



The Benefice of St Mary's Bocking & Panfield Church



Sunday 30th July 2023
The Eighth 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 30th July	8am/10am	Said Mass/Sung Mass
Wednesday 2nd August	9.30am	Said Mass
Sunday 6th August	8am/10am	Said Mass/Sung Mass

See

special

Booklet

Panfield Church

Sunday 30th July	11am	Holy Communion
Tuesday 1st August	5pm	Evening Prayer/Office Hour
Sunday 6th August	11am	All Age Worship

Gospel Acclamation

*I call you friends, says the Lord,
because I have made known
to you everything I have
learnt from my Father.*

NOTICES

Eddie Burton's Funeral - As you may well have heard, Eddie sadly passed away earlier last week. His funeral will take place in church **THIS FRIDAY**, August 4th at 2pm with the Committal at Bocking Cemetery. The family would be very pleased if you could join them to celebrate Eddie's life.

Local wildlife walk - A huge thank you to all those who joined us last week 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.

Mindfulness Trail - Our mindfulness trail in the church grounds at St Mary's is up and running. It has been great to see individuals and families coming along over the week. The weather has been less than ideal and so to give more of a chance to take part, we are extending it for a few days into this week. You can come and give it a go at anytime. Leaflets are in the Church Porch.

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 Rose Spence, Emily Bond and Florence Osborn.

The Collect for the Eighth Sunday after Trinity

Almighty Lord and everlasting God,
we beseech you to direct, sanctify and govern
both our hearts and bodies
in the ways of your laws
and the works of your commandments;
that through your most mighty protection,
both here and ever,
we may be preserved in body and soul;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Epistle Reading - Romans 8:26-end

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 13:31-33 and 44-52

He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.' 'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 'Have you understood all this?' They answered, 'Yes.' And he said to them, 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.!

Address

Jacky and I spent last weekend at the Othona Community in Bradwell. As well as simply enjoying being there we had been intrigued by the content of the weekend – ‘shape note singing’ – described as using ‘a distinctive notation that makes it particularly easy to learn if you don’t read music’. It is a traditional form of American music in which the notes of the Do-Re-Me scale are depicted by different geometric shapes. The group of people who were teaching and performing it made a very powerful sound, even if the words being sung came from a theology which emphasised the wretchedness and hopelessness of fallen humanity and the need for total dependence on the grace of God. But even leaving that aside, neither of us thought that shape note was any easier to learn than traditional musical notation. It also seemed to limit you only to being able to sing shape note; learning to read music on the other hand can open up a whole world of possibilities.

In looking at the Gospel reading set for today, it struck me that while the essential content of Jesus’s message remained consistent, he used a variety of ways of trying to explain it. He was not stuck in a shape note rut. So I sort of imagine that after he had compared the kingdom of heaven to the treasure in the field, someone in the crowd shouted, ‘I’m not a farmer, I’m a trader. All this about seeds and treasure in fields isn’t my world’. So Jesus responded with the parable of the pearl and perhaps said, ‘Now do you get it?’ One of the joys of the parables, or indeed the other stories that Jesus told, is that most if not all of us can find something that we can relate to and which can therefore open the door to exploring the rest of Jesus’ teaching.

I suspect that something similar is true of our experience of worship, or indeed of the characteristics of particular churches. We are all different so it is hardly surprising if we feel more comfortable in one church setting than another. It can be good to be challenged, but we also need somewhere in which we feel at home. One of the strengths of the Church of England is that it manages to hold together not only a wide range of theological opinions but also a wide variety of types of worship, or indeed of ways of being church. There should be something for everybody.

Let me explore this a bit further by reflecting on three churches that I have had some involvement with during my lifetime. First, the church of St Chad, Ladybarn in Manchester where I worshipped as a boy and teenager and continued to attend when I went ‘home’ in the years when I was working and living in London. It was also where I met my first wife. For much of my time there, the Rector was a scholar with a particular interest in the relationship between science and religion. He published a book on this topic, making use of the philosophy of Karl Popper and in due course was appointed as a Canon of Windsor. The church was very much a thinking person’s church, attracting people with a professional interest in exploring Christian doctrines and how they related to the modern world. I learned a lot from my time there; but was also aware that it was not a church for everyone. The more emotional aspects of Christianity were less well represented.

Secondly, the church of St Luke in Charlton in south-east London where I worshipped in the years after I had left university and was working as a civil servant. I know I have mentioned St Luke’s in previous sermons and its very radical Rector Tony Crowe. I think it would now have described itself as an ‘inclusive’ church welcoming to all people no matter what their race, sexuality or background. It was something of a culture shock after St Chad’s. It wasn’t really a thinking person’s church and the liturgy could be quite messy, partly because encouraging people to participate was seen as more important than doing things in the proper way. After a few years, I realised that it was not for me and started to worship and minister at another south London church, but remained in friendly contact with Tony Crowe until he

died a year or so ago. I learnt a lot from my time there, including my need for something more structured.

Thirdly, the church of St John the Evangelist, Newbold in Chesterfield in Derbyshire. After working in London for some 13 years I moved job to work for what in those days was the Manpower Services Commission (now Employment Department) based in Sheffield. Chesterfield was a convenient place to live and St John's Newbold was the church at which my then wife had worshipped before she moved to Manchester. St John's was very firmly in the Anglo-Catholic tradition. There was daily Mass, preceded by Morning Prayer for the clergy team (often Rector and two curates). I was there in the early years of women priests but there was no possibility of a woman presiding at Newbold. Worship was dignified and very structured. It was a large parish and when I became full-time curate there one of the first things the Rector did was to give me a stack of over 100 index cards with names and address of parishioners who were to be visited in the course of the next few months. I learned a lot there about the richness of the Anglo-Catholic tradition and about pastoral ministry. Officiating at three funerals in a week was not uncommon; I think my record was eight. It was a good preparation for becoming an incumbent; but unlike the other two neither intellectually stimulating nor challenging in terms of thinking how the parish church needed to adapt to a rapidly changing world.

As I said earlier I believe that one of the strengths of the Church of England is its ability to accommodate a wide range of theological viewpoints, contrasting forms of worship and ways of being church that are tailored to local circumstances. Variety is good. But there also needs to be a consistent core message or all can just become confusion. Despite my reservations about the theology expressed in the shape note singing at Othona last weekend, I was very taken by the strong emphasis on 'grace'. This can be understood in a number of ways. The emphasis may be, as it was last weekend, on God's forgiveness and acceptance of human beings without us having to do anything to earn this. Or it might be on graciousness: God does not compel but invites. It might equally be about the way in which we treat each other, both within the church and in the wider world. But as today's reading reminds us, although we cannot earn God's grace, we are called to respond to it. Both the man who hid the treasure and the one who found the pearl of great value realised that it was worth staking everything they already had in order to obtain this more valuable thing. Discipleship involves costs as well as benefits.

When I was exploring my call to ordained ministry and in particular to non-stipendiary ministry, thus keeping my paid job but offering ministry in my spare time, one colleague challenged me: are you really called to this or are just hedging your bets? While I am convinced that there is a valuable role for non-stipendiary ministers, I had to concede that he had a point. After a few years I knew I had to go full-time if was to have what I hoped would be both a useful and a fulfilling ministry. I think it was the right decision. If we want the buried treasure or the pearl of great price, there is a cost. There is no such thing as a free lunch.

Post Communion Prayer

Strengthen for service, Lord, the hands that have taken holy things;
may the ears which have heard your word be deaf to clamour and dispute;
may the tongues which have sung your praise be free from deceit;
may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love
shine with the light of hope;
and may the bodies which have been fed with your body
be refreshed with the fullness of your life;
glory to you for ever. Amen.