



Partnership News

7 March 2010



Third Sunday in Lent

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 – Family Worship with Baptism

Preacher - Mrs Liz Little
Leadership - Mr M Ovenden
Intercessions – Mrs Margaret Appleton

11.00am Putnoe Heights – Family Worship with Baptism

Preacher – Mrs Liz Little
Leadership — Mr Lawrence Wyatt
Intercessions –Mrs Sue Allen

Fourth Sunday of Lent, 14 March 2010 Mothering Sunday

9.30am St. Mark's –Morning Worship

Leadership –Mrs Delia Shephard
Intercessions – Mrs Morag Stewart
Preacher - Revd Charles Royden

11.00am Putnoe Heights– Morning Worship

Preacher – Revd Charles Royden
Leadership – Mrs Wendy Nash
Intercessions – Mrs Claire Peck

Readings 1.Joshua 5: 9-12 2. 2 Corinthians 5: 16-21 3.Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32

Thank You

The flowers at St. Mark's this week have been given by Joan Staley in memory of her daughter Gillian.

The flowers at Putnoe Heights Church this week have been given by Gwen Beswick in loving memory of her husband, Peter; and by Sheila Tapping in memory of various family members who died in March in different years.

We are grateful when people make donations towards flowers perhaps to celebrate a special occasion such as an anniversary or in memory of a loved one. Please contact Miss Marion Prior 303254 (St Mark's) or Ann Hitt 404186 (Putnoe Heights) or add your name to the rota in the foyers.

Prayer for Sunday

O God, you have called men and women of every land to be a holy nation, a royal priesthood, the church of your Son: unite us in mutual love across barriers of race, culture and background, and strengthen us in our common task of being Christ and showing Christ to the world He came to save. 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 General Manager for Hewlett Packard)

Deacon Jane Mason

12 Hartop Close, Bedford MK41 8HE
348091 Mobile07807 146535
jane@thisischurch.com

The Reverend Charles Royden

The Vicarage, Calder Rise. MK41 7UY
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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.ThisChurch.com

Partnership Pastoral Support Team Co-Ordinator & Churchyards Administrator

Mrs Mary Stubbs 406784 Mary@Thisischurch.com
Please inform us if you know of anyone who is ill, bereaved, housebound, requires a visit, home communion or counselling services. Please also ask us if you would like a home visit for any reason.

Putnoe Heights Church Centre

Open Monday to Thursday 9am - 5pm, Friday 9am - 1pm
Tel/fax & Answering Service 365630 putnoe@thisischurch.com
Centre Manager Mr Barry Snelson 365630 & 344417
Leadership Team Mr. Lawrence Wyatt 350188
Treasurer Mr Ian Morse 216428 treasurerph@thisischurch.com
Youth & children's worker - Mrs Spavins 302349

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

Tel/fax & Answering Service 342613 office@thisischurch.com
Centre Manager Miss Wendy Rider 342613
Leadership Team - Mrs Delia Shephard 273628
Treasurer - Mr Ian Farthing 210892 treasurer@thisischurch.com

Regular Weekly Activities - A Guide To Our Churches

Monday

9.15 -11.45 am Mon-Fri Putnoe Heights Pre-school

Headteacher Mrs Janet Smith ☎326685

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

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

Headteacher Mrs. Helen Harpin ☎312634

(See website for more details)

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

9.45am - Body Control Pilates –Putnoe Heights
Stephanie Smith ☎ 357787 or 07973174430

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

10.30am U3A Play reading St Mark's J Birks ☎219607

12.00pm Story box Putnoe Heights We welcome the under 5's and their carers to join them between 12noon and 1pm for a sandwich lunch followed by a Bible based story and singing. Liz ☎ 302349

1.30pm U3A History Group St Mark's. David Fowler ☎ 824474

2pm U3A Drama St Mark's 1st & 2nd week. Mr Ovenden ☎ 825059

4.00pm Storybox Plus Putnoe Heights for 4-9 year Old. Meet at 3.30 for refreshments & games. Then till 5pm 'follow the year' through stories, drama, singing & craft activities. We then make a short presentation in church on first Sunday in each month. Liz Spavins ☎302349

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

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

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

6.15 pm Brownies Putnoe. Sharon Tanner ☎ 07720713738.

6.15 Pilates at Putnoe Heights Jane Butcher 300859

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

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

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

7.15pm Yoga. Putnoe Heights Denise Green ☎244970

7.30pm Whist Drive. St Mark's 3rd & 5th week . Next meeting March 15 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 Jo Jingles. St. Mark's. Music & movement for pre-school children. Renu Elston ☎07790296016

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

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

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

11.15am U3A Keep Fit Putnoe Heights Sally Banks ☎ 870357

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

1.30pm U3A Cinema Group. St Mark's 4th Week in month . Mrs Beaumont ☎261461

2.00pm U3A Book Group. St Mark's 3rd Week Mrs Forrest ☎344043

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

2pm U3A Photography (Group 3) St Mark's 1st Week. Janet King ☎313946

2.15pm Putnoe Heights Women's Fellowship. Next meeting March 9 'Citizens Advice Bureau' Betty Wyatt ☎ 350188.

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

2.15pm Tuesday Afternoon Housegroup. St Mark's Fortnightly. Mary Stubbs ☎406784.

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

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

6.30pm Yoga Putnoe Heights Veronica Lafferty ☎781466 or 07788750360

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

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

7.30pm Hearts & Beds. Cardiac Support Group 1st Tuesday in the month. Brian Ibberson ☎403497

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

7.30pm Putnoe Heights Ladies Tuesday Club - Meets fortnightly. Next meeting March 9 'Palmistry' Mrs. Kibby. Details from 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.

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

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

10am Sewing & Chat. Putnoe Heights Valerie Russell ☎01462 815966

10am U3A Card Making, St Mark's Church. 4th week in the month.

12.30pm Luncheon Club. Putnoe Heights fortnightly. Next - 17 March Putnoe Heights Office ☎365630

1.00-3pm Police Surgery at Putnoe Heights .

1.15pm Bridge Club for the Retired. St. Mark's. Mr Barnes ☎261811

1.45 Scots Society Whist Putnoe monthly .All welcome Nancy Barr ☎268147

2-5pm Police Surgery. St Mark's Foyer. ☎349179

1.30-4.30pm U3A Craft St Mark's 1st & 3rd week. Pat Holland ☎262823

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

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

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

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

6-8pm Karate. St Mark's Karen King ☎079412 64885
7.00pm Bunyan Bridge. St. Mark's Brian Sallows ☎407725
7.00pm Archaeological & Local History Society Putnoe Heights monthly. Vanessa Aykac 268098 or 07917385987
7.00pm Putnoe Guild Putnoe Heights monthly Janice Loxley ☎ 347073
7.00pm Line Dancing Putnoe Heights Mike Del-Boyer ☎348378
8.00pm Badminton Club Putnoe Heights All welcome. Ken Marriott ☎214867
8.00pm Tudor Reeds Folk Dance Club meet at St Mark's 1st,3rd & 5th Wednesday in month. Next Meeting 17 March 2010 Everyone welcome. All dances called, only £1 including refreshments. Ring Graham ☎406359 or Alan 345312. or Rosemary 405594 for more details
8.00pm Bedford Wine and Social Club St Mark's 1st week in the month. Mrs Gansfield ☎215016
7.45 for 8pm God talk - women's group monthly meeting for worship and friendly chat at Wendy Nash's Contact Majella Atkinson ☎325293

Thursday

9.30am Thursday Prayer Group. Putnoe Heights in the quiet room. Sylvia Cohen ☎343424 .
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. Emma Strangwick ☎211070
 11am-12noon Citizens Advice Bureau at Putnoe Heights.
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 01234 363283
1.30 - 3.00pm NHS Baby Clinic St.Mark's ☎267444
1.30pm Toddler Playtime. Putnoe Majella Atkinson ☎325293.
2pm Putnoe Bridge Club. Gerald Palmer ☎345991
2.30 - 4.30pm Bedford Art Society at St Mark's. Malcolm Smith ☎400741
4 - 7.00pm Police Surgery. St Mark's Foyer. ☎349179
6.15 pm Weightwatchers. St. Mark's. Mrs Margaret Ralph ☎01767 224978.
6.15pm Brownies. Putnoe Heights Caroline Morgan ☎07786508351
7.00pm Club 2000 Putnoe Heights Nina Ovenden ☎825059
7pm U3A Folk & Poetry Group. St Mark's 2nd & 4th week in month. Doug Ovenden ☎825059
7.15pm Putnoe Art Group Bob Wardale ☎406094
7.30pm Bedford Embroiderers' Guild St Mark's 3rd week in month. Pauline Lynham ☎01525 714517
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. Julie Nicholson ☎353642

Friday

9.30-12.30pm U3A Photography (Group 1) St Marks 4th week in month Val Scrivener ☎346397
9.00am Clubhouse St. Mark's for those with Learning Disabilities. Karen Bywater ☎315460.
10am - 12 & 1.15 - 3.15pm U3A Beginners French St

Mark's Joyce Fields ☎353086
12.15pm U3A Photography (Group 2). St Mark's 4th week in month. Sue Butler ☎354183
5pm Stars School of Dance Putnoe Heights Contact Esther Sancto ☎295862 or ☎07917 582468
2.00pm U3A Gardening Group Putnoe Heights Eve Whitehead ☎356875
6.15pm Yoga and Relaxation Putnoe Heights. Racheall Monton ☎297138 or 07910835994
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
6pm T.N.T. Putnoe. For 9-12 year olds (fortnightly) join us for fellowship & fun. Please see Liz ☎302349 .

Diary Dates

St Mark's Church Council – 22 June, 8 November.
St Mark's Leadership Team – 20th April.
Putnoe Heights Leadership Team – 7 June at the Manse, 18 October
Putnoe Heights Management Meeting ; 24 May
St Mark's Church Forum Meeting - 16 Mar 2010,
Putnoe Church Council - 21 June, 25 October.
Pastoral Group Meeting - 20th April at 4.30pm
Churchyard Committee - 26 May at 11am.
Putnoe Heights Mission Group—
Partnership Council—TBA
Brickhill Parish Council Meetings
Deanery Meeting - 5 May, 17 June.
Circuit Property/Treasurers Meeting
Circuit Meeting 8 March at Oakley
Woodland Burial Trustees – Sunday 21st March
Putnoe Heights Children & Youth –

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

Third Sunday in Lent

Opening Verse of Scripture - .Psalm 51:17

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart He will not despise.

Collect Prayer for the Day - Before we read we pray Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen *Common Worship*

First Reading – Genesis Chapter 28, 10 –19,

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.
(Reader: This is the Word of the Lord- **All: Thanks be to God**)

Second Reading – Psalm 12

Help, LORD, for the godly are no more; the faithful have vanished from among men. Everyone lies to his neighbour; their flattering lips speak with deception.

May the LORD cut off all flattering lips and every boastful tongue that says, "We will triumph with our tongues; we own our lips—who is our master?"

"Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy,

I will now arise," says the LORD. "I will protect them from those who malign them."

And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times. O LORD, you will keep us safe and protect us from such people forever.

The wicked freely strut about when what is vile is honoured among men.

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

Gospel Reading - John Chapter 1, 35 – 51

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the



Jacob had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

tenth hour. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."
(Reader: This is the Word of the Lord - **All: Thanks be to God**)

Post Communion Prayer

Lord God, you have renewed us with the living bread from heaven; by it you nourish our faith, increase our hope, and strengthen our love: teach us always to hunger for him who is the true and living bread, and enable us to live by every word that proceeds from out of your mouth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymns - Please distribute Mission Praise, service sheets and baptism service sheets

1. Lord God your love has called us here. (On Service sheet)
2. For the beauty of the earth 152
3. Do not be afraid 115
4. Lord make me a mountain 436
- 5 Go forth and tell 178

Commentary

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but he grew up in Nazareth. Some years later Christians were dismissed as the 'Nazarene sect' Acts 24:5. Nazareth was not a place which was highly thought of and it was probably held in even less esteem by people from Cana a neighbouring village. In the Gospel reading today we read about Philip who was one of the Apostles. He believes that Jesus is the one whom all the scriptures point to. He brings a man named Nathanael, who came from Cana, to meet with Jesus. At first Nathanael rejects the idea that the messiah could come from Nazareth. However after meeting Jesus and hearing what he has to say Nathanael responds with a confession of faith. We are not sure what the substance of the conversation was but we can see that Jesus is able to tell Nathanael things about himself in such a way that Nathanael is convinced that Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus tells Nathanael that what he has seen of Jesus so far is only the beginning and Jesus uses the imagery of Genesis 28:12, the vision of Jacob's ladder. It is important to remember the story of Jacob and what happened in order to appreciate why Jesus refers to this incident, otherwise it just doesn't make sense. Jacob was the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham and he was very important. So important that his name was later changed to Israel. His children were the ancestors of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. You will remember Jacob as the younger twin of Esau. He tricked Esau out of his birthright and the blessing from his father which he should have received as the firstborn. It is appropriate that later in his life Jacob himself is tricked by his own sons who are jealous of their favoured brother Joseph. We all know from whom they inherited that kind of deceit! Jacob had to flee from his brother, the hunter Esau, when his twin tried to kill him (Genesis 25-28). Destitute he goes to his uncle Laban, but on the way he has a dream at Bethel. He saw a ladder or staircase which stretched up to the sky, with angels going up and down on it. In the dream he receives a blessing from God and a promise that he will return to the land and God would be with him. Of course all of this eventually took place. After working for his Uncle Laban, he married his daughters Leah and Rachel and after swindling him out large flocks and herds he returned home and was reunited with his brother Esau.

It is important to remember this story because Jesus clearly knew all about it and it's importance. When he tells Nathanael that he will see *'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on*

the Son of Man. Jesus is placing himself in the same position as Jacob. Every Jew knew that Jacob was the father of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, now Jesus is assuming such importance onto himself. Jesus is the new Israel ! God will no longer reveal himself at Bethel, God is present in the person of Jesus and it is Jesus who will link heaven and earth, not Jacob's ladder. This is all a part of the process by which Jesus takes the message of the Jewish scriptures, applies them himself and brings about such a change in Judaism that it must become like a new religion. The old covenant has in Jesus been brought to an end and a new covenant has been offered to all people, not just the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. With the birth of Jesus, the children of God will no longer be descendants of Abraham, they will be from all nations. So the witness of Philip must be one which we share in making Jesus known to others. *Charles Royden*

Prayers for Sunday and the Week Ahead

Thanks be that we are never fully grown. Each day, each month, each year gives time to be regenerated. God of creation and recreation, you planted in us the seeds of life and growth and challenged us to effort and to energy that they might grow in us. Enabling God, by your continuing challenge may we still grow in vision and in use of our gifts by your love and goodness enrich and deepen our commitment. By your gifts to those around us and the insights that we share, may we be instruments of your blessing to one another. Amen

O Lord, thou knowest how busy I must be this day.
If I forget thee, do not thou forget me. Amen. Jacob Astley

Knit my soul to your own, O Christ, so that I may never be separated from you. Only in you am I a person fully alive. Only in your light can I see and only in your strength can I pursue my way. To you I come, O wisdom without end. In you I rest, O mercy without limit. To you I give all praise, O crown of all majesty. Amen Mechtild of Magdeburg, 1210-80

Lent Materials The Bishops of our Diocese have prepared excellent Lent Course materials for use in groups. These can be found at [http://](http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/)



www.stalbans.anglican.org/Mission/Lent-Course-2010. You may obtain copies of these materials for your own use from the church offices. You may also join two new Lent Groups which have been established over Lent. Other groups meet as usual .

Lent Group 1 led by Wendy Waters at 13 Farnham Way, Putnoe, 7.45pm on , 8 March and 22 March. Tel 401834.

Lent Group 2 at home of Eileen and Peter Brown 9 Buckfast Avenue. 17 March. 10.30am start .

Living Oasis Bookshop I am delighted to announce that the Right Reverend Richard Inwood, Bishop of Bedford has kindly agreed to officially open the new Living Oasis bookshop at 4.30 pm on Saturday 13th March. It would be great to see as many people as possible to celebrated this occasion. Alan Jones, Manager.

Card stall Cards are now being purchased from the Living Oasis bookshop and the range will be increased as more become available e.g. Easter cards.

Bedford & District Citizens Advice Bureau.

Drop in service, no appointment necessary.
Thursdays:- 11am -12 noon Putnoe Children's Centre, Putnoe Heights Church. 1.00pm - 2.45pm

Goldington Children's Centre, 30 Meadway, Bedford. Providing Free, Confidential, Impartial and Independent Advice.

St. Mark's Preschool are collecting Sainsbury's and Tesco's vouchers and would greatly appreciate any. They can be handed into Preschool or the office. Thank you very much. Helen Harman

Inaugural meeting of the Bedford Borough Third Sector Assembly 'Shaping the Future'

Date: Tuesday 23rd March 2010
Time: 9.30am - 1.00pm (followed by lunch)
Venue: Bedford Corn Exchange, St Paul's Square, Bedford, MK40 1SL. You can book a place at the Assembly by phone or email:
Phone CVS on 01234 354366, Email your details to: assembly@yourcvs.org

St Mark's Quiz Night with Fish & Chip Supper

Saturday 20th March 2010 at 7.30p.m.
Tickets £6.00 Adult £3.00 Children

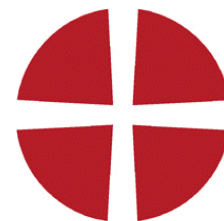
Raffle

Bring your own liquid refreshment
Come and join us for a fun evening

Tickets available from St Mark's Church Office and Putnoe Heights Church Office. Teams of 8 can register of we will join you up!

Raffle prizes gratefully accepted and can be handed in to the Church Office before the 20th.

News from the Methodist Church



Church leaders urge politicians to take the Pledge

The leaders of the Methodist Church in Britain, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the United Reformed Church are asking politicians to take the Sanctuary Pledge, which is an initiative of the Citizens for Sanctuary Campaign.

The Revd David Gamble, President of the British Methodist Conference, said, "Politicians must resist the temptation to use asylum as a political football in their election campaigns. We strongly support the Sanctuary Pledge campaign's call for politicians to campaign responsibly, and not to demean those fleeing persecution and seeking sanctuary in Britain. I hope people will ask candidates standing for election to sign the Sanctuary Pledge."

The pledge is a commitment to campaign positively and sensitively, helping the public to understand why it is important to offer a safe haven to people fleeing persecution. It also asks politicians to support policies that will end the forced detention of children and families, and to promote awareness of the UK's long heritage of providing a safe haven for people seeking sanctuary.

The Revd John Marsh, Moderator of the United Reformed Church, said, "By taking this pledge, political candidates will show that they are serious about offering sanctuary to those who cannot find safety in their homelands. As Christians, we are called to love our neighbours as ourselves, and the Citizens for Sanctuary campaign encourages us to do just that."

"We are particularly concerned about the detention of children and young people in the asylum system (*Yarls Wood*)," continued the Revd Jonathan Edwards, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. "There is overwhelming evidence that holding children in detention centres is damaging to their physical and emotional wellbeing. Children are particularly vulnerable, and no matter where they are from, we all have a duty to protect them from harm."

Only a decade to bring nuclear weapons under control, says PM's advisor on nuclear proliferation Baroness Shirley Williams is warning that the proliferation of nuclear weapons is one of the greatest threats to the survival of humankind. The Prime Minister's advisor on nuclear proliferation made the statement just days after the White House indicated plans for 'dramatic reductions' in the nuclear arsenal of the United States of America. Baroness Williams was endorsing a campaign by an alliance of nine UK Churches, which calls on the British Government to make a commitment to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, building a safer future for all.

The Churches' campaign, entitled *Now is the Time*, joins the World Council of Churches and others in pressing for governments to put all bomb-grade material under international control and commit to making the use and possession of nuclear weapons illegal through a new Nuclear Weapons Convention. They are asking people to sign an online petition (at www.endnuclearweapons.org.uk) expressing support for these aims.

Baroness Williams said: "The proliferation of nuclear weapons and climate change are the greatest threats to the survival of humankind. We have only a few years, at most a decade or so, to control and eventually abolish nuclear weapons. The support of concerned citizens in the UK and elsewhere is vital. The Churches have already played a crucial part in breaking the bonds of debt on poor countries and their leadership on this issue is equally important and urgently needed."

The alliance includes the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), the United Reformed Church, the International Affairs Department of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Scotland and the Archbishop of the Church in Wales. The Churches are voicing these concerns in advance of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference this May, which they believe will be crucial for international disarmament.

The Rt Revd Dr Tom Butler Lord Bishop of Southwark, said: "We cannot tackle the threat of nuclear terrorism by simply rehearsing old doctrines of defence. The simple fact is that more nuclear weapons do not make for a safer world. We must instead turn to the universal adoption of common rules and standards, enforced by international treaties. It is crucial that all nuclear armed states now demonstrate a willingness to redefine their concepts of security."

"Nuclear weapons instil fear. They are divisive and counter-productive to a sustainable peace between nations," added Steve Hucklesby, Policy Advisor for the Joint Public Issues Team. "The recent commitment by the United States and Russia to reduce their missiles and warheads has injected new life into non-proliferation and disarmament negotiations. We must grasp this opportunity and commit our governments to the road to zero nuclear weapons."

To find out more about the campaign, visit www.endnuclearweapons.org.uk.

Bishops Lent Course Lent 3

Words of Challenge
Words of Life

Luke 13. 1-9: Jesus invites repentance (NRSV)

There were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them - do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.' Then he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"



Some reflections

This blunt passage might shock us. Two incidents are recalled, apparently well known to some in the crowd, and then Jesus tells a parable which reminds us of John the Baptist's equally direct call to repentance (Luke 3.3). First there is a conversation about sin. Some people draw Jesus' attention to an outrage. Pilate had mingled the blood of Galilean pilgrims with the blood of the very sacrifices they were coming to make at the Temple (v. 1). We can only speculate, unhelpfully, on how they died. Perhaps because of anti-Roman plotting or to 'encourage' compliance with the authorities. Regardless, we can sense the fate of another Galilean pilgrim at the hand of the same Roman official. Jesus then gives another example of innocent suffering (v. 4) but this time it is of some people from Jerusalem, subtly ensuring that there is no Jerusalem snobbery over country Galileans in this serious business of sinning. Jesus makes it quite clear that the victims of severe and degrading death and those who die as a result of calamitous accident are not worse "sinners" (v. 2) or "offenders" (v. 4) than any others in Jerusalem or Galilee. Sternly Jesus issues a comprehensive call to repentance (v. 5). The parable of the fig tree indicates that time for repentance is short. John the Baptist had been equally emphatic when he issued a similar call (Luke 3. 7-9). Whether the year's respite is a sign of God's mercy, prompted here by the gardener in much the same way as the Syrophenician woman had prompted compassion (Matthew 15. 24-28), or as God's patience close to exhaustion, the urgency is very clear (v. 9). The parable of the fig tree sets before us both judgement and hope.

Questions for discussion

1. What are the words of challenge in this passage? What are the words of life?
3. The approach (sometimes called a theodicy) that suggests suffering might be 'deserved', as in verses 1- takes us into a blind alley. What does the cross of Calvary have to tell us about the nature of suffering?
4. Sometimes we are tempted to pass the buck about sin by blaming others or making excuses. First John the Baptist and then Jesus made personal, individual calls to repentance. Talk about how we can support each other in facing our sin, being careful to respect each others' dignity.

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,

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.

Reg Littlejohns

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



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Forthcoming Funerals



The funeral of Aubrey Booth will take place at Bedford Crematorium on Monday 8 March at 1.45pm

The funeral of Peggy Stanley will take place at Bedford Crematorium on Monday 15 March at 12.15pm