

Methodist  
Church

# Partnership News

27 November 2011

Advent 1



Church of  
England

## Partnership Church Services Today

### 8.30am Holy Communion every Sunday

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

### 27 November – Advent 1

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

Preacher - Rob Huddart - From Bechar  
Leadership – Mrs Jean Bank  
Intercessions – Mr Ian Farthing

#### 11.00 am Putnoe - Morning Worship & Baptism

Preacher – Rob Huddart From Bechar  
Leadership - Mrs Jean Kirk  
Intercessions — Ministers

### Advent 2 – Christingle

#### 9.30am St Mark's - Family Worship with Baptism

Preacher - Deacon Jane Mason  
Leadership – Mrs Laura Farthing  
Intercessions - Mr Richard Ledger

#### 11.00 am Putnoe - Family Worship with Baptism

Preacher – Deacon Jane Mason  
Leadership - Mrs Jenny Snelson  
Intercessions - YPG

**Bible Readings** 1. Isaiah 40:1-1 2. 2 Peter 3:8-15  
3. Mark 1:1-8

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

## Thank You

The flowers at Putnoe Heights Church this week have been given by Mrs M Wisdich in memory of her dear mother, Charlotte Ramsay whose birthday was in November.

The flowers at St. Mark's Church this week have been given by Jean, Sylvia, Ann, Reg and family in loving memory of our Mum, Alice Chappel.

## Welcome

We especially welcome to Putnoe today the family and friends of Ollie Thomas Simmonds who has been brought for baptism



## Prayer for the Week

People of God:  
Awake!

The day is coming soon when you shall see God face to face. Remember the ways and the works of God. Christ calls you out of darkness to walk in the light of his coming. You are God's children

**Lord make us one as we walk with Christ  
today and for ever. Amen.**

### The Reverend Dr. Sam Cappleman

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

### Deacon Jane Mason

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

### The Reverend Charles Royden

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

### For Data Protection Purposes

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

Partnership News is also archived on our church website [www.ThisIsChurch.com](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 Geoff Gypps 365630 mob 07947 902846  
**Leadership Team** Mrs. Linda Hoare 782717  
**Treasurer** Mr Ian Morse 216428 treasurerph@thisischurch.com  
**Gift Aid Administrator** John Hitt 404186  
**Youth Worker** Emma Gordon email - 07593266091 youth@thisischurch.com

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

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

# Regular Weekly Activities - A Guide To Our Churches

## Monday

**9.15 –3.45 pm Mon and Wed/ 9.15-12.15pm Tues/Thurs/ Fri. Putnoe Heights Pre-school.** See website for more details [www.ThisChurch.com](http://www.ThisChurch.com)

Head teacher Mrs Janet Smith ☎326685

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

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

Headteacher Mrs. Helen Harpin ☎312634

*(See website for more details)*

**.9.45am - Body Control Pilates** –Putnoe Heights

Stephanie Smith ☎ 357787 or 07973174430

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

**10.30am U3A Play reading** (see contact details below)

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

**2pm U3A Music Appreciation** - (see contact details below)**3.30pm Storybox Plus** Putnoe Heights for 4-9 year olds. Meet at 3.30 for refreshments & games. Then until 5pm stories, drama, singing & craft activities. Emma Gordon 07593266091 or 365630

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

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

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

**6.15 pm Brownies** Putnoe. Sharon Tanner

☎01767699399 or 07720713738.

**6.15 Pilates** at Putnoe Heights Jane Butcher 300859

6.15 - 8.15pm

**6.15pm Weightwatchers.** St. Mark's Sam Thompson

☎07766421000

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Tuesday

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**2.00pm U3A** (see contact details below)

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

**2.15pm Putnoe Heights Women's Fellowship.** Next meeting 6 December - Christmas Social afternoon ' For more details contact 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-6.15pm Stars School of Dance.** Putnoe Heights. Esther Richardson ☎295862 or 07917582468.

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

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

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

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

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

**7pm Tabernacle of Truth Church** Putnoe Heights Bible study & prayers. Sacha Ojo ☎07590597891 or [www.tabernacleoftruth.co.uk](http://www.tabernacleoftruth.co.uk)

**7.30pm Putnoe Heights Ladies Tuesday Club** - Meets fortnightly. Next meeting November 29 Craft Evening Details call Janet King 313946

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

## Wednesday

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

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

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

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

**12.30pm Luncheon Club.** Putnoe Heights fortnightly. Next meeting 6 December 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** (see contact details below)

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

**3.45.- 5.30pm Messy Church.** St Mark's for children of lower school age and their carers. Bible-based story, crafts, singing and a meal. 3rd Wednesday in the month.. Wendy Waters 401834

**4.15pm Kumon Maths.** Putnoe Heights Mrs Raksha

Mistry ☎01908 392698

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

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

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

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

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

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

**7.00pm Putnoe Guild** Putnoe Heights monthly Janice Loxley ☎347073

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

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

**8.00pm Tudor Reeds Folk Dance Club** meet at St Mark's 1st,3rd & 5th Wednesday in month. Next meeting will be 30 November 2011 Everyone welcome. All dances called, only £1 including refreshments. Ring Valmai 219555 Rosemary 405594 or Graham 406359 for more details.

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

### Thursday

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

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

**9.45am Yoga** Putnoe Heights Denise Green ☎244970

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**6.15pm Brownies.** Putnoe Heights Lou Watkins

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Friday

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Saturday

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

**Young Embroiderers** bi monthly Putnoe Heights Terry Fletcher ☎357198

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

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

### Sunday

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

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

**1pm Tabernacle of Truth Church** Putnoe Heights Revd. Tarr ☎360188 or ☎07866775515

**7-9pm Tae Kwon Do** St Mark's Contact Adrian Felice [www.bedfordtkd.com](http://www.bedfordtkd.com) or [bedfordtkd@googlemail.com](mailto:bedfordtkd@googlemail.com).

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



## Diary Dates



**St Mark's Church Council** – 21 February 2012

**St Mark's Leadership Team** - 16 February 2012

**Putnoe Heights Leadership Team** - 25th Jan 2012

7.30pm at 24 Loring Rd. Sharnbrook.

**Putnoe Heights Management Meeting** - Mon. 23rd

Jan 2012 7.30 Putnoe Meeting Room

**St Mark's Forum Meeting** -

**Putnoe Church Council** - 13 February 2012

**Pastoral Group Meeting** -

**Churchyard Committee** -

**Brickhill Parish Council Meetings** -

**Circuit meeting** - 8 February 2012 @ Kempston East

**Deanery Meeting**

**Woodland Burial Trustees** – 27 November

**Putnoe Heights Children & Youth** – 16 January 2012

*Please advise St Mark's Church Office*



## Advent

### Opening Verse of Scripture — 1 Corinthians Chapter 1:8-9

He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.



### Collect Prayer (*Before we read we pray*)

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen *Common Worship*

### First Bible Reading - Isaiah 64: 1-9

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you! For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you. Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins. Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look upon us, we pray, for we are all your people. (*This is the Word of the Lord — Thanks be to God*)

### Second Reading - 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge— because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

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

### Gospel Reading - Mark 13: 24-37

But in those days, following that distress, 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

"At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens. "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away,

but my words will never pass away. "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!' "

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

### **Post Communion Prayer**

Merciful Father, who gave Jesus Christ to be for us the bread of life, that those who come to him should never hunger: draw us to the Lord in faith and love, that we may eat and drink with him at his table in the kingdom, where he is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

### **Hymns** *(Please distribute Morning Worship and Hymns and Psalms)*

- 1) O come, O come, Emmanuel (*Veni Emmanuel*) 85
- 2) One more step along the road I go (*Southcote*) 746
- 3) Who would true valour see (*Monk's Gate*) 688
- 4) The advent of our King (*Franconia*) -on Partnership News
- 5) Lo, he comes with clouds descending (*Helmsley*) 241

### **Commentary**

Today we start a new liturgical year and our Sunday readings come from Mark's gospel. It seems odd but we don't start at the beginning of the Gospel, we jump straight to Mark 13. In this passage Jesus has entered Jerusalem, it is a short time before his death and he speaks to his disciples mindful that he will be killed and no longer physically present with them. He therefore warns them about what is to come and uses a story of a man going away and leaving servants in charge of his home. The master may be leaving, but his return is certain; though those given charge of his household do not know when. What is for sure is that when the master returns he expects to find his house in good order and his servants alert. They are charged to be constantly awake. This is why this reading is selected for the start of Advent this morning. Advent is about watchfulness and being prepared, believers are told to be vigilant.

So let's take a look at this passage and consider exactly what it means. In my Bible chapter 13 is headed 'signs of the end of the age.' However if we start from the beginning of the passage in chapter 13 from verse 1, it is clear that the discussion concerns the Temple. We read 'one of Jesus disciples said to him look teacher, what massive stone what magnificent buildings', Jesus replies 'not one stone here will be left on another'

So Jesus is speaking in these apocalyptic words about the Temple, not signs of the end of the age. This is just one of the reasons why I urge you when you read from the Bible in church, just stick to the text and don't read out the introductions which are human commentary and not the original text! They are sometimes misleading, as is the case today. Jesus goes on later in the chapter to speak about his coming again but first he has a warning about the fall of the Temple which happened in AD 70. Jesus urges his followers to flee. Jesus says,

*'let those who are in Judaea flee to the mountain, Let no one on the roof of his house go down, or enter the house to take anything out, Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak.'*

Jesus is giving a warning to his disciples to flee, if this is the end of time there would be no place to which to flee! Sadly people did not heed Jesus warning and instead of fleeing to the mountains they crowded into Jerusalem. We know why Jesus encouraged such a mass exodus because we can read about the events of the fall of Jerusalem. It is recorded for us by the historian Josephus. He tells the terrible tale of the siege of Jerusalem, people starved and ate their own babies to stay alive. There was terrible political infighting with more Jews being killed by other Jews than by the invading Romans. In the year A.D. 69 one Roman Emperor succeeded another four, Nero, Otho, Vitellius and Vespasian each time with violence and murder. As Vespasian made his way to Rome to receive the crown his adopted son Titus entered Jerusalem burnt the Temple destroyed the city and crucified thousands of Jews. Josephus tells us that 97,000 were taken captive and 1,100,000 perished by slow starvation and the sword.

So what are the messages today 2000 years after these events have taken place? We should remember the awe and wonder which impressed itself upon the disciples when they saw the Temple and be aware that we can be caught up admiring or failing to challenge the wrong things. The Temple which Herod built was one of the wonders of the world. It was begun about 19BC and in the time of Jesus it was still not fully finished. Josephus tells us that some of the stones were forty feet long by twelve feet high and eighteen

feet wide. It was these stones which the disciples found so amazing. The Temple represented the pinnacle of human endeavour, but not for Jesus. Jesus saw the Temple differently, he recognised it as a human institution which was corrupt. It had set itself up against God's law, it had perpetuated deep injustice and oppression. Jesus was never beguiled by human power and prestige, he saw through it and recognised that it had little to do with the love and compassion of God. His disciples through all ages must do the same. We must refuse to be caught up and impressed by institutions which do not reflect God's concern with each and every individual created in God's image. God has no favourites, no special rewards, all are equal and beautiful in God's sight.

The chapter concludes with a story with the message that we must keep awake and watch. The disciples of Jesus must not be lulled into any false sense of security, we must be vigilant and engaged in a state of preparedness. The judgement which fell on the Temple is a foretaste of the judgement which will be for the whole world. God's people are called to be faithful and not to compromise with the standards and fashions of the present age, rather keep awake.

As Christians we keep alert and perhaps as an example this means challenging the diet of mind numbing stuff that is fed to us by our media. For example, our daily news focuses our minds on trivia such as the lives of celebrities, whilst in Africa there is apocalyptic devastation in countries like Zimbabwe, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan's Darfur, and especially the Congo. A 2008 study by the International Rescue Committee concluded that 5.4 million "excess deaths" occurred in the Congo from 1998 to 2007 — a staggering ten percent of the population and a death toll eight times greater than the Rwandan genocide.

Our Christmas cards will direct our thoughts to snowy scenes, robins and candles. The holy family crib scene depicting the perfect family. Our reading today is a warning that we must not sentimentalize Christmas. The real story is a foul stable with animals, a pregnant and homeless teenager, and a world which simply had 'no room' for our Jesus. Advent is about watching and waiting and recognising things for what they are. Today in our church we welcome Bechar and our speaker Rob Huddart, we are grateful to Bechar for the opportunity this Christmas to be able to give to the work of helping the homeless in Bedford. Advent is a time to wrestle with the unsolved problems of the world such as homelessness and also to come to terms with our unanswered prayers, and so many unfulfilled promises. In the words of the Christmas hymn, Advent isn't about pious platitudes but about our very real "hopes and fears of all the years." The exhortation to "keep alert" and "watch" is not unique to Mark, it is one of the most common exhortations throughout the New Testament. It has nothing to do with reading tea leaves in an attempt to predict "the day and hour." It is a time for discernment, when we look at the crucified Jesus and seek ways in which to serve him. *Charles Royden*

## **Meditation**

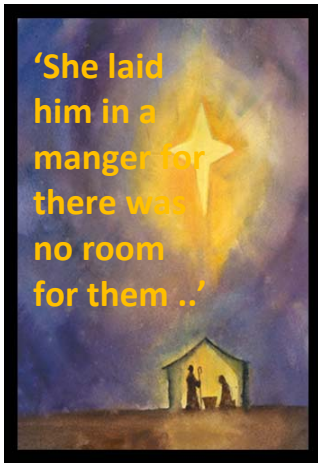
Advent is the season of waiting and watching and a season of hope. What do we see? A church in confusion and struggling to come to terms with a weakening influence. A world in which many live with extraordinary wealth well and in which many more die without the most basic food and medicine. There is growing uncertainty of how our nation will cope surrounded by economic difficulties. Advent is a time of hope and yet we struggle to see God at work in our world. In the reading from Isaiah the prophet captures our Advent hopes and fears with words full of impatience, "*O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence.*"

Isaiah thinks God is angry at the people and this is what has brought about the current circumstances: "You were angry and we sinned.... we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand." It feels to Isaiah like our pain must be God's doing: God must be punishing us, withdrawing God's presence, because we have gone astray. God is angry at us and God's anger takes the form of apparent abandonment. Isaiah and his community are going through a severe case of "separation anxiety." God's is present with us moment by moment and yet he does not micromanage our lives, God gives us space. We assume that God is absent whereas our actions or lack of them have limited God's presence in our own lives and our communities. God acts through us as we seek to be part of his Kingdom right now. If we want God to tear open the heavens we will wait a long time, if we ask God to allow us to share in the work of the kingdom then God might say to us 'about time too' *Charles Royden*

## **Prayer**

We pray for the Church throughout the world, that she may be a voice for those who lack even the basic necessities of life, tirelessly serving them and calling for change. We pray for the world's leaders, that they may not hide behind their power or abuse it, but work for the good of all humanity, particularly the poor throughout the world. We pray for our local community, that we may show our love through our respect for each other and for our environment, gladly sharing what we have with those in need.





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

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

**Putnoe Provender** Sunday 4 December. Sales of the ever popular Christmas puddings, cakes, mince pies, jams, marmalades, chutneys and much more in the Welcome Area after morning service. Proceeds in aid of BeCHaR, our autumn mission project. (Contributions gratefully received). Sally & John Gunning 305925.

**Women's Network/ MWiB** –Circuit Advent Service on 27th November at 4pm at Priory Methodist Church. All Welcome. See notice board in foyer

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

**"Putnoe Heights Cleaning Rota** - After many years sterling work Joy Parker has stepped down from organising the church cleaning rota. I'm taking over and would welcome any new volunteers who would like to join the rota. It involves less than an hour on a Saturday morning every 5 or 6 weeks. If you can help please contact me. Diana Johnson tel 828773"

**Alban Academy** would like to thank the Partnership for their shoebox donations which were added to our 250 boxes. We hope you all saw the photograph of the mountain we made in the Times and Citizen! They were taken last Friday on their journey to Kyrgyzstan in time for Christmas. We will keep you updated on their progress.

**Footprints Walk Sunday 4 December 2.00pm**  
Meet by the lake in Bedford Park for 3 mile circular walk on good paths through Brickhill and Clapham Park. A note for your diary - as New Year's Day 2012 will fall on a Sunday, the New Year Walk will

be held on Monday 2nd January at 10.30am. Further details from Sue Allen

**Words & Music for Christmas".** Come & enjoy a seasonal celebration of amusing & nostalgic prose & poetry from our Putnoe readers with music from members of the Bedford Community Chamber Orchestra at Putnoe Heights on Friday 9th December at 7.30pm. Mulled wine & mince pies. Admission £4 - tickets in advance from Putnoe Heights Church Office or at the door. Proceeds in aid of the BeCHaR appeal.

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

### **First Candle - The Candle of Hope**

The Patriarchs, Abraham, the Old Testament Ancestors of Jesus

Leader: May your hearts be filled with hope as you hear the promises God made to bless all the peoples on earth through Abraham, the father of our faith.

#### **All: Thanks be to God**

Leader: Today is the First Sunday of Advent, we will light a candle to remember the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the ancestors of our faith.

#### **Genesis Chapter 12**

The LORD had said to Abraham, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Abraham was obedient to God and left his home to go to a distant land. God told Abraham that through him all the nations of the world would be blessed. This blessing would come because he trusted and put his hope in God. The Gospel writer Matthew traces the ancestry of Jesus back through the Old Testament to Abraham. So it was that the promise was fulfilled, that all the nations of the world were blessed through the obedience of Abraham.

*(A person lights the first candle here)*

Leader: Let us pray:

**All: God of Abraham, Jacob and Isaac and the ancestors of our faith, you are our Father too. Help us as we await the coming of Jesus, to show the same obedience and willingness as Abraham. May we seek always to follow your path for our lives. We ask this prayer in the name of Jesus our Saviour, the babe of Bethlehem. Amen.**

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

**Circuit** are urgently looking for help with the planning, and for suggestions about, the content of the Circuit Magazine. There is a planning meeting on Thursday 8th December at the home of Ruth & John Caves, 27 Northhill Road, Cople, MK44 3TU. An input or representation from our Partnership would give a good positive message. If any member of our Congregation is willing to help with this work please advise a member of the Leadership Team as soon as possible. Any offer (or offers!) would be very much appreciated"

**Mission Update** We are delighted to welcome Rob Huddart to the Partnership today. Rob is the Chairman of Trustees for BeCHaR, who we are supporting in our Autumn Mission project this year, and will be speaking to us in our services on the work and mission of BeCHaR. Including Gift Aid we have already raised nearly £3000 across the Partnership in support of this work in Bedford. Thank you for all who have already given so generously. There is still time to make a donation so if you have not yet picked up an envelope containing details (or you've lost the one you did take!) please pick one up from either of the church offices after the service. Once again thank you for your outstanding support for such a worthwhile cause.

**Children's Concert** by Bedford Community Chamber Orchestra at Putnoe Heights Church on Saturday 3 December at 3.30pm. Tickets £7/£5 concession at the door or contact 07895 266389.

**From Jennie** Because of age, I am unable to write Christmas cards, but will give an extra donation to

our church charity instead. I wish a happy, healthy Christmas to everyone. Please don't send cards to me as I shall be in Vancouver until mid January.

### A Hymn for Sunday

The advent of our King  
Our prayers must now employ  
And we must hymns of welcome sing  
In strains of holy joy.

The everlasting Son  
Incarnate deigns to be;  
Himself a servant's form puts on  
To set His servants free.

Daughters of Zion, rise  
To meet thy lowly King;  
Nor let thy faithless heart despise  
The peace He comes to bring.

As judge, on clouds of light  
He soon will come again,  
And his true servants all unite  
With him in heaven to reign.

All glory to the Son  
Who comes to set us free,  
With Father, Spirit, ever One,  
Through all eternity.

**Doris Jefferies** Members of our church will be saddened to hear of the death of Doris Jefferies who died last weekend at Dial House. Doris was a deeply devoted Christian lady who attended Putnoe Heights Church with her husband George from 1983 until she was prevented by health. her funeral will be held this week and we will treasure her memory.

### 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 Dennis Denton** will take place at Norse Road Cemetery on Monday 28 November at 1.00pm

**The funeral of Reginald Ernest Ayres** will take place at Bedford Crematorium at 2.30pm on

Thursday 1 December

**The funeral of Doris Margaret Jefferies** will take place at Putnoe Heights Church at 3.15pm on Tuesday 29 November