



# Partnership News

Putnoe Heights & St Mark's Church  
23 July 2017  
Trinity 6 Ordinary 16



## 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

**23 July 2017 - Trinity 6 Ordinary 16**

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

Preacher - Rev. Sam Cappleman  
Leadership - Mrs Wendy Waters  
Intercessions - Mr Richard Ledger  
Organist - Mr Clive Simmons

### 11.00 am Putnoe - Morning Worship

Preacher - Mr. Jim Ragless  
Leadership - A. & S. Dennison  
Intercessions - Mrs. Sue Allen  
Organist - Mr Clive Simmons

**30 July 2017 - Trinity 7 Ordinary 17**

### 9.30am St Mark's - Holy Communion with PCH

Preacher - Rev. Canon Charles Royden  
Leadership - Mrs Laura Farthing  
Intercessions - Mr Ian Farthing  
Organist - Miss Marion Prior

### 11.00 am Putnoe - Holy Communion with PCH

Preacher - Reverend Wendy Evans Wood  
Leadership - Mrs Veta Hudson Rae  
Intercessions - Mrs Julia Bailey  
Organist - Mr Ben Mason

**Readings** 1. 1 Kings 3:5-12 2. Romans 8:26-39  
3. Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52  
Mid Week Holy Communion at 10.00am at St Mark's  
Chapel every Wednesday and at Sir William Harpur House  
first Monday of every month

## Thank You

The flowers in the chapel at St Mark's Church this week have been given by Barbara and family in memory of Vera Tippet.

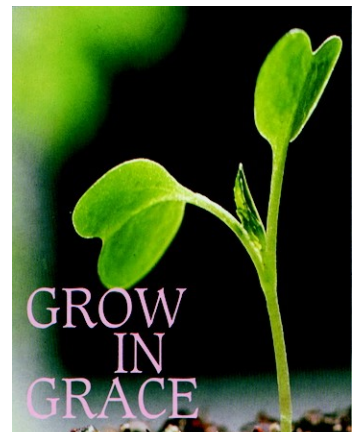


The flowers in St Mark's Church this week have been given by Brian Cooper and Margaret Burr and their families in memory of Doris Cooper.

The flowers at Putnoe Heights Church have been given by Pam Crouch in loving memory of her husband Jack on their 68 Wedding Anniversary.

## Prayer for Sunday

**Steadfast God,  
teach us your way  
and your truth.  
Root us in you alone,  
help us to  
grow in grace and love,  
that we may fulfill  
our role and our work  
in the reign of  
Jesus Christ. Amen.**



### The Reverend Dr. Sam Cappleman

Assistant Rural Dean of Bedford  
107 Dover Crescent, Bedford MK41  
Tel: 266952 nsm@thisischurch.com

### The Reverend Wendy Evans-Wood

c/o Putnoe Heights Church Centre  
Tel: 346317 wendyeanswood@yahoo.co.uk

### The Reverend Canon Charles Royden

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

**Reader: Mrs Wendy Waters**  
**Pastoral Support Team Co-Ordinator**  
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.*

**Partnership News** is sent out by email every Saturday in a colour edition. To receive a copy please email vicar@thisischurch.com. 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)**

### St Mark's Churchyard 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** Mr Geoff Gypps 365630  
**Leadership Team** Mrs Sue Allen 407264  
**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 1164416

Open Monday - Friday 9am - 5.00pm  
Tel/fax & Answering Service 342613 office@thisischurch.com  
**Centre Manager** Miss Wendy Rider 342613  
**Leadership Team** - Mrs Wendy Waters  
**Treasurer** - Mr Ian Farthing 210892  
treasurer@thisischurch.com  
**Gift Aid Administrator** Mr Jim Williams 360605  
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# Regular Weekly Activities - Putnoe Heights Church

## 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

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

**12.00 noon Storybox** Welcomes under 5's and carers to between 12noon and 1pm. Sandwich lunch followed by a Bible based story and singing. Contact Carolyn Morris youth@thisischurch.com 365630

**2.00pm U3A Music Appreciation** Chris Fordham 217396

**2.00pm U3A Italian** – fortnightly Chris Fordham 217396

**4.15pm Kumon Maths** Mrs Raksha Mistry 01908 392698

**6.15 pm Brownies** . Sharon Tanner 01767 699399 email firstputnoebrownies@hotmail.co.uk

**6.15-7.15pm Pilates** Jane Butcher 07891879571

**7.15pm-8.15pm Fit for Life Yoga** Jane Butcher 07891879571

**6.30pm-8pm Cubs** Ages 8 –10.5 Michelle Davis 07711916870 email: michelle@putnoescouts.org

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

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

**7.45-9.15 Get Fit Keep Fit** Diane Field 01234 404976

## Tuesday

**9.30am Candlewicking** (Needlework). Jenny Snelson 344417

**11-12.15am U3A Keep Fit** Chris Fordham 217396

**2.00pm Library Walk W.I.** meets monthly.

Jo Fordham (President) 01234 217396

Margaret Bull (President) 01234 267866

Cheryl Gardner (President) 01234 261584

**2.30pm. Ladies Tuesday Club** (meets monthly) Next Meeting Tuesday 18 July - Priory Marina. Details Diane Bayliss 268101

**2.30-4.30 U3A Play Reading** Chris Fordham 217396

**6.30pm– 8.00pm Cubs** 6.30pm—8.00pm Ages 8-10.5 michelle@putnoescouts.org

## Wednesday

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

**10am-12 Community Coffee Morning** (Fortnightly) Next date 21 June contact Jenny Snelson 365630

**11.00am U3A Keep Fit.** Chris Fordham 217396

**12.30pm Luncheon Club.** Fortnightly. Next meeting 12 July, Closed till 6 September Contact Putnoe Office 365630

**2-4pm U3A Ukulele Group.** Beginners welcome. Contact Chris Fordham 217396

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

**4.15pm Kumon Maths.** Mrs Rakha Mistry 01908 392698

**5.00–6.00pm Rainbows** Mrs Gill Lake 218091

**6.15-7.15pm ATSK Karate** Kevin Stark 01234 353865

**7.00pm-9.00pm Scouts** ages 10.5-14; Michelle Davis 07711916870 email:michelle@putnoescouts.org

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

**7.15pm Putnoe Guild** Putnoe 3rd Wednesday in every month except August Mrs Jo Street 344600

## Thursday

**8.15-2.15pm Sing & Sign.** Julie Warriner 01767 691488

**9.30am Thursday Prayer Group.** Valerie Capon 356306.

Request for prayer can be written in the prayer diary on the information table. Will meet again on August 17.

**10.00-12pm U3A Painting & Sketching** Chris Fordham 217396

**1.30pm-3.00p.m Play and Learn**(Dropin) Contact Trudy 341977

**2pm –4pm U3A Current Affairs** Chris Fordham 217396

**2.30pm-3.30pm U3A Spanish** (Weekly) Chris Fordham 217396

**5.15-8.15pm NHS Eat Smart Think Active** contact : Laura Rocket 355122

**6.00pm-7.30pm Beavers** Ages 6-8 michelle@putnoescouts.org

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

**7.00pm Club 2000** Putnoe Monthly second Thursday in the month. Sandra White 313645

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

**8.00pm Bedford Folk Dancers** (formerly Barn dancers) Meet weekly with different guest callers each week.Except August. All welcome, cost £2. Including refreshments. More details Ron 825574 or Shirley 01767 651767

## Friday

**9.30pm Spanish Holiday Survival** Elena 01234 266968

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

**10am-12 U3A French Conversation** Chris Fordham 217396

**2pm U3A Gardening** Chris Fordham 217396

**6.30pm-8.00pm Beavers** Ages 6-8 Michelle Davis 07711916870 email: michelle@putnoescouts.org

## Saturday

**Young Embroiderers** bi monthly Terry Fletcher 357198

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

## Sunday

**11.00 - 12.00 Church and Junior** for the under 9's . A crèche is also available.

## Diary Dates



**St Mark's Church Council** - 26 September, 22 November & 21 February 2018

**St Mark's Leadership Team**-18 September, 6 Nov

**Annual Congregational Meetings** - 15 April 2018

**Putnoe Leadership Team** – 9 Oct.

**Putnoe Management Meeting** – 11 Oct

**Putnoe Church Council** - 17 October

**Pastoral Group Meeting** – 12 September 4pm

**Churchyard Committee** -

**Circuit Meeting** —

**Deanery meeting** -

**Woodland Burial Trustees** –

**Putnoe Heights Children & Youth Meeting** -

**St Marks Messy Church** - 20 September

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

# Regular Weekly Activities - St Mark's Church

## Monday

**7.30am-6.00pm Pre-school** Mon-Fri St Mark's  
**7.30am-6.00pm 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  
**10.00am Bakers Barn Art Group.** Mrs M. Berry 211955  
**10.00am U3A Playreading** Chris Fordham 217396  
**9.45am - 10.45am & 11.00am-12noon Pilates** Liz Mason  
07816522200  
**6.00pm Brownies** Mrs C Mathew 826190  
**7.30pm Sugarcraft Guild** St Mark's (1st week in month)  
Mary Daly 217127  
**7.00pm Cancer Care Society.** (1st week in month)  
Mr J Dewhurst 01908 377020.  
**7.00-8.00pm Laughter Club** on 2nd week each month  
Cheryl Green 07729187399  
**7-9pm Rangers.** Nikki Lake 07584028653  
**7.15pm Guides.** Mrs Gill Lake 218091  
**7.30pm Whist Drive.** Weeks 3 & 5 in the month. Next  
meeting- 21 August Judith Stanton. 823313

## Tuesday

**9.15am-11.15. Chat & Make** A term time group for  
Mums and toddlers 0-5. For more details ring St Mark's  
Church Office 01234 342613 or Janine 01234 297481  
**9.30am -12.30 & 4-9pm Slimming World**  
9.30, 11.30, 3.30, 5.30, 7.30. Lorrie Pearson 340473  
**1.15pm U3A Cinema Group.** Chris Fordham 217396  
**1.30pm U3A Choir.** Contact Chris Fordham  
217396  
**2.00pm U3A Book Group 1** (3rd Week in month)  
Contact Chris Fordham 217396  
**2.00pm U3A Book Group 2** (2nd Week in month)  
Contact Chris Fordham 217396  
**2.00pm U3A Photography Group 3** (1st Week in month)  
Contact Chris Fordham 217396  
**2.30pm Knit & Natter Group.** (Alternate Tuesdays)  
Wool and knitting needles provided. Mrs Maureen Watling  
262225  
**2.00-3.30pm Tuesday Afternoon Housegroup.** A social  
and Bible Study group. Meets alternate Tuesdays. Mrs  
Jean Bank 355698  
**6-7pm Supple Strength Yoga** Amanda Alcock  
07769747393  
**7.15-8.15pm Pilates** Jane Butcher 07891879571  
**7.30-9pm Faith Community Church** Audua Ogilvie  
01234 308644  
**8.00pm Hearts in Beds Committee** (4th week in month)  
Mrs N Aspey 309816

## Wednesday

**10.00-2pm Open House** for those with learning  
disabilities., their friends, family , carers and supporters  
342613.  
**10.00am U3A Gardening Group 3** Chris Fordham  
217396  
**10.00am Holy Communion.** St. Mark's Chapel. A half  
hour service followed by coffee. All welcome.  
**10am U3A Card Making,** Chris Fordham 217396  
**10-4pm Sewing group** 4th week of the month. Contact  
Sue Sewell 07979797747  
**1.15pm Social Bridge Club** Mr Barnes 261811  
**2.00-4.00pm U3A Craft** 1st week of the month Chris  
Fordham 217396  
**3.45.- 5.30pm Messy Church.** (3rd Week in month). for  
children of lower school age and their carers. Bible-based  
story, crafts, singing and a meal. Next meeting 20th

September. Wendy Waters 401834 Jean Bank 355698  
**6.00pm Brownies.** Mrs C Warden 219731  
**7.00pm Bunyan Bridge.** Colin Jackson 363398 or Brian  
Sallows 407725.  
**8.00pm Tudor Reeds Folk Dance Club** at St Mark's  
(1st,3rd & 5th Wednesday in month). Next meeting will be  
6 September Everyone welcome. All dances called, only  
£1 including refreshments. Call Rosemary 405594 or  
Graham 406359 for more details or come and join our  
friendly group and have a try.  
**8.00pm Bedford Wine and Social Club** ( Week 1 in the  
month) Jill Cooper 357960

## Thursday

**9.45am Chat and Play** A term time group for Mums &  
toddlers.0-5 St Mark's Church Office 01234 342613 or  
Janine 01234 297481  
**12pm Storybox** . We 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 342613  
**2-4pm U3A Indoor Games.** Chris Fordham 217396  
**2.30 - 4.30pm Bedford Art Society**  
**5.15-6.45pm Weightwatchers** Jodi Henderson  
07449890830  
**6-7pm Supple Strength Yoga** Amanda Alcock  
07769747393  
**7.00pm U3A Singing for Fun** (1st & 3rd week in month)  
Chris Fordham 217396  
**7.00pm Bedford Embroiderers' Guild**  
(3rd week in month). Carol Plant 01832710504  
**7.30pm Magpies Ladies Group** St Mark's (2nd & 4th  
week in month )An Illustrated Talk on Gilbert & Sullivan—  
Philip Street. Next meeting 27 July 'Call Rosemary  
405594 for more details and visit our friendly group.  
**7.30pm Brickhill Ladies Group** St Mark's (1st and 3rd  
week in month) Rose Beal 212157  
**8.00pm Bedford Writers Circle.** St Mark's (1st week in  
month). John Broadhouse 01525 404014

## Friday

**10am -12.00 U3A Photography** (4th week in month)  
Contact Chris Fordham 217396  
**10.45am - 12 U3A Poetry & Literature** St. Marks  
Contact Chris Fordham 217396  
**2.00-4.00 pm U3A Whist** (2nd week in month) Contact  
Chris Fordham 217396  
**7.00pm-9.00pm Meditation** Cheryl Green  
07729187399  
**7.45 - 10.45pm Bedford Astrology Club.** St Marks(2nd  
week in month )Carol Brown 01438 233385  
**6.30 -8.30pm Pakua Martial Arts** John Waugh  
07802755914

## Saturday

**9.00am Faith Community Church** (1st week in month)  
Audua Ogilvie 01234 308644  
**10.00-1pm Theatretrain** Dancing acting, singing. Kate  
Howard 01234 782414

## 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 at St. Mark's.** 1st  
Sunday August. P Harris 01623 621143  
**11.30-2.30pm Faith Inspired Ministry.** Pastor James  
Mudokwani 07411154809

# Ordinary 16

## Opening Verse of Scripture - Psalm 86:11

Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; knit my heart to you, that I may fear your name.

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

Lord God your Son left the riches of heaven and became poor for our sake: when we prosper save us from pride, when we are needy save us from despair, that we may trust in you alone; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## First Bible Reading - Wisdom of Solomon 12:13, 16-19

There is not any god besides you, whose care is for all people, to whom you should prove that you have not judged unjustly; For your strength is the source of righteousness, and your sovereignty over all causes you to spare all. For you show your strength when people doubt the completeness of your power, and you rebuke any insolence among those who know it. Although you are sovereign in strength, you judge with mildness, and with great forbearance you govern us; for you have power to act whenever you choose. Through such works you have taught your people that the righteous must be kind, and you have filled your children with good hope, because you give repentance for sins.  
(This is the word of the Lord -- **Thanks be to God**)

## Second Bible Reading - Romans Chapter 8:12-25

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.  
(This is the word of the Lord -- **Thanks be to God**)

## Gospel Reading - Matthew Chapter 13: 24-30, 36-43

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' "An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants

## Wheat and Tares

Let both grow  
together until  
the harvest



asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn. "Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.  
(This is the word of the Lord -- **Thanks be to God**)

### **Hymns** (*Please distribute Morning Worship booklet and hymn sheets*)

#### **St Marks**

1. Let all the world in every corner sing
2. Give thanks with a grateful heart
3. O thou who camest from above
4. Seek ye first the kingdom of God
5. Jesus is Lord

#### **Putnoe Heights**

God is Love, Let Heaven Adore Him  
Be Still, for the Presence of the Lord  
All my Hope On God is Founded  
What Shall I Do My God To Love  
Lord, For The Years

### **Post Communion Prayer**

Strengthen for service, Lord, the hands that have taken holy things; may the ears which have heard your word be deaf to clamour and dispute; may the tongues which have sung your praise be free from deceit; may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love shine with the light of hope; and may the bodies which have been fed with your body be refreshed with the fullness of your life; glory to you for ever. Amen

### **Old Testament Commentary - Wisdom for the wise**

The Book of Wisdom, sometimes more fully known as the Wisdom of Solomon, is one of the books which make up the Apocrypha. We sometimes speak of apocryphal stories, those stories which we can't prove to be true but are widely circulated as if they were, even though their origins may be somewhat doubtful! In scripture, the Apocryphal books are not part of the Hebrew Bible but some parts of the church, particularly the Catholic tradition, understand them as being part of the Deuterocanonical (second canon) of Scripture. They are sometimes included as a separate section of the Bible for example in some versions of the New Revised Standard Version, or interspersed with the other Old Testament books as they are in the Jerusalem Bible.

The book of Wisdom probably dates from around the last half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. It was almost certainly written in Greek. Given the likely date and language of the book it's unlikely that it was written by Solomon, despite its name. The book itself is a blend of philosophy and oratory but is not abstract or obtuse. Probably written in Alexandria in Egypt, a centre of learning and intellectualism, it challenges us to understand that our learning should have an impact on our moral and spiritual life. Its purpose appears to be to help strengthen the faith of those living in a society that did not necessarily share their faith. For the book of Wisdom the focus is probably the Jews in Alexandria living in a very Hellenistic society who were being beguiled by the scientific world as it began to open up to them. There were many different philosophies and systems emerging which offered wisdom and insight into the meaning of life and a new way of living which the Jews were in danger of slipping into and beginning to follow.

Whilst the book was written over two thousand years ago it offers real insights into our world today. We too are a world which is full of knowledge, and often only a click away on the internet. Every day it seems we are encouraged to understand more about science and the world around us. We are increasingly beguiled by theoretical physics, something which would have seemed unbelievable just a few years ago as experts strive to make our world more understandable to everyone. We have seen the explosion of science programmes about the very big (astronomy and what might be 'out there') and the very small (the world of small particles and new discoveries such as the Higgs-Boson elementary particle and more recently a double heavy-quark baryon in the standard model of particle physics). There is a huge growth in alternative religions and lifestyles as people strive to understand for themselves the meaning of life.

The book of Wisdom reminds us that all of the immense beauty of creation and the all of the increasing understanding of our world that we have through scientific discoveries find their genesis in God Himself.

He is the beauty of creation. He is the source of all knowledge and understanding. And as we see the beauty of creation and our earthly wisdom in the reflected light of God's own beauty and wisdom so we are able to use both to deepen our own insights into God and deepen our faith in Him and what He has done for us through His son Jesus. As the parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew explains, growth is possible when the teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven is taken seriously, takes root in fertile and receptive soil. The Kingdom can and does grow when we not only hear the word, but also make an effort, however faltering, to understand it at a deeper level. *Sam Cappleman.*

### **New Testament Commentary**

One of the biggest intellectual obstacles to faith is the presence of evil in the world and let's face it in the church as well. We look around us at the world and we see a place where goodness is often trampled upon and where bad people often succeed. With all of this evil around us, we often yearn for a glimpse of justice, and surely we can be forgiven for wanting to see bad people sorted out. Sadly today Jesus tells us that this is exactly what we must not do. As we look around us at evil in the world we are called upon to do nothing but wait. Through this parable Jesus teaches us that evil must exist alongside good in the world, until the day of judgement, at which time it will be God who is the judge, not us.

Jesus tells this parable of the wheat and the tares, good and bad growing side by side in the field. Those people who heard this parable would have understood it very easily. The most basic staple diet in Palestine was of course bread, so wheat was critical. The weed growing with the wheat was poisonous, a kind of ryegrass known as darnel, and often translated as tares. In the early stages of development it looked like wheat, it could only be distinguished from wheat later as the ear appeared. It closely resembles wheat, except the grains are black. When harvested the wheat was taken and the tares left behind to be cut and used as fuel. Darnel has to be removed because it is mildly toxic and will ruin the flour, any surviving black grains were removed by hand after threshing. Critically, it was not removed in the fields whilst the wheat was growing because the roots of the weed were strong and wrapped around the wheat, to remove the weed would just as likely kill the wheat.

So in our reading today from Matthew, Jesus indicates that just as the wheat and the weeds must be left to grow together, so too the separation of good from bad is not something which we should engage in doing now. It should be left for the final harvest, God's harvest at the end of time.

Accepting this presence of evil is as hard for us to understand as Christians as it would be for keen gardeners to simply try and ignore weeds in their gardens. Can you imagine keen gardeners who would stand by and watch weeds in their plants? They want to go out and spray and cut and hoe, weeds are annoying. Just as gardeners want to attack weeds, so we can become impatient to judge fellow human beings and want to see them removed. Hence this is a difficult parable and a disappointing parable for the moral crusaders and those of us who want to go around making judgemental statements !

It is very hard to understand how we can be expected to live side by side with evil people in God's field. There is a fear that our tolerance might be regarded as moral indifference, and the good seed will become overwhelmed. We want to remind God that too many weeds might choke the harvest. Yet God does not want us to be his religious police to go around accusing others of evil and punishing them. We have seen this happen often in crusades and inquisitions, attacks on infidels and witches. God tells us that evil must exist alongside good until the day of judgement, at which time God will be the judge.

So what are we to do ? To sit back and watch ? No, in the meantime whilst we are not allowed to pluck, we are encouraged to plant. In the midst of a very mixed up world we are called upon to be markedly different, to do good instead of evil.

Consider the Prayer of St Francis

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love.  
Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hope.  
Where there is darkness, light. Where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.*

In the words of the hymn, we are to be channels of God's grace, to bring blessing to our world where there is evil, to be those who do not walk by on the other side, to show love where there is bitterness. None of us has any idea why God allows weeds in his field, or why evil is allowed to exist in God's world. Yet, Jesus is very clear and assures us that evil is not of God, but is the enemy of God. This is quite an important lesson for us to hear today, it is a very important lesson for those who see it as a sign of God's punishment when bad things happen.

One of the important lessons from the parable today is that we must have patience. Patience in the face of situations that seem bad to us, like good people dying before time. Patience in the face of our desire to make judgements about others and to act on those judgements. We leave the judgement for God to make and we must concentrate on doing what he asks us to do - which is producing his fruits in our lives, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, self control. There may be good reason for this. How can I root out the bad weeds in the world, when I recognise in me also that there is a conflict between good and bad? In truth we are all 'part weed part wheat'. We must hope and pray that God works in us to make us more 'wheat like.' The good news is that God does this and the Bible is filled with people we might have considered weeds, but God did not give up. Moses was a murderer, King David a murderer and an adulterer, the apostle Paul surely a murderer, he who looked on as Stephen was stoned to death and rounded the Christians up. Who could believe that such weeds could come to be so fruitful ? The life of Jesus teaches us to be careful about making too many assumptions about who is a weed and who is good wheat. Jesus reserved his strongest criticism for those who were considered really holy, and instead he treated with compassion the very weeds who were openly condemned. Jesus loved weeds and spent time with them, the thieves, prostitutes and the ones thought to be sinners. This is difficult for us, however Jesus tells us not to rush to judgement, but rather to let it be, let it go, forgive. Evil is to be dealt with through letting it be, permitting it, forgiving it. This does not mean that there will not be a time when evil is dealt with, but that will be God's time, not ours, God's judgement and not ours. It is only God who look and see what is a human heart.

This story is about grace, about God giving time. We might become frustrated and wanting God to act more quickly to address the evil and suffering in the world. Yet we must also recognise how committed God is in dealing with the problems of this world. One look at the cross will show us the depth of God's commitment. On the cross, evil may seem to triumph over good, but finally, the cross tells us, God's love overcomes and God's goodness will triumph over evil.

In the meantime there is much that we can do. We must avoid the temptation to pluck and instead work hard to plant. Let us all spend much more time nourishing the wheat, encouraging the good things which we see all round us. Our newspapers are chock full of so much bad stuff, yet we must recognise that newspapers are only full of bad news because we have an appetite for it. Our moral outrage and calling for justice is usually nothing more than self righteous hypocrisy. Our newspapers would never have reached the depths to which they have sunk if we had not provided a market for the dirt which they have provided on a daily basis. As Christians we have to have to get beyond this human appetite for evil and see the much greater good which lies all round us. Darkness is eliminated not by cursing it, but by lighting a candle. So Christians must be those determined to bring God goodness to overcome evil in the world.

Charles Royden

### **Meditation**

In her book on Benedictine spirituality, 'Seeking God', Esther de Waal, reflects on the Benedictine aspect of balance and moderation. She says, '*The monk lives constantly at the point of tension between stability and change; between tradition and the future; between the personal and the community; between obedience and initiative; between the desert place and the market place, between action and contemplation*'. This is in fact nothing more and nothing less than the paradox of the Christian life itself. This is something which is known in the Bible and which the [Benedictine] Rule expresses as part of its dependence on the Bible. We discover that things are not as we thought they were. When St Benedict showed his monks how to climb the ladder to God, it was at the same time a descent into humility and self-abandonment. We find the same paradox expressed in the gospels and the psalms, that in darkness we see light; in death we find life, that we are filled by emptying ourselves; that we are happiest not when we receive but when we give. What might have been a tearing apart, a splitting and a fragmentation becomes a means of establishing a wholeness and balance.' Whilst we are not necessarily called to a life which is governed by the Benedictine rule, we too can find a wholeness in our lives through a conscious seeking after God as we seek to know more of Him and a balance and moderation expressed in how we live.

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

To fulfill the ancient promise of salvation, O God, you made a covenant with our ancestors and pledged them descendants more numerous than the stars. Grant that all people may share in the blessings of your covenant, accomplished through the death and resurrection of your Son and sealed by the gift of your Spirit. Amen.

Just as a grain of wheat must die in the earth in order to bring forth a rich harvest, so your Son died on the cross to bring a rich harvest of love. Just as the harvest of wheat must be ground into flour to make bread, so the suffering of your Son brings us the bread of life. Just as bread gives our bodies strength for our daily work, so the risen body of your Son gives us strength to obey your laws. (Thomas Munzer 1490-1525)

**Bedford Food Bank** are very grateful for all the donations given via St Mark's. They are running low on the following items Tinned Vegetables, Tinned Tomatoes, Tinned Spaghetti Hoops, UHT Milk, UHT Fruit Juice, Tinned Tuna, Tinned Soup, Tinned Rice Pudding, Jam, Cup-a-soup, Tinned Meat eg Beef, Chicken).

**North Beds Circuit Farewell to Deacon Jane Mills.** Sunday 23 July 2017 at Priory. The Farewell starts at 4.00 pm with a performance by Tony Vino, well known Christian Comedian, followed by tea and finishing with a "Songs of Praise" service. All welcome to come and share in a good show of appreciation for Jane.

**The Great Gappo** will be at Putnoe Heights Church on Monday 24 July 2017 at 12 noon to 2pm "The Great Gappo" 12 noon to 1pm, Sandwich lunch provided 1pm to 2pm. Raffle in aid of church funds. Tickets: £2.00 in advance, £3.00 on the door, free to children under 1 yrs old. Donations for the raffle welcome. Available from the church office. contact: Carolyn Morris Tel: 07751348925 Email youth@thisischurch.com or Putnoe Heights Church office on Tel: 01234 365630

**Junior Church at St Mark's** restarts on Sunday 10 September.

**Chat and Play** will take place on 3, 17, & 31 August from 9.30 - 11.30 during the holidays and restart on 14 September.

**Story Box** restarts 7 September 2017

**Junior Church at Putnoe Heights** will not be meeting during August. We will meet again on Sunday 3rd September for our All Age Service at 11am.

**Storybox at Putnoe Heights Church** will start next term on Monday 11th September at 12 noon.

**Putnoe Thursday Prayer Group** will meet again on Thursday 17 August at 9.30am.

**St Mark's Country and Western Night** with live band Nine Blind Ravens. Tickets go on sale this week for a great night out on Saturday 2 September. It is a little while since we had one of themed nights so expect this to be a fantastic night Tickets at £8 include all entertainment and food. Please bring your own drinks

**Putnoe Heights Fairtrade Stall.** We are now on Facebook - find us at /FairtradeGoldingtonPutnoe and follow for stall news, Traidcraft campaign updates, Fairtrade events in Bedford and beyond, sneak peeks at new lines and much more. The next two stalls will be September 3 and November 5 2017.

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### **St Albans Woodland Burial Ground Keysoe**

We are currently recording the GPS coordinates for every burial which has taken place at the woodland. This is a pleasurable way to spend time in the countryside but it does take time and our administrator Linda has been extremely busy recently with lots of burial taking place. It is straightforward exercise and we would very much value the help of a volunteer, training will be provided.

### **Putnoe Heights Church Centre Manager** (Redadvertised)

To manage all aspects of Putnoe Heights Church Centre, including managing lettings, arranging maintenance of buildings and equipment and maintaining our policies on safety and security. You will need a great sense of humour, be able to meet and greet all service users and be proficient in Microsoft office. Flexibility is required, including some locking up duties as part of a team. Closing date: 5pm Monday 7 August 2017 Details can be downloaded from the church website [www.putnoechurch.org.uk](http://www.putnoechurch.org.uk)

## **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.*



## **Forthcoming Funerals**

### **The funeral of Iris Pauline**

**Perry** will take place at St Mark's Church 3.30pm on Thursday 27 July 2017

All funerals at Bedford Crematorium can be found @ [www.bedford.gov.uk/obituaries](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/obituaries)

