



Methodist
Church

Partnership News

28 December 2008

First Sunday of Christmas



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

9.30am St. Mark's – Morning Worship
Preacher - Mrs Claire Peck
Leadership Team - Mrs Linda Parry
Intercessions– Mr Richard Ledger

11.00am Putnoe Heights - Morning Worship
Preacher - Mrs Claire Peck
Leadership Team – Mrs Jenny Emsley
Intercessions - Mr Eddy Peck

Sunday 4th January

9.30am St Mark's-Covenant and Renewal of Baptism Vows

Preacher - Revd Charles Royden
Leadership– Mr Mike Cooper
Intercessions –Mrs Wendy Waters

11.00am Putnoe Heights– Covenant and Renewal of Baptism Vows

Preacher - Revd Charles Royden
Leadership -
Intercessions -

Readings

1. Exodus 24: 3-11 2Jer 31: 31-34, Rom 12: 1-2
3 John 15: 1-10

Thank You

Thank you to all our flower arrangers who have made our churches look so beautiful throughout the year. We are also especially grateful to all who have donated flowers in memory or in celebration.

A Prayer for Sunday

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

There will be no Junior Church or YPF at Putnoe on Sunday 28 December. Mat activities in Church will be available at the All age service on Sunday 4th January and our new term will begin on Sunday 11th January. We look forward to seeing you all soon. Liz and Sam

Contact Details

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)

The Reverend Charles Royden (Day off Thursday)

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 Mrs. Wendy Nash 357119
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 - Mr Mike Cooper 306751
Treasurer - Mr Ian Farthing 210892 treasurer@thisischurch.com
Gift Aid Administrator Mr Williams 360605

Regular Weekly Activities - A Guide To Our Churches

Monday

9.30-12.00pm Mon-Fri Putnoe Heights Pre-school

Headteacher Mrs Janet Smith ☎326685

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

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 07973174430

10.00am Bakers Barn Art Group. St Mark's Mr Kellie ☎721063

10.45am U3A Playreading St Mark's C Birks ☎219607

11am - 12. The Right Track at St Mark's. Signpost information for people with learning difficulties. Gina Barton

☎07999859980

12.00pm Story box 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

1.45pm U3A History Group St Mark's 2nd & 4th week of the month. ☎ David Fowler 824474

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

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 every month Pat Nicholson ☎353518

7.30pm Cancer Care Society. Meets monthly at St Mark's. Contact Mr J Dewhurst ☎01908 377020

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

7.15pm Yoga. Putnoe Heights Lena Holland ☎244970

7.30pm Whist Drive. St Mark's 3rd & 5th week each month. Next meeting 19 January 2009 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

9.30am Candlewicking (Needlework). Putnoe Heights. Judi Staughton ☎341821

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

9.40 -12.30 Jo Jingles. St. Mark's. Music & movement for pre-school children. Jayne Philips 01582 485333

10am -Bedford Arts Society starting at St Mark's on the 11th September. ☎Mrs Brown 771676

1.30pm Toddlers Playtime. Putnoe Heights Majella Atkinson ☎325293.

1.30pm U3A Cinema Group. St Mark's last Tuesday of the month. Mr Austin ☎365184

2.00pm U3A Book Group. St Mark's 3rd Tuesday of the month Mrs Berman ☎364723

2.00pm Library Walk W.I. Putnoe Heights, meets monthly. Mrs C Allen ☎363878

2-5pm Police Surgery. St Mark's Foyer.

2.15pm Putnoe Heights Women's Fellowship. Next meeting 6 January 2009 Betty Wyatt ☎350188.

2.30pm Mother Teresa Support Group. St Mark's alternate weeks. Wool and knitting needles provided. Mrs Maureen Watling ☎262225

2.30pm Tuesday Afternoon Housegroup. St Mark's alternate weeks. Mary Stubbs ☎406784.

3.45pm Stars School of Dance. Putnoe Heights. Esther Sancto ☎295862 or ☎07917582468.

7.00pm Hearts in Beds Cardiac Support Group St Mark's 1st Tuesday ☎Parsons 351150

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

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

7.30pm Tabernacle of Truth Church Putnoe Heights Bible study & prayers. Revd.Tarr ☎360188 or 07866775515

7.30pmChartered Management Institute St Marks 3rd week of the month. Mrs Dimmock ☎01525 862374

7.30pm Putnoe Heights Ladies Tuesday Club - Meets fortnightly. Next meeting 6 January 2009 Afternoon tea. Details from Audrey Wilkins☎365068 or Margaret Gentle ☎309043

Wednesday

9.15am Paint Tots St Mark's Jacqui Hanahan ☎824475

9.30am Childminding Support Group Putnoe Heights. Mrs S Longman ☎313949

9.30am Body Control Pilates. Putnoe Heights. Stephanie Smith ☎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

10.30 am U3A Art Appreciation Putnoe Heights Fortnightly. Audrey Hancock ☎365915.

Luncheon Club. Putnoe Heights fortnightly. Next meeting 7 January 2009 Putnoe Heights Office ☎365630

12.30pm Men's Fellowship Lunch St Mark's 2nd week each month. Chris Izzard ☎212164

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 monthly .All welcome Nancy Barr 268147

2pm U3A Whist Group St Mark's 3rd week of the month Ken Silvester☎400584

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

6.30pm Karate. St Mark's Karen ☎079412 64885

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

7pm U3A Whist Group St Mark's 4th Wednesday of the month. Ken Silvester ☎400584

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

7.00pm Putnoe Guild Putnoe Heights monthly Janice ☎ Loxley 347073

7.00pm U3A Sky at Night 2nd Wednesday of the month. Mr Farish ☎824984

7.45pm Badminton Club Putnoe Heights All welcome. Ken Marriott ☎214867

8.00pm Tudor Reeds Folk Dance Club St Mark's, 1st ,3rd & 5th Wednesday. Next meeting 7 January 2009 Everyone welcome. Graham ☎406359 or Alan 345312.

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

9.45am Yoga Putnoe Heights Lena Holland ☎244970

9.45am Chat and Play weekly at St.Mark's. A group for Mums & toddlers. £1.75. More details from St. Marks Office ☎342613 or Emma Strangwick ☎211070

12pm Storybox weekly at 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 Emma Strangwick ☎211070

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

5.30pm Police Surgery. St Mark's Foyer.

2.30—4.30pm Art Society at St Mark's

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

6.15pm Brownies. Putnoe Heights Helga Nash ☎218521
7.00pm Club 2000 Putnoe Heights Nina Ovenden☎825059

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

7.00pm British Cardiac Patients Assoc.at Putnoe bi monthly Mrs.E. Marriot 303834

7.30pm Bedford Embroiderers' Guild St Mark's 3rd Thursday of the month. Mrs C Smith ☎344544

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

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

8.00pm Brickhill Wives St Mark's 1st and 3rd week Next meeting Mrs Woods ☎404702

Friday

9.30-12.30pm & 12.30 - 2.30pm U3A Photography Group St Marks 4th week Joyce Fildes ☎353086

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

1.30pm Stars School of Dance Putnoe Heights Contact Esther Sancto ☎295862 or ☎07917 582468

2.00pm U3A Gardening Group Putnoe Heights Eve Whitehead ☎356875

6.30pm –7.30pm Line Dancing. Beginners 7-8pm Improvers St Mark's Christine Rushton ☎782360

7pm Bedford Arts Society fortnightly Putnoe Heights from 8 September. Malcolm Smith ☎01234 400741

7.45pm Astrology Group St Mark's as from 11th January. Mr Kenworthy ☎402792

Saturday

9.00pm Stars School of Dance. Putnoe Esther Sancto ☎295862 or ☎07917 582468

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

1.30pm Young Embroiders bi monthly Terry Fletcher Tel 357198

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

4pm B.A.M.A.A. at St Mark's. Chinese soft martial arts. Mr Chris Butcher ☎07886894922

6pm T.N.T. Putnoe. For 9-12 year olds (fortnightly) join us

Diary Dates



St Mark's Church Council – ,
2 February, 22 June,
9 November 2009

St Mark's Leadership Team –
24 February

Putnoe Heights Leadership Team –

Putnoe Heights Management Meeting- 19 January, 20

April, 13 July

St Mark's Church Forum Meeting -
21 January 2009

Putnoe Church Council - Monday 26 January,
Monday 15 June, Monday 5 October

Pastoral Group Meeting - Tuesday 20 January
4.30pm

Annual Congregational Meetings 26 April

Churchyard Committee -

Putnoe Heights Mission Group –

Partnership Council -

Brickhill Parish Council Meetings -

Deanery Meeting

Circuit/Deanery Meeting

Woodland Burial Trustees

Mission Group Meeting - Weds 7th January 2009 at
7.30pm Sylvia 14 Flint Way 343424

Putnoe Heights Children & Youth –

First Sunday of Christmas

Opening Verse of Scripture -Matthew 1:21

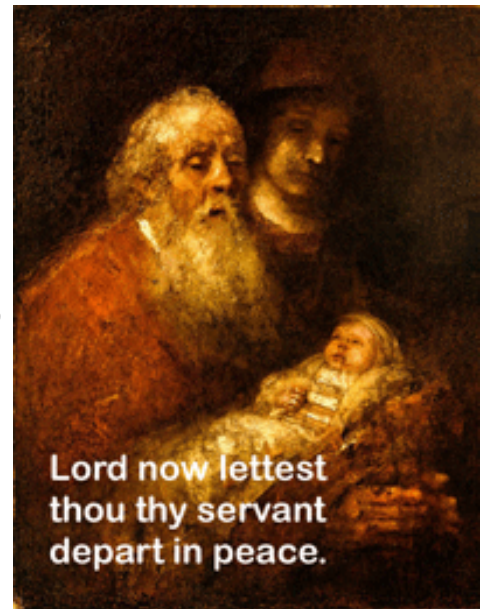
"You shall call his name Jesus,
for he will save his people from their sins"

Collect Prayer

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.

First Bible Reading Isaiah 61:10-62:3

I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the soil makes the shoot come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations. For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow. You will be a crown of splendour in the LORD's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. (Reader: This is the word of the Lord – Thanks be to God)



Second Reading- Galatians 4:4-7

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. (Reader: This is the word of the Lord - Thanks be to God)

Gospel Reading - Luke 2:22-40

When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons. Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. (Reader: This is the word of the Lord - Thanks be to God)

Commentary

In today's Gospel passage we see Jesus undergoing three ancient ceremonies which every Jewish boy had to undergo.

1. Circumcision. Every Jewish boy was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. So sacred was that ceremony that it could be carried out even on a Sabbath when the law forbade almost every other act which was not absolutely essential; and on that day a boy received his name.

2. The Redemption of the First-born. According to the law (Exodus 13:2) every first-born male, both of human beings and of cattle, was sacred to God. That law may have been a recognition of the gracious power of God in giving human life, or it may even have been a relic of the day when children were sacrificed to the gods. Clearly if it had been carried out literally, life would have been disrupted. There was therefore a ceremony called the Redemption of the First-born (Numbers 18:16). It is laid down that for the sum of five shekels – almost a month's pay – parents could, as it were, buy back their son from God – and the sum had to be paid to the priests!

3. The Purification after Childbirth. When a woman had borne a child, if it was a boy, she was unclean for forty days, if it was a girl, for eighty days. She could go about her household and her daily business but she could not enter the Temple or share in any religious ceremony (Leviticus 12). At the end of that time she had to bring to the Temple a lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon for a sin offering. That was a somewhat expensive sacrifice, and so the law laid it down (Leviticus 12:8) that if she could not afford the lamb she might bring another pigeon. The offering of the two pigeons instead of the lamb and the pigeon was technically called the Offering of the Poor. It was the offering of the poor which Mary brought. We see that it was into an ordinary home that Jesus was born, a home where there were no luxuries, a home where the cost of everything had to be considered carefully, a home where the members of the family knew all about the difficulties of making a living and the haunting insecurity of life.

These three ceremonies are strange old ceremonies; but all three of them have at the back of them the conviction that a child is a gift of God. That gift of God, Jesus, to Mary and Joseph in turn became God's gift to the world – a present which can be unwrapped every day of the year by each and every one of us.

- It was and is a gift that will share in the happy and joyous occasions which we look forward to in our lives.
- It was and is a gift that will share in our sad and lonely times when we long for the comforting arms of love and support to be wrapped around us.
- It was and is a gift that will journey through those times when we long for the answers to difficult questions and it was and is a gift that will lead us to eternal life.

Prayers for the week.

Thank you God, that the time of waiting is now over, that with Simeon we can bless you for the coming of Jesus into the world. We praise you for a new intimacy you invite us to share with you.

We too are inspired by the Spirit.

We confess those many times we fail to see your purpose, your presence, in what lies before us. We confess closed minds and stunted expectations, spurning the creativity and spirit with which you have entrusted us. We too are inspired by the Spirit.

We pray for millions of people today who in material terms can afford very little to honour the birth of Jesus. We pray that you will constantly move us to stand alongside our sisters and brothers in need.

We too are inspired by the Spirit.

Direct what we think, say and do that we may be transformed by your new beginning in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Salvation. Give us a passion for your Gospel and a vision of your kingdom in which all are included.

We too are inspired by the Spirit. Amen. Gray Featherstone 2002

God in our hopes and fears, our smiles and tears, of all the years, take our hand as we cross over the border between this year and the next. Sustain in us faith, hope and love. Help us to hear in the cry of the new-born Christ the first sounds of your great 'perhaps'. Amen. Paul Johns

Lord God, in the birth of Jesus your Son I see the fulfilment of your promises, not just for all the world but in particular for me. I thank you for the reassurance this gives me of your love. I look back on the year and see your presence in my life. Help me to live securely in your love during all that the coming year brings. Amen.

May Christ be born afresh into our hearts. May doors be flung open to welcome, bless and inspire. May new gifts be discovered cherished and expressed. May love be nurtured, gently given and received. May courage continue in dark nights. May joy flash at dawn. May bread and wine be always a sign of grace, forgiveness and redemption. And may each prayer, each day, of this New Year draw us closer together as we rejoice in our diversity and seek to serve the world in all its need. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Morning Worship Order

Welcome, Opening Verse *Matthew 1:21*

*"You shall call his name Jesus,
for he will save his people from their sins"*

Adoration

Lord, we thank you that though Christmas is over the Christmas message of a Saviour remains. We thank you that though all the presents have been opened the greatest gift of all can still bring us joyous surprises. We may for a time have eaten well, but through your sacrificial giving of yourself you offer us the bread and water of life that we may be sustained all our days and by your mercy brought at last to your eternal kingdom. Amen.

Hymn Joy to the world 77

Confession

Christmas Christ, what have we done to you?
You came in poverty, but we have turned
Christmas into a shopping spree
Forgive us, we pray, **Lord forgive us**

You surprised the world by your coming, but we
make it a routine, year after year
Forgive us, we pray, **Lord forgive us**

You summoned the shepherds and foreigners to
your celebration, but we often keep it to our families
and friends
Forgive us, we pray, **Lord forgive us**

You take enormous risks to be with us, but we are
obsessed with our own comfort and joy.
Forgive us, we pray, **Lord forgive us**

You come with a message of costly peace.
upsetting the proud, encouraging the weak, but we
hope that things will go on as usual.
Forgive us, we pray, **Lord forgive us**

Inspire us this Christmas, so that we appreciate
afresh the meaning of your coming, transforming
our individual lives and communities into signs of
your active reign among us. Let forgiveness be
your Christmas gift to us, and new commitment be
our Christmas gift to you.

Offering

**Gracious God, accept these gifts, and with them
our lives, to be used in your service through
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Hymn Go tell it on the mountain 135

Collect Prayer & Readings

Hymn Born in the night 95

Address Mrs Claire Peck

Hymn

Declaration of faith

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ,
his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge
the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen

Prayers

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the
glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Hymn Love came down at Christmas 105

Closing Prayer

Light of God, Lead us, Power of God, hold us,
Joy of God, heal us, Laughter of God, bless us
Love of God, caress us

Blessing

You are here not because you are searching but
because you have been sought, called, summoned.
You are here because God has reached in, grabbed
you, put you here, enticed, wooed, allured you here.
So Christianity is not so much a religion of discovery.
It is a religion of revelation. The long search is over.
You have been found. This is the good news.

Chat and Play at St Mark's restarts on 8th January 2009 after church alterations.

Office closures - St Mark's Church office will close for Christmas from Tuesday evening 23 December and will re-open Monday morning 5 January 09 **Putnoe Heights Church Office** will close at 1pm on Wednesday 24 December and re-open at 9am on Monday 5 January 2009.

New Years Day Walk 1 January. Meet at 10.30am in Priory Methodist Church car park, Newnham Avenue. 3 mile circular walk around the marina and riverside area. All welcome to join in our traditional start to the New Year. After the walk a jacket potato lunch will be served at Putnoe Heights Church. Please contact Sue 407264 with an indication of numbers for lunch.

Putnoe New Year Lunch Sunday 11 January 1.00 pm. Tickets now available from Putnoe Office or Sue Allen (407264). Adults £8.00, Children under 10 £4.50. 3 courses all inclusive of wine, coffee and all the trimmings. Vegetarians please pre-order. This year all proceeds to Church Funds.

Thank you to Judith Stanton and her supporters who have donated £255 to St Mark's Church following their Christmas Whist Drive.

Archbishop of Canterbury's Christmas Message to the Anglican Communion

Human beings, left to themselves, have imagined God in all sorts of shapes; but – although there were one or two instances, in Ancient Greece and Ancient Egypt, of gods being pictured as boys – it took Christianity to introduce the world to the idea of God in the form of a baby: in the form of complete dependence and fragility, without power or control. If you stop to think about it, it is still shocking. And it is also deeply challenging. God chose to show himself to us in a complete human life, telling us that every stage in human existence, from conception to maturity and even death, was in principle capable of telling us something about God. Although what we learn from Jesus Christ and what his life makes possible is unique, that life still means that we look differently at every other life. There is something in us that is capable of communicating what God has to say – the image of God in each of us, which is expressed in its perfection only in Jesus.

Hence the reverence which as Christians we ought to show to human beings in every condition, at every stage of existence. This is why we cannot regard unborn children as less than members of the human family, why those with disabilities or deprivations have no less claim upon us than anyone else, why we try to make loving sense of human life even when it is near its end and we can

hardly see any signs left of freedom or thought. And hence the concern we need to have about the welfare of children. As we look around the world, there is plenty to prompt us to far more anger and protest about what happens to children than we often seem to feel or express. In the UK this year there have been several public debates about childhood, as research has underlined the lack of emotional security felt by many children here, the high cost of divorce and family breakdown, the disproportionate effect of poverty and debt on children, and many other problems. We look forward to the publication here in the New Year of a nationwide survey about what people think is a 'good childhood' – sponsored by the Children's Society, with its long association with the Anglican Church.

Elsewhere we see far more horrendous sights – child soldiers still deployed in parts of Africa and in Sri Lanka, the burden laid on children in places where HIV and AIDS have wiped out a whole generation, leaving only the old and the young, the fate of children in areas of conflict like Congo and the Middle East and the insensitive treatment that is so often given to child refugees and asylum seekers in more prosperous countries.

'Though an infant now we view him, He shall fill his Father's throne' says the Christmas hymn. If it is true that the child of Bethlehem is the same one who will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, how shall we stand before him if we have allowed his image in the children of the world to be abused and defaced? In the week I write this, the British public is trying to cope with the revelation of the shocking killing of a very small child. Recently I accompanied a number of students and British faith leaders on a pilgrimage to the extermination camps at Auschwitz, where some of the most unforgettably horrifying images have to do with the wholesale slaughter of Jewish children – their toys and clothes still on display, looted by their killers from their dead bodies.

Christmas is a good time to think again about our attitudes to children and about what happens to children in our societies. Christians who recognise the infinite and all-powerful God in the vulnerability of a newborn baby have every reason to ask hard questions about the ways in which children come to be despised, exploited, even feared in our world. We all suspect that in a time of economic crisis worldwide, it will be the most vulnerable who are left to carry most of the human cost. The Holy Child of Bethlehem demands of us that we resist this with all our strength, for the sake of the one who, though he was rich, for our sake became poor, became helpless with the helpless so that he might exalt us all through his mercy and abundant grace.

With every blessing and best wish for Christmas and the New Year. **+Rowan Cantuar**

Christmas Message from the Methodist President

The Revd Stephen Poxon, President of the Methodist Conference, calls for Christmas to be a time of hospitality towards strangers.

Christmas is the season of parties, family meals and special occasions with friends but it can be exhausting if you are the host all the time. As we listen to the Christmas story once again this year we hear that it was a night of hospitality – but who is the host?

The supernumeraries and their spouses and widows of the North Lancashire District are invited for a Christmas lunch each year. They are so grateful and often say things like 'it's so good of you to host us' but in honesty all we do is provide the space, the food and drink and then it just happens! That may be how the innkeeper rationalised offering the stable area with a manger to the holy family. As the host we'll never know if it was out of warm generosity or just a business transaction that resulted in them being pushed out of the way.

In Britain 100,000's of people come among us year by year from around the world. Many are migrant workers from eastern Europe, bringing their culture, faith and skills whilst others are people fleeing from persecution, war, seeking a better life for their children as asylum seekers and refugees. Time and again we hear that people want to come among us because of our hospitality; of our tolerance; our openness. How welcome do we make others feel?

Many churches are doing remarkable work among asylum seekers and refugees, with the homeless and others who feel on the edge of society. Yet there can often be a fear within us about those who are different and perhaps we might be tempted to want to push them out of the way, into the stable. As we see the landscape of our communities changing with the rich variety of people from across the world we must continue to discover ways to embrace and make everyone welcome, for each is a child of God, created in his own image. For when we meet any one we are meeting the Christ. There was another hospitality that holy night. In a young frightened girl there is the hospitality of Mary whose willingness to receive the gift of God brings to birth the salvation of the world. We cannot begin to understand

the fear, the shame, the bewilderment tinged with anticipation and even hope. Yet out of her 'yes' God became human and lived among us in Jesus.....and since then there have been countless people who have said 'yes' to God...to welcome Christ into their lives...so he may find a resting place, a birthing place to continue God's living presence within the world.

This must be at the heart of who we are as church communities. We must become people who continually offer that hospitable space, within ourselves as well as our buildings, for God's love and grace that others may come among us and encounter Immanuel. We need to welcome all but especially discover ways to welcome the young, many who like Mary are frightened and trying to make sense out of what is happening to them and the world they inhabit.

Yet there is a further host on that holy night. Here is God hosting his own party, the birth of His son, His own coming among us. God, Immanuel, becoming human and living among us in Jesus.

In some of the carol services this year we will find everyone singing the soprano line with no descant and little harmony. We live in a world where there is little harmony with people at war, where people in Britain struggle with the beginnings of recession, where in the wider world there is an increasing poverty gap, people suffering from cholera, AIDS, hunger and countless injustices. As we hear again the song of the angels we catch a glimpse of creation in harmony with the Creator... as a child is born....God come among us.

God the eternal host is giving us a glimpse of eternity, of His Kingdom, where all are one and at peace and in harmony seen in the poverty of shepherds and the riches of magi; in the powerlessness of the secular authority of Herod and in the glory of the vulnerability of the weak and frightened. And in this moment, this holy, eternal moment we hear the eternal host welcome us...

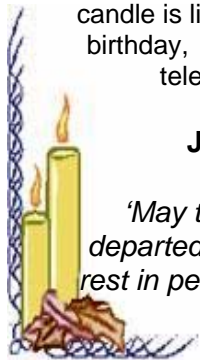
'To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.'

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.

John Edward Kinns

'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 Jessie Pink will take place at Bedford Crematorium on Tuesday 30 December at 2.30pm

The funeral of Michael Trevor Hardiman will take place at Bedford Crematorium at 1.45 on Friday 2 January

The funeral of Mr Horace Tatum will take place at Bedford Crematorium at 10-45am on Wednesday 31 December

The funeral of Mr Donald Charles Rich will take place at Bedford Crematorium at 1.45p.m Monday 5 January

The funeral of Mrs Elizabeth Wren will take place at St Mark's Church on Wednesday 7 January at 3.15pm