



The Benefice of St Mary's Bocking & Panfield Church

Sunday 3rd December 2023

Advent Sunday

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 3rd December

8am Said Mass
10am Sung Mass

Wednesday 6th December

9.30am Said Mass

Sunday 10th December

8am Said Mass
10am Sung Mass

8

405

42

7 (vv1-4 only)

Panfield Church

Sunday 3rd December

11am Holy Communion

Tuesday 5th December

5pm Evening Prayer/Office Hour

Sunday 10th December

11am Holy Communion

Gospel Acclamation

*Let us see your mercy O Lord,
and grant us your salvation*

NOTICES

Panfield Autumn Lunch - We are really pleased to say that £360 profit was raised for funds at Panfield from the recent lunch, £70 from the raffle! Thank you to all involved and all who came along.

Christmas Tree Festival - It all starts next weekend, on Saturday 9th December with our Christmas Market event, which means now is the final time to get your 'Pound Presents' in to Ann Lanham. We are also looking for items for the 'Tombola' these need to go to Angela Fuller. Instead of a prize draw there will a couple of wonderful hampers, details on what is need for those are at the back. The team on refreshments will also be in need of your support, a list of items needed is also available.

Christmas Concert - A huge thank you to everyone that came along last night, it was a great event. A brilliant start to the season to have the Brass Band and of course all those fabulous children from the school, it was a very special occasion. Details on the monies made which were split between the church and the band will follow soon.

Christmas Postcards - The postcards with all our Christmas Services are back from the printers. We are hoping to get them delivered across the parish. If you can help then please see Fr Rod.

Carols around the Tree - At St Mary's on TODAY at 3pm there will be carols around the tree led by local brass players. We will also 'switch on' our outdoor Christmas Tree. All welcome.

Friendly Friday Cafe - is now underway and will run each Friday until December 15th. Sessions start at 12noon and run until 3pm in the Hall. All are very welcome, why not pop down and bring a friend too.

Prayers - We keep in our prayers Julie Wilkinson, Barry and Janice Goody, Jean Goodwin, Sue, Roger, Frances, Jo Meech, 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 John Copp, Harold Andrews, Caroline Chinnery, Bessie Sibley, John May, Ethel Suckling and Maureen McCready

The Collect for Advent Sunday

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him 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 1:3-9

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind, just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Mark 13:24-end

'But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 'But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.'

Address

And so it begins! The countdown has now begun with Advent calendars being opened from Friday, the season of Advent officially beginning today, as we mark the start of another year, another opportunity to re-tell God's story, that goes right back to the beginning of well, everything, and even more importantly to recognise how our story intertwines.

As we will hear and experience over these coming weeks, it is a season of hope, light, preparation but also a season of waiting. The frustration is we are not normally very good at waiting, not least in this busy 21st century life of which we are all apart.

So much happens in an instant, you can send money and transfer it all over the world in seconds not days and weeks. Even when something frustrating like losing your bank card happens, whether because you left it somewhere or someone lifted, either way, you can ring the number and one is on its way within hours. Another task that used to take days, not least because you had to go into the branch. Mind you they had branches then, and ones that actually opened.

Advent then is an invitation to look differently at 'waiting'.

Rather appropriately for Stir Up Sunday last week, the closing prayer began 'Stir up O Lord the wills of your people', a call to not let things stagnate, to not waste time, to utilise every minute. This week another interruption in that gospel passage. A frightening moment from Mark of the end times, that not only do we wait, but in doing so must be ready. For what is coming we cannot afford to miss, we must stay alert and be awake. These interruptions must provoke us into action.

In Advent, we are waiting to celebrate the joy of Christmas once again but secondly to wait in hope for God to complete his kingdom, for earth and heaven to be together. So, like the Patriarchs of the church whom we remember today and the prophets whom we shall remember next week, we can't afford to just give up our focus on that when we get so easily distracted. Nor can we afford to not use this time he has given us.

We are human beings, not divine beings and we must be honest, we haven't quite got this called life sorted, so we need work. We need constant renewal. Advent is the time to repair what is broken, to heal what is hurt. It is the time to remember the work that we need to do on our lives, our spirits, our hearts. And so we make ourselves ready. We prepare.

So often we do that best in prayer, when we sit in silence, offer prayers, ask for guidance and then listen. Not being distracted but sitting in his presence and being ready to listen, that is something we all could strive for this Advent.

Like so much in life, but also in our faith we hold much in tension. In Advent, we are told a season of waiting, but as much we need to wait, to be fully prepared we also need to do.

At all times, I have a to do list, but even more so in the run up to all our festive services. I am sure yours is much the same, never-ending. It can feel not just a lot to do, but can I suggest too much? We simply won't be able to do it all. So, we need to focus on what we can do, and what will really make a difference. What on your list could you ditch? What might it be lovely to do, but actually you won't get time for, and nobody will notice anyway?

Making our to do list, more relevant, might free up time, it might give us space to focus on even more important things, and questions like where can we each day bring light to those struggling in darkness, a helping hand, a good deed, the phone call we never quite make, an offer of help fulfilled, in these and so many ways we can wait and do.

Even in those mundane tasks we can find meaning and purpose. Do you still write Christmas cards? Well, if so, when you write them, think of the person or people you are sending them to and ask for God's blessing on them. Maybe in wrapping presents, focus on the joy they will bring. On the bus or sitting in the car to look at others and just for a moment believe and pray they know the hope and joy of this season. That glint that you see in children's eyes, is not just for little people.

Maybe we could try to hold onto and carry that hope too, to be excited for the season.

For a time of judgement is coming, a time for which we need to keep awake and prepare for. However, if we only focus on that part of today's reading, can we really only live from fear, or out of the gloom and despair it describes? We said before that we need hope and excitement, but they are rare to find these days. I think it feels like that now in the world. Now I don't know if these are end times, but from the state of the environment, politics and a lack of peace we are left both angry and unhappy. To the challenges we face not least nationally, to within the church and even that overwhelming sense of the weight of expectation on us for a perfect Christmas. It really is hard to get passed the despairing and demoralising headlines as we wait, and we prepare.

Thomas Merton, a great theologian, poet and monk once wrote that there are three comings of Christ – when he was born, when he will return at the end of time, and now. Here. Every day. The countdown is indeed on until Christmas, but between now and then in that every day waiting and doing, let us look, let us learn the lesson of the fig tree from our reading today as well, that as verse 28 ends, we must remember that summer is near.

For us, in all our sadness and hopelessness of these times, we are reminded powerfully that God is good, that blessings are always around. Hope is ours, already won for us. I trust as we journey through this wonderful season that even when all feels lost, and we end up despairing, that we are called to wait and watch, to do what we can, however small it may seem, knowing that summer is near. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

O Lord our God,
make us watchful and keep us faithful
as we await the coming of your Son our Lord;
that, when he shall appear,
he may not find us sleeping in sin
but active in his service
and joyful in his praise;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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