



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

Sunday 4th June 2023

Trinity 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 4th June	8am/10am	Said Mass/Sung Mass
Wednesday 7th June	9.30am	Said Mass
Sunday 11th June	8am/10am	Said Mass/Sung Mass

162

554

404

553

### **Panfield Church**

Sunday 4th June	11am	Holy Communion
Tuesday 6th June	5pm	Evening Prayer/Office Hour
Sunday 11th June	11am	Morning Worship

## Gospel Acclamation

*Glory be to the Father,  
and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit, the God  
who was, and is, and is to come.*

## NOTICES

**Stepping Stones** - The next session is on Tuesday June 6th at 7pm, meeting in church. This week we will be looking at 'The Bible', and particularly the links between the Old Testament and New Testament. The sessions will then run until June 27th. You are welcome to come to any sessions that you can make, and importantly the course is open to everyone. See Fr Rod for more details.

**Concert** - Rock Choir are back at St Mary's NEXT SUNDAY at 4pm. The weather is looking perfect for us to be outside, so bring a blanket, chair and picnic if you want. Tickets are on sale now. Adults £10, concessions £8, and children attend free. At the concert, we will also be offering a glass of Pimms, and we will have a traditional ice cream cart too!

**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 TODAY, 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 on Fridays 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.

**Benefice BBQ** - You are all invited to the Benefice BBQ on Saturday July 29th from 3pm in the gardens at The Deanery, cost £5 for adults, children go free. There will be more details nearer the time, but for now, please save the date.

**Fellowship** - The next meeting is Thursday June 15th in the Church Hall. The speaker is Ed Fairey and his talk is on the 'History of the National Garden Scheme'. We start at 12.30pm with a light lunch followed by our speaker, the cost only £5, don't miss it.

**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 Angela Comfort, Jack Blackwood, Elizabeth Crossley, Edna Body, Gertrude Wiffen, Maurice Reeves, Dorothy George, and Winifred Porter.

### The Collect for Trinity Sunday

Almighty and everlasting God,  
you have given us your servants grace,  
by the confession of a true faith,  
to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity  
and in the power of the divine majesty to worship the Unity:  
keep us steadfast in this faith,  
that we may evermore be defended from all adversities;  
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 - 2 Corinthians 13:11-end***

Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

### ***Gospel Reading - Matthew 28:16-end***

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

### Address

I think I have mentioned in at least one previous sermon the custom that many churches in my home city of Manchester had of processing round their parish in the season of Pentecost (then usually called Whitsuntide). The church I attended as a boy processed on Trinity Sunday – in other words, today. I remember once being asked to take part in the procession and help to carry the Rose Queen's train. Being a young boy I associated trains with railways and imagined something like a model of a train engine, made out of some precious metal such as silver and to be carried on a cushion. After a rehearsal, I returned home disappointed and disillusioned. 'It's only a bit of old curtain' I complained to my mother, having realised that the train was simply part of the Rose Queen's costume. No doubt, however, I walked in the procession and helped carry it.

I find Trinity Sunday something of an anti-climax after Easter and Pentecost – not unlike my bit of old curtain in the procession. After the astonishing events of the first weeks following the resurrection of Jesus, the preacher is left with trying to make sense of a doctrine which was developed from about the second century onwards. What the doctrine seeks to express is of great importance, but it does not easily translate into either inspiring liturgy or straightforward preaching. No doubt, like me, many of you have sat through sermons on the mystery of the Trinity, gradually getting more and more confused. Preachers love to find analogies to help us understand the mystery: so, it's like water (ice, water, steam); or a three-leaf clover; or one person fulfilling different roles. Such analogies may sometimes provide a clue as to how something familiar can be both three and one, but they can't come near to explaining the mystery of the Trinity. And I suspect they often trivialise it. We try to bring God down to our level, instead of letting ourselves look up with awe and wonder on the majesty and mystery of God.

So I'm not going to try to explain how the doctrine of the Trinity works. It's beyond understanding. But that doesn't mean that it's unimportant or should be side-lined. It tries to express something of profound significance – how to hold together (within the context of a Greek-influenced philosophical framework) a set of crucial insights about the nature of God:

the Jewish understanding that if there is a God, then there can only be one God who had made Himself known to them by word and action.

the early Christian insight that the encounter with Jesus had been an encounter not with a prophet or holy man, but with that one God. Jesus is Lord!

the growing idea that God was encountered in everyday life through the experience of the Holy Spirit about whom the apostles John and Paul had written.

and that this threefold encounter with God did not undermine the oneness of God but enriched it.

Like many of us, the first generation of Christians were always in danger of over-emphasising one of these insights at the expense of the others – and for example either denying the full divinity of Jesus, or giving opponents the impression that it worshipped three Gods (a misunderstanding that perhaps partly underlies the Islamic emphasis on the oneness of Allah).

As I said, just how the doctrine holds together is beyond explanation, or indeed understanding. But it has some profound implications. God is one. In God all things cohere and find their meaning. There aren't different Gods for different purposes. You can't play one God off against another. But in some mysterious way, this God, who is one, is also God in relationship; perhaps even in a sort of self-contained community that is also in relationship with the created order. In the very essence of the Godhead there is no division, but there is relatedness. And that insight can be profoundly important for our own time.

In our contemporary western society we tend to place a great deal of emphasis on the individual. We are encouraged to be ourselves and express our individuality. 'I did it my way' in the words of one of the songs that is often chosen for music at funerals. And a song that I know some clergy colleagues will either not allow or only allow with the greatest reluctance because it seems to fly in the face of a Christian understanding of humanity as dependent on that other which we name as God. Yet I suspect that many of us admire those who assert their independence from conventional norms; those who, against all odds have made something of themselves; those who are not afraid to be different. Standing out from the crowd is generally perceived as a positive and not a negative characteristic.

I am hesitant to challenge this because I know that I place considerable value in believing that, like all humans made in the image of God, I need to follow my own particular path in life. But I also believe that this is an incomplete understanding of our human condition and indeed our individual destiny. If relationship is of the essence of the Godhead, then surely relationship must be inherent in a properly fulfilled human life.

That relationship can take many forms. It might be the mutual love of husband and wife; the community of love experienced in the best of family life; or the losing of self in commitment to some greater cause, including that of trying to live as Christian in an increasingly secular society. Ultimately this is a realisation that I am not complete in myself. I am only truly myself when set in relationship, with God, and with my neighbour. Here is an essential part of the Christian message. And it is founded on a Trinitarian understanding of God: that relatedness is somehow a more complete state of being than pure individuality.

This implies a recognition that for most of us – and there may be exceptions, for example those who choose a solitary life of prayer - individualism isn't enough. I am not truly I unless I am in relationship with someone other. And if that relationship is to be real, then I must be willing to surrender something of myself to allow that other to be him/herself. There is a paradox here: if I want to be fully myself, then I have to risk something of myself to allow those around me also to be fully themselves.

I suspect that, at some deep level, most of us know this. But does it not run counter to the grain of our assertive, competitive, individualistic society, to say that I only find myself if I risk losing myself? But is that not a familiar saying from the Gospels? And maybe it's one that we need to be reminded of every now and then. And one that needs proclaiming to those around us. But we can only do that with credibility if we ourselves display in our church life, as well as our personal lives, something of that mutual love and relatedness that is at the heart of the mystery of the Trinity.

Perhaps I need to think again about Trinity Sunday. It isn't the 'bit of old curtain' used for the Rose Queen's train in the austerity Britain of the 1950s. Rather it is a chance to celebrate the amazing Christian insight that being truly myself does not preclude being in community; and that community living does not deny individual flourishing. All is possible within the mystery of the Three in One and One in Three of the Christian Trinity.

## Post Communion Prayer

Almighty and eternal God,  
you have revealed yourself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
and live and reign in the perfect unity of love:  
hold us firm in this faith,  
that we may know you in all your ways  
and evermore rejoice in your eternal glory,  
who are three Persons yet one God,  
now and for ever.  
Amen.