



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



Sunday 5th November 2023  
The Fourth Sunday before Advent  
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**

334

Sunday 5th November

8am Said Mass

10am Sung Mass

Be still for the presence  
of the Lord (*see sheet*)

Wednesday 8th November

9.30am Said Mass

Sunday 12th November

8am Said Mass

405

10am Sung Mass

10.50am An Act of Remembrance

489 (*omit v3*)

### **Panfield Church**

Sunday 5th November

11am Holy Communion

Tuesday 7th November

5pm Evening Prayer/Office Hour

Sunday 12th November

10.55am Remembrance Service

## Gospel Acclamation

*May your love be upon us O Lord,  
for we place our hope in you.*

## NOTICES

**Funerals** - At St Mary's we have been very saddened to hear of the deaths of congregation members in these last few weeks. Please note that, Peter Hopkin's funeral will be the morning of **November 16th**.

**Confirmation** - Congratulations to our newly confirmed candidates. It was a wonderful service last Monday evening, and I am thankful to all who worked behind the scenes to make it such a great occasion.

**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.

**Christmas Tree Festival!** - It is just under 5 weeks until the Christmas Tree Festival, and to help make it so successful we need your support. More details will follow after Remembrance Sunday, but for the moment please save the date of Saturday 9th December, as that is when it all starts. You could also be thinking about items for the pound present stall, these are to go to Ann Lanham.

**Remembrance Sunday** - On Nov 12th at Panfield the Remembrance Service will be begin at 10.55am. At St Mary's, our 10am service will be slightly shorter, to allow for An Act of Remembrance at 10.50am.

**Archdeacon Kate** - Yesterday, in the Cathedral we officially welcomed our new Archdeacon to the Diocese. We are really pleased to say that Archdeacon Kate will be leading a Benefice service at St Mary's Bocking on Sunday 26th November at 10am. She will also be collating Revd Rod as Rector of the Benefice. It will be a great opportunity to share all that we are up to, so please don't miss it.

**Panfield Autumn Lunch** - on Saturday 18th November we are hosting an Autumn Lunch. Join us for a Jacket Potato lunch with a variety of fillings. To follow there will be a selection of desserts, tea & coffee, and a raffle! Tickets £10 for adults, £5 for children aged 10 and under. Spaces limited to 40, so please contact Bridget (01376 328907) or Sara (01376 321045) to book your tickets now.

**Prayers** - We keep in our prayers Gemma Howe, Julie Wilkinson, Barry and Janice Goody, Ron Cole, 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 Diana Morgan, Eric Butler, Dorothy (Dodie) Robinson, Henry Appleton and Roy How.

### The Collect for the Fourth Sunday before Advent

Almighty and eternal God,  
you have kindled the flame of love  
in the hearts of the saints:  
grant to us the same faith and power of love,  
that, as we rejoice in their triumphs,  
we may be sustained by their example and fellowship;  
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 - 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13***

You remember our labour and toil, brothers and sisters; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was towards you believers. As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, urging and encouraging you and pleading that you should lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers.

### ***Gospel Reading - Matthew 24:1-14***

As Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. Then he asked them, 'You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.' When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?' Jesus answered them, 'Beware that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, "I am the Messiah!" and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs. 'Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. But anyone who endures to the end will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come.

## Address

One of the more useful books on my study shelves is a volume entitled *Exciting Holiness*. It contains Collects and Readings for the Lesser Festivals of the Church of England. It also provides brief information about the person whose festival it is. Although I would normally try to preach on one of the Sunday readings, usually the Gospel, there are occasions when I find it difficult to say anything uplifting about a particular Bible passage. So I turn to *Exciting Holiness* to see if there is an interesting person whose festival falls close to the Sunday for which I need to write a sermon. Tomorrow, 6th November, is the day when we are able to celebrate the life and work of Archbishop William Temple. The date chosen marks the anniversary of his Baptism in 1881.

Temple was born into a clerical family. His father, Frederick, was Bishop of Exeter when William was born and subsequently became Bishop of London and Archbishop of Canterbury. William was educated at public school and then Oxford University where, after obtaining a first-class degree, he lectured in philosophy. He was ordained in 1908, became Rector of St James, Piccadilly and subsequently Bishop of Manchester, Archbishop of York and finally Archbishop of Canterbury. He was at Canterbury for two years before his untimely death in 1944.

Temple was a significant figure in the early ecumenical movement. He could be regarded as an intellectual but was also a person of deep spirituality with a concern for mission. The latter included his taking part in the annual Blackpool Sands mission as well as missions to Oxford undergraduates. His books include 'Nature, God and Man', based on his Gifford lectures, 'Readings in St John's Gospel' a copy of which is on my shelves and frequently consulted, and 'Christianity and Social Order'.

A concern for social justice was an enduring theme of his life and work. Was this perhaps sparked by his father's indignation when Bishop of Exeter at the wretched conditions suffered by agricultural labourers and others in Devon? William Temple was president of the Workers Educational Association for some 16 years and during his time in Manchester took a keen interest in industrial relations. He had first-hand knowledge of the conditions under which many people were forced to live, and was convinced that society should be structured so that it reflected the innate dignity of each person created in the image of God. His thinking influenced the work of William Beveridge who played a central role in designing the British welfare state introduced by the Labour Government of the late 1940s. Temple was not afraid to mix religion and politics.

Although Temple could be regarded as an intellectual, fully able to hold his own with theologians and philosophers, my impression is that he was more interested in the practical application of Jesus's teachings rather than abstract speculation. Perhaps there is something to be learnt from that. One of the great strengths of the Church of England is that, because of the parish system, it potentially has a presence in every city, town and village. At its best, the parish church is not a club of like-minded people but a resource for the whole community. There is a spiritual dimension to this which may relate to the worship that is offered, but may also be about being a place where 'prayer has been valid' over many centuries. We are fortunate at St Mary's that we are able to have the church open each day. It is clear from comments in the visitors' book that this is much appreciated. I understand why some churches have to be kept locked except when a service or some other activity is taking place, but in principle would like to see churches being more accessible and perhaps providing some simple resources to help people pray or simply appreciate the feel of a place that is set apart from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

But what of today's reading from St Matthew's Gospel which I have so far in this sermon managed to evade? I find it a difficult passage. St Matthew's Gospel was probably written in the last quarter of the first century, so perhaps up to seventy years after the events it records took place. At the time it was written, the Temple in Jerusalem had indeed been destroyed by the occupying Roman power. This happened in AD 70 so Jesus's prediction that 'not one stone will be left here upon another' had been fulfilled. The second part of the Gospel reading about the signs associated with the end of the age is more challenging. No doubt some of the predictions had also been fulfilled by the time the Gospel was written, but the end itself had not come, and indeed it could be said that we are still waiting for it.

Throughout history there have been those who have attempted to interpret current events in ways which might suggest that the signs of the 'birth pangs' have indeed arrived. Such signs could indeed include natural disasters such as earthquakes or diseases like the plague; but also wars and revolutions. It is, of course, always possible that one day such an event might indeed herald the end of all things. However such a catastrophe might be more likely to be caused by humankind's meddling with nature than by some supernatural event. It is reasonable to be aware that there may indeed be an end time at some point in the future; it is probably futile to speculate on when or how, or indeed to be constantly trying to read the signs of the times. Our task is to do the best we can to live in the way that Jesus demonstrated during His earthly life and to leave the rest to God. There is more than enough to do in the here and now.

Doing things in the here and now is I suspect very much what William Temple would have advised and indeed what he actually did. Temple's commitment to a social Gospel and to the need to strive for a fairer world is as relevant now as it was during his lifetime. The particular issues may have changed. For example climate change and environmental degradation were not high on the agenda of anyone at the time when Temple was active. If he was living today I think it is fairly safe to assume that he would have been concerned about these and would have been encouraging people of faith to get involved both locally and globally. Like all of us he was of his time, but his legacy, particularly in the areas of ecumenism and social justice can still be inspirational.

I think it is good that the church formally acknowledges and celebrates the achievements of people who served it in the more recent past. It is easier to relate to them than to the earliest Christians. William Temple is an outstanding example of a very able and very committed Christian leader, particularly in those dark days of the mid twentieth century. We can still learn from him. Amen.

## Post Communion Prayer

Lord of heaven,  
in this eucharist you have brought us near  
to an innumerable company of angels  
and to the spirits of the saints made perfect:  
as in this food of our earthly pilgrimage  
we have shared their fellowship,  
so may we come to share their joy in heaven;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.