

Methodist
Church

Partnership News

11 December 2011

Advent 3



Church of
England

Partnership Church Services Today

8.30am Holy Communion every Sunday
1st, 3rd and 5th Sunday at Putnoe Heights
2nd and 4th Sunday at St. Mark's Church

11 December – Advent 3

9.30 am St. Mark's - Morning Worship

Preacher - Revd Dr Sam Cappleman
Leadership – Mrs Margaret Appleton
Intercessions – Mr Richard Ledger

11.00 am Putnoe - Morning Worship

Preacher – Revd Dr Sam Cappleman
Leadership - Mrs Linda Hoar
Intercessions - Mrs Claire Peck

18 December - Advent 4

9.30am St Mark's - Holy Communion

Preacher - The Reverend Charles Royden
Leadership – Mrs Jean Bank
Intercessions - Deacon Jane Mason

11.00 am Putnoe - Holy Communion

Preacher - The Reverend Eric Royden
Leadership - Mrs Veta Hudson-Rae
Intercessions - Mrs Sam Ware

Bible Readings 1. Samuel 7: 1-11, 16 2. Romans
16: 25-27 3. Luke 1: 26-38

Midweek Worship Holy Communion at St Mark's
Chapel every Wednesday at 10.00am and at Sir William
Harpur House on first Monday of every month at 10.00am

Thank You

The flowers at Putnoe Heights Church this week
have been given Pearl and Vin James on their
wedding anniversary.

*We are grateful when people make donations towards
flowers perhaps to celebrate a special occasion such as
an anniversary or in memory of a loved one. Please
contact Miss Marion Prior 303254 (St Mark's) or Ann Hitt
404186 (Putnoe Heights) or add your name to the rota in
the foyers.*

Baptism

We especially welcome this morning the family
and friends of Jacob Daniel Clive Bond who has
been brought for baptism

Prayer for the Week

Heavenly King, Advocate, Spirit of truth,
present everywhere, filling all things,
Treasury of blessings and Giver of life,
come and dwell in us,
cleanse us from every stain,
and, O good One, save our souls. Amen
Orthodox Daily Prayer

The Reverend Dr. Sam Cappleman

107 Dover Crescent, Bedford MK41 8QR
266952 Fax- 402624 nsm@thisischurch.com
(Sam also works full time as a Vice President for Hewlett Packard)

Deacon Jane Mason

12 Hartop Close, Bedford MK41 8HE
348091 Mobile 07807 146535
jane@thisischurch.com

The Reverend Charles Royden

The Vicarage, Calder Rise. MK41 7UY
309175 Mobile 07973 113861
vicar@thisischurch.com

For Data Protection Purposes

Please note that any items submitted for inclusion in
Partnership News will automatically be posted on our website
and may appear in other local media sources.

Partnership News is also archived on our
church website www.ThisIsChurch.com

Partnership Pastoral Support Team Co-Ordinator & Churchyards Administrator

Mrs Mary Stubbs 406784 Mary@ThisIsChurch.com
*Please inform us if you know of anyone who is ill, bereaved,
housebound, requires a visit, home communion or counselling services.
Please also ask us if you would like a home visit for any reason.*

Putnoe Heights Church Centre

Open Monday to Thursday 9am - 5pm, Friday 9am - 1pm
Tel/fax & Answering Service 365630 putnoe@thisischurch.com
Centre Manager Mr Geoff Gypps 365630 mob 07947 902846
Leadership Team Mrs. Linda Hoare 782717
Treasurer Mr Ian Morse 21428 treasurerph@thisischurch.com
Gift Aid Administrator John Hitt 404186
Youth Worker Emma Gordon email - 07593266091
youth@thisischurch.com

St. Mark's Church Centre (Open 9am - 5.00pm)

Tel/fax & Answering Service 342613 office@thisischurch.com
Centre Manager Miss Wendy Rider 342613
Leadership Team - Laura Farthing 210892
Treasurer - Mr Ian Farthing 210892 treasurer@thisischurch.com
Gift Aid Administrator Jim Williams 360605

Regular Weekly Activities - A Guide To Our Churches

Monday

9.15 –3.45 pm Mon and Wed/ 9.15-12.15pm Tues/Thurs/ Fri. Putnoe Heights Pre-school. See website for more details www.ThisChurch.com

Head teacher Mrs Janet Smith ☎326685

8.30-5.30pm Pre-school Mon-Fri St Mark's

9.30-3.15pm Top Marks Mon-Fri St Mark's

Headteacher Mrs. Helen Harpin ☎312634

(See website for more details)

.9.45am - Body Control Pilates –Putnoe Heights

Stephanie Smith ☎ 357787 or 07973174430

10.00am Bakers Barn Art Group. St Mark's Mrs Berry ☎211955

10.30am U3A Play reading (see contact details below)

12.15pm Story box Putnoe Heights We welcome the under 5's and their carers to join them between 12.15 and 1.15 for a sandwich lunch followed by a Bible based story and singing. Contact Emma Gordon ☎07593266091

2pm U3A Music Appreciation - (see contact details below)

4.15pm Rosemary Conley Diet & Fitness. Putnoe Heights. Margo Needham ☎843747 or 07881730747

4.15pm Kumon Maths Putnoe Heights. Mrs Raksha Mistry ☎01908 392698

6.00pm Brownies St Mark's. Mrs C Mathew ☎826190

6.15 pm Brownies Putnoe. Sharon Tanner

☎01767699399 or 07720713738.

6.15 Pilates at Putnoe Heights Jane Butcher 300859

6.15 - 8.15pm

6.15pm Weightwatchers. St. Mark's Sam Thompson ☎07766421000

7.15pm Fit for Life Yoga - Putnoe Heights Contact Jane Butcher ☎07891879571

7.30pm Sugarcraft Guild St Mark's 1st week Pat Nicholson ☎353518

7.30pm Cancer Care Society. St Mark's. 1st Week. Mr J Dewhurst ☎01908 377020

7.15pm Guides. St Mark's. Mrs Gill Lake ☎218091

7.30pm Whist Drive. St Mark's 3rd & 5th week . Next meeting– 19 December Judith Stanton. ☎823313

7.30pm House group 30 The Ridgeway. The home of Eddy & Margaret Peck ☎267567.

8pm 'Get Fit, Stay Fit' Putnoe Heights. Mrs Diane Field ☎404976

Tuesday

9.30am Jo Jingles. St. Mark's. Music & movement for pre-school children. Renu Elston ☎07790206016

9.30am Candlewicking (Needlework). Putnoe Heights. Pat McCart ☎365507

9.30am -12.30 & 4-9pm Slimming World St. Mark's. Helen Folbigg ☎351223

10am Autism Beds Adult Support Group. St Mark's. Sally Cripsley ☎350704

11.15am U3A Keep Fit Putnoe Heights (see contact details below)

1.15pm Toddlers Playtime/Sing & Stomp - Putnoe Heights for toddlers and their carers. Run by Putnoe Childre's Centre Trudy Hamilton ☎340552

1.30pm U3A Cinema Group. (see contact details below)

2.00pm U3A Book Group. (see contact details below)

2.00pm Library Walk W.I. Putnoe Heights, meets

monthly. Morag Tomkins ☎356895

2.00pm U3A (see contact details below)

2pm U3A Photography St. Mark's (see contact details below).

2.30pm Mother Teresa Support Group. St Mark's Fortnightly . Wool and knitting needles provided. Mrs Maureen Watling ☎262225

2.15pm Tuesday Afternoon Housegroup. St Mark's Fortnightly. Mary Stubbs ☎406784.

3.45pm-6.15pm Stars School of Dance. Putnoe Heights. Esther Richardson ☎295862 or 07917582468.

6.30pm Creative Card making. Putnoe Heights Church. Carol Houghton ☎346718

6.15pm Pilates St Mark's Church Jane Butcher ☎07891879571

7pm Keep Fit. St. Mark's Jan Gregory ☎328455

7pm MT Karate [all ages] Putnoe Heights. Karen King ☎07941 264885

7.30pm Hearts in Beds. Cardiac Support Group 1st Tuesday in the month at St Mark's. Brian Ibberson ☎403497

7pm Tabernacle of Truth Church Putnoe Heights Bible study & prayers. Sacha Ojo ☎07590597891 or www.tabernacleoftruth.co.uk

7.30pm Putnoe Heights Ladies Tuesday Club - Meets fortnightly. Next meeting December 13 Christmas Event Details call Janet King 313946

8.15pm - 10.15pm Bedford Advanced Dancers St. Mark's 1st Tuesday in month. Shirley Sadler ☎01767 651767

Wednesday

9.30am Body Control Pilates. Putnoe Heights. Stephanie Smith ☎357787 or 07973174430.

10am-2pm Open House at St Mark's for those with learning disabilities., their friends, family , carers and supporters ☎342613.

10.00am Holy Communion. St. Mark's Chapel. A half hour service followed by coffee. All welcome.

10am U3A Card Making, (see contact details below)

12.30pm Luncheon Club. Putnoe Heights fortnightly. Next meeting 4 January 2012 Putnoe Heights Office ☎365630

1.00-3pm Police Surgery at Putnoe Heights (Fortnightly)

1.15pm Bridge Club for the Retired. St. Mark's. Mr Barnes ☎261811

1.45 Scots Society Whist Putnoe monthly .All welcome Nancy Barr ☎268147

2-5pm Police Surgery. St Mark's Foyer. ☎349179

1.30-4.30pm U3A Craft St Mark's (see contact details below)

2.15pm - Fifty plus Keep Fit. Putnoe Heights Mrs Webster ☎856966

3.45.- 5.30pm Messy Church. St Mark's for children of lower school age and their carers. Bible-based story, crafts, singing and a meal. Next meeting Wednesday 14th December. Jean Banks 355698.

4.15pm Kumon Maths. Putnoe Heights Mrs Raksha Mistry ☎01908 392698

6.00 pm Brownies. St Mark's. Mrs Carol Warden ☎219731

6.00pm Shooting Stars. Youth Group for 9-13yrs at Putnoe Heights fortnightly. Contact Emma Gordon 365630.

6.15pm Yoga and Relaxation Putnoe Heights Racheall

Monton ☎01234 297138 or 07910835994.

6-8pm Karate. St Mark's Karen King ☎079412 64885

7.00pm Bunyan Bridge. St. Mark's Brian Sallows ☎407725

7.00pm Archaeological & Local History Society Putnoe Heights monthly. Vanessa Aykac 268098 or 07917385987

7.00pm Putnoe Guild Putnoe Heights monthly Janice Loxley ☎347073

7.00pm Line Dancing Putnoe Heights Mike Del-Boyer ☎348378

8.00pm Badminton Club Putnoe Heights All welcome. Ken Marriott ☎214867

8.00pm Tudor Reeds Folk Dance Club meet at St Mark's 1st,3rd & 5th Wednesday in month. Next meeting will be 21 December 2011 Everyone welcome. All dances called, only £1 including refreshments. Ring Valmai 219555 Rosemary 405594 or Graham 406359 for more details.

8.00pm Bedford Wine and Social Club St Mark's 1st week in the month. Mrs Gansfield ☎215016

Thursday

9.30am Thursday Prayer Group. Putnoe Heights. Valerie Capon ☎356306 .

Request for prayer can be written in the prayer diary on the information table.

9.45am Yoga Putnoe Heights Denise Green ☎244970

9.45am Chat and Play St.Mark's. A group for Mums & toddlers. Jo Garner 400071 or 07719670624 Restarts on 8 September.

12pm Storybox . St Mark's welcome the under 5's and their carers to join them between 12 noon and 1pm for a sandwich lunch followed by a Bible based story and singing. Lots of fun. Contact Jaana Swaby ☎363283

1.30 - 3.00pm NHS Baby Clinic 1st and 3rd Thursdays St. Mark's ☎267444

1.30pm Toddler Playtime. Putnoe Majella Atkinson ☎325293

1.45 Friendly Chicago Bridge at Putnoe Heights £2 per session inc. refreshments. New members welcome. Contact Pat 01234 294220.

2pm Putnoe Bridge Club. Gerald Palmer ☎345991

2-4pm U3A Indoor Games (see contact details below)

2.30 - 4.30pm Bedford Art Society at St Mark's. Malcolm Smith ☎400741

2- 4pm Police Surgery. St Mark's Foyer. ☎275229

6.15 pm Weightwatchers. St. Mark's. Clare Martin 857850 or 07919402797 .

6.15pm Brownies. Putnoe Heights Lou Watkins

7.00pm Club 2000 Putnoe Heights Nina Ovenden ☎825059

7pm U3A Folk & Poetry (see contact details below)

7.15pm Putnoe Art Group Bob Wardale ☎406094

7.30pm Bedford Embroiderers' Guild St Mark's 3rd week in month. Pauline Lynham ☎01525 714517

8 -10pm Bedford Folk dancers (formerly Barn dancers) Meet weekly at Putnoe Heights . Different guest callers each week. All welcome, cost £2 Including refreshments. More details Ron Law 825574.

8.00pm Bedford Writers Circle. St Mark's 1st week in month. Mr Newton ☎01525 378193

8.00pm Magpies Women's Group St Mark's 2nd & 4th week Jean Birks ☎219607

8.00pm Brickhill Ladies Group St Mark's 1st and 3rd week in month. Pauline Hooper ☎350079

Friday

9.30-12.30pm U3A Photography ((see contact details below)

10am - 12 & 1.15 - 3.15pm U3A Beginners French (see contact details below)

5-8pm Stars School of Dance Putnoe Heights Contact Esther Richardson ☎295862 or ☎07917 582468

5.50-7.05pm Zumba at St Mark's. Contact Laura Harrow ☎07834529833

6.15pm Yoga and Relaxation Putnoe Heights. Racheall Monton ☎297138 or 07910835994

7.45 - 10.45pm Bedford Astrology Club. St. Mark's. Carol Brown ☎01438 233385

Saturday

10.00am Theatretrain St Mark's. Dancing acting, singing. Kate Howard ☎01234 782414

Young Embroiderers bi monthly Putnoe Heights Terry Fletcher ☎357198

2.15pm Society of Recorder Players at Putnoe Heights. G Parry ☎01462 674792

7.00pm Duplicate Bridge. St Mark's Mrs Pillinger ☎212066

Sunday

9.30 - 10.30 Church and Sunday School at St Mark's with crèche for under 3's

11.00 - 12.00 Church and Junior at Putnoe Heights for the under 9's and Young Peoples Fellowship (Y.P.F) for our young adults. A crèche is also available.

1pm Tabernacle of Truth Church Putnoe Heights Sacha Ojo ☎07590597891 or www.tabernacleoftruth.co.uk

7-9pm Tae Kwon Do St Mark's Contact Adrian Felice www.bedfordtkd.com

U3A For information on the U3A groups meeting at St Mark's and Putnoe Heights Church please contact Yvonne Francis ☎405119



Diary Dates



St Mark's Church Council – 21 February 2012

St Mark's Leadership Team - 16 February 2012

Putnoe Heights Leadership Team - 25th Jan 2012

7.30pm at 24 Loring Rd. Sharnbrook.

Putnoe Heights Management Meeting - Mon. 23rd

Jan 2012 7.30 Putnoe Meeting Room

St Mark's Forum Meeting - NA

Putnoe Church Council - 13 February 2012

Pastoral Group Meeting -

Churchyard Committee -

Brickhill Parish Council Meetings -

Circuit meeting - 8 February 2012 @ Kempston East

Deanery Meeting

Woodland Burial Trustees – 5th February 12.30pm

Putnoe Heights Children & Youth – 16 January 2012

Please advise St Mark's Church Office

Advent 3

Opening Verse of Scripture John

"I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."



Collect Prayer *(Before we read we pray)*

God for whom we wait and watch, you sent your servant John the Baptist to prepare your people for the coming of the Messiah. Inspire the ministers and stewards of your truth to turn our disobedient hearts to you; that, when Christ shall come again in glory to be our judge, we may stand with confidence before Him, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. **Amen**

First Bible Reading - Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations. "For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity. In my faithfulness I will reward them and make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the Lord has blessed." I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the soil makes the young plant come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations. (This is the Word of the Lord — **Thanks be to God**)

Second Reading - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. (This is the Word of the Lord — **All: Thanks be to God**)

Gospel Reading - John 1:6-8, 19-28

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" Now some Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing. (This is the word of the Lord— **All: Thanks be to God**)

Post Communion Prayer

We give you thanks O Lord, for these heavenly gifts; kindle in us the fire of your Spirit that when your Christ comes again we may shine as lights before His face: who is alive and reigns for ever. **Amen**

Hymns (Please distribute Hymns and Psalms and Morning Worship, baptism sheets at Putnoe)

1. Long ago prophets knew 83
2. Jesus comes with all his grace 168
3. Hark the glad sound! The Saviour comes 82
4. Come, thou long expected Jesus 81
5. On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry 84

Meditation

There is a rabbinic saying, "Every service which a slave performs for his master shall a disciple do for his master, except the loosing of a sandal thong". Disciples often performed jobs or services for their teachers, but never the menial or dirty tasks, such as tying or untying sandals. John uses the example of 'loosing of a sandal thong' that the rabbinic saying states is too menial for any disciple to undertake, and then declares he is not worthy to perform even this task for the Messiah, the one who is to follow him. His humility and his desire to point only to Christ, challenge us in a world that constantly fosters self aggrandisement and often points only to self.

Commentary Salvation for all

In today's gospel reading we have John the Baptist proclaiming that the time has come to 'Make straight the way for the Lord!' echoing the words of Isaiah. Jesus Himself seems to have been profoundly influenced by the words from Isaiah in His own ministry and life. Paul too in his epistle encourages the Thessalonians to

'Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances'.

The message from today's readings is clear: the salvation we await with joy will liberate both the individual and the community, and its special focus appears to be the poor and lowly, not necessarily the rich and powerful. Jesus comes so that as individuals and as community we may be free from the poverty which afflicts the spiritual lives of all of us and for some in our world, their temporal lives too, that we might be transformed and preserved whole and entire, spirit, soul, and body. The gospel writer John is giving us an insight into what will follow in his gospel in this passage telling the story of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist's own status came from the fact that his father, Zechariah, was a devout rural priest. But John the Baptist is not behaving like a priest. Instead, he looks very much like a member of the numerous groups of alienated priests that emerged as early as the sixth century BC. These groups found themselves increasingly separated from the aristocratic priesthood in Jerusalem. By his dress and diet, John the Baptist distances himself from this luxury and his rural priestly heritage, and appears far more like a prophet, a person who declares the will of God for the here and now. Hence the question from the priests and Levites about John being Elijah. They also have a second question. If John is not a priest, Elijah or a prophet, why is he baptising people? John explains his baptism is a symbolic action, not a priestly function. An act and baptism symbolising repentance for the forgiveness of sins, a purification and cleansing, a return to God. Hence, when John the Baptist is asked if he is Elijah he replies, 'I am not'. But he points to one who will follow, whose sandals he is not worthy to untie.

Powerful words, especially when we realise that throughout the fourth gospel there are many occasions when Jesus declares 'I am'. The gospel begins with John the Baptist attesting 'I am not' and ends with Peter using those same words when questioned about whether or not he was one of Jesus' disciples as Christ is arrested and taken to His death. In between we have a Jesus, who comes to us incarnate at Christmas, and who will come again in glory as we celebrate at Advent, who is the true 'I am'. Jesus is, quite simply, the centre of all that has been, all that is, and all that is to come. The 'I am', the centre of transformation and new life.

Without Christ at the centre of our lives, helping us focus on God, life can seem a desolate wilderness, a dark and hopeless place where we are trapped by our own humanity, our own 'I am not'-ness. As we open ourselves to Jesus, the true 'I am', He releases us into new life and restores those places in our lives that have been marred, or even devastated by the effects of the darkness of the world. As Advent passes into Christmas we look to the light of Christ, who will return in a great blaze of glory to complete that work of restoration, but who first came as a small pinprick of light in a stable in Bethlehem.

For some, all they ever see is the pinprick of light at Christmas and for the rest of the year the Christian faith means little to them. For others, the light in the stable at Christmas is the dawning of the realisation of Christ as the great 'I am' in their lives, lives which continue to be changed, transformed and restored by His incarnation. We too, as was John the Baptist, are called to point to that light, and reflect its transformation and glory in our lives. *Sam Cappleman*

Prayers for Sunday and the week ahead

O God of all hope, we thank you for your promises which find their fulfilment in your Son. We rejoice in His coming in the flesh and look for His coming in glory. By your word, sacraments and Holy Spirit make us ready to receive Christ as our Lord and Saviour, and with thankfulness praise Him, now and for ever. **Amen**

Lord Jesus, redeemer and judge of all people, who came that we might have life eternal, you have taught us that you will come again in great glory to take account of your servants and reward their faithful service; help us to live as people who wait for their master, prepared, engaged in service, and ready for action; that we might not be ashamed before you at your coming so that we might enter into your eternal joy. **Amen**

Grant, O God, that as we rejoice in the hope of the coming of our Saviour, we too may seek to prepare the way of His coming by demonstrating His love as we care for others. **Amen**

Christ the Son of Righteousness shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

"When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion, / we were like men who dreamed. *Psalm 126*

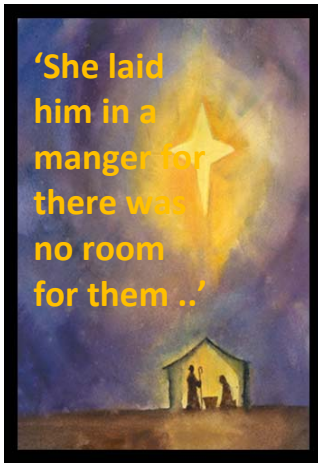
In her memoir called *Mighty Be Our Powers* (2011), the Nobel laureate Leymah Gbowee describes how one night she had her dream while sleeping on her office floor: "I didn't know where I was. Everything was dark. I couldn't see a face, but I heard a voice, and it was talking to me — commanding me: 'Gather the women to pray for peace!'" At 5 A.M. she woke up shaking, feeling like she had heard the voice of God. Peace was a distant dream for Liberians after fourteen years of savage civil war (1989–2003). By some estimates, ten percent of the population had been slaughtered. Twenty-five percent had fled the country. Starvation, systematic rape, torture, mutilation and Charles Taylor's cocaine-crazed child soldiers had traumatized the nation. Schools and hospitals closed. Rats and dogs ate the unburied dead who littered the streets. There was no water, electricity or phone service.



Later that morning Gbowee related her dream to the women at her Lutheran church. Sister Esther Musah, an evangelist, led them in prayer: "Dear God, thank you for sending us this vision. Give us your blessing, Lord, and offer us Your protection and guidance in helping us to understand what it means." What it meant was the start of the Liberian women's peace movement that ended the civil war.

About twenty Lutheran women began to gather every Tuesday at noon to pray. Sometimes they fasted. They invited other Christian churches. At one meeting Asatu spoke up: "I'm the only Muslim here, and we want to join this peace movement." "Praise the Lord!" shouted the Christian women. And so Muslim and Christian women formed an alliance. They shared their horror stories. Training sessions and workshops followed. They passed out brochures and marched to city hall. Three days a week for six months they visited the mosques, the markets, and the churches of Monrovia: "Liberian women, awake for peace!"

In the end, the women forced Charles Taylor to peace talks in Ghana, and then in Ghana they barricaded the do-nothing men in their plenary hall until they signed peace accords. After the 2003 accords, they were instrumental in disarming the country, registering voters, and electing Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as the first woman head of state in Africa. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf speaks at Harvard. Who were these women? "I will say," says Gbowee, "they are ordinary mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters." They sowed bitter tears. They went out weeping. And they acted on their dreams of peace, joy, and laughter for their beloved country.



Christmas cards as shown below are now available for purchase in aid of our charity BeChar, which provides essential care for the homeless and rootless in Bedford. The cards are priced at 25p each with packs of 5 for £1.00. This is a way to have great looking cards and know that your money is going towards such an important charity. Orders

can be made by telephoning St Mark's Office on 342613.

Advent Texts and Emails- This Advent the Diocese of St Albans is offering a very special kind of Advent calendar. They will send you every day a text or email with a special religious thought for Christmas. It will help you to take time to pause each day to prepare for Christmas. You can sign up by visiting www.livethechallenge.co.uk where you can also download stories and activity sheets

Books on Tape We have a selection of books on tape, free of charge. Mostly classics, Silas Marner, Agnes Grey, Black Beauty, Wuthering Heights, Sense and Sensibility etc. These tapes are not commercially recorded. If interested please contact Wendy at St Marks Church Office.

Christmas Card Posting Box. I hope you will use the box again this year to send your cards to friends within Putnoe Heights church. I will put the box in the Welcome area on the 5 December. Last day for posting will be 18 Dec. Regretfully, remaining cards will be left in the church until after Christmas. Thank you, Joy Parker.

Kempston Musical Society annual Christmas concert Saturday 17 December at Kempston East Methodist Church at 7.30pm. Admission £6.00 Proceeds are in aid of BECHAR. Guest artistes Muse and Music. Do come along and bring a friend for what promises to be a most enjoyable evening. For more details contact 01234 268101.

Mission Update BeCHAR is our Autumn Mission project this year. Thank you for all who have already given so generously. There is still time to make a donation so if you have not yet picked up an envelope containing details (or you've lost the one you did take!) please pick one up from either of the church offices after the service. Once again thank you for your outstanding support for such a worthwhile cause. Any clothing and non perishable food can be left at St. Andrew's Church. Totals will be announced next week

Putnoe Heights is having a Christmas Party!! Anybody between 5-14 is welcome to come along for games, music, crafts and Christmas fun, with a small donation £1 per child/young person. It is on 17 December, 2pm-4pm at Putnoe Heights Church! To book a place, contact Emma Gordon (Putnoe Height's children and youth worker) on youth@thisischurch.com or call 07593266091."

Collegium Regale, King's College Cambridge at St. Andrew's Church on Saturday 21st January at 8pm. Tickets £8 £7 concessions. £3 students, children free accompanied by an adult. Tickets from St. Andrew's tel 216881 or central box office 269519.

Putnoe Heights New Year Lunch. Sunday 15 January 1.00pm. Tickets available from Putnoe Office or from Sue on Sundays after morning service. £8.00 adults, £4.50 children. Festive three course lunch with drinks included. Book early for this popular event.

Footprints New Year's Day Walk. Monday 2nd January 10.30 am. Meet at Aspects (Cinema) Car Park (park on far side nearest the river). Easy 3 mile riverside stroll, no stiles, followed by lunch at Putnoe Heights. All welcome to join our traditional start to the New Year.

Christmas Closure St Mark's Church office will close at 5pm Friday 23 December and re-open Monday 9 January.

Deborah Wallace regrets that due to illness she is unable to send cards this year but wishes Christmas Blessings and a Happy New Year to all her friends in the Partnership. She will be making a donation to Putnoe Children's Project and Messy Church.

Christmas Greetings to everyone at St Mark's from Vera Tippett.

Brickhill Community Safety Forum, The next meeting which is also the Annual General Meeting, will be held on Monday 9th January 2012 at 7.30pm at St Mark's Church, Calder Rise.



Carols in the Car Park. This coming Saturday 17 December at 6.30pm. We will be singing carols in the car park, with free mulled wine and mince pies Music provided by Bedford Town Brass Band

Third Candle - The Candle of Love (purple) John the Baptist

Leader: May your hearts be filled with God's love towards all people as you consider the life of sacrifice and encouragement of John the Baptist.

All: Thanks be to God

Last Sunday we lit the Candles of Hope and Peace.

(A person now lights the Candles of Hope, and Peace.)

Today is the Third Sunday of Advent and we light the Candle of Love and remember John the Baptist.

Matthew Chapter 3

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: 'A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him' God gave to Zechariah and Elisabeth a son called John. John spoke to the people bravely in the desert denying his own comforts and was prepared to die for what he believed. John taught that we should share what we have with others, treat each other kindly and show God's love. He did this because he cared for people and wanted them to repent and find God's forgiveness.

(A person now lights the third candle of love)

Let us pray:

Lord God, help us to follow the example of your servant John the Baptist that we would be witnesses and spread the good news of your love. We ask this prayer in the name of Jesus our Saviour, the babe of Bethlehem. Amen.

Womens Fellowship The Fellowship held its final meeting yesterday. (Numbers have got so low it is no longer viable)

Women's Network/MWiB The annual Daffodil Day celebration will be held on 5 March 2012 at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster. Corinne Thomas is organizing a coach- cost is £11. Anyone wishing to go please phone Corinne ASAP on 01525 403936.

Putnoe Provender : Last Sunday's sale raised £264 in aid of BeCHAR - an all time record Thank you to everyone who contributed. John & Sally Gunning.

Tuesday Club Christmas Celebration. You are all invited to join us at Putnoe on Tuesday December 12 at 7.30 - (Please note men and women invited!)

Prayer Group will not meet on December 29.

St Mark's Church Craft Stall Thank you all for your support. We made over £570 .

Christmas Concert by Bedford Town Band at St Mark's Church on 16 December at 7.30pm. Tickets £7.00 concessions £6.00 available from St Mark's Church or Frescoes Coffee House, 20 Mill Street.

In the Steps of St John & St Paul. Rev David Winwood will lead a trip to Turkey, visiting The Seven Churches of Revelation, Konya, Cappadocia & Istanbul, 6 to 17 September 2012. See poster in welcome area or contact David on 01234 359930

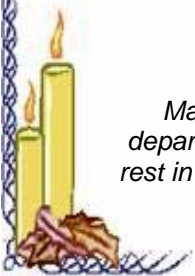
"Witness" is an important concept all through the fourth gospel, and that is how John is presented. He is a "witness to the light." The Greek word is *martureo*, from which we get our word "martyr." The connection is obvious: Witnessing can lead to martyrdom. John himself is a good example.

Rest In Peace

On the Sunday following a funeral service we remember in church those who have died. We light a candle to symbolise the light of Christ which eternally shines and brings hope. If you would like a person remembered in our service when the candle is lit, perhaps on an anniversary or birthday, please inform the ministers, or telephone the church office.

Eddie McKenzie

May the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.'



Banns

We publish the banns and pray for the marriage of Karen Deborah Jackson of this parish and Benjamin Peter Watts of All Saints Church, Kempston.
Second time of asking

Forthcoming Funerals



Members of Putnoe Heights Church will be saddened to hear the news of the death of Arthur Merryman a faithful member of the church for many years. Recently Arthur became ill and has been cared for at home by his son Phil. The funeral will take place at Putnoe Heights Church on Thursday December 22 at 1.00pm