



# Partnership News

Putnoe Heights & St Mark's Church  
12 April 2015  
Second Sunday of Easter



## Sunday Services

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

### 12 April Second Sunday of Easter

**9.30am St Mark's - Morning Worship with Baptism**

Preacher - Mr Geoff Talbot  
Leadership - Mrs Wendy waters  
Intercessions - Mr Ian Farthing  
Organist - Mr. Clive Simmonds

**11.00 am Putnoe - Morning Worship with Baptism**

Preacher - Mr Geoff Talbot  
Leadership - Mr Barry Southam  
Intercessions - Mrs Sam Ware  
Organist - Mr. Clive Simmonds

### 19 April - Third Sunday of Easter

**9.30am St Mark's - Holy Communion**

Preacher - Mrs Wendy Waters  
Leadership - Mrs Jean Bank  
Intercessions - Mrs Morag Stewart  
Organist - Mr Clive Simmonds

**11.00 am Putnoe - Holy Communion**

Preacher - Mrs Wendy Waters  
Leadership - Mrs Veta Hudson Rae  
Intercessions - Mrs Sylvia Cohen  
Organist - **Readings** 1. Acts 3:12-19 2. 1 John 3:1-7  
3. Luke 24:36b-48

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

## Thank You

The flowers have not been donated this week

*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.*

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## Welcome

We welcome you all to our worship today we especially welcome to St Mark's the family and friends of Osian Philip Thomas who has been brought for Baptism

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## Prayer for Sunday

All creation blesses you, O Lord. Exiles offer you worship. Pilgrims hallow your name. Saints adore you. Humanity offers its praise. And we your servants lift our hearts and voices to you in joy and thanksgiving. Amen.

*Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)*

### The Reverend Dr. Sam Cappleman

107 Dover Crescent, Bedford MK41 8QR  
Tel: 266952 nsm@thisischurch.com

### Deacon Jane Mills

c/o Putnoe Heights Church Centre  
Tel. 348091 Mobile 07807 146535  
jane@thisischurch.com

### The Reverend Canon Charles Royden

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

**Partnership News** is sent out by email every Saturday in a colour edition. If you would like to receive a copy please send an email entitled 'Partnership News' to vicar@thisischurch.com. 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](http://www.ThisIsChurch.com)**

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### Partnership Pastoral Support Team Co-ordinators

Mrs Wendy Waters 342613 office@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.*

### Churchyards Administrator

Mrs Avril Williams 01234 342613

### Putnoe Heights Church Centre

**Open Mon-Thur 9-5.30pm, Friday 9-1pm**  
**Tel/fax & Answering Service** 365630 putnoe@thisischurch.com  
**Centre Manager** Geoff Gypps 365630  
**Leadership Team** Mrs Jenny Snelson 344417  
**Treasurer** Mr John Hitt 404186 treasurerph@thisischurch.com  
**Gift Aid Administrator** Mr Lawrence Wyatt 350188  
**Youth Team Leader** Carolyn Morris youth@thisischurch.com

### St. Mark's Church Centre Charity No Charity No 1160981.

**Open Monday - Friday 9am - 5.00pm**  
**Tel/fax & Answering Service** 342613 office@thisischurch.com  
**Centre Manager** Miss Wendy Rider 342613  
**Leadership Team** - Mrs Jean Bank 355698  
**Treasurer** - Mr Ian Farthing 210892  
treasurer@thisischurch.com  
**Gift Aid Administrator** Mr Jim Williams 360605

# Regular Weekly Activities - A Guide To Our Churches

## Monday

**Hazeldene Heights Pre-school.** Sessional and Full Day care available—open Mon.—Fri. Full Day Care 8.30am to 5pm Sessional times 9am—12noon and 12.45pm - 3.45pm For more info please contact Laura Leggett 01234 326685 or www.hazeldeneheights.com

**8.00am-5.30pm Pre-school** Mon-Fri St Mark's

**8.00am-5.30pm Top Marks** Mon-Fri St Mark's Manager Mrs. Helen Harpin 312634  
(See website for more details)

**9.00am-12noon St Mark's Pre-School Nursery** Manager Mrs. Helen Harpin 312634

**9.30-10.30am - Body Control Pilates** –Putnoe Heights Stephanie Smith 357787 or 07973174430

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

**10.00am-12 U3A Play reading** Putnoe Heights Contact Janet King 313946

**11.00am-12noon Pilates** St. Mark's. Liz Mason 07816522200 (starts 8 Sept.)

**12.00 noon Storybox** Putnoe Heights We welcome the under 5's and their carers to join them between 12noon and 1pm for a sandwich lunch followed by a Bible based story and singing. Contact Carolyn Morris youth@thisischurch.com 365630

**1.30pm Chat & Make. Term time** for babies and toddlers 0-5. Crafts, toys, songs, story and refreshments £1. More details contact St Mark's Church Office on 01234 342613 or Janine 01234 297481 Restarts On April 20

**2.00pm U3A Music Appreciation** Putnoe Heights Contact Janet King 313946

**2.00pm U3A Italian** Putnoe Heights– fortnightly

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

**5.30 - 8.30 NHS Eat Smart Think Active** at Putnoe Heights. For more details contact Zoe Wilcox 07767311424

**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

**6.15pm-8.15pm Fit for Life Yoga** - Putnoe Heights Contact Jane Butcher 07891879571

**6.30pm-8pm Cubs** at Putnoe Ages 8 –10.5 Email:phxg.enquiries@gmail.com Tel Tom 07974566509

**6.30pm Fit For All** Putnoe Heights – Laura Amor 341152 / 07976259081

**7.00pm Sugarcraft Guild** St Mark's (1st week in month) Pat Nicholson 353518

**7.00pm Cancer Care Society.** St Mark's. (1st week in month) Mr J Dewhurst 01908 377020.

**7.00-8.00pm Laughter Club** at St. Mark's 2nd week each month) Cheryl Green 07729187399

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

**7.30pm Whist Drive.** St Mark's ( Weeks 3 & 5 in the month).. Next meeting– 20 April Judith Stanton. 823313

**7.30pm No Fear Bridge Club** St. Mark's Mrs. Susan Ford 300218.

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

**7.45-9.15 Get Fit Keep Fit** at Putnoe Heights Diane Field 01234 404976

## Tuesday

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

**9.30am -12.30 & 4-9pm Slimming World** St. Mark's. Lorrie Pearson 01234 340473

**11-12.15am U3A Keep Fit Putnoe Heights** Contact Janet King 313946

**1.15pm U3A Cinema Group.** St Mark's Contact Janet King 313946

**1.30pm U3A Choir.** St Mark's Contact Janet King 313946

**2.00pm U3A Book Group 1** St Mark's (3rd Week in month) Contact Janet King 313946

**2.00pm U3A Book Group 2** St Mark's (2nd Week in month) Contact Janet King 313946

**2.00pm Library Walk W.I.** Putnoe Heights, meets monthly. Morag Tomkins 356895

**2.00pm U3A Photography Group 3** St. Mark's (1st Week in month) Contact Janet King 313946

**2.30pm Mother Teresa Support Group.** St Mark's (1st & 3rd week in month). Wool and knitting needles provided. Mrs Maureen Watling 262225

**2.15pm Tuesday Afternoon Housegroup.** St Mark's (2nd & 4th week in month) Mary Stubbs 406784.

**3.30-6.30pm Stars School of Dance** at Putnoe Heights. Esther Richardson 295862 or 07917582468

**7.15-8.15pm Pilates** St Mark's Church Jane Butcher 07891879571

**7.00pm - 8.30pm Daisy Birthing** Putnoe Heights Susie 07980447390

**7.30pm Ladies Tuesday Club** at Putnoe Heights (Meets monthly Next meeting 14 April Rev. Sam Cappleman Details Diane Bayliss 268101

**8.00pm Hearts in Beds Committee** St Mark's ( week 4 in month) Mrs N Aspey 309816

## Wednesday

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

**10.00-2pm Open House** at St Mark's for those with learning disabilities., their friends, family , carers and supporters 342613.

**10.00am U3A Gardening Group 3** St Marks. Contact Janet King 313946

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

**10am U3A Card Making,** St Marks Contact Janet King 313946

**11.15am U3A Keep Fit** at Putnoe Heights

**12.30pm Luncheon Club.** Putnoe fortnightly. Next meeting 22 April. Contact Putnoe Office 365630

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

**2.00-4.00pm U3A Craft** at St Marks.Contact 1st week of the month. Janet King 313946

**2.00pm U3A Gilbert and Sullivan** Putnoe Heights Contact Janet King 313946

**2.00pm - Fifty plus Keep Fit.** Putnoe Heights Mrs Webster 856966

**3.45.- 5.30pm Messy Church.** St Mark's (3rd Week in month). for children of lower school age and their carers. Bible-based story, crafts, singing and a meal. Next meeting 15 April 2014 Wendy Waters 401834 Jean Bank 355698

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

**5.00–6.00pm Rainbows** at Putnoe Heights Mrs Gill Lake 218091

**6.00pm Brownies.** St Mark's. Mrs C Warden 219731

**6.15pm Yoga and Relaxation** Putnoe Heights Racheall Monton 01234 297138 or 07910835994

**6.00-7.00pm ATSK Karate** at Putnoe Height Kevin Stark Tel.01234 353865

**7.00pm-9.00pm Scouts** at Putnoe ages 10.5-14;

Email:phxg.enquiries@gmail.com Tel Tom 07974566509

**7.00pm Bunyan Bridge.** St. Mark's Colin Jackson 363398 or Brian Sallows 407725.

**7.00pm Archaeological & Local History Society** Putnoe Heights monthly. Sylvia Woods 365095

**7.15pm Putnoe Guild** Putnoe 3rd Wednesday in every month except August Mrs Jo Street 3446008.

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

**8.00pm Tudor Reeds Folk Dance Club** at St Mark's (1st,3rd & 5th Wednesday in month). Next meeting will be 15 April Everyone welcome. All dances called, only £1 including refreshments. Rosemary 405594 or Graham 406359 for more details.

**8.00pm Bedford Wine and Social Club** St Mark's ( Week 1 in the month) Greta Cansfield 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.

**10.30pm Spanish Holiday Survival** at Putnoe Heights. Elena 01234 266968

**9.45am Chat and Play** St.Mark's. A term time group for Mums & toddlers.0-5 Contact St Mark's Church Office 01234 342613 or Janine 01234 297481 Restarts 16 April

**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. Restarts 16 April. Contact Jaana Swaby 342613

**1.00ui-2.30pm Wiggles & Jiggles** Putnoe Heights. Drop in.

**1.00 - 2.30pm NHS Baby Clinic** at St Mark's ( Weeks 1 & 3 in the month)Contact 897401

**1pm-2.30pm Drop in** (small hall) Next Steps 9-24months Putnoe Children's Centre.Please call Trudy Hamilton (centre assistant) for more information 340552. 2pm - **Friendly Chicago Bridge** at Putnoe Heights £2 per session inc. refreshments. New members welcome. Contact Pat 01234 294220.

**2pm U3A Current Affairs** - Putnoe Heights Contact Janet King 313946

**2-4pm U3A Indoor Games.** St.Mark's Contact Janet King 313946

**2.30 - 4.30pm Bedford Art Society** St Mark's Jean Paterson 307210

**3.15-5.15pm Social Care Solutions** Drama Group Claire Creek 262650

**5.45pm Weightwatchers.** St. Mark's. Clare Martin 07768481499

**6.15pm Brownies.** Putnoe Heights Lou Brenna. 07919402797.

**7.00pm Club 2000** Putnoe Audrey Halford 407284

**7pm U3A Folk & Poetry** St Marks (2nd and 4th week in month)Contact Janet King 313946

**7.15pm Putnoe Art Group** Bob Wardale 406094

**7.00pm Bedford Embroiderers' Guild** St Mark's (3rd week in month). Carol Plant 01832710504

**8.00pm Bedford Folk Dancers** (formerly Barn dancers) Meet weekly at Putnoe Heights Different guest callers each week.Except August. All welcome, cost £2.50 Including refreshments. More details Ron 825574 or Shirley 01767 651767

**8.00pm Bedford Writers Circle.** St Mark's (1st week in month). John Broadhouse 01525 404014

**7.30pm Magpies Women's Group** St Mark's (2nd & 4th week in month) Mrs Marie Cotchin 402089

**7.30pm Brickhill Ladies Group** St Mark's (1st and 3rd week in month) Kaye Logan 309105

### Friday

**9.30am –3.30pm Machine Knitting** group at Putnoe Heights, 2nd week per month.. Contact Marion Sutton 217647

**10am -12.00 U3A Photography** St Marks.(4th week in month) Contact Janet King 313946

**10am - 12 & 1.15 - 3.15pm U3A Beginners French** St. Marks Contact Janet King 313946

**2.00-4.00 pm U3A Whist** St Marks. (2nd week in month) Contact Janet King 313946

**2pm U3A Gardening** - Putnoe Heights Contact Janet King 313946

**4.50pm-7.00pm Stars School of Dance** at Putnoe. Esther Richardson 295862 or 07917582468

**6.30pm-8.00pm Beavers** at Putnoe Ages 6-8 Email: phxg.enquiries@gmail.com Tel Tom 07974566509

**7.00pm-9.00pm Meditation** St Mark's.Cheryl Green 07729187399

**7.45 - 10.45pm Bedford Astrology Club.** St Marks(2nd week in month )Carol Brown 01438 233385

### Saturday

**9.00am Faith Temple Ministries** St Mark's (1st week in month) Dawn Kelly 07863762593

**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

### Sunday

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

**10 - 5.30pm Bedford Stamp Fayre.** 1st Sunday Apr/Jun/Aug /Oct/Dec. Contact P Harris 01623 621143

**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.

**2– 4.30pm Indoor Bowls** at St. Mark's 2nd & 4th Sunday. Ray Seymour 305695 or church office.

## Diary Dates



**St Mark's Church Council** – tba

**St Mark's Leadership Team** -

**Annual Congregational Meetings** - 26 April 2015

**Putnoe Heights Leadership Team** –

**Putnoe Heights Management Meeting** –

**Putnoe Church Council** -

**Pastoral Group Meeting**– 15 September 2015 4.00pm

**Churchyard Committee** - TBA

**Circuit meeting** –

**Deanery meeting** - 19 March 7.30pm.

**Woodland Burial Trustees** – 15 March 12.30pm

**Putnoe Heights Children & Youth Meeting** - 1 June 2015 2pm

**St Mark's Car Boot Sales 2015**, 6 April, 4 May, 25 May and 31 August.

**Harvest Festival** service will be on Sunday 27 September.

*Please advise St Mark's Church Office of the dates of your meetings.*

# Second Sunday of Easter

## Low Sunday

### Sentence of Scripture John 6 : 40

Jesus said to his disciples, 'This is the will of my Father, that whoever sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and that I shall raise him up on the last day.'

### Collect Prayer for the Day *Before we read we pray*

Faithful God, the strength of all who believe and the hope of those who doubt; may we, who have not seen, have faith and receive the fullness of Christ's blessing; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen Methodist Worship

### First Bible Reading - Acts 4:32-35

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. (This is the word of the Lord—**Thanks be to God**)

### Second Bible Reading - 1 John 1:1-2:2

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

(This is the word of the Lord – **Thanks be to God**)

### Gospel Reading - John 20:19-31

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Then Jesus said  
to Thomas,  
"Put your finger here and  
see my hands.  
Reach out your hand  
and put it in my side.  
Do not doubt  
but believe."  
*John 20.27*



A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

(This is the Gospel of Christ - **Praise to Christ our Lord**)

### **Post Communion Prayer**

Lord God our Father, through our Saviour Jesus Christ you have assured your children of eternal life and in baptism have made us one with him: deliver us from the death of sin and raise us to new life in your love, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen

### **Hymns for Sunday** (*Please distribute Easter Communion Booklets and Hymn Sheet if desired*)

1. Alleluia, alleluia give thanks to the risen Lord
2. All heaven declares
3. Low in the grave he lay
4. The strife is o'er, the battle done
5. Alleluia, Alleluia!

### **Commentary**

In our Gospel reading today, the disciple Thomas wants to put his hands in the holes in the wounded body of Jesus. He needs to know that Jesus is really alive. If we had been near Jesus after the resurrection we might also have been surprised at what was going on. Thomas just says out loud the things the other disciples (and perhaps us) think but keep to themselves.

It was Thomas also who asked Jesus what on earth he was talking about when he said he was going to 'prepare a place for them.' We are fortunate that Thomas voices the questions which we all have and in so doing shows us that it is alright to have doubts and fears in our faith. Like Thomas we do not know what happens when we die, we are filled with questions. But thankfully this is a good thing, faith is like a muscle it grows by stretching. It is good for our faith to be stretched like Thomas and as it is we learn to understand that there many things which we just do not and never will understand.

We all have doubts, we might not always express them, but they are there, a normal part of living. So it is with our faith, there will be things which trouble and confuse us, or things which we simply cannot bring ourselves to accept or understand. What do we do when our doubts trouble us? In the Gospel reading today we learn of Thomas. He could not accept that Jesus had risen from the grave, and he could not even accept the witness of the disciples who told him that they had seen Jesus with their own eyes.

Thomas struggled with the resurrection story, but it was not just Thomas, we are told others doubted as well, until they too had seen Jesus.

Thomas was lucky, soon he saw Jesus for himself, we are not so fortunate So what do we do about our doubts, we who believe but have not seen ? Perhaps the first things is to understand that everybody has doubts, the best things is to talk about them and use them to encourage ourselves to move on in our faith.

### **Meditation Easter reflection from the Methodist President and Vice-President**

On our visits to the different parts of the Methodist Church we see many examples of death and resurrection. There are so many places where God's Spirit is doing incredible things in us and through us. We have tried to explore this in two reflections on how people experienced the events of the first Easter. The woman's is by the Vice-President, Gill Dascombe. The man's is by the President, the Revd Kenneth Howcroft.

The characters and events of Holy Week take us through a vast range of human experience: from jubilation through conflict, hope, betrayal, anger, power, fear, to grief, pain and loss, bewilderment and desolation where all we can do is wait. In this we are moving along the way that took Jesus through Good Friday to Holy Saturday, and on towards Easter Sunday's good news of new life.

In our travels, we have begun to realise that true renewal is always shaped by a dynamic of death and resurrection. It is stamped through with the reality of a cross and a tomb. Both begin with a body. Both become empty. They are inextricably linked.

To them and all the world comes the message that Christ is alive. God has raised him up and affirmed that

his way of taking up the cross in suffering love is God's way of creating, redeeming and perfecting the world. God still seeks to raise us up to be Christ's body and live his way through what we say and do, and how we think and pray (and, in a few weeks, how we vote) in the world around us.

**A woman** Why did I go to the garden so early? It was still dark! The night-world was a place of shadows and menace and all around was the gloomy silence of death. Unsure of my way, I was stumbling over boulders and getting caught in bushes. Overcome with frustration and despair, I sank down and wept.

I hadn't been able to sleep, of course. Not that night or the night before. Like all the bereaved, I didn't want one day to end and the next one to start. Each new day dragging me further from his presence, each day the pain of separation gnawing anew at my insides.

Later he was to tell me not to cling to him, not to hold on, and at the time I thought that it was the most unutterably callous thing I had ever heard. Of course I wanted to cling on! To cling on with all my might. To squeeze out every last drop that was left to memory. It was all I had left.

But it was into such darkness and emptiness that God spoke the first words of creation, bringing light and life. Could it be that on this blackest and most dreadful of all nights the world stood once again on the brink of something new? The dawn began to break. There was no blinding brilliance, only the usual cold grey mistiness. Enough for me to stumble on to the tomb and look inside and find, to my horror, that it was empty. There was no body. Nothing left to cling to.

And then, a voice spoke once more into the void. A Word. And it was my name. I turned around in astonishment and joy, and held out my arms. And he said: 'Don't cling to me. I haven't come back as before, I have moved on to new life. And so now must you.' The sun rose into the sky, gaining strength and filling the garden with warmth and life. I became the first witness to God's new creation. The universe re-made by love. I haven't come back, I have moved on, and now, so must you.' And now, so must we.

**A man.** Why didn't I go to the tomb? I couldn't bear it. I didn't want to think about what people did to him. Or what God allowed to happen to him. I had given up everything for him. But it had come to nothing. Darkness. Emptiness.

I didn't want to picture the awful way he was killed. I hadn't been able to face it when it happened. When the soldiers came, we ran. But most of us also ran away from the horror of it all inside ourselves. Some of us fell asleep when he asked us to stay awake and pray while he prayed. He was praying that God's will, not his, be done not just in heaven but in what was happening to him here on earth, even if that meant that he would have to drain the cup of suffering. We were meant to be praying alongside him that we would not be brought to our breaking point or led into temptation. Yet some of us went on to deny that we knew him. Some of us thought he had betrayed us and so ended up betraying him.

But something brought us back together. We huddled together, hiding from the awfulness of it all, from the rest of the world, and perhaps even from God.

We huddled together, not facing what had happened, yet somehow hanging on to it. Then something happened among the women. Some of them had not betrayed or denied him. They had not run away, but had been there at his barbaric execution on a cross. They had not merely said that they would follow him. They had actually followed him. Now they were running in, telling us a jumble of different things. His body had vanished. He wasn't dead. He had risen from the grave. Or, rather, God had raised him. Someone had told them. Or an angel had told them. Or he had appeared and spoken to them himself. And they were to tell the rest of us that we were to get out of our huddle and get on with his mission, saying and doing what he had taught us to do. If we did, we would find that he was with us. Can we face it? Can we trust that their message is good news? Can we let go and let God raise us to new life with and in Christ - and, through us, the world?

### **Prayers for Sunday and the week ahead**

In joy and hope let us pray to the Father.

That our risen Saviour may fill us with the joy of his glorious and life-giving resurrection.

That isolated and persecuted churches may find fresh strength in the good news of Easter.

That God may grant us humility to be subject to one another in Christian love.

That he may provide for those who lack food, work or shelter.

That by his power war and famine may cease through all the world.

That he may reveal the light of his presence to the sick, the weak and the dying, to comfort and strengthen them.

That, according to his promises, all who have died in the faith of the resurrection may be raised on the last day.

That he may send the fire of the Holy Spirit upon his people, so that we may bear faithful witness to his resurrection.

Heavenly Father, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant that, as his death has recalled us to life, so his continual presence in us may raise us to eternal joy; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Putnoe Storybox** A big thank you to all our Putnoe storybox volunteers. Storybox at Putnoe will start again on Monday 20 April

### **The Big Night Out Auction of Promises**

Come to St Mark's Church Saturday 18 April at 7.30pm for a great fun night out whilst we raise money for the new tile floor. We have booked entertainment with music and dancing. Tickets will be just £3 to include a welcome drink. Please feel free to bring your own drinks for the night, there will be 'nibbles' but no food provided.

Some of the things promised !

Day out at Silverstone with special access

Day out in a sports car

Holiday

Fishing experience and lunch Grafham

**Next Messy Church at St Mark's Church** on Wednesday 15 April 3.45 - 5.30pm. Messy Church takes place monthly on a Wednesday from 3.45pm - 5.30pm. For children of lower school age and carers. Bible-based story, crafts, singing and meal. For more details contact Wendy Waters 401834

**'Fruit Corner Yogurt Pots'** - If you buy these types of yogurts please save them for Messy Church. We need them for Wednesday 15 April. Please leave at St Mark's office or contact Wendy Waters.

**St Mark's Chat and Make** restarts after Easter on April 20 **Chat and play** restarts on April 16 **Storybox** restarts on April 16

**Car Boot Easter Monday** Thank you to everybody who helped with the car boot sale. It was a great day and we raised over £1,000 towards church funds.

**Footprints** There will be a walk from Turvey on Sunday 12 April 2015. The later start time is 2.30pm. Meet on the bridge where the A428 traverses the River Great Ouse. Park in nearby layby. The walk is over grassy park land behind Turvey Abbey. 3-4 miles. Stiles have been replaced by modern kissing gates. Some muddy places. Enquiries Alan or Margaret 327219.

**Arthritis Research.** Our popular fun quiz night is being held at the White Horse, Newnham Avenue at 7.30pm for 8.00pm on Wednesday 22 April in aid of Arthritis Research. Tickets £7 including buffet supper with chips. It's great fun so please raise a team maximum of 6 members. For information contact Marion Goddard on 344617

**St Andrew's Money Advice** We are holding our Annual Meeting on Wednesday 29 April 2015 at 7.30pm in the Holt Room St Andrew's Church Centre. Speaker from Bedford Food Bank plus reports on our year's activity and light refreshments.

For more information contact; Fiona McLeod (Chairman) [moneyadvice@standrewsbedford.org](mailto:moneyadvice@standrewsbedford.org) or telephone 07599618602

**Iona Service** - Sunday 26 April at 6.00pm at St Andrew's Church. An hour of reflection in the style of Iona, sharing the concern for ecology and social justice

## **Annual Congregational Meeting**

### **Please complete a Church Membership Form**

Our Annual General Church Meeting takes place on 26 April after the church services. It is really helpful and sometimes quite important for us to have accurate membership information for this meeting. Our churches pay a financial contribution to the Church of England or the Methodist Church for every member over 16 years of age. It is therefore important to have an accurate record of membership to enable us to pay our church share to the Church of England and the Methodist Church. It is also helpful to have up to date details if we need to make contact with you, perhaps when a pastoral situation arises.

If you consider yourself to be a member of this church, please would you kindly complete this form and return it to the church office, a minister or a member of the Leadership Team. You can also fax or Email your details to [vicar@thisischurch.com](mailto:vicar@thisischurch.com). Please be assured we do not release your details to any other organisations.

It is becoming increasingly helpful to have a record of email addresses so please do let us know. It is helpful and cost effective to communicate in this way and we will send you a copy of Partnership News each week which is helpful if you are unable to come to church for any reason. We will not share your details with anybody else.

### **Nomination Forms for Church Council**

Nomination forms for the Church Councils are printed in Partnership News this week and anyone who attends our churches can join the church council at either St Mark's or Putnoe Heights. Becoming a member of the church council is a great way of having your say and becoming more involved with the running of the churches. As you know, to maintain its Charity status, St Mark's has recently become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation called St Mark's Church Community Centre, Bedford and Church Council members at St Mark's therefore become members of that charity. Just as the members of the Church Council, they then have a degree of responsibility for the decisions that are made at the church. Needless to say, everyone who comes to either church whether on Church Council or not is always welcome and it's great to know that all who come can benefit from all the activities that happens every day in our churches.

## Easter Message from the Bishop of St Albans

'Always look on the bright side of life.' Somewhat bizarrely, the song from Monty Python's *The Life of Brian* has become a favourite at funerals. In the film it is sung by one of the thieves hanging on a cross next to Jesus. The message of the song is simple: when everything is going wrong, just whistle and reflect on the good things in life.

If only it were that easy. In reality groundless optimism does not offer comfort. In fact as we look around at the world it is easy to lapse into despair. In the past few months alone we have been confronted with the beheadings of journalists by Isis, police brutality in Ferguson, Missouri, the shooting down of Malaysian Airlines MH17 over Ukraine, the Ebola crisis, the Charlie Hebdo massacre in Paris and now the loss of 150 lives in the Germanwings disaster.

Reflecting on the counterpoint of hope and despair in human life, Maria Boulding, a Benedictine nun, writes: 'We cannot comfort ourselves with wistful thinking. We instinctively admire the courage of those who squarely face the possibility that human life is simply absurd, that there is no future at all, and that the only honourable option is to live with dignity and kindness as we wait for our meaningless extinction. Courageous as it is, however, this view is not convincing, for it leaves too much unexplained. Deeply rooted in our experience is an obstinate certainty that our best intuition will prove to have been the truest, and no mockery.'

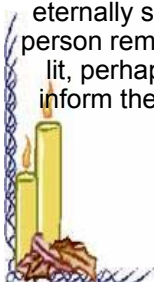
Hope is one of the essentials of life: without it we wither and perish. As we approach the General Election, one of the questions I will be asking is 'Who are the bearers of hope for those who have no hope in our society?'

Ziauddin Yousufzai, the father of Malala, the young Pakistani human rights activist and Nobel Prize-winner, was interviewed on Radio 4. Asked if he liked his new life in Britain, travelling among the international community and meeting world leaders, he was diplomatic but unequivocal. He expressed his appreciation of Britain and his gratitude for being alive, but said he was only sustained by one thing: the hope that one day he would be able to return to his home in Swat, Pakistan, with its familiar sights, smells and sounds. He said, 'It is the only hope we are living with. If someone told me I would die in any other part of the world, it would kill me.'

### 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

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



At least Malala's father can name the hope that sustains him. For others, hope is more elusive. The most abject hopelessness I have encountered is among those whose lives have been wrecked by addictions, who are unable to hold down a job and who have no home of their own. Talking to such a man recently, he said that he could not think about next month let alone next year. The only thing that kept him going was that he had been given enough hope to get through the next twenty-four hours. Listening to his story, it was difficult to know how to help or where to start.

Twenty-five years ago last month, two women from St Mary's Church, Watford, became increasingly concerned about the homeless people who congregated in their church porch. Rather than see them as faceless people to be moved on by the police, they took the trouble to befriend them. They discovered men and women whose lives had disintegrated. By reaching out to them with friendship, food and even taking some of them into their own homes for shelter, they sowed seeds of hope.

Joined by other helpers from churches across the town, they worked alongside the homeless and supported them as they rebuilt their lives. Today, with an annual turnover of £2m, the charity houses up to sixty people each night and supports around six hundred people annually. The name of the charity says it all: 'New Hope'.

The two women could name the grounds of their hope too: Jesus Christ, who is the hope beyond all hopes. Their belief in the resurrection of Jesus led them to the conviction that God is still in the business of giving life and hope, even in the most desperate situations.

This gift of hope has the power to transform people and situations, and it lies at the heart of Easter. Such hope is for everyone, even for those whose lives seem unredeemable. What Easter says is that nobody is beyond the healing, redeeming, restoring love of God.

+Alan St Albans The Rt Revd Dr Alan Smith

### Forthcoming Funerals

**It was with sadness that we heard this week of the death of The Reverend James (Jim)**

**Gartside** one of our ministers in the Circuit who has had a long and faithful ministry stretching over many years. His funeral service will take place at 3.00pm on Friday 17 April at St Mark's Church and will be followed by burial at St Albans Woodland Burial Ground

**The funeral of Patricia Carmen Muncaster** will take place at Bedford Crematorium on Monday 13 April at 10.00am

**The funeral of Myrtle Mary McConnell** will take place at 12.15p.m. on Tuesday 14 April at Bedford Crematorium