



# The Benefice of St Mary's Bocking & Panfield Church



Sunday 18th December 2022  
The Fourth Sunday of Advent  
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 18th December	8am	Said Mass
	10am	Sung Mass
	6pm	Carols by Candlelight
Wednesday 21st December	9.30am	Said Mass
	11am	Messy Christmas
Saturday 24th (Christmas Eve)	5pm	Christingle
	11.30pm	Midnight Mass
Sunday 25th (Christmas Day)	10am	Holy Communion

258

217

470

Tell out my soul

### **Panfield Church**

Sunday 18th December	3pm	Carol Service
Tuesday 20th December	5pm	Evening Prayer
Saturday 24th (Christmas Eve)	3pm	Crib Service
	11pm	First Communion of Christmas
Sunday 25th (Christmas Day)	10.30am	Christmas Day worship

## Gospel Acclamation

*The Virgin will conceive and  
bear a son, and his name  
will be called 'Emmanuel'.*

## NOTICES

**Christingle Making** - On Friday 23rd from 10.15am we will be making Christingles in the Church Hall ahead of the Christingle service on Christmas Eve at 5pm. We are planning on making at least 100 in readiness, and so the more help we get the quicker we can be done. All welcome!

**Christmas Tree Festival** - A huge thank you to absolutely everyone involved, from all those who decorated trees, took part in the bazaar or helped behind the scenes. It was wonderfully successful, and great to have so much support. Final monies to be announced soon, but we have made at least £1,500.

**The Retreat, Bocking & The Bell, Panfield** - We will be carol singing in The Retreat on Wednesday 21st Dec from 7.30pm, and at The Bell, Panfield on Monday Dec 19th also at 7.30pm. Come and join us!

**A Warm Place this Winter** - Every Friday until March 10th we will be opening St Mary's Church Hall from 11.30am to 2pm as a warm place. Along with being a friendly space, there will be refreshments and a simple soup lunch, all of which will be free. Why not bring a friend and come along yourself.

**Messy Christmas** - On Wed 21st Dec from 11am - 1pm, St Mary's are having a craft morning in church with activities, refreshments and carols. If you are around to help please sign up at the back. Thanks.

**Going Green!** - In partnership with A Rocha, an environmental charity, we are hoping to work towards the various awards associated with being an Eco-Church. There will be opportunities for all to get involved as we progress, including for our younger ones. Watch this space for more details.

**Prayers** - We keep in our prayers Jean Goodwin, Sue, Jackie, Roger Hurford, Frances, Margaret, Peter, Jenifer, Jo, Bernard, June Blackwood, Gwen Nicholls and Margaret Everitt. We also 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 Mary Parkinson, Rita Ellis, Stanley Kent, Valerie Debbage, Geoffrey Sheppard, Eileen Mortimer, Michael Berry, Frank Skeet, Louisa Philips, Ken Chapman, Ray Debbage, Enid Thomas, Peggy Kenyon, Margaret Cooper, Fred Trott, Vilma Ward, Gerald How, Frank Goodchild, Ruth Warren, and Frank Camp.

## The Collect for The Fourth Sunday of Advent

God our redeemer,  
who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary  
to be the mother of your Son:  
grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour,  
so we may be ready to greet him  
when he comes again as our judge;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

## ***Epistle Reading - Romans 1:1-7***

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## ***Gospel Reading - Matthew 1:18-25***

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

## Address

So, it is nearly all over. No, not Christmas that hasn't really started yet! Instead, love it or loathe it, over the last 4 weeks we have had story after story about the World Cup. The home nations represented by Wales and England, the latter going out in another agonising Quarter Final defeat. In amongst all the talk of football, this England team, as well as missed penalties and biased refs, there was one story that for me really told us about the true character and nature of the England team. It is to do with Dave!

Have you heard about Dave? The unofficial mascot of the England team. Yes Dave, as he was named by the players is a cat. A cat who visited the team hotel and befriended the players, who cared for him, fed him and looked out for him. Of course, the stories have been mainly about the football, but Dave and his experience say much more. The care and compassion the players had for him, a stray who in Qatar had a life expectancy of just 4 years. He was not only well treated by the team while they were in the competition but equally so in coming home because he is being adopted by them! He captured a special place in their hearts, and so unlike football, Dave is coming home!

This final Sunday of Advent, the reading from Matthew provides another example of what I've been saying. The main focus of our story this week is Mary, and rightly so. Her courage, determination, trust and sacrificial love are a real example to us, and appear in each gospel. However, it is only in this re-telling from Matthew that we get more details about Joseph. A seemingly small, insignificant character. We know he isn't around later when Jesus begins his ministry, indeed we think he died when Jesus was in his teens.

He is often skipped over but not for Matthew, it is only here then that we get a little more to fill in his story, not least that last line where it says it was Joseph who named him Jesus. No small feat!

And I think we need to look more closely at Joseph, as his example can and should inspire us.

Often don't know what to do with Joseph, depicted as balding with a patchy beard, stage left, at the back on many nativity scenes. I believe there is one very rare nativity scene from Medieval times where it is Joseph who is holding the baby, but generally he is a small player, however, his role is central. Without him as his father, we wouldn't necessarily have the Jesus who was to follow.

For those familiar with Alice in Wonderland, the White Queen says to Alice to practice believing in 6 impossible things before breakfast. Certainly, the same is true for Joseph, Joseph had to accept some of those impossible things. Faced with a fiancé who was pregnant, he had to have his name being dragged through mud, and then to face a future ruined by all of this. He was asked to believe God was somehow present and active in this mess, and he does, he does it. Joseph then is no small player, and indeed mirrors the trust of Mary, the courage of Mary and the sacrificial love.

For me there is a message in there for us. That in the mess of our lives, in the complications, burdens and worries that our lives can present, all sorts of situations that are not as we would have them, but God is nevertheless in us, at work and able to bring things about with us and through us. We need to try and believe in those impossible things, but also to believe in ourselves!

We can feel like a small, insignificant player in this great story of which we are part. In our own lives, we can also feel that we spend much of the time, like Joseph, at the back, stage left, without any control, or at the very least unlikely to affect any sort of change, but this just isn't true, and we need to break ourselves out of that mindset.

The birth of Christ from the very beginning has turned lives upside down. Individuals who quietly got on with things, who never saw themselves as lead characters, people who would become an example to others. That is just what happened to Mary, and to Joseph. Most importantly, they needed to begin

to see themselves from God's point of view, where we all have a part, where we all are involved, where impossible things are all too possible.

The birth of Christ, which we celebrate again in just a week's time, should turn our worlds upside. Maybe they already feel in a complete mess, but that is when we will know him most. As we all know but so often forget, we don't write our stories, it is God who does that. But he doesn't do it alone, he does it with us.

Dave's story, well it should have many more chapters, even if he won't be back in the UK until April, as the adoption process will take some time. Meanwhile, I saw it reported that he has been getting into some scrapes and was last seen sporting a red and white bandage.

With our stories, we may not hold the pen, or have the ability to see a few chapters ahead but what we can draw from Mary and Joseph this week, is to remember that you are vital to God's plan. That however impossible so much may seem, however much of a mess things may feel they are in, we need to let go. To be more like Mary and Joseph, to be courageous, to be trusting and to always act out of love. Amen.

### Post Communion Prayer

Heavenly Father,  
who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary  
to be the mother of the promised saviour:  
fill us your servants with your grace,  
that in all things we may embrace your holy will  
and with her rejoice in your salvation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.