



# Partnership News

20 December 2009

Advent 4



## 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

### 9.30am St. Mark's - Holy Communion

Preacher - Mr B Owen  
Leadership - Mrs Jean Bank  
Intercessions - Mrs Pat Leusby

### 11.00am Putnoe Heights - Holy Communion

Preacher - Mr B Owen Leadership - Mrs Linda Hoar  
Intercessions - Claire Peck

### 24 December

3.00pm Crib Service  
11.30pm Midnight Mass

### 25 December

9.30am Morning Worship

### 27 December - Christmas 1

### 9.30am St. Mark's - Morning Worship

Preacher - Revd Charles Royden  
Leadership - Mrs Avril Williams  
Intercessions - Mr Richard Ledger

### 11.00am Putnoe Heights - Morning Worship

Preacher - Revd Charles Royden Leadership - Mrs Sam Ware  
Intercessions - Dr Tim Wilkes

### Readings

1.1 Sam 2: 18-20, 26 2.Col 3: 12-17  
3.Luke 2:41-52

## Thank You

The flowers at Putnoe Heights Church this week have been given by Patricia Pollard in loving memory of her mother Eva Hopkins.

One of the arrangements in church at St Mark's this week have been given in loving memory of John Norris Corfield from all the family.

*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.*

## Prayer for Sunday

O God, you have folded back the mantle of the night to clothe us in the glory of the day. Drive all gloomy thoughts from our hearts and make us glad with the brightness of eternal hope; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*from the Gregorian Sacramentary (sixth century)*

### The Reverend Dr. Sam Cappleman

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

### Deacon Jane Mason

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

### The Reverend Charles Royden

The Vicarage, Calder Rise. MK41 7UY  
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### For Data Protection Purposes

Please note that any items submitted for inclusion in Partnership News will automatically be posted on our website.

Partnership News is also archived on our church website [www.ThisIsChurch.com](http://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 Barry Snelson 365630 & 344417  
Leadership Team Mr. Lawrence Wyatt 350188  
Treasurer Mr Ian Morse 216428 treasurerph@thisischurch.com  
Gift Aid Administrator - Mr John Hitt 404186  
Youth & children's worker - Mrs Spavins 302349  
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 - Mrs Delia Shephard 273628  
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 -11.45 am Mon-Fri Putnoe Heights Pre-school**  
Headteacher 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)
- 9.00am Clubhouse** at St. Mark's for those with Learning Disabilities. Karen Bywater ☎315460.
- 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** St Mark's J Birks ☎219607
- 12.00pm Story box 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. ☎Liz 302349
- 1.30pm U3A History Group** St Mark's ☎ David Fowler 824474
- 2pm U3A Drama** St Mark's 1st & 2nd week. Mr Ovenden ☎ 825059
- 4.00pm Storybox Plus** Putnoe Heights for 4-9 year Old. Meet at 3.30 for refreshments & games. Then till 5pm 'follow the year' through stories, drama, singing & craft activities. We then make a short presentation in church on first Sunday in each month. ☎Liz Spavins 302349
- 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 ☎ 07720713738.
- 6.15 Pilates** at Putnoe Heights Jane Butcher 300859
- 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
- 7.15pm Yoga.** Putnoe Heights Denise Green ☎244970
- 7.30pm Whist Drive.** St Mark's 3rd & 5th week . Next meeting December 21 Judith Stanton. ☎823313
- 7.30pm House group** 30 The Ridgeway. The home of Eddy & Margaret Peck ☎267567.
- 8.00pm 'Get Fit, Stay Fit'** Putnoe Heights. Mrs Diane Field ☎404976

## Tuesday

- 9.30 12.30 Jo Jingles.** St. Mark's. Music & movement for pre-school children. Renu Elston ☎01908 587299
- 9.30am Candlewicking** (Needlework). Putnoe Heights. Judi Staughton ☎341821
- 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** Sally Banks ☎ 870357
- 1.30pm Toddlers Playtime.** Putnoe Heights Majella Atkinson ☎325293.
- 1.30pm U3A Cinema Group.** St Mark's 4th Week in month . Mrs Beaumont ☎261461

- 2.00pm U3A Book Group.** St Mark's 3rd Week Mrs Forrest ☎344043
- 2.00pm Library Walk W.I.** Putnoe Heights, meets monthly. Morag Tomkins ☎356895
- 2pm U3A Photography** (Group 3) St Mark's 1st Week. Janet King ☎313946
- 2.15pm Putnoe Heights Women's Fellowship.** Next meeting January 12 2010. Betty Wyatt ☎350188. **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 Stars School of Dance.** Putnoe Heights. Esther Sancto ☎295862 or 07917582468.
- 6.30pm Creative Card making.** Putnoe Heights Church. Carol Houghton 346718
- 6.30pm Yoga** Putnoe Heights Veronica Lafferty ☎781466 or 07788750360
- 7pm Keep Fit.** St. Mark's Jan Gregory ☎328455
- 7pm MT Karate** [all ages] Putnoe Heights. Karen King ☎ 07941 264885
- 7.30pm Hearts & Beds. Cardiac Support Group** 1st Tuesday in the month. Brian Ibberson ☎403497
- 7.30pm Tabernacle of Truth Church** Putnoe Heights Bible study & prayers. Revd. Tarr ☎360188 or 07866775515
- 7.30pm Putnoe Heights Ladies Tuesday Club** - Meets fortnightly. Next meeting December 15 Christmas Celebrations. Details from Audrey Wilkins☎365068 or Margaret Gentle ☎309043

## Wednesday

- 9.30am Body Control Pilates.** Putnoe Heights. Stephanie Smith ☎357787 or 07973174430.
- 9.00am Clubhouse** at St Mark's for those with Learning Disabilities. Karen Bywater ☎315460.
- 10.00am Holy Communion.** St. Mark's Chapel. A half hour service followed by coffee. All welcome.
- 10am Sewing & Chat.** Putnoe Heights Valerie Russell ☎01462 815966
- 10am U3A Card Making,** St Mark's Church. 4th week in the month. Contact Janet King 313946
- 12.30pm Luncheon Club.** Putnoe Heights fortnightly. Next - 6 January Putnoe Heights Office ☎365630
- 1.00-3pm Police Surgery** at Putnoe Heights .
- 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** 1st & 3rd week. Pat Holland ☎ 262823
- 2.15pm - Fifty plus Keep Fit.** Putnoe Heights Mrs Webster ☎856966
- 4.15pm Kumon Maths.** Putnoe Heights Mrs Raksha Mistry ☎01908 392698
- 6.00 pm Brownies.** St Mark's. Mrs Carol Warden ☎219731
- 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 6 January 2010 Everyone welcome. All dances called, only £1 including refreshments.. Ring Graham ☎ 406359 or Alan 345312. or Rosemary 405594 for more details

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

**7.45 for 8pm God talk** - women's group monthly meeting for worship and friendly chat at Wendy Nash's Contact Majella Atkinson ☎ 325293

### Thursday

**9.30am Thursday Prayer Group.** Putnoe Heights in the quiet room. Sylvia Cohen ☎ 343424 There will be no meetings on 24 & 31 December. As usual on 7 January *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. Starts again on 7 January 2010 Emma Strangwick ☎ 211070

11am-12noon Citizens Advice Bureau at Putnoe Heights.

**12pm Storybox Restarts on 7 January 2010.** 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 01234 363283

**1.30 - 3.00pm NHS Baby Clinic** St. Mark's ☎ 267444

**1.30pm Toddler Playtime.** Putnoe Majella Atkinson ☎ 325293.

**2pm Putnoe Bridge Club.** Gerald Palmer ☎ 345991

**2.30 - 4.30pm Bedford Art Society** at St Mark's. Mary Rich ☎ 272470 Next meeting 24 September

**4 - 7.00pm Police Surgery.** St Mark's Foyer. ☎ 349179

**6.15 pm Weightwatchers.** St. Mark's. Mrs Margaret Ralph ☎ 01767 224978.

**6.15pm Brownies.** Putnoe Heights Caroline Morgan ☎ 07786508351

**7.00pm Club 2000** Putnoe Heights Nina Ovenden ☎ 825059

**7pm U3A Folk & Poetry Group.** St Mark's 2nd & 4th week in month. Doug Ovenden ☎ 825059

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

**7.30pm Bedford Embroiderers' Guild** St Mark's 3rd week in month. Nadeen Salmon ☎ 301550

**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. Pat Foulks ☎ 346505

### Friday

**9.30-12.30pm U3A Photography** (Group 1) St Marks 4th week in month Val Scrivener ☎ 346397

**9.00am Clubhouse** St. Mark's for those with Learning Disabilities. Karen Bywater ☎ 315460.

**10am - 12 & 1.15 - 3.15pm U3A Beginners French** St Mark's Joyce Fields ☎ 353086

**12.15pm U3A Photography** (Group 2). St Mark's 4th week in month. Sue Butler ☎ 354183

**5pm Stars School of Dance** Putnoe Heights Contact Esther Sancto ☎ 295862 or ☎ 07917 582468

**2.00pm U3A Gardening Group** Putnoe Heights Eve Whitehead ☎ 356875

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

**6.30pm Line Dancing.** St Mark's Christine Rushton ☎ 782360

6.30 - 7.30pm Ladies Kick Boxing weekly at St. Mark's. Parker Lake ☎ 07984427854

**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 Tel 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 Revd. Tarr ☎ 360188 or ☎ 07866775515

**6pm T.N.T.** Putnoe. For 9-12 year olds (fortnightly) join us for fellowship & fun. Please see Liz ☎ 302349 .

## Diary Dates

**St Mark's Church Council –**  
**St Mark's Leadership Team –** 19 January  
**Putnoe Heights Leadership Team –** , 8 Feb  
**Putnoe Heights Management Meeting** 18 Jan 7.45pm  
**St Mark's Church Forum Meeting** - 12 Jan 2010,  
**Putnoe Church Council** - 15 February  
**Pastoral Group Meeting** - 19 January  
**Churchyard Committee** - 26 January 2010, 11am  
**Putnoe Heights Mission Group—**Weds 6th Jan at 14 Flint Way at 7.30pm  
**Partnership Council—**TBA  
**Brickhill Parish Council Meetings -**  
**Deanery Meeting**  
**Circuit/Treasurers** Review meeting at St. Mark's  
**Circuit Meeting 8 March at Oakley**  
**Woodland Burial Trustees –** 6th December  
**Putnoe Heights Children & Youth –** 18th Jan

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

# Fourth Sunday of Advent

## Opening Verses of Scripture—Psalm 80:19

Restore us, O LORD God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.

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

God our Redeemer, you chose the Virgin Mary, to be the mother of our Lord and saviour. Fill us with your grace that in all things we may embrace your holy will and with her rejoice in your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord 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 - Micah Chapter 5:2-5

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labour gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace. When the Assyrian invades our land and marches through our fortresses, we will raise against him seven shepherds, even eight leaders of men  
(Reader: This is the word of the Lord - **All: Thanks be to God**)

## Second Reading - Hebrews Chapter 10:5-10

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, 'Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'" First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.  
(Reader: This is the word of the Lord -- **All: Thanks be to God**)

## Gospel Reading - Luke Chapter 1:39-45 -All –Glory TO Christ our Saviour

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!" And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers." Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

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



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

**Meditation From today's Micah reading:**

Thus says the Lord: "You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel.... He shall be peace."

**Reflection:** When we celebrate the birth of the Promised One from small and insignificant Bethlehem, we might also celebrate and commit to his way – as the old song goes, "Give Peace a Chance."

Start by thinking small, the way God did. Give peace a chance in the small ways of our daily lives. Try disarming our hearts by seeking understanding and reconciliation in our relationships.

So we ask ourselves:

1. What in my daily words and acts reflects anger and an unrestful spirit?
2. How can I begin to change so as to be more an instrument of God's peace?

**Hymns** (*Please distribute Hymns and Psalms and Holy Communion*)

1. The angel Gabriel 87
2. O Little town of Bethlehem 113
3. Joy to the world 77
4. What child is this ? 5
5. A Messenger named Gabriel

**Commentary**

Imagine a people waiting and waiting for God to send a liberator to free them from their oppressed and poor lives. Imagine their dreams and whispered hopes about how God would do it: a warrior with a vast army would come to lead them to freedom and prosperity. At the time the prophet Micah prophesied, 800 years before Christ, the people could certainly have used some decisive action by God. They were oppressed, not only by the Assyrians, but by their own corrupt, wealthy merchants. In addition, their religious practices, while well-prepared and properly performed were empty. The people were left spiritually and physically desperate.

Micah, along with his contemporary prophet Isaiah, had denounced the unfaithfulness and sins of the people which, they preached, had caused the current dire situation in which the people found themselves. But Micah also reminded people of God's faithful love. Today we hear Micah getting more specific about God's salvation. But what nerve! Instead of promising the coming of a mighty rescuer, born in a great city like Rome, a commercial centre like Corinth, or a religious capital like Jerusalem, the one who is coming will be born in Bethlehem (also called Ephrathah); which even the prophet admits is "two small" to be of any significance. It's just like God to work contrary to human expectation. We invest in size and power; God invests in the lowly and insignificant. Which way will survive; which way bring us lasting life?

This is not the first time God has chosen the diminutive Bethlehem to begin a work of rescue and renewal. Bethlehem was where Jesse, the father of David the Shepherd King, was born. Once again, Micah promises, God will draw from Bethlehem another Shepherd King, "one who is to be ruler in Israel." This one will not be an iron-fisted ruler, instead "he shall be peace." We respond to what God is about to do with a sigh of relief and anticipation, "Thank God!"

We humans have tried to extend our rule and dominance over one another and nations by the use of military might and economic muscle. We have hardly created states of peace throughout the world, in our local communities, or for some of us, even in our own families. We need to commit to another course of action, one which at first may appear or feel impotent and with little hope of success. When we celebrate the birth of the promised one from Bethlehem, we might also celebrate and commit to his way – as the old song goes, we might, "Give Peace a Chance."

We could start by thinking small, the way God did. Give peace a chance in the small ways of our daily lives. Try disarming our hearts and our relationships by seeking understanding and reconciliation. Use less violent and volume-intense language at home. Bridge a gap – go out of our way to meet the "other" in our parish or school. Defuse conversations or change the subject when the topic turns on "them." ("The problem with them is....")

It seems that once God chooses a course of action God repeats the act again and again. The story of the Israelites and their prophets, like Micah, and his prediction about Bethlehem, is an often-told tale: God works among the small and insignificant to accomplish God's intentions. Luke will also repeat this theme throughout his gospel.

Today Luke focuses on Nazareth, a small coastal village the world would have forgotten had Mary not come from there. It was in Nazareth Mary received the angel's announcement about her bearing, "the One who would deliver his people." That same angel announced another "small event": her aged kinswoman Elizabeth was also pregnant. So, hearing this improbable message and believing it, Mary sets off to visit Elizabeth—today's story.

God doesn't choose the high and mighty to accomplish God's plans. If that were so, they could claim some part in the successful completion of the tasks God put to them. Instead, God turns to the least likely so that we will know how the deed got done. The chosen one says, "Yes" to God and then God sets to work in and through them. Since they can't claim credit for what they did, God's chosen instrument has nothing to say except, "Thank you"

Jesus didn't need a woman of rank and power to be his mother; he needed a docile, gentle and strong spirit who would say "Yes" to God, no matter how improbable the goal at hand seemed. Mary, like all the faithful people, starting with Abraham and Sarah, trusted that God could fulfill God's promises. Like us, she was asked to "step out in faith," to take a risk based on her trust in God. In her act of trust she reveals for us a name for God: "Constant Fidelity."

Micah promises God will send a shepherd to rule and guide the people. A shepherd not only leads, but protects the defenceless sheep. Jesus will be that firm, gentle shepherd. Since he is born among humble people, from an insignificant place, he will not forget his origins and his life will be characterized by his sensitivity to the outcast, poor and scattered.

Joy characterizes the encounter between Mary and Elizabeth. It's not a jubilation stirred up by a great victory over a vanquished enemy with the sharing of spoils. Instead, it's the more profound joy that appears in the Bible when God's work is accomplished by the faithful. It's David's joyful dance before the ark of the covenant (2 Samuel 6:14-15) in celebration of God's mighty deeds for Israel. Now it is Elizabeth and Mary's moment of joy, expressing the work of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the time of fulfilment. The signs were clear to these two faithful ones: God was present and working on behalf of the lowly—and that's the reason to be joyful, or in imitation of David before the ark, reason to do a little skip and jump for joy!

Will we ever have peace on earth and goodwill towards all, or is Micah's proclamation an empty promise? So much time has elapsed since Mary made that trip and hope was stirred at Elizabeth's greeting. But where shall we look on the globe to find nations not in conflict, or living under the cloud of future conflict? Certainly not in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Middle East, Russia, China, Africa, or even our own country.

Still we express our hope, as impossible as it often seems, that one day we shall live in that promised, peaceable Kingdom, ruled by the One we call in this season, the "Prince of Peace." In the meanwhile, we will live our hope in concrete ways so as to manifest our longing: forgiving those who have offended us and reaching out to the neediest.

After all, what Elizabeth said to Mary is also said over us today, "Blessed are you who believe that what was spoken to you by the Lord will be fulfilled." Mary was blessed because she believed what was told her and trusted God's promises for herself and God's people. Advent encourages Mary's virtues in us: to trust, believe, wait in patience and hope in God's fidelity towards us. Mary's first response to the angel's message was to humbly receive it and give her consent. But her patience and trust do not cause her to sit back to see what God would do next. She responded to what she heard and set out to visit Elizabeth; she acted on the word she heard.

While we also trust and wait patiently on God we do not sit back and do nothing. Withdrawal from the world is the vocation of only a few monastic Christians. Meanwhile, the rest of us engage the world and do what we can to resist the evil we meet. Being a people of Advent hope means we perceive and feel the pain of the world and do something to end it – no matter how small our response seems to us.

Today's gospel scene is often called, "The Visitation"—the meeting of two people on a deeply personal and spiritual level. This Christmas time might be an occasion to reach out to someone we care for and share the good news with them of our God's gracious deeds. Or, perhaps there is someone who is struggling with a personal issue to whom we can give a listening ear. Mary's visit was a blessing to Elizabeth, as ours can be for another. We also praise God today for those who came to visit us in a time of need and through their visit brought a blessing of peace and the rekindling of faith in us. Like Mary we can be Christ-bearers to one another.

### **Prayers for Sunday and the Week Ahead**

God, in the name of the one who gave bread to the hungry, we remember all, who through our human ignorance, folly, and sin are condemned to live in want. Show us, who have so much, what we can do to help those who have so little; and bless the efforts of those who work to overcome poverty and hunger, that sufficient food may be found for all; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Church of Scotland

All-powerful God, let the splendour of your glory rise in our hearts like the dawn, that the darkness of the night may be scattered and the coming of your only Son may reveal us as children of the light. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever. Amen.

**Christmas Post Box at Putnoe Heights.** Please post your Christmas cards to friends who are members of the Church in the box. As usual, the cost is 10p per card or 12 for £1. This year, regrettably, cards which remain at the church on Christmas Day will be left there until they are collected after Christmas. Happy posting from Joy and Peter.

**Putnoe Heights Card Sales** A big thank you for continuing to support us by buying our hand made cards. A third of what we make continues to go towards a range of different charities. This Christmas we are hoping to raise £100 to go to NSPCC (National Society For The Prevention of Cruelty to Children). Cards can always be made to order. Please contact Margaret on 267567. Margaret and Claire Peck

**St Mark's** will be conducting a Carol Service at Highfield Home on Sunday 20 December at 2.30pm. Please feel free to join us if you are able.

**Putnoe Heights New Year Lunch Sunday** 10th January 2010 at 1.00pm A festive lunch with 3 courses inclusive of drinks. All proceeds to church funds. Tickets (from Putnoe Office) £8.00 (£4.50 for children under 10)

**Telecare:** It is extremely helpful to the Ministers to be able to have feed back, especially if somebody is be able to have feed back, especially if somebody is poorly or in hospital. If you have not yet put your name down on the Telecare scheme, please do so

**Christmas Home Communion.** We have a small team of people who assist the ministers in bringing Holy Communion to those who are unable to come to church. If you are genuinely housebound then we are more than pleased to bring communion to you in your home before Christmas. Please telephone one of the ministers and we will be arrange a visit before Christmas.

**BEH Women's Network** District Residential Weekend 19 - 21 February 2010 at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Herts. Further details and booking form from Pam Seymour 305695

**Women's Fellowship** After the last meeting of 2009, please note that the first meeting in 2010 will be on the 12 January - not 5th as per the 2009 programme.

**Putnoe Provender** Last Sunday's sale raised the record amount of £247. 80, which will go to this year's charity, The King's Arms Project. Many thanks to all who contributed in anyway. John & Sally Gunning

**St Mark's Junior Church** Would appreciate the cellophane wrappers from Quality Street & any other suitable cellophane. Thank you Jaana.

### **Footprints Walking Group**

New Year's Day –1st December 2010

All Welcome to join us for our traditional New Year's Day walk (about 3 miles), starting at 10.30am from the car park at Harrold Country Park. Jacket potatoes afterwards at Putnoe Heights Church. Please just turn up for the walk but let Sue know the day before if you would like lunch. Tel 407264

**Action for Children Support Group** with the help of Bedfordshire Singing Circle (Girl Guides Association) raised £265.06 singing carols at the railway station on Monday 14 December.

**Dawn Allinson** would like to thank everybody who sent cards, made enquiries or visited her during her stay in hospital. She hopes to be out and about in the New Year and wishes everyone a Happy Christmas.

**Outstanding response to Partnership Christmas Charity Appeal.** Following our gift service we have been adding up the gifts of money raised during the mission. When gift aid is added to the funds raised we are now able to say that we have raised £5,000 for the Kings Arms Project. This charity which provides shelter and support for the homeless is an outstanding expression of practical Christian care. The charity helps people to get back on their feet and there are impressive results from their dedicated team. We are still pleased to receive donations if you have not already had an opportunity to give.

**Bible Reading.** If you are reading through the bible in a year with the course provided by Sam Cappleman, then you will be coming to the end of the cycle. Congratulations to all who have made it this far. Please see Sam Ware if you would like a copy of the plan for next year or if you would like a plan which covers the bible in 2 years, which is now also available from Sam Ware.

### **Putnoe Heights and St Mark's Centre Christmas and New Year Opening**

**Our Church Centre Offices will each  
close on  
Wednesday 23 December**

**and re-open  
on Monday 4 January.**

Can we thank all of the office volunteers who by their commitment assist in keeping our centre offices operating throughout the year.

## Hymns for Sunday

A messenger named Gabriel  
came to the land of Israel;  
and he proclaimed that Mary's son  
was God's messiah, holy One.

O Jesus Christ, strong Son of God,  
once born for us at Bethlehem:  
we listen to the angels' song  
and worship you for ever.

Angelic hosts of God most high  
with radiant glory fill the sky;  
enraptured voices joyful sing  
to welcome Christ, the new-born king.

In awesome fear and bitter cold  
the shepherds huddle in their fold;  
then since the message is for them  
they make their way to Bethlehem.

Within the sacred stable-shrine  
they see the holy child divine;  
the manger stands amidst the straw  
and humble folk their God adore.

Since then have passed two thousand years  
of human misery and tears;  
yet Christ alone can bring release:  
he loves us still - the prince of peace.

Words MJ Walker  
Traditional melody arranged Noel Tredinnick

What child is this, who, laid to rest  
on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
whom angels greet with anthems sweet,  
while shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the King,  
whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
haste, haste to bring him laud  
the babe, the son of Mary.

Why lies he in such mean estate,  
where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christians fear: for sinners here,  
the silent word is pleading:  
Nails, spear, shall pierce him through,  
the cross be borne for me, for you:  
hail, hail the word made flesh,  
the babe, the son of Mary.

So bring him incense, gold and myrrh,  
come, peasant, king to own him,  
the King of kings salvation brings,  
let loving hearts enthrone him:  
Raise, raise the song on high  
the Virgin sings her lullaby.  
Joy, joy, for Christ is born  
the babe, the son of Mary.

William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898) and  
others  
8 7 8 7 6 8 6 7

### 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.'*



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### Forthcoming Funerals



**The funeral of Mr Harold Kenneth Whitlock** will take place at Bedford Crematorium at 11.30am on Monday 21 December

**The funeral of Gwendoline Mary Eaton** will take place at Bedford Crematorium at 11.30am on Tuesday 29 December