



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



Sunday 15th January 2023  
The Feast of the Baptism of Christ  
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 15th January

8am Said Mass  
10am Sung Mass

Wednesday 18th January

9.30am Said Mass

Sunday 22nd January

8am Said Mass  
10am Sung Mass

### **Panfield Church**

Sunday 15th January

6pm BCP Evensong

Tuesday 17th January

5pm Evening Prayer

Sunday 22nd January

11am Holy Communion

See

*special*

*booklet*

## Gospel Acclamation

*The heavens opened and  
the Father's voice was  
heard. This is my beloved  
Son, listen to him.*

## NOTICES

**Coffee Morning** - As part of the fundraising towards the cost of flowers used at this year's Flower Festival there will be a Coffee Morning on Friday Jan 27th from 10.30am in the Church Hall. All welcome.

**Gwen Nicholls** - We wanted to let you know in good time that Gwen's funeral will be in St Mary's on Thursday 2nd February at 11am. We hope many will join us as we give thanks for her life and faith.

**Lent Soup** - On Sunday February 26th following the main morning service there will be a Lent Soup in the Church Hall. Please can we encourage you to save the date. A sign up sheet so that we can gauge numbers will follow in a few weeks time, thank you.

**Quarterly Newsletter** - The second issue of our Newsletter needs to go to the printers by Monday 20th February. If you have ideas for content, or areas of church life we could include, please speak to or email Fr Rod. We won't be able to include them all, but we can make sure to do so through the year.

**Fellowship** - The next meeting will be Thursday 19th Jan at 12.30pm in the Church Hall, cost is £5 for the lunch & talk. Our speaker this month is Amanda Sutherland, her talk entitled 'My Creative Journey'.

**Junior Church** - Please let people know that through the first part of 2023, Junior Church will be running on the last Sunday of each month, so the forthcoming dates are January 29th, February 26th, March 26th and April 30th. Continuing and new members always welcome.

**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.

**Eco Church - Birdwatch!** - Everyone is welcome to join in the Annual RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch in St Mary's Churchyard. Sunday January 29th, meet at the churchyard gate 11.30am for one hour's feathery fun. Spotter guide supplied, just wear appropriate clothing. See Jacqui Hogger for more details.

**Gareth Bennett** - As some may know, Gareth, who had been planning to move in the Spring has decided that now is the time for a new opportunity. We are sad to say that his last Sunday as Director of Music will be January 29th. We hope you will stay for coffee afterwards so we can thank him together.

**Prayers** - We keep in our prayers Jean Goodwin, Sue, Jackie, Roger Hurford, Frances, Margaret, Peter, Jenifer, Jo, June Blackwood, 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 Elsie King, Victor Scruby, Keith Collins, Margaret Tabor, Patrick Meany, Florence Barnard, Rita Hutchins, and Gillford Mills,

### The Collect for the Feast of the Baptism of Christ

Eternal Father,  
who at the baptism of Jesus  
revealed him to be your Son,  
anointing him with the Holy Spirit:  
grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit,  
that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children;  
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 - Acts 10:34-43**

Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

### **Gospel Reading - Matthew 3:13-17**

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptised by him. John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptised, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'

## Address

This season of Epiphany began last week with the visit of the Magi, the three Wise Men. These Kings came with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

It is the beginning of a story, but what really happens next? We are told they returned home by a different route. However, I don't want to know about the journey as much as about what actually happened to them. Yes, they brought gifts, they offered gifts, but what did they receive?

For they met, encountered God's son, born in a manger. By being in his presence they were changed. They may have come to offer gifts, but the most powerful moment is that they each received a gift, they received God's son, and in that moment, an epiphany moment took place which will have shaped everything that was to come. Lives transformed. In wonder and awe, what might they have told others of this infant, that in bowing before, would change them.

These epiphany moments are not just for Kings, or wise men and women. Nor are these epiphany moments for those 2000yrs ago who directly came into contact with God's son, but they are for you and me too. Through Epiphany we are encouraged to reset how we approach church, and our lives, to reset how we see ourselves.

Giving gifts at Christmas is often a joyous thing to do, but did you stop to see what you received in doing so? Maybe it was an appreciation of how much it meant, maybe you received a little of their joy, hopefully there was affirmation and love at the heart of it. When we love God, when we give to him, whether by attending church, meeting him in prayer, or helping out in a myriad of other ways, what do you receive from him? He gives us the gift of his Son, the gift of his love each day. But we live expecting to only give and not receive, so we miss so much of what he offers, we miss those epiphany moments. Those encounters that change everything.

Over Christmas, one of the gifts a number of us enjoyed was the TV adaption of a wonderful book, called *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. The story of a boy who is lost, who makes the most surprising of friends and realises the gift he is to others, and the gift they are to him, not least when we are feeling lost and alone. It was written by the wonderful Charlie Mackesy. Many, rightly see resonances with Christianity, hope and light winning out, but the journey through won't be easy.

I recently heard Charlie interviewed and he shared a story from a hospital chaplain friend. This friend would walk the hospital each time he was in, the same route through, visiting the same wards. Each time he passed one man in particular, the man would put two fingers up at him, this continued occasion after occasion. Then one day it didn't, and the chaplain paused, and the man said come and tell me about this God you believe in. He told him about God who loves him, cares for him, doesn't judge him on what gifts he can bring other than to be himself. He then asked how do I talk to him? Well through prayer the chaplain explains. The man was worried he didn't have the words, and so the chaplain went and got a chair, an empty chair and left it beside him. He is here, in this chair, loving you and listening to you, talk to him. The chaplain left for the rest of his round.

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The next week he came in, turned to see the man and the bed was empty. In speaking to the nurse, he heard how the man had changed, had opened up about his life, and began to accept that the end was coming. He passed away but did so peacefully. They did say that something strange happened though. He didn't die in the bed but died reaching out of the bed embracing the chair next to him.

We don't know when we might receive, we don't know when those epiphany moments may come in our lives, but they will, for God loves you, offers you grace and forgiveness too. For me that is what lies behind the baptism story we heard today, another Epiphany moment.

God's son doesn't need baptising, John knows that and questions it, but this is about solidarity with God's people, not one rule for others but the same route for us all. It is receiving God's presence, blessing that it can become fuel for him, and the same is true for us.

It is also a story of affirmation. The passage closes with God speaking directly to those gathered, what must that have been like! Proudly, a Father speaks of his Son and says how beloved that he is. This is my Son and he is pretty darn fantastic. That Son would go on to draw us all together, through the cross and resurrection. As a result, that praise, that affirmation is aimed at us too. You are beloved, you are fantastic, in that knowledge be open to God, be open to receiving what he has to offer, an invitation to be changed and transformed. It may be that change is something we can't see, or won't notice at first, but by receiving we will be transformed.

In that knowledge, we are sent out as God's people, sent out as Chaplains, just like the one from the hospital, helping people to receive God, to see and experience him. We need to seek out those epiphany moments, not just to hope they happen, and hope we see them. To do so, my prayer is that we will find a place, an empty chair, a quiet room and choose to encounter God, to encounter Jesus now. Not for him, but for you! Amen.

## Post Communion Prayer

Lord of all time and eternity,  
you opened the heavens and revealed yourself as Father  
in the baptism of Jesus your beloved Son:  
by the power of your Spirit  
complete the heavenly work of our rebirth  
through the waters of the new creation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.