seek to love God, to love one another and the community around us. May we draw on Mary's resilience, her faithfulness and trust, as well as her determination, and may our souls seek to always magnify the Lord, rejoicing in God our Saviour.

Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

God most high,
whose handmaid bore the Word made flesh:
we thank you that in this sacrament of our redemption
you visit us with your Holy Spirit
and overshadow us by your power;
strengthen us to walk with Mary the joyful path of obedience
and so to bring forth the fruits of holiness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.