

Partnership News

2 December

First Sunday of Advent



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

Today 2 December

9.30am St Mark's – Family Worship

Preacher - Revd Charles Royden
Leadership - Mrs Morag Stewart
Intercessions - Ministers

11.00 am Putnoe - Family Worship

Preacher - Revd Charles Royden
Leadership – Mrs Jenny Snelson
Intercessions - YPG

Sunday 9 December

9.30 St Marks's – Morning Worship - Christingle

Preacher - Richard Ledger/Wendy Waters
Leadership - Mr Mick Ovenden

11.00 am Putnoe - Morning Worship - Christingle

Preacher - Richard Ledger/Wendy Waters
Leadership - Mrs Linda Hoar

Readings 1 Malachi 3: 1-4.2. Phil 1: 3-11
3. Luke 3: 1-6

Midweek 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 Jenny and Clive Emsley in memory of their parents.

The flowers at St. Mark's Church have been given by Rosemary and Colin McNeillage in memory of her parents

Prayer for Sunday

Come, O Lord, in much mercy down into my soul and take possession and dwell there. A poor dwelling, I confess, for so glorious a Person as You. Yet, I am preparing for a fitting reception of you, by holy and fervent desires of your own inspiring.

Enter then, and adorn my soul, and make it a worthy place for you to inhabit, since it is the work of your own hands. Give me yourself, without which, even if you should give me all that you ever have made, yet this would not satisfy my desires.

Let my soul ever seek you, and let me persist in seeking, until I have found, and am in full possession of you. Amen.
St. Augustine of Hippo (354 - 430)

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 Mills

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

Partnership News is sent out by email every Saturday in a colour edition. If you would like to receive a copy please send an email entitled 'Partnership News' to vicar@thisischurch.com. 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.ThisChurch.com

Partnership Pastoral Support Team Co-Ordinator

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.

Churchyards Administrator

Mrs Avril Williams 01234 342613

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. Jean Kirk 317699
Treasurer Mr John Hitt 404186 treasurerph@thisischurch.com
Gift Aid Administrator Mr Lawrence Wyatt 350188
Youth Team Leader Carolyn Morris youth@thisischurch.com

St. Mark's Church Centre

Open Monday - Friday 9am - 5.00pm
Tel/fax & Answering Service 342613 office@thisischurch.com
Centre Manager Miss Wendy Rider 342613
Leadership Team - Morag Stewart 360103

Regular Weekly Activities - A Guide To Our Churches

Monday

9.15 –3.45 pm Mon and Wed/ 9.15-12.15pm Tues/ Thurs/Fri. Hazeldene Heights Pre-school. See website for more details www.ThisChurch.com
Head teacher Mrs Laura Leggett 326685
8.30-5.30pm Pre-school Mon-Fri St Mark's
9.-3.45pm 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 St Mark's (see contact details below)
2.00pm U3A Calligraphy at St Mark's 2nd week (see contact details below)
2.00pm U3A Relaxation & Meditation at St Mark's 1st & 3rd week starting 1st October (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 Carolyn Morris youth@thisischurch.com 365630
1.30-2.45pm Chat and Make For babies and toddlers 0-5. Crafts, toys,songs,story and refreshments £1. More details email– chatandplay@hotmail.co.uk . Restarts on 10 September
2pm U3A Music Appreciation (see contact details below)
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
6.15pm-8.15pm Fit for Life Yoga - Putnoe Heights Contact Jane Butcher 07891879571
6.30pm Boot Camp Putnoe Heights – Laura Amor 341152 / 07976259081
7.00pm Sugarcraft Guild St Mark's 1st week Pat Nicholson 353518
7.00pm 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– 17 December Judith Stanton. 823313
7.30pm House group 30 The Ridgeway. The home of Eddy & Margaret Peck 267567
7.45pm Opus Choir at St Mark's Mrs Sutherland 269100
8pm 'Get Fit, Stay Fit' at Putnoe 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 Skinner 07989080389
10am Autism Beds Adult Support Group. St Mark's. Sally Cripsley 350704
11.15am U3A Keep Fit Putnoe Heights (see contact details below)
1pm –2.30pm Drop in Wiggles and Jiggles 0-5 years, Putnoe Children's Centre. Please call Trudy Hamilton (centre assistant) for more information 340552

1.15pm U3A Cinema Group. St Mark's (contacts below)
2.00pm U3A Book Group 1 St Mark's (3rd Wk) (see contact details below)
2.00pm U3A Book Group 2 St Mark's (2nd Wk) (see contact details)
2.00pm Library Walk W.I. Putnoe Heights, meets monthly. Morag Tomkins 356895
2pm U3A Photography Group 3 St. Mark's (1st Wk) (contact details below).
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.
4.00pm-6.15pm Stars School of Dance. Esther Richardson 295862 or 07917582468
6.15pm Pilates St Mark's Church Jane Butcher 0789187957
7pm—8.30pm Daisy Birthing Putnoe Heights Susie 07980447390
6.00-7.00pm Zumba at St Mark's. Contact Denise Worker 07900 232648
6.30pm MT Karate (all ages) Karen King 07941264885
7pm Keep Fit. St. Mark's Jan Gregory 328455
7pm Tabernacle of Truth Church Putnoe Heights Bible study & prayers. Sacha Ojo 07590597891 or www.tabernacleoftruth.co.uk
7pm Putnoe Heights Ladies Tuesday Club (Meets fortnightly). Janet King 313946 Next meeting December 11 - Christmas Celebration - Hand Bells - Open to all. Collection for Keech Hospice. Details Janet King 313946
8.15pm - 10.15pm Bedford Advanced Dancers Workshop St. Mark's 1st Tuesday in month. Shirley Sadler 01767 651767

Wednesday

9am -1pm Machine Knitting group at Putnoe Heights, fortnightly. Contact Marion Sutton 217647
9.30am Body Control Pilates. Putnoe Heights. Stephanie Smith 357787 or 07973174430.
9.30am Discovery & Do (Childminders) St. Mark's. Clare Simmons 328380 or 07788824666
10am-2pm Open House at St Mark's for those with learning disabilities., their friends, family , carers and supporters 342613.
10am U3A Gardening Group 3 St Marks. (contact below)
10.00am Holy Communion. St. Mark's Chapel. A half hour service followed by coffee. All welcome.
10am U3A Card Making, St Marks (see contact details below)
10am U3A Diet and Nutrition- Putnoe (contact below)
11.15am U3A Keep Fit
12.30pm Luncheon Club. Putnoe fortnightly. Next meeting 5 December 2012 Putnoe Heights Office 365630
1.00-3pm Police Surgery at Putnoe Heights (Fortnightly)
1.15pm Bridge Club for the Retired. St. Mark's. Mr Barnes 261811
2.00-4.00pm U3A Craft St Marks.(see contact details below)
2.00pm Fifty Plus Keep Fit Mrs Webster 856966
2pm U3A Gilbert and Sullivan
2.15pm - Fifty plus Keep Fit. Putnoe Heights Mrs Webster 856966
3.45.- 5.30pm Messy Church. St Mark's (3rd Wk). for children of lower school age and their carers. Bible-based

story, crafts, singing and a meal. Next meeting 12 December. Wendy Waters /401834

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

6.00 pm Brownies. St Mark's. Mrs C 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. Sylvia Woods 365095

7.00pm Putnoe Guild Putnoe monthly Mrs O Holt 266004

7.00pm Line Dancing Putnoe Mike Del-Boyer 348378

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

8.00pm Tudor Reeds Folk Dance Club at St Mark's 1st,3rd & 5th Wednesday in month. Next meeting will be 5 December. Everyone welcome. All dances called, only £1 including refreshments. 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. Jean Ross 771870

Thursday

9.30am Thursday Prayer Group. Putnoe Heights. Valerie Capon 356306 No meeting on 1 November.

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 term time group for Mums & toddlers.0-5 Jo Garner 400071 or 07719670624

110-11.30am Gentle Yoga For more details contact Helen Nicholson Tel.03003004305

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

1pm-2.30pm Drop in (large hall) Children's Chatty Time 0-5 years, Putnoe Children's Centre.Please call Trudy Hamilton (centre assistant) for more information 340552.

1pm—2.30pm Drop in (small hall) Next Steps 9-24months Putnoe Children's Centre.Please call Trudy Hamilton (centre assistant) for more information 340552.

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

2pm U3A Current Affairs - Putnoe Heights

2-4pm U3A Indoor Games. St.Mark's (contact below)

2.30 - 4.30pm Bedford Art Society St Mark's Mary Rich 272470

6.15 pm Weightwatchers. St. Mark's. Clare Martin 07805408811.

6.15pm Brownies. Putnoe Heights Lou Watkins .

7.00pm Club 2000 Putnoe Nina Ovenden 825059

7pm U3A Folk & Poetry St Marks (2nd and 4th week) (see contact details below)

7.15pm Putnoe Art Group Bob Wardale 406094

7.00pm Bedford Embroiderers' Guild St Mark's 3rd week in month. Carol Plant 01832710504

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 Pat Cass 294220

8.00pm Brickhill Ladies Group St Mark's 1st and 3rd week in month Kay Logan 01234 309105.

Friday

10am -12.00 U3A Photography St Marks.(4th week) (see contact details below)

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

2.00-4.00 pm U3A Whist St Marks. (contact details below)

2pm U3A Italian-Putnoe Heights (contact details below)

2pm U3A Gardening - Putnoe Heights

4.50pm-8.15pm Stars School of Dance Esther Richardson 295862 or 07917582468

6.00-7.00pm Zumba at St Mark's. Contact Denise Worker (07900 232648

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

7.45 - 10.45pm Bedford Astrology Club.St Marks(2nd week) 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

6.45pm 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 Sacha Ojo 07590597891 or w.tabernacleoftruth.co.uk

7-9pm Tae Kwon Do St Mark's Adrian Felice www.bedfordtkd.com 07964356355

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 – 19 Feb,11 June

St Mark's Leadership Team - 22 January

Putnoe Heights Leadership Team - 5 February

Putnoe Heights Management Meeting 24 January

Putnoe Church Council - 19 February

Pastoral Group Meeting - 5 February

Churchyard Committee -

Brickhill Parish Council Meetings -

Commemoration Service

Circuit meeting - 7 February

Deanery Meeting -

Woodland Burial Trustees—

Putnoe Heights Children & Youth Meeting -

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

Advent Sunday

Opening Verse of Scripture—Romans Chapter 13:11

Now is the time to wake out of sleep: for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

Collect Prayer

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. Common Worship & Methodist Worship

First Bible Reading – Jeremiah Chapter 33:14 - 16

'The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will fulfil the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. "In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.'

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

Second Bible Reading - 1 Thessalonians 3: 9 – 13

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

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

Gospel Reading - Luke 21:25 – 36

"There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. "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. "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

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

Post Communion Prayer

Holy and blessed God, you have fed us with the body and blood of your Son and filled us with your Holy Spirit: may we honour you not only with our lips but in our lives dedicated to the service of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The days are surely coming, says the LORD,

when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.
Jeremiah 33:14



Hymns (Please distribute Hymns Sheets and Advent Morning Worship)

1. Advent candles tell their story (Tune: Angel Voices)
2. There's a sound on the wind like a victory song,
3. Come, thou long-expected Jesus (Tune Stuttgart)
4. As sons of the day and daughters of light, (Tune Laudate Dominum Parry)
5. Lo, he comes with clouds descending (Tune Helmsley)



Meditation

I have to try and remember this year never to write Xmas, in the past it has caused zealous Christian to write me three page letters telling me that I am unworthy and selling out the real meaning of Christmas to Beelzebub. Of course 'X' is the Greek letter chi which together with 'P' the Greek letter Rho, form the first two letters of Christ used in the chi-rho monogram, a very ancient Christian symbol. In fact Constantine used it in the fourth century as a religious emblem placed on the shields of his soldiers as a conquering sign, not something Jesus would have had in mind.

The Church has been using X as an abbreviation for the word Christ for centuries, especially since the invention of the printing press and Webster's dictionary acknowledges that the abbreviation Xmas was in common use by the middle of the sixteenth century. It is not part of a secular plot to obliterate Jesus and we need to be lot less defensive around the whole season. We Xians are not the only ones who celebrate a winter holiday at this time of year, in fact we pinched it off a pagan festival around the winter solstice. Many people will come along to Church this year at Christmas time because they sense something special, we have to try not to put them off by being too precious and holy. If we really want to keep Christ in Christmas' then the way to do that is to ensure that we are doing the kinds of things which Jesus spent his time doing, looking after the poor, the lonely and the sick. He was a really holy man who never bragged about what he did and would never have wanted his name up in lights however we decided to spell it. Perhaps that cross (X) is a way we can remind ourselves of the kind of life he lived for others and a cross (X) can also be a great way of us expressing our love for him by doing the same.

Commentary

We are supposed to enjoy Advent. In our services we will be lighting candles in a beautiful ceremony which counts down to Christmas. This is a time when we look forward to the coming of Jesus which we remember and celebrate at Christmas. Yet of course Jesus is already with us as a Christian community and this is some of the ambiguity of Advent, there is a sense of '*already and not yet.*' It is the fact that Jesus is with his people now which gives Christians confidence and reassurance for the future. We are a people who can step out into the future knowing that God is in charge. When Jesus left his disciples physically, his presence did not in any way diminish, rather his risen presence pervades the whole world. This is why so many prophetic voices proclaiming the second coming seem to sound hollow, they look forward to a return of Jesus and somehow fail to look around and see that Jesus has never left. It is as if every person holding a billboard with '*the end is nigh*' is blissfully unaware of Jesus standing behind them.

Today, the first Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of the new church liturgical year. Advent is a time of watching and waiting, but this does not mean standing around with our hands in our pockets hoping that one day Jesus is going to appear on a cloud. Neither does fulfilment come on December 25 when we symbolically place the doll in a crib scene. Advent has been seen as this time of looking to the future to see if we can discern Jesus return. It is like one of those people taxi people at an airport by the arrivals holding a sign with the name of the person they are supposed to give a lift. This image rightly captures the Advent message of being alert, but it fails miserably to see that Jesus has already arrived, and now being 'alert' and 'watching' means ensuring that we are about his business.

In Luke today Jesus uses apocalyptic language to encourage the faithful to be participants with God in his purposes, even in the most difficult of times. Jesus' tells us to "be on guard so that our hearts are not weighed down with... the worries of this life" [v. 34]. This might especially be true of Christmas but it is also for throughout the year, an invitation not lose the focus of our faith, but to be fully attentive so that we might not miss any opportunity for participation in God's ongoing work of creative transformation. This is the work to which Advent and the new church year calls us.

Today on the first Sunday of Advent we see Jesus in apocalyptic preaching telling that the old systems, the old kingdoms are falling away so that God's kingdom, with all of the power of Christ's love can come in its place. This rebuilding is taking place now and we are a part of it, all who are not idly standing in the airport but living as citizens of the kingdom of God.

So, this is a time of reaffirm our trust in God's promises and ensure that we are alive to seeing Jesus in our midst and ensuring that we are sharing in his work. If Jesus were to physically walk the streets of our

community what would he see and say and do? What concerns are there on the heart of God for the people around us and are these our concerns? We Christians are supposed to be part of the Kingdom of God, going about this world as citizens living out the new ways to which we have been called.

It is unsurprising that we walk past Jesus in the street without recognising him, this is exactly what the Bible tells us characterised his birth and subsequent life. While a few Magi and shepherds came and worshipped and Herod tried to have him killed, the rest of the world got on with business as usual. The truth is that Jesus just didn't live up to the expectations which people had of him, in fact for most he was a bit of a disappointment. They wanted so much more in the sense of fulfilling the human desire for excitement and power.

Around us over weeks of Advent we will be seduced by the trappings of Christmas and we will taste lovely food, see beautiful and tinsel and as it all grows and develops we will almost naturally start to sing 'It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas.' However Advent is a season of purple, a solemn season. The reason for this solemnity is clear, whilst we enjoy the festivities of the season, we are nevertheless mindful that the grown up Jesus is already Immanuel, 'God with us.' He is seeking to engage us in his work now, rather than just look back and re-enact the nativity. There is always a temptation to see Advent as a count down to Christmas, counting how many sleeps are left until we can enjoy ourselves, opening the doors on the calendar and eating chocolates one a day at a time before the big event. But Advent is not a countdown, it is a season in itself, a time of preparedness and reflection to ensure that we are a part of God's ongoing work of redemption. If we are not 'on duty' in the service of the Kingdom now, then Christmas is a fairy story and Jesus has no more importance than Harry Potter.

It is this solemnity which causes us to look past the mind numbing carols and Christmas trappings which beguile us to sing sugar coated songs about still silent nights with twinkling stars. The first Christmas was born out of human misery and pain in a land under military occupation in which human life was so cheap that babies could be killed without mercy, on the hunch that one might be a political threat. Of course little has changed and Christmas today will be a most difficult time for many people. Issues around relationships are thrown into much sharper focus and the pains of such things as broken families and bereavements can be at their most painful. This year the global economic and social challenges which we face are more acute and our welfare system is in a state of change and cutbacks which will inevitably bring problems which throw people back on their own resources or lack of them, without a safety net.

While Christmas preparations are unavoidable we need to work on living in the present and not let the season's preparations divert our attention. There is a story told which may or may not be true but which makes the point quite clearly. It is said that two hundred and twenty years ago the Connecticut House of Representatives was in session on a bright day in May, and the delegates were able to do their work by natural light. But then right in the middle of debate, the day turned to night. Clouds obliterated the sun, and everything turned to darkness. Some legislators thought it was the Second Coming. So a clamour arose. People wanted to adjourn. People wanted to pray. People wanted to prepare for the coming of the Lord. However the speaker of the House, who was a Christian believer rose to his feet. 'We are all upset by the darkness', he said, 'and some of us are afraid. But, the Day of the Lord is either approaching or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. And if the Lord is returning, I, for one, choose to be found doing my duty. I therefore ask that candles be brought. At which the men who expected Jesus went back to their desks and resumed their debate.

So this year as you celebrate and enjoy all the best that Christmas has to offer with family and friends, keep vigilant and seek of God to know what is your duty and where service might be found for a citizen of the new kingdom. *Charles Royden*

Prayers for Sunday and the Week ahead

Heavenly Father, we thank you that your kingdom is near to each one of us, that you are close to each one of us, separated only by a prayer. Sustain us we pray in your service, that we would share with you in the work of your kingdom, that our lives would not be wasted in selfishness, but freely poured out in an offering of love, in response to your love shown to us in our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ.

A Prayer following World AIDS Day, December 1.

God of all the nations, so many of your children are crying out to you worn down by injustice and suffering. Help us to fulfil our goal of helping to make real the vision that Christ spoke of as 'the kingdom of God' where justice reigns. Help us to foster compassion one for another, tolerating damage to no one and oppression by no system. As we remember those living with HIV at this time may we use all our energy and imagination and trusting in your steadfast love be united in conquering disease and fear.

Footprints Walking Group Walk on 2 December. Planting trees in Wiles Wood, part of the new Marston Vale Forest. Meet at Wootton Village Hall at 2.00pm for short walk to planting area. Trees, tools, tea and toilets provided. Details from Sue A.

Tuesday Club on Tuesday 11 December at 7.30pm invite everyone to join them in their Christmas celebrations. The Hand Bell Ringers will be playing. There will be a collection for Keech Hospice.

Advent Course

Canon John Tibbs got us off to a great start last week and this week promises to be another great evening. Each session will start with refreshments at 7.30pm with the main meeting 8.00pm - 9.00pm. For our second session we will be joined by The Reverend Dennis Stamps who until recently was responsible for ministerial education in the Diocese.

Thursday 6 December

In WREN room from 7.30pm

With Rev Dennis Stamps
Vicar of St Nicholas Harpenden

Thursday 13 December

Rev Jennie Cappleman
Coffee served in Chapel 7.30 - 8pm
Session in Church from 8pm.

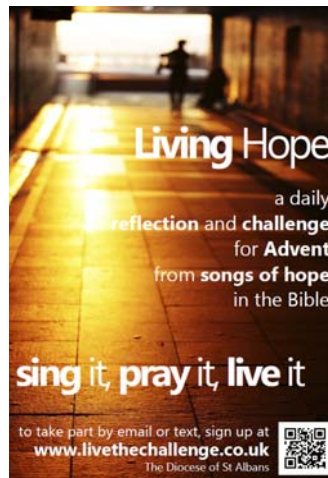
Mission Update Thank you to everyone who has given so generously to the Mission Project supporting Kisiizi so far this year. Already we have raised around £3000 between the churches which is a great achievement and truly reflects the mission heart of the Partnership. If you have not already completed your form and returned it either in the offertory tray or directly to one of the church offices there is still time to do so - please let one of the ministers know if have not received a letter explaining the project and details of how to contribute and we can ensure you get one. Thank you for your generosity.

Christmas Presents Now is the time when many of us will be going online to buy gifts. Please always only ever access Amazon by clicking on the logo on www.thischurch.com. Please be careful to make sure that you never access Amazon direct but always use the link on ThisisChurch.com, this ensures we get a donation every time you make a purchase. Even if you use a computer and go to Amazon and have a look first without clicking we will lose our referral, because they put a secret cookie on your computer! This is really a very good way to shop as it has lots of voucher codes and discounts which can save you a fortune on purchases and help raise money.

Make Way for Christmas On 16 December at 6pm – Make Way for Christmas. Do you fancy a change from the usual nativity plays and Christmas Carols? If

so, then 'Make Way for Christmas' could be just what you're looking for this Christmas time. It's a modern musical written by the Christian song-writer, Graham Kendrick, with songs that in the short time since Kendrick wrote them have become firm favourites as alternatives to the more traditional Christmas Carols. Add to that a slightly less conventional take on the Christmas story with drama from the Wild Goose Worship Group and you have a completely different, yet no less meaningful, version of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus.

It will be performed by the choir and drama group of Kempston East Methodist Church on Sunday 16 December at 6pm. So, if you fancy something a bit different, come along and listen. Admission is free and everyone is welcome.



Living Hope

www.livethechallenge.co.uk
A Daily reflection and challenge for Advent from the St Albans Diocese. It offers individuals a simple way of taking time each day to reflect and making time to act.

If you would like to print out the daily verses to give to people who do not have access to the internet you can find weekly sheets at Week 1 is already up and

others will follow shortly, at least a fortnight in advance. You will also be able to download again the Wait Look Listen sheets we developed three years ago for families, children and schools to use each day in Advent at <http://www.livethechallenge.co.uk/download/>. Telling the Advent story, from creation to Christmas, they introduce a character each day. There are readings, activities, prayer pointers and pictures to colour. Attractive folders for the Wait Look

Putnoe Heights Tiddler Trail Emergency Relief Fund. Each Sunday we collect small change from the congregation. This is used to send an immediate donation from the church when there is a major disaster. This year over £400 has been raised and a donation sent to The British Red Cross Syrian Appeal. Warmest thanks to the contributors and collectors. Please keep saving in 2013. Sylvia Cohen

Kempston Musical Society present their annual Christmas concert on Saturday 15 December at Kempston East Methodist Church at 7.30pm, with guests Goldington Green Lower School Choir. This promises to be a most enjoyable evening and includes audience participation. Admission £6.00. For more details contact kempstonmusicalsociety@hotmail.com or telephone Bedford 781010

Methodist Women in Britain The Daffodil Day celebration will be on Monday 4 March 2013 at Westminster Hall. To book a place on the coach leaving Kempston East Methodist Church at 8.45am please contact Corrine Thomas a.s.a.p. Tel 01525 403936.

Christmas closure at St. Mark's Church Office— The office will be closed from Monday 24 December and will reopen Monday 7 January.

Putnoe Provender Sunday 9 December Sales of the ever popular Christmas puddings, cakes, mince pies, jam, marmalade, chutney and much more in the Welcome area after morning service. Proceeds In aid of Kisiizi. All contributions gratefully received. John & Sally Gunning 305925.

Vacancies at Dorothea Court, Park Avenue. Pilgrim Friends Society provide sheltered housing for Christians in a Christian community and currently have 3 vacancies. See notice board at St. Mark's for further details, phone 03003031490 or email dorothea@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk.

Putnoe Heights Communal Christmas Card will be up from Sunday 2 December. Wish your friends at Church a Merry Christmas and donate to our charity.

Circuit Advent Service: On Sunday 2 December you are invited to the Circuit Advent Service at Priory Methodist Church; this will begin at 4pm and will be followed by refreshments. A service of readings and songs, with participants from across the Circuit.

Date for your diary: The New Year Lunch at Putnoe Heights will be held on Sunday 20 January 2013. Tickets will be on sale before Christmas.

Operation Christmas Child, Shoe Boxes: Very many thanks to all who contributed to our Messy Church first mission activity! We hoped to send 10 boxes but have sent 38! The Messy Church families also brought gifts and entered enthusiastically into wrapping and filling the boxes. *Wendy Waters*

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.

**Muriel Alice Herridge
Joan Vera Burden**

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

Christingle Service Sunday 9 December

Christingle Service at both churches will be led by Richard Ledger and Wendy Waters in a Messy Church style. It will be a bit new and a bit different, but an insight for us all into what happens at messy Church.



St Marks: Refreshments will be served from 09.00. to 9.25. Service 09.30 to 10.15. Followed by drinks and cake. We look forward to welcoming some of our Messy Church families, brownies and guides to our Sunday Worship.

Putnoe Heights: Service 11.00 to 11.45 Followed by drinks and cake. We look forward to welcoming some Messy Church families, brownies, cubs, scouts and their families to our Sunday Worship.

Cold Weather preventing you from coming to church? Tell St Mark's Church office (Tel: 342613) and we will arrange for a taxi to include you on its route to the 9.30am service.

The Bedford and District Christian Aid Committee have been granted a collecting day at Tesco Cardington Road store on Saturday 12 January 2013. If you would like to volunteer to help on this day please speak to Carolyn for further details.

Carol Singing. Putnoe Heights Church will be singing carols at Library Walk on Saturday 15 December 11.00-12.00noon. All are welcome to come and sing in aid of BeChar. Meet at Putnoe Heights Church at 10.30 for tea/coffee beforehand. Refreshments will be served in the small hall afterwards.

St Mark's Messy Church Future dates: all 3.45 to 5.30pm , Wednesday 12 Dec, Wednesday 16 January, Wednesday 20 February

Christmas Newspapers for Delivery



We have newspapers for deliver from each of our churches. Please help us get them out inviting people to our Christmas services with a Christmas message. Putnoe newspapers available **NOW**

Forthcoming Funerals



Please remember these families and friends in your prayers.
There are no funeral this week