



The Benefice of St Mary's Bocking & Panfield Church



Sunday 21st May 2023
The Seventh Sunday of Easter
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 21st May	8am/10am	Said Mass/Sung Mass
Wednesday 24th May	9.30am	Said Mass
Sunday 28th May	8am/10am	Said Mass/Sung Mass

Panfield Church

Sunday 21st May	6pm	BCP Evensong
Tuesday 23rd May	5pm	Evening Prayer/Office Hour
Sunday 28th May	11am	Holy Communion

Christ is our Cornerstone

147

169

420

Gospel Acclamation

*I will not leave you comfortless says
the Lord. I will come back to you
and your hearts will be full of joy.*

NOTICES

Thank you - All the monies from the Flower Festival and May Day have now been counted, and I am pleased to say that over £6,700 profit has been made, our 2nd best result ever! Thank you to you all!

Stepping Stones - This is a new 5 week course beginning on Tuesday May 23rd at 7pm. Each session will be accessible with some initial input and then a chance for questions and further discussion. The course is open to everyone. See Fr Rod for more details.

Rock Choir - Following popular demand, and after their successful concert last November we are thrilled that the Rock Choir will be back at St Mary's on Sunday June 11th at 4pm. We hope the concert will be outdoors with fabulous Summer weather for us to enjoy! If not, which seems a good possibility, we will be in church. Tickets on sale from TODAY. Adults £10, concessions £8 and children attend free.

Hymns - We would love you to choose your favourite hymns for us all to enjoy over the Summer months. The slips are at the back of the church and need to be returned by Sunday June 4th.

Friendly Friday Cafe - Following the success of Warm Space, our new regular community lunch space has re-launched in the Church Hall from 12-3pm and will run until July 21st.

Friends of St Mary's - The Friends have arranged a Barn Dance at Bocking Village Hall for **Friday July 14th at 7pm**. More information will follow in due course, but for the moment we wanted you to have the date, so that you can get it in your diaries now.

Prayers - We keep in our prayers Peter Hopkins, Jean Goodwin, Sue, Roger, Frances, Peter, Jo, June Blackwood, Tony & Ann, 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 Mary Boswell, John Brown, Michael Warren, Keith Wright, Ernest Dyer, Percy Hart, Thomas Barkaway, and Doris Holdaway.

The Collect for the Seventh Sunday of Easter

O God the King of glory,
you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ
with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven:
we beseech you, leave us not comfortless,
but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us
and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Epistle Reading - Acts 1:6-14

So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.' Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

Gospel Reading - John 17:1-11

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. 'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

Address

As many of you may know, just over three weeks ago I tripped and fell in a hotel room in Oxford. I had gone there to do some research in the University Library – the Bodleian – and thought it worth staying overnight. As soon as I picked myself up I knew that I had hurt my shoulder, but only subsequently found out that I had made a thorough job of damaging it. One outcome has been a certain amount of waiting around in A&E and Orthopaedics at Broomfield Hospital. Given the pressures on the NHS, I expected this, am not complaining and am very grateful for the care I received. I was indeed not unused to waiting around in hospitals as my previous wife, who died in 2015, had major health problems which required frequent hospital visits and admissions. Being the patient and not the carer was, however, something that took a bit of getting used to. It felt like a loss of being in control and instead becoming dependent on others to decide what to do.

This is probably a fairly minor example of what is a not uncommon experience of losing control and waiting on the decisions of others – something that perhaps becomes increasingly expected as we age. But it is not only associated with aging, or with minor accidents like mine. It may happen at any stage in life. If there is an underlying theme in the passage from the Acts of the Apostles that we have just heard it is that of waiting. The remaining disciples were in a sort of limbo. They had rejoiced at seeing Jesus again after the crucifixion and were perhaps beginning to understand more and more about whom He was and what He had come to do. But what would happen next? The Ascension perhaps provided part of the answer. He had returned to the heavenly realms, promising that they would receive power from above and be able to witness to Him, but without giving any detail about how or where they were to do this. Would there be some new revelation? Would his followers receive some new power or inspiration? What were they expected to do next? The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the festival we call Pentecost and celebrate next Sunday provided part of the answer, but that was still in an unknown future. For the time being, they simply had to be patient and wait.

I don't think that I am very good at waiting. I have had a fair bit of practice, both in hospital waiting areas and airport lounges (and plenty of places in between) but I still don't like it. I want to be getting on and doing; and feeling that I have some degree of control rather than simply listening to the announcement saying that my 8.00 pm flight is now delayed for a further two hours – and knowing there is nothing I can do about it. Except wait.

Many years ago I had quite a lot to do with the Retreat House in Chester. I even lived there for a while at the time when I was researching in the Cheshire Record Office. It was in the centre of the city, near the Cathedral and easily accessible by public transport. They had some excellent speakers and retreat leaders. One I particularly remember was W.H. (Bill) Vanstone. He spent most of his ministry in a deprived area on the fringes of Greater Manchester. Some of you may have come across his book, *Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense* which explores the sacrificial nature of God's love for His creation. Less well known is his subsequent book *The Stature of Waiting*. I was privileged to hear Canon Vanstone set out the key themes of that book in a series of addresses during a weekend Retreat. He focussed in particular on the passivity of Jesus in the final days of his life and argued that Christian witness needed a passive as well as an active element. In other words, waiting and being was just as important as doing and achieving.

It is not an easy lesson to take on board, particularly in a culture that places so much emphasis on being active. It is no doubt good that there are, for example, many more out of school activities for children than there were when I was young. But might there sometimes be too many, leaving no time in which it is possible to be quiet and enjoy the present moment? Equally, people in a much later stage of life are commended if they keep themselves active and busy. While joining in activities in, for example, a care home is no doubt very much better than being slumped in front of the TV all day, may there not also be value in providing time for older people simply to be and to have time to reflect on their life experience and share this with others?

Becoming dependent on others and losing some degree of control, whether just for a temporary period or for the foreseeable future, is not a mark of failure. It is an almost inevitable part of life, and one that is, in a sense, hallowed by the passion of Jesus.

In the reading from the Acts of the Apostles which we have just heard, the disciples are told in no uncertain terms that, although they will receive the power of the Holy Spirit and will spread the good news of Jesus to the ends of the earth, they will not be privy to just when these things will happen. They will have to wait until the time is right. Things unfold in God's time and not in ours. So at the moment we are also in waiting mode. We have celebrated Easter: His 'bursting from the tomb' as the current liturgy expresses it; and we are not far away from Pentecost when we rejoice in the gifts of the Spirit both in our own day and in those of the first followers of Jesus. Moreover we have already celebrated (or at least been aware of) the feast of the Ascension: this mysterious transference of the bodily Jesus from an earthly to a heavenly realm. It speaks of the promise that our true destiny is to be in God's realm, not necessarily in the sense of going to heaven after we die, but in the sense of recognising that we are already citizens of God's kingdom even if our day to day behaviour often falls short of the mark. We are still on a journey, and there is still some waiting to be endured.

As they waited, the disciples prayed. As we wait, and as we acknowledge that we are not so much in control as we may like to think we are, then perhaps we should also make sure that we devote time to prayer. This does not have to be in a formal setting like this church. It may be that we set aside time and space in our own homes for prayer. Or it may be that we use time when we are waiting – perhaps for the delayed train or the bus that never seems to run – simply to still ourselves and try to be in God's presence rather than getting more agitated.

So let us today both celebrate the mysterious feast of the Ascension and look forward to the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. In the meantime we have to wait. And we have to learn that waiting may not just be an unwelcome chore but also a positive experience in our journey of life. Amen

Post Communion Prayer

Eternal God, giver of love and power,
your Son Jesus Christ has sent us into all the world
to preach the gospel of his kingdom:
confirm us in this mission,
and help us to live the good news we proclaim;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.