



The Benefice of St Mary's Bocking & Panfield Church



Sunday 13th August 2023
The Tenth Sunday after Trinity
Staying in Contact

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

Email: bockingchurch@gmail.com Call: (01376) 324887 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 13th August	8am/10am	Said Mass/Sung Mass
Wednesday 16th August	9.30am	Said Mass
Sunday 20th August	8am/10am	Said Mass/Morning Prayer

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363

399

Panfield Church

Sunday 13th August	11am	Holy Communion
Tuesday 15th August	5pm	Evening Prayer/Office Hour
Sunday 20th August	6pm	BCP Evensong

368

Gospel Acclamation

*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life
says the Lord, no-one comes to the
Father except through me.*

NOTICES

Placement - We are thrilled to welcome Helen Sherfield to the Benefice this month. Some of you met Helen at the BBQ recently, but you will have plenty of opportunities to come as she leads and preaches at some of our services across both churches. Helen is training to be a Lay Reader and I know we can support her throughout her placement with us, and make her very welcome indeed.

Heritage Open Weekend - Both churches will be marking the Heritage Open Days next month. 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. More details on events at both churches will follow in due course but please save the date.

Local wildlife walk - A huge thank you to all those who joined us recently for our first wildlife walk around the parish. We had 25 people join in which is great, and certainly something to build on. We are hoping to get in another Wildlife Walk this year, probably in October. More to follow.

Childrens' Society - It is that time already, please can those with donation boxes return them to Caron Francis over the coming weeks. Thank you.

June Blackwood's Funeral - As announced a little time ago, June recently passed away peacefully in Broomfield Hospital. Her funeral will take place in church at 11am on Tuesday 29th August. Please do join us as we celebrate and give thanks for June's life, and the mark she left on each of us.

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.

Prayers - We keep in our prayers Ron Cole, Peter Hopkins, Jean Goodwin, Sue, Roger, Frances, Jo, Tony & Ann, David Denny, 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 Frederick How and Ivy Wood.

The Collect for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity

Let your merciful ears, O Lord,
be open to the prayers of your humble servants;
and that they may obtain their petitions
make them to ask such things as shall please you;
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 - Romans 10:5-15

Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that 'the person who does these things will live by them.' But the righteousness that comes from faith says, 'Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?"' (that is, to bring Christ down) 'or "Who will descend into the abyss?"' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? 'The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, 'No one who believes in him will be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'

Gospel Reading - Matthew 14:22-33

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.' Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' He said, 'Come.' So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?' When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

Address

A few weeks ago I went to Wolverhampton in the West Midlands to do some research in the City Archives. When I am travelling on my own I prefer not to drive if there is a sensible alternative. So I went by train. I therefore trusted that I would find a parking space at Witham station; that the various trains (Witham to Liverpool Street, Euston to Birmingham, and Birmingham to Wolverhampton) would be

running reasonably on time; that the accommodation I had booked would be available; and that the documents I had ordered in advance would be produced. All went well. There was nothing special or unusual about what I was doing, but reflecting on it made me realise that for all to go well I was dependent on many other people doing what they were supposed to do. In other words I had to trust them. This sort of trust is probably something that we tend to take for granted and don't usually think about.

These reflections were prompted by today's Gospel reading. I think it is slightly unfortunate that the word 'faith' is used – quite correctly no doubt as a translation from the Greek – but perhaps having connotations of what we assent to with our minds rather than what we feel in our hearts. Jesus was not rebuking Peter because he had not perhaps at this stage in his journeying worked out just who Jesus was, but because of his lack of trust that through Jesus what seemed impossible became possible. If you are about to sink in a stormy sea, having someone catch hold of you takes priority over working out just how that person stands in relation to God. While the closing words of today's Gospel suggest that the disciples were beginning to grasp this, Peter's full proclamation of faith came later at Caesarea Philippi when he declared that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

Statements of belief matter, if only to guard against each believer putting their own interpretation on the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. So we recite the Nicene Creed whenever we celebrate the Eucharist on a Sunday. A simpler form of creed, in question and answer format, is generally used at Baptism; and sometimes in more informal Sunday worship. The Baptismal format uses the phrase 'believe and trust in' when referring to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The underlying thought process seems to be that belief comes before trust. Although that seems logical, I am not entirely sure that it reflects the way in which many people come to faith. Might it not be that at least some people trust before they believe? In other words that they find something hugely attractive in the person of Jesus that prompts them first to make some sort of commitment to following 'the way' as the early disciples might have phrased it; and only then to start exploring the details of the Christian faith and what it is that believers proclaim.

So might it perhaps be that trusting in Jesus sometimes precedes a head-based understanding of His message? That is not to disregard the importance of Biblical scholarship or the work of theologians who try to make sense of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity in a way that can speak to 21st century human beings. All of that is important. My own faith was undoubtedly nurtured by the theologians of the 1960s and 1970s who dared to pose questions about traditional beliefs and tried to find a language that would express the eternal truths of Christianity in ways that spoke to that rapidly changing culture. Had it not been for the writings of Bishop John Robinson in the 1960s and Bishop David Jenkins in the 1980s I suspect that I might have turned my back on organised religion and explored what might now be described as New Age beliefs.

This is where 'trust' comes back in. My experience has been that other people sometimes seem to know me much better than I know myself. When, around forty years ago, I was exploring a possible call to ordained ministry, or at least to undertake some study and training that might lead in that direction, I was much influenced by others who seemed to know what was right for me much better than I did. Not all of these people had a recognised role in the church. Some were members of church congregations. One was the person who would later become my first wife and who supported me through ordination training and early years of ordained ministry until her untimely death. They were people I trusted. I'm not sure that I can analyse just why I thought they were to be trusted, but I knew that they were trustworthy and that they could discern things about me that I was either blind to or wished to ignore. It is a great blessing to have trustworthy friends.

Going back to today's Gospel reading, it seems that in a moment of crisis the disciples trusted Jesus, even if Peter was asked to take that trust a bit too far outside his comfort zone. But perhaps that is just typical Peter. He asks Jesus to command him to walk on the water and succeeds in doing so until he becomes frightened by the strong wind. He trusts, but cannot let go of the doubts that what he is attempting to do is beyond the bounds of reasonable possibility.

He is holding something back. It seems to be part of his character, at least in the years when he was part of the group around Jesus and perhaps even in his later ministry. There is a legend from his later life that he escaped from his Roman prison on the night before he was due to be executed and was fleeing when he met a familiar figure carrying a cross. He asked, 'Lord, where are you going?' and received the reply, 'I am going to Rome to be crucified afresh'. Peter turned round and was found in prison the next morning. He was then executed.

Who knows whether that is or is not true. My sense is that St Peter desperately wanted to trust Jesus and follow him no matter what, but that he struggled to do so. I find it only too easy to empathize with Peter. Part of me would like to be the one who, metaphorically, was willing to trust Jesus sufficiently to risk walking on water. But I am realistic enough to know that, like Peter, I wouldn't quite believe what I was doing and would start to sink. I suspect that I am not alone in feeling like this.

But Peter had one advantage that we do not have. He knew Jesus and was presumably able from his personal experience to know that Jesus was to be trusted, even if that trust led him into some uncomfortable places. It is harder for us. Even if we trust that Jesus has a plan for our lives and wants us to become what we are meant to be through adhering to that plan, we do not have the sort of direct access to him that enables us to discover the plan. We may think we know what it is, but we could be mistaken. Often, the best we can do is to seek out someone whom we trust, and who shares, or is at least sympathetic to, our own principles and aspirations, and seek their advice. Trust is central to our Christian calling, both in the sense of trusting in God, but also, and partly because God's will often seems hidden from sight, trusting in the discernment of those who are also striving to walk in the Way and who may be a little further along the path than we are.

We all need people whom we trust. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

God of our pilgrimage,
you have willed that the gate of mercy
should stand open for those who trust in you:
look upon us with your favour
that we who follow the path of your will
may never wander from the way of life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.