



Partnership News

27 December 2009

Christmas 1



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 -Morning Worship

Preacher -- Revd Charles Royden

Intercessions -Mr Richard Ledger

Leadership - Mrs Avril Williams

11.00am Putnoe Heights- Morning Worship

Preacher -Revd Charles Royden

Leadership -Mrs Sam Ware

Intercessions - Dr Tim Wilkes

January 3 2010- Christmas 2

9.30am St. Mark's -Family Worship

Preacher—Rev Charles Royden

Leadership - Mr Mick Ovenden

Intercessions – Mrs Alison Holden

11.00am Putnoe Heights- Family Worship

Preacher – Rev Charles Royden

Leadership – Mrs Wendy Nash

Intercessions – Mr Eddy Peck

Readings

1.Isaiah 60: 1-6 2. Ephesians 3: 1-12

3.Matthew 2: 1-12

Thank You

Thank you to all of those who have made our churches look so beautiful with floral arrangements over Christmas.

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

God in Trinity
Eternal unity of perfect love
Gather the nations to be one family
And draw us into your holy life,
Through the birth of Emmanuel
Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Common Worship Shorter Collect

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

309175 Mobile 07973 113861

vicar@thisischurch.com

For Data Protection Purposes

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

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

Partnership Pastoral Support Team Co-Ordinator & Churchyards Administrator

Mrs Mary Stubbs 406784 Mary@Thisischurch.com

Please inform us if you know of anyone who is ill, bereaved, housebound, requires a visit, home communion or counselling services. Please also ask us if you would like a home visit for any reason.

Putnoe Heights Church Centre

Open Monday to Thursday 9am - 5pm, Friday 9am - 1pm

Tel/fax & Answering Service 365630 putnoe@thisischurch.com

Centre Manager Mr 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 –
Putnoe Heights Children & Youth – 18th Jan

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

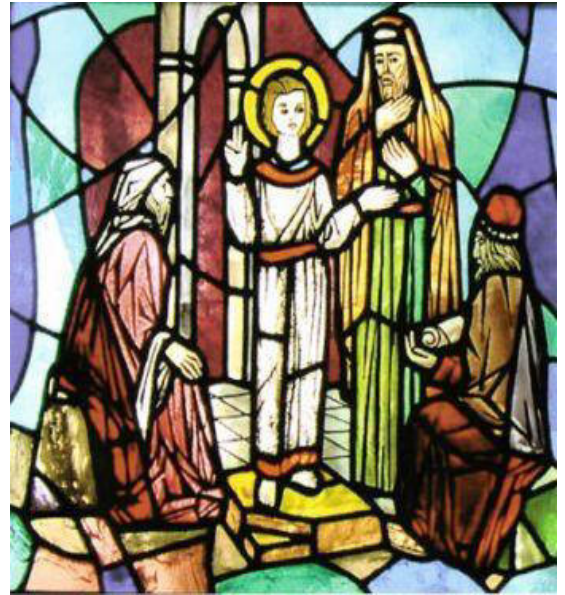
Sunday 27 December - Christmas 1

Opening Verses of Scripture—Psalm 148: 11-13

Kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, young men and maidens, old men and children. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his splendour is above the earth and the heavens.

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

Radiant God, in Jesus Christ your light shines in our darkness, giving joy in our sorrow and revealing your presence in our loneliness. Fill our hearts with your light that in the darkness of this world our lives may shine with your eternal splendour; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Methodist Worship



Jesus teaches in the Temple

First Bible Reading –1 Sam 2: 18-20,26

But Samuel was ministering before the LORD -a boy wearing a linen ephod. Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, saying, "May the LORD give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the LORD." Then they would go home And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favour with the LORD and with men

(Reader: This is the word of the Lord - **All: Thanks be to God**)

Second Reading –Col 3: 12-17

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

(Reader: This is the word of the Lord -- **All: Thanks be to God**)

Gospel Reading - Luke 2: 41-52

Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they travelled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.

(Reader: This is the Word of the Lord- **All: Thanks be to God**)

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

The Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches have condemned the world's richest countries for failing to reach a binding agreement at the Copenhagen climate change summit.

The Free Churches have been arguing that, as the world's biggest carbon emitters, developed countries have a moral responsibility to take the lead in agreeing a new deal to counter global warming when the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012. "The failure by negotiators at the climate talks in Copenhagen to agree to cut carbon emissions by 40 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020, after two weeks of negotiations, represents an immense set-back for rich and poor countries alike," said the Revd John Marsh, moderator of the general assembly of the United Reformed Church.

"History will judge our generation harshly for failing to act on the clear scientific evidence for global warming linked to human activity," he added. "We therefore urge the British government to continue exerting pressure on all key players to agree the necessary cuts in emissions to reduce the risk of global temperatures rising above 2 degrees."

The Revd Graham Sparkes, head of Faith and Unity at the Baptist Union of Great Britain, said: "No doubt people will point the finger of blame in many different directions. But the fact is that those who will suffer most have no voice and no political power. They are the poorest in our world, and are least equipped to deal with the catastrophic effects of climate change."

Steve Hucklesby, policy adviser for the Methodist Church, said: "The reality is that the US, Europe, Australia and some others are emitting a great deal more greenhouse gases than our eco-system can sustain. The science is clear; we know what needs to be done to prevent catastrophic climate change. There is no realistic alternative to a strong international treaty that commits developed nation states to deep cuts in emissions."

Hymns (*Please distribute Mission Praise and Morning Worship*)

1. In the bleak mid-winter 337
2. On Christmas night 537
3. Thou who wast rich 700
4. Love came down at Christmas 451
5. Unto us a boy is born 714

Commentary

There were legends in early Christianity about the boyhood of Jesus and the spectacular feats he performed. They were not included in the Gospels. It's obvious that the evangelists were less interested in peripheral stories prior to Jesus' public ministry. Such stories would be charming, but the four Gospels don't seem to be interested in details of Jesus' boyhood, as quaint as they might be. Instead his ministry, death and resurrection predominate the Gospels.

One suspects that Luke has told today's story, of the 12-year-old Jesus in the Temple, to fit in with the narration of his entire gospel. The narrative from Jesus' childhood seems dull and unexceptional, compared to details of fantasy that circulated in the early church about his boyhood. This passage is included because, rather than a tale of fantastic works, the story focuses on the climactic statement the boy Jesus makes, "I must be in my Father's house" (or, "about my Father's business"). It isn't an astounding deed that stands out the story; it's the early signs of Jesus' awareness of his call and future ministry.

Jesus' life is already revealing the reason his Father sent him: he "must" fulfill his vocation. Later in the gospel he will put it another way, "I must proclaim the Good News" (Luke 4:43). In Luke's gospel Jesus will turn his face to Jerusalem where, he tells his disciples, he "must" suffer and die (9:22; 17:25). Today's passage shows Jesus initiating steps that will eventually take him away from the comfort of his loving (and as we learned today, somewhat bewildered) parents and eventually lead him to the cross where he "must" be about the will of his Father. On his journey to the cross he will see the pain and desperation of his people and he will issue an invitation to his disciples to help him in his ministry to them.

There is a feeling in today's readings that, though we are still in the Christmas season, we are beginning to move on. Jesus reveals an awareness of his destiny and we are getting a hint of his future ministry. But still he will return with his parents, be obedient to them, and "advance in wisdom." We sense two important and formative institutions in Jesus' life—his home and his religion. Luke tells us, "Each year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover." They are devout Jews and will pass on their piety to their son. Was

that a factor in Jesus' staying behind in the Temple, the devotion first instilled in him by his parents for that holy place?

But today's story isn't about the call of the disciples. Not yet. It's about Jesus' own sense of call and the tension it is already causing in his natural family. He tells his parents, "I must be in my father's house." In his world family loyalty was of the highest importance. Your family gave you your very identity within the community. Today Jesus is naming his fundamental loyalty to his heavenly Father; which will call him to leave his parents, relatives and community to go forth to preach the gospel and begin to form a new family/community.

When Jesus begins his public ministry he will call disciples to leave all and follow him. Those who were responsive will not only leave their possessions, they will leave their families as well. As Jesus' followers they will be part of a new family. As our second reading states, "See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God." Jesus and his disciples will form a community of brothers and sisters, "children of God." Jesus will not ask anything later of his chosen disciples that he himself was not willing to do, beginning as a 12 year old, to leave father and mother for the sake of doing God's "business."

We are told the teachers listening to Jesus and hearing his questions were, "astounded at his understanding and his answers." Again we have a hint of what will occur as Luke unfolds his narrative. Many people will be astounded by Jesus' words and deeds. But being "astounded" is not enough, unless they decide to change their lives and commit themselves to him.

As it is today. People will, in their own way, be "astounded" by Jesus. They will admire his peaceable life, inspiring preachings and great deeds—but from a distance. They will not take the next step required of Jesus' followers: an act of faith in him and a resulting change in their lives. Being "astounded" over a well known personality might make us an autograph seeker, but we probably won't pack our bags and follow him or her. And so it is with Jesus: being "astounded" is not enough.

This feast day will stir up painful memories for some. Families have not always been idyllic places to live for many people. As a result they have had to spend a lifetime trying to overcome the pain and stultifying effects of their childhood family memories. While most of our families can hardly be called "holy" still, there is much goodness to affirm about them. But for others this celebration of the feast of the "Holy Family" would just seem ironic, as they recall their own pain and struggles. Family for them has been a place of neglect, physical violence or even sexual abuse. A huge percentage of prison inmates were physically abused as children in their own homes. Most sexual abusers are members of the family or a family acquaintance. This may not be a pleasant way to end a biblical reflection on this feast, but it is an important cautionary tale for us all when we are tempted to wax eloquently about the joys of family life in general.

Prayers for Sunday and the Week Ahead

With the angels and saints, each day and each night, each shade and each light, I bend my knee in the eye of the Father who created me, in the eye of the Son who redeemed me, in the eye of the Spirit who cleansed me. In love and affection, in wisdom and grace, in love and in fear, for ever and ever. Amen. *Gaelic Prayer to the Trinity*

O God, all holy one, you are our Mother and our Father and we are your children. Open our eyes and our hearts so that we may be able to discern your work in the universe. And be able to see Your features in every one of Your children. May we learn that there are many paths but all lead to You. Help us to know that you have created us for family, for togetherness, for peace, for gentleness, for compassion, for caring, for sharing. May we know that You want us to care for one another as those who know that they are sisters and brothers, members of the same family, Your family, the human family. Help us to beat our swords into ploughshares and our spears into pruning hooks, so that we may be able to live in peace and harmony, wiping away the tears from the eyes of those who are less fortunate than ourselves. And may we know war no more, as we strive to be what You want us to be: Your children. Amen *Desmond M. Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town, South Africa*

O Thou Joy of every longing heart, come to us, we pray, and fill us to overflowing with the Joy that is You. Amen.

The President of the Methodist Conference has challenged people to look beyond the romanticism of the Christmas story in search of the reality.

"I wonder how we shall remember Christmas 2009? I have to admit that I don't always remember Christmas for very Christmassy reasons. Sometimes it is things to do with home or family.

"For example, 1995 was the Christmas we got a new cooker. It was delivered at the beginning of December. Eventually someone came to disconnect the old one on the morning of Christmas Eve, which seemed like good news, but wasn't so good at 3.00 in the afternoon when still no one had come to connect the new one. They did come eventually – but not until very late.

"Or I remember Christmas 1988. My wife, Liz, was pregnant and our baby was due in the middle of March. But then, just after Christmas, Liz went into hospital and our son, Joe, arrived two months early. When they came home at the beginning of March, I'd been so busy going to work, taking family members hospital visiting, doing the washing and so on, that the Christmas decorations were still up.

"Or 1980, when my mum, who was housebound, asked to be taken out Christmas shopping on the last weekend in October. She bought and wrapped all our presents. The next day she contracted pneumonia and she died on the Monday. We opened her presents on Christmas Day. Many people associate Christmas with the death of someone special to them.

"Other memories relate to work. In my first Circuit I was chaplain to an open prison for women. One Christmas we took a small group from the prison carol singing around the local village. Unfortunately, when we got back the group was one short!

"So, many Christmas memories don't seem to have much to do with the Christmas story itself. They're not about the carols or the Christmas Day sermon, but about things – happy and sad - that were going on in our lives and the world at the time. Who will ever forget Christmas 2004, when, in the middle of the season of goodwill, the tsunami struck?

"But that is part of the paradox of this time of the year. On the one hand is the Christmas story, which we like hearing again and again. On the other hand we have the real world; things going on for us, our neighbours and friends; things on the news, new cookers not turning up, people in prison, people being born too soon, people being ill, or dying. The real world.

"But that's the whole point! Christmas is actually much more about the real world than it is about a

lovely story of far off places in far off times.

"It's about a young unmarried mother. And our country has the highest rate of teenage pregnancies in the European Union. It's about a homeless couple and their young child out in the cold. Look on the streets of our cities. Think of the television pictures of refugees.

"It's about shepherds who didn't go to church and weren't all that respectable being there to witness how God was doing something new - while the churchgoers and the religious leaders weren't there.

"It's about wise men looking for a new king and finding him not in a palace but behind a pub.

"It's about Mary and Joseph having to escape with their baby, as sanctuary seekers. Who is to say they wouldn't have been desperate enough to hide themselves in the back of a lorry coming through the channel tunnel in their attempt to save their precious son? And what kind of a welcome would they have received here in 21st Century Britain? And for those who didn't escape, it's about innocent children being brutally killed. You don't get much more real than that! And for Bethlehem in 2009 you could also read Baghdad or Afghanistan.

"Christmas is about the real world – as we know it. And it's in that real world – at times very cruel, painful and dangerous – that God acts. Not in heaven. Not even in the temple. But right in the middle of human life at its toughest. People being born, people dying, people on the run, people with nowhere to go, people for whom there is no room.

"Remember the meaning of the name Immanuel in Isaiah's prophecy? God is with us. That's the central part of the Christmas message. God is with us. And behind and within the lovely Christmas story is the truth of God with us in our world and in our lives. In good parts and bad, joys and pains, hopes and fears.

"Remember, too, that some people won't be able to suspend normal life for a few days over Christmas. If you are literally starving; if you are a refugee or a sanctuary seeker; if you are a child being abused in your own home, worried sick that your dad's going to be around more over the next few days – you can't suspend normal life, however much you'd like to.

"If the gospel is really the good news it claims to be (and I believe it is) then it has to be good news for the hungry, the hurting, the oppressed, the abused. Good news. God is with us.

"Sharing that good news is a huge challenge – but it's also our great joy. God be with you."

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

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 feedback, especially if somebody is poorly or in hospital. If you have not yet put your name down on the Telecare scheme, please do so

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, 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 January 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



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.

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.

Harold Kenneth Whitlock

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



amazon.co.uk Please don't forget to buy your presents at Amazon. Free delivery this year. Never click on Amazon direct, always click on Amazon via the link at thischurch.com, then we obtain 5%

Forthcoming Funerals



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

The funeral of Ethel Duffield will take place at 12.15pm on Friday 8 January

The funeral of Marliene Malins will take place at Bedford Crematorium at 1.45pm on Monday 18 January