



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

Sunday 3rd March 2024  
The Third Sunday of Lent  
Staying in Contact



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

Email: [bockingchurch@gmail.com](mailto:bockingchurch@gmail.com) Call: (01376) 324887 [www.stmarys-bocking.com](http://www.stmarys-bocking.com)  
or on Facebook, search for 'St Mary's Church, Bocking', or 'Panfield Church'

## Forthcoming Services

## Hymns

### **St Mary's, Bocking**

Sunday 3rd March	8am	Said Mass	512 (omit * verses)
	10am	Sung Mass	390
Wednesday 6th March	9.30am	Said Mass	414
Sunday 10th March	8am	Said Mass	
	10am	Sung Mass on Mothering Sunday	Jesus is Lord

### **Panfield Church**

Sunday 3rd March	11am	Holy Communion	<u>Gospel Acclamation</u> <i>Lord, you are the Saviour of the world, give me living water that I may never thirst.</i>
Tuesday 5th March	5pm	Office Hour/Evening Prayer	
Sunday 10th March	11am	Morning Worship on Mothering Sunday	

## NOTICES

**Charity of the Month** - In March, the monies given at tea & coffee after the main service at St Mary's will go to Essex Air Ambulance. The total raised for Farleigh Hospice last month will be announced soon.

**Stepping Stones** - Our next season of Stepping Stones will run through Lent, continuing THIS TUESDAY, March 5th at 7pm in church, The remaining sessions will be March 19th & 26th. All welcome.

**Mothering Sunday** - Next Sunday, March 10th is Mothering Sunday and we look forward to welcoming everyone to an All-Age Mass. With thanks to Daniel Robinsons and Sons, we are pleased to be able to give out a potted plant as a gift to all who attend. We hope you can join us for this special service.

**Murder Mystery Play** - Bocking Theatre Club are about to begin rehearsals for Jacky Mitchell's latest murder mystery play to be performed in the coming months. The play will be staged in the Church Hall with profits split between the Theatre Club and the Friends of St Mary's. If you would be interested in joining the cast then please speak to Pru Page.

**Quiz Night** - The next Friends event will be a Quiz Night in the Church Hall with Fish & Chip supper, Saturday March 16th, 6.30 for 7pm. Tickets available now.

**Friendly Friday Cafe** - We are pleased to say that the Friendly Friday Café is back in the Church Hall from 12noon onwards, and now running each Friday up to, and including Friday March 22nd.

**Rotas** - In the next few weeks, the latest rota will be issued for servers, sides-people, as well as those who organise tea and coffee after the service. We thank all those who support St Mary's in this way week by week. If you would like to join the rota for one of these roles, or maybe feel now is the time to step back, then please speak to Fr Rod.

**Bring and Buy** - We would love your support for the upcoming Bring and Buy sale which will follow the main church service at St Mary's on Sunday March 17th in the Church Hall. If you have items for it, or want to know more, please speak to Caron Francis.

**Prayers** - We keep in our prayers Brenda Dunstone, Barry and Janice Goody, Jean Goodwin, Sue, Roger, Frances, Jo Meech, and Tony & Ann. We remember our care homes Millard House, Larchwood, Fern Lodge, Aspen Grange, Braintree Mews, St Mary's Court and The New Deanery, and the following, whose anniversary of their passing falls this Daniel Brooks, Gertrude Robinson, John South, Blanche Lee, Ethel Girling, Anthony Eden, Lancelot Broyd, Grace Earnshaw and Ada Peacock.

### The Collect for the Third Sunday of Lent

Almighty God,  
whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain,  
and entered not into glory before he was crucified:  
mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross,  
may find it none other than the way of life and peace;  
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 - 1 Corinthians 1:18-25***

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.' Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

### ***Gospel Reading - John 2:13-22***

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

## Address

Imagine the scene. It is Christmas market here at St Mary's. The church is filled with stalls selling lots of things and with others offering simple games where it might be possible to win a small prize. Suddenly a stranger rushes in, begins turning over some of the stalls and starts shouting that the House of God should not be made into a market place or a gambling den. No doubt someone would try to calm the stranger down and gently lead them away.

But might it be worth hearing what the stranger is trying to say? They might, for example, say, 'You have a church hall where you can do all these things: this is a holy place, set aside for prayer and the worship of God'. It would of course be possible to respond by explaining that in earlier times churches were very much multi-purpose buildings used not only for worship but also as the hub of much village and community life. Surely it is better to make as much use as possible of the building. Also, in the context of the Christmas market and Christmas Tree festival, do not the trees themselves add more than a just a touch of magic and potentially enhance the worship offered in the church?

That was not the case with the practices that Jesus challenged when he denounced those selling possible sacrificial animals in the temple and overturned the tables of the money-changers. Even if both practices were necessary, as they probably were (special coinage, for example, avoided using coins depicting the Roman Emperor) there was plenty of scope for profiteering at the expense of people who had little or no money to spare but who believed it was their duty to make offerings in the Temple. But the words 'Stop making my Father's house a market-place' might give us pause for thought. Is there a point at which the quite appropriate use of a church for events like a Christmas market or Christmas tree festival becomes questionable? For example, while it is good to use the church for concerts, how would we feel about a heavy metal tribute band – acceptable at a festival but perhaps not in church?

A bigger question concerns whether it is right to charge tourists to enter a church building. I know that this is common practice in many countries in continental Europe. It is also the case with regard to many Anglican Cathedrals. There is good reason to expect visitors to contribute to the costs of maintaining such buildings. It is also probably the case that an entrance fee raises much more revenue than asking for donations. And, of course, it is not uncommon in cathedrals and larger churches to set aside a small area for prayer and not charge people to use it. I can see the reason for this, but might it not give the impression that God is only to be found a small space tucked in between the café and the toilets. Should not the whole church be in some sense 'holy space'?

A question that I have sometimes been asked, and indeed have sometimes asked others, is along the lines of, 'Where, if anywhere, do you feel particularly close to God?' Perhaps it should be possible to answer 'anywhere' because God is not limited by space and time, but I suspect that I am not alone in being able to identify places that have a particular sense of holiness. For me, these places usually have some combination of being significant in terms of the story of Christianity in the British Isles and also being geographically quite remote. So I would name the island of Iona off the west coast of Scotland from where St Columba and his followers spread Christianity in the northern parts of our islands. The founder of the Iona Community, George McLeod referred to Iona as a 'thin place' where the boundary between the things of earth and the things of heaven had almost been erased. As well as having the Abbey it is a popular tourist spot and can feel very busy at times. But you don't have to walk far from the ferry terminal and small village to understand what George McLeod meant.

Secondly I would name Durham Cathedral with its links to Anglo-Saxon scholars and missionaries. It has a powerful presence perched over the River Wear and a strong sense of Christian history.

The chapel containing the tomb of the Venerable Bede is one of my favourite places to sit and quietly reflect. Thirdly, and a much more recent discovery for me, is the Othona Community at Bradwell and the Chapel of St Peter-on-the-Wall, one of the oldest churches in England. Its simplicity and antiquity speak strongly to me of an uncluttered Christianity where the fundamentals of the 'good news' proclaimed by Jesus can be heard afresh. Places matter.

It also matters how the space in these holy places is used. I sometimes wonder what a visitor with no knowledge of Christian faith would make of the sort of church building that is dominated by imposing chest tombs and with memorial tablets along every wall, most of which appear to be several hundred years old. Such a visitor might ask, 'do these people practise some form of ancestor worship?' On the other hand, going into a church where there is a good display of children's work, an attractive and well-stocked bookstall and an enticing scent of coffee from the church café gives a very different first impression. Of course it is also appropriate that the use of space should give some sense of the deeper purpose of the church building. Leaflets about the Christian faith; an opportunity to light candles; a place where requests for prayer can be made; an attractive parish magazine; and information about who (and when) to contact for further information and guidance can all help to present the church as a living and worshipping presence in the community.

It is easy to become too familiar with the way in which the space in a church building is used. Trying to look at it through eyes of a visitor might be a useful exercise. Judging by the comments in our Visitors' book at St Mary's, we do well. Not only is the building itself appreciated and there is a real sense that it is cherished and cared for, but it is also clear that many people appreciate the chance to step outside the hustle and bustle of daily life and find a place that seems set aside for a different purpose and where it is possible to pause and reflect. It seems to me that we get a lot of things right. I don't think the imaginary stranger with whom I started this address will be turning up here soon in order to overturn the tables of the money changers.

St Mary's is a house of prayer. But there is never any harm in taking stock and asking if we can do more to be at the heart our community while offering the sort of worship that takes us out of our daily routine and seeks to honour the God we serve. Amen.

## Post Communion Prayer

Merciful Lord,  
grant your people grace to withstand the temptations  
of the world, the flesh and the devil,  
and with pure hearts and minds to follow you, the only God;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

You can scan this QR code with your phone at anytime and make a donation to the church.

Open your camera app, hold it over the QR code and then click 'open link' *Thank you*

