



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



Sunday 19th February 2023  
The Sunday next before Lent  
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 19th February

8am Said Mass  
10am Sung Mass

297

277

Ash Wednesday, 22nd February

9.30am Said Mass  
*with Imposition of Ashes*

526

489

Sunday 26th February

8am Said Mass  
10am Sung Mass

## Gospel Acclamation

### **Panfield Church**

Sunday 19th February

6pm BCP Evensong

Tuesday 21st February

5pm Evening Prayer

Wednesday 22nd February

7.30pm Ash Wednesday Communion

Sunday 26th February

11am Holy Communion

*Whoever loves me,  
keeps my word, says the  
Lord and my Father  
loves them*

## NOTICES

**Lent Soup** - NEXT SUNDAY after the main service there will be a Lent Soup in the Church Hall. The sign up sheet has been at the back, do add yourself if you think you might be able to join us for this.

**Funeral** - Bernard Meech's funeral will take place THIS TUESDAY 11.30am at Three Counties Crematorium. Jo and the family warmly invite you to join us them in celebrating Bernard's life.

**Lent Book** - There are copies of the Lent Booklet in both churches from TODAY. It is entitled 'Dust and Glory' and we hope will give you plenty of food for thought, suggested donation of £2. Thanks.

**Ash Wednesday** - There will be services in both churches on Ash Wednesday, February 22nd. At St Mary's there will be the usual mid week Communion with the addition of the Imposition of Ashes at 9.30am. Panfield will mark Ash Wednesday at 7.30pm, please note no evening service at St Mary's.

**Quiz Night** - The Friends of St Mary's have arranged for a Quiz Night with Fish & Chip Supper on Saturday 4th March, 6.30 for 7pm in the Church Hall. Join us for a fantastic evening, with a £100 prize for the winning team! Tickets available from today only £12 including your food!

**World Day of Prayer** - Friday March 3rd marks 'World Day of Prayer'. There will be a service at Braintree Baptist Church, starting at 10.30am, involving members from local churches. All welcome.

**‘Out of this World’** - Across March 18th—19th we are hosting a space themed weekend. More details to follow soon, but plans are in place for an Indoor Planetarium and sessions with the North Essex Astronomical Society. The Sunday service will then be a special celebration with Felsted School Choir joining us to make it a very exciting Mothering Sunday indeed! Mark your diaries now!

**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.

**Prayers** - We keep in our prayers Jean Goodwin, Sue, Jackie, Roger, Frances, Margaret, Peter, Jenifer, Jo, June Blackwood, Tony and Ann, 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 Alice Fuller, Margaret Bloomfield, Ruth Warren, Marjorie Crumbleholme, Vera Deere, Margaret Witchell, Ada Yeldham, Pat Glyde, Miriam Butler, Katie Abbott, Cecil Ponder, Walter Draper and Micki Smith.

### The Collect for The Sunday next before Lent

Almighty Father,  
whose Son was revealed in majesty  
before he suffered death upon the cross:  
give us grace to perceive his glory,  
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him  
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

### **Epistle Reading - 2 Peter 1:16-21**

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honour and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.’ We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

### **Gospel Reading - Matthew 17:1-9**

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!’ When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, ‘Get up and do not be afraid.’ And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, ‘Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.’

## Address

He took with him James, John and Peter we are told.

What unfolded none of the three could have expected.

This story, called the Transfiguration appears during the year several times, and I know I have preached on it on quite a few occasions too, often referring to the mountain top element of this experience, or focussing on what Jesus was trying to teach them. However, today I wanted to start by concentrating on what the experience was like for the three Jesus took with him, and what that might mean for us.

What must that have been like to witness? The transfiguration!

Well, we know that it had such a profound impact on Peter that he wanted to stay, offering to build dwellings for them. It seems it was a glimpse of the presence of God now, God's presence in the past, and God's presence in all that was to come. For James and John, we don't have written in authorised scripture what the experience was like, with but Peter we do, indeed we heard it just before this gospel reading.

The experience of the Transfiguration seems to have touched upon every part of what it is to be human and in doing so it empowered him, drove him and guided him along his path. Against what Jesus asked, he and I am sure the others, would speak of this moment, and go on doing so. It is as if their kindling faith, caught fire.

For Peter it wasn't his first moment of encounter with the transforming presence of God, for example in Matthew's retelling he has already walked (albeit very briefly) on water. Neither can we escape the fact that doubts would still settle in, he is still to deny Jesus three times. That being said, this moment, this experience changed things.

Now I have had all sorts of wonderful experiences in life, but climbing a mountain as yet is not one of them. Yes, I have crossed the Yorkshire Dales, and up through the Lake District, but not quite climbed a mountain. Even those experiences though indicate just how remote we can feel, we can only carry so much with us for a journey like that, and so in comparison to our daily lives, we are stripped of so much. It is just us and the elements, us and creation, us and God.

That brings focus to our lives in ways we don't often live through, and it strikes me that what is left, or what is revealed might be a better description, is truth. A true sense of who we are, a true sense of our place in the grand scheme of things, and a true sense of being closer to God. That closeness can lead us to feel both fully alive and fully mortal.

It struck me if that could be something of the experience Peter and the others had. That in their mountain top moment, their lives, commitments, relationships, family amongst much more were put to one side, and in seeing a transfigured Jesus, acknowledging the awesomeness of this moment, the truth about him, and about them was revealed.

The story of the transfiguration doesn't end with truth. It is not truth we are left with and mirror to then see ourselves in, but instead it is truth followed by love, fatherly love. After Jesus' face shone like the sun, it is then God speaks from heaven affirming his beloved Son and asks those around to listen to him.

As his followers today, living in our confusing and complex world that still remains the case. As we seek to journey through life, and our faith, he takes us this with him, day by day, hand in hand. Encouraging us to see truth, and with it to know he loves us, and that we need to listen for him and his Son.

The best news of all is that we don't all need to climb a mountain for this to be our experience, but instead, we are set possibly the harder task of continuing to be encouraged to look for God and to hear him at work each and every day, in the normality of our lives. However, knowing that is our task, and if you like more fittingly our calling, the reality is the busyness of life sets in.

For some that busyness is indeed to do lists, places to go, an endless parade of tasks. That busyness is just as much the distractions we put in place too, the avoidance plans that while not technically busy, distract us from life, from our faith.

We need to choose, to look, to see truth, and we need to choose to look knowing God loves us all.

Lent is the time to do this. A chance in however we might describe our busyness, to set aside a little time, a time of peace and reflection, a metaphorical mountain top and to dwell there listening for God, trying to hear his song, his prayer, his word, knowing he loves us. I doubt this will be as easy as tuning into a radio station, if only, but it is about the commitment to trying, and in trying the courage to allow ourselves to be transfigured by truth and love.

Ash Wednesday and the heralding of Lent are just a few days away, I hope through that season each of us may know something more of the experience of being loved by God. Prayer will be foundational to that, and I know how we struggle at times with what words? how do we pray?

To close, let me offer these words from a familiar hymn, 'Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to me'. Written by two sisters and here in Essex, Sarah Flowers wrote them as a poem and her sister Eliza set them to the haunting tune, we all know and love. This Lent may our prayer simply be 'Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!' Amen.

## Post Communion Prayer

Holy God,  
we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ:  
may we who are partakers at his table  
reflect his life in word and deed,  
that all the world may know his power to change and save.  
This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.