



Methodist
Church

Partnership News

9 January 2005



Church of
England

Methodist Church & the Church of England in Partnership at both
Putnoe Heights Church & St. Mark's Church

January 9 -

Covenant and Renewal of Baptism Vows

8.30am Service of Holy Communion

Held at both churches

9.30am St Mark's Church Morning Worship

Preacher Mr Chris Izzard

Leadership Team Mrs Delia Shephard

11.00am Putnoe Heights Morning Worship

Preacher Mr Chris Izzard

Leadership Team Mr Alan Bayliss

January 16

8.30am Service of Holy Communion

Held at both churches

9.30am St Mark's Church Holy Communion

Preacher The Reverend Charles Royden

Leadership Team Mr Ian Farthing

11.00am Putnoe Heights Holy Communion

Preacher The Reverend Charles Royden

Leadership Team Mr Dave Allen

Thank You

The flowers at Putnoe Heights Church this week have been given by the family of Eddie McKenzie on the occasion of his 80th Birthday.

We are extremely grateful when donations are made for the flowers. This may be as a celebration of a happy occasion such as an anniversary or in memory of someone who has died. Contact Miss Marion Prior 303254 (St. Mark's) or Miss Jennie Cooper 404950 (Putnoe Heights)

Prayer for Sunday

Fill us we pray thee, with thy light and life,
that we may show forth thy wondrous glory.
Grant that thy love may so fill our lives
that we may count
nothing too small to do for thee,
nothing too much to give and
nothing too hard to bear.
Ignatius Loyola 1491-1556

Contact Details

The Reverend Dr. Sam Cappleman

107 Dover Crescent, Bedford MK41 8QR

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(Sam also works full time as a General Manager for Hewlett Packard)

The Reverend Neil Bramble-Chapman BA, CTM

(Day off Friday)

12 Hartop Close, Putnoe. MK41 8HE

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The Reverend Dr. Joan Crossley (Day off Friday)

30 Cutcliffe Grove, Bedford. MK40 4DD.

Home 344536 Crossley@Thisischurch.com

The Reverend Charles Royden (Day off Thursday)

The Vicarage, Calder Rise. MK41 7UY

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Partnership News is now available each week on the
Partnership Website - www.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 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 9am - 1.00pm Monday & Friday

9am - 4pm Tuesday/Wednesday & Thursday

Tel/fax & Answering Service 365630 www.ThisisChurch.com

Centre Manager Mr Barry Snelson 365630

Leadership Team - Mrs Elizabeth Wyatt 350188

Treasurer Mrs Kathryn Morse 216428

treasurerph@Thisischurch.com

Gift Aid Administrator - Mr John Hitt 404186

Junior Church Co-ordinator - Mrs Samantha Ware 304058

St. Mark's Church Centre (Open 9am - 5pm)

Tel/fax & Answering Service 342613 www.ThisisChurch.com

Centre Manager Miss Wendy Rider 342613

Wendy@thisischurch.com

Leadership Team - Mrs Janet Day—295592

Treasurer - Mr John Day 295592 treasurer@Thisischurch.com

Gift Aid Administrator Mr Jim Williams 360605

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Regular Weekly Activities - A Guide To Our Churches

Monday

9.30 - 12.00 pm Pre-school (See website for more details) Mrs Janet Smith 326685 (Putnoe Heights) or Mrs. Helen Harpin **312634** (St. Mark's).
10.00 am Day Care Centre at St. Mark's Church for those with Learning Difficulties. Contact K Stenton 07748 760082
12.00pm - 1.00pm Storybox at Putnoe Heights Church. Service for parents/carers & children under 5. Children's activities songs and prayers, all in one hour from 12-1pm!
4.15 - 5.45pm Kumon Maths at Putnoe Heights. Contact Ms R.Mistry 01908 217555
6.00pm Brownies St Mark's. Mrs C Mathew 400987
6.15 pm Brownies Putnoe. Alison McEwen 358583
7.30pm Sugarcraft Guild meets first Monday every month at St. Mark's Mrs Pauline Parrott 768419
7.15 m Guides -St. Mark's. Mrs Gill Lake 218091
7.30- 9.30pm Creative Needles at Putnoe Heights. Mrs Hayward 307648
7.30pm Whist Drive - At St Mark's each month. Next 17 January
oorfields Contact Mrs. Judith Stanton. 823313
7.30pm Housegroup 30 The Ridgeway. The home of Eddy & Margaret Peck 267567.
8.00 - 9.00 pm 'Get Fit, Stay Fit' at Putnoe Heights. Mrs Diane Field 404976

Tuesday

9.30am - 12.30pm Candlewicking (Needlework) at Putnoe Heights - Mrs Olive Shotbolt 267203
9.30am - 11.30pm Jo Jingles at St. Mark's. Music & movement for pre-school children. Contact Renu Elston 01908 282866
10.00am - 11.00am - Keep Fit at Putnoe Heights. Contact Mrs Stileman 822230
1.30 -3.00pm Putnoe Heights Church Toddlers Playtime Contact Geraldine Skeel 406828
12 noon - 10.00 pm Slimming World at St. Mark's. Sessions start at 12, 1.30pm, 4pm, 5.30pm & 7.15pm Contact Val Careless 345213.
2.15pm Putnoe Heights Women's Fellowship - Next meeting - 11 January 2005 Travels of a Nature Photographer Miss.A. Doody. Contact Mrs Betty Wyatt 350188
2.15pm Putnoe Heights Men's Fellowship. Next meeting 18 January 2005 Members afternoon Contact Lawrence Wyatt 350188.
2.30pm Mother Teresa Support Group. Meets fortnightly at St. Mark's. Wool and knitting needles provided. Contact Mrs Joan Gravett 356911 and Mrs Marjorie Taylor 305709
2.30pm Tuesday Afternoon Housegroup. Meets fortnightly at St. Mark's Church. Contact Mary Stubbs 406784.
3.30 - 4.30pm Putnoe Heights Church Essential Stretch Contact Caroline 07778 898135 or 326096

6.30 - 7.30pm Yoga at Putnoe Heights. Contact Rachel Leontyne 01234 783129
6.45pm Guides at Putnoe Heights - Liz Rix 363607
7.00 - 8.00 pm Keep Fit at St. Mark's Church. Contact Mrs Jan Gregory 214107.
7.30- 9.00pm Bibleway Church at Putnoe Heights - Bible study & prayers. Contact Revd.Tarr 309881 or 07891095746
7. 45 pm Putnoe Heights Ladies Tuesday Club - Next meeting – 18 January Meets fortnightly. Contact Sheila Cracknell 217009
8.30-9.30pm St. Mark's - Qi Gong (Self help healing) group) - Contact Mr F Steele 355937

Wednesday

10.00 am Childminding Support Group at Putnoe Heights. Mrs S Longman 313949
10.00 am Day Care Centre Putnoe Height Church for those with Learning Difficulties. Contact K Stenton 07748 760082
10.00 am Holy Communion at St. Mark's Chapel. A half hour service followed by coffee. All welcome.
10am Sewing & Chat Putnoe Heights Contact Valerie Russell 01462 815966
12 - 1pm Putnoe Height Church Total Body Toning Contact Caroline 07778 898135 or 326096
Luncheon Club at St. Mark's meets fortnightly. Next on 19 January 2005 Contact St. Mark's 342613
1.30 - 4.00pm. Bridge Club for the Retired - Meets weekly at St. Mark's. Mrs Truss Boyce 781133
4.15 - 5.45pm Kumon Maths at Putnoe Heights Contact Ms R Mistry 01908 217555
6. - 7.00pm Self Defence at Putnoe Contact Mr James 07711 687449
6.00 -7.30 pm Brownies at St Mark's Contact Mrs Carol Warden 219731
7.00pm St. Mark's Church Bunyan Bridge. Contact Brian Sallows 407725
7-10pm Putnoe Guild - Putnoe Heights 3rd Wednesday each month. Contact Mrs Dallas 212609
7.45 - 8.45pm Kick Boxing Junior classes St. Mark's. Mr James 07711687449 or 07810234890
7.45pm Badminton Club at Putnoe Heights - all welcome. Contact Ken Marriott 214867

Thursday

9.30am Thursday Prayer Group at Putnoe Heights in the side chapel. Sylvia Cohen 343424 *Request for prayer can be written in the prayer diary on the information table.*
10.30am - 12.00am Fledglings at **2.00pm—3.00pm Clinic At St. Mark's** Contact 267444
10.00am - 11.30am Yoga at Putnoe Heights Contact 244970
12 - 1.00 pm Storybox at St Mark's Church. Service for parents, carers & children under 5. Sandwich lunch, Bible Stories, Children's activities,

songs & prayers, all in one hour from 12-1pm.
1.30 - 3.00 pm St. Mark's Church Toddler Group.
 Contact Debbie Coppenhall 356828.
1.30 -3.00pm Putnoe Heights Church Toddlers Playtime Contact Geraldine Skeel 406828
2.30 Bedford Arts Society at St. Mark's. Contact Celia Maddison 782901
6.15 pm Weightwatchers at St. Mark's.
 Contact Mrs Margaret Ralph 01767 224978.
6.15pm Brownies at Putnoe Mrs S Lewis 300198
7.30 - 9.30pm Club 2000 Putnoe 2nd Thursday of the month. Contact Mrs Moreton 771261
6.15 - 7.30pm Bedford Junior Chess Club. St. Mark's Contact Mr & Mrs Pike 823795
7.30pm - 11.00pm Bedford Senior Chess Club at St Mark's Contact Mr P Housden 376597
7.30 - 9.30pm Embroiderer's Guild St Mark's– 3rd Thursday month. Contact Mrs K Sage 771525
7.45pm. Housegroup-Meets fortnightly at 3 Little Headlands. Newcomers always welcome. Contact Betty Wyatt 350188
8.00 - 10pm Bedford Writers Circle meets at St Mark's Church 3rd Thursday each month. Contact Mr John Broadhouse 740271

Friday
10.00 am Day Care Centre at St. Mark's Church Contact K Stenton 07748 760082
6 -7.00 pm Self Defence at Putnoe Contact Mr James 0771 687449 or 07810 234890
7. 30 - 9.30pm Young Peoples meeting Contact Pastor Tarr 376841
7.30pm Music Group St. Mark's Church/monthly
6.30pm –8.30 pm Dog Training Classes at St. Mark's Contact Mrs L. Laton 365601

Saturday
10.00am - 1.00pm & 2 - 5pm Theatre Train at St Mark's –dancing acting, singing,- Kate Randle 304865
7.15pm - 10.30pm Duplicate Bridge at St Mark's Contact Ann or Peter 212066
Peace Project Saturday School at Putnoe Heights. For details contact Mrs.E.Tarr 309881

Sunday
1- 3pm & 7-9pm Bibleway Church at Putnoe Heights - Worship. Contact Revd. Tarr 309881 Mob. 07891095746

News, Views and Information

The Church Calendar

January 2005	February 2005	March 2005	April 2005
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

Wednesday Bereavement Drop in Group.

The group will start again on Wednesday 12 January at 2.30pm., with a talk by Sonia Minney from the Guildhouse, followed by tea & an opportunity to talk with friends & members of the Pastoral Team until 4pm. The group will continue meeting on the first Wednesday of each month from 2.30 to 4 pm with the same format, talk, tea and chat. We are considering changing the name to 'Tea and Friendship,' & would be grateful for any other ideas..

Fundraising Spectacular Weekend 5 and 6 February 2005

A note for your diaries. We have arranged 2 exciting fundraising events in aid of the Autism Building Extension at St Mark's.

Saturday Night 5 February, 7-30pm our ever popular themed evening this time taking in the music and flavours of Spain, book early to avoid disappointment

Sunday 6 February 4pm to 5.30pm at Bedford High School Swimming Pool, Battle of the Sexes Swimathon, 2 teams, 5 men and 5 women have laid down a challenge to win this spectacular race and raise the most sponsorship money- who will win ? Come and offer your support. The men's team will include Neil and Charlie! Please join us in our fundraising through these events and help us to make our dream of the new building into a reality.

Putnoe Centre Management -
St Mark's Church Council Feb 1 2005
Circuit Men's Lunch
 on the 12 January at St Mark's
Churchyards Committee
 Next meeting on Monday 17 Jan at 10am
St Mark's Centre Management Meeting
 Wednesday 19 January 2005
St Mark's Leadership Team
 12 Jan home of Ian Farthing, 4 May
Deanery Synod 10 February
Partnership Council 18 Jan
Putnoe Heights Leadership Team
 25 April 2005 at 7.30pm
Putnoe Church Council
 7 Feb 2005, 13 June 2005, 10 Oct 2005
Pastoral Group Meeting January 24 at 2.00pm

Calendar dates now appear on our church website www.ThisChurch.com. Please advise us if you have a date to be added to the church calendar



Bible Notes

Verse of Scripture Rom 12 v 1 - 2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

A Collect Prayer - Before we read we pray

God of grace, through the mediation of your Son, you call us into a new covenant. Help us therefore to draw near with faith and join ourselves in a perpetual covenant with you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

First Reading Exodus 24:3-11

When Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do." Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey." Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank. (Reader : This is the word of the Lord. **All: Thanks be to God**)

Additional Reading Read by a Minister Jeremiah 31: 31-34

"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (Reader : This is the word of the Lord. **All: Thanks be to God**)

Second Reading Romans 12: 1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

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

Gospel Reading John 15:1-10 Please stand

(After the Gospel is announced **All: 'Glory to Christ our Saviour'**)

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear

much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. (Reader: This is the Gospel of Christ - **All: Praise to Christ our Lord**)

Post Communion Prayer

Faithful God, with these Holy gifts you have strengthened us in Jesus Christ your Son. Guide us on our way, that with all your faithful people we may come to share the feast of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymns (Please distribute Covenant Service Booklets and Mission Praise)

1. Guide me O thou great Jehovah 2. Majesty For I'm building a people of power 3. Come let us use the grace divine—on page 8 Partnership News (Tune Dundee). 4. O Happy Day 499

Meditation on the Methodist Covenant Service by Reverend Alan Kirk

First there was 'pick and mix', where you could have a few of these sweets, and few of those, according to your personal choice. So, you could choose to have only the sweets YOU liked, instead of that 'assortment' which always seemed to have a few you did not like, and which got left for someone else.

Then came 'cherry-picking', with motor insurance companies offering very competitive rates to 'careful mature drivers', and household insurance companies selecting from particular postcodes. Both concepts attractive in their own way, but, somehow, not fair on everyone.

'Pick & mix'? This Covenant Service, with all its words, and potential promises, may encourage 'pick and mix' and 'cherry picking', rather than take it as it is. For example, you could pick, from 'Christ has many services to be done' the ones that are easy, bring honour, suitable to our natural inclinations and material interests, those which please Christ and please ourselves, and we could mix them with 'Your will be done – when there is work for me, when I am at peace, when I am valued, when I find fulfilment, when I am valued, and when I have all things.

Such a selection would make Christianity not only very attractive, but easy, and ego-boosting. The churches could be filled to overflowing if that were the gospel on offer. But it isn't. On the other hand, no-one in their right mind would deliberately pick the services that are difficult, which bring reproach, those which are contrary to our natural inclinations and material interests, the ones where we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves, and we would not mix them with doing God's will where there is no work to do, when we are troubled, when we are disregarded, when fulfilment is lacking, when we have nothing. Such a selection, if offered by the churches, would be guaranteed to empty them of all except sado-masochists!

But that gospel is not on offer either. We 'take what comes' because... Such 'pick and mixing', such 'cherry picking', is foreign to an authentic Christian faith, which takes what comes, and which seeks, above all else, to be faithful to the God who offers us a covenant with himself. And what matters, is that 'the power to do all these things is given to us in Christ, who strengthens us.'

The covenant is not a gospel of good works, but a gospel of grace. It is not a gospel of us trying to please God, but a gospel of God coming to us with strength and mercy. That is why, this morning, whatever our circumstances, whatever our faith, we can make this covenant of God our own, giving ourselves to him, trusting in his promises and relying on his grace. *The Reverend Alan Kirk*

Prayers for Sunday and the week ahead.

Let me love you, O Lord, my rock and my defence. My Saviour you are my one desire, my love and my helper. Let me love you in my strength and let me love you in my weakness. Let me love you at all times in all places. Let me love you upon earth and let me love you in heaven; and this I beg for Jesu's sake. Amen
Bernard of Clairvaux, 1090-1153

Lord, as this day unfolds, help me to remember that you are in company with me. May I flourish through what you say to me in those I meet. Strengthen me to share what I know of you in challenging and helpful ways. Remind me to own and rejoice in all that is good. Encourage me when the going is tough. Nurture me to develop the creative gifts you have given me. May others be touched by your blessing through what I say and do and, in all things, may your name be glorified. *Ward Jones, Bristol District Chair*

The Tsunami Disaster **The Right Reverend Christopher Herbert**

I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for all you have been doing, and continue to do, in encouraging giving and the offering of prayers during the last two weeks. I have little doubt that the pastoral and spiritual leadership you have been offering will have been greatly appreciated by your parishioners.

I am also aware that we are called as priests, and Readers, to try to convey some answers to the theological and philosophical questions raised by this terrible disaster. This letter is an attempt to try to assist in that process.

Like you, I have been appalled by the disaster: by its apparent randomness, by the scale of the suffering that has happened; and like you, I have inevitably asked questions about how such an event can be part of a world which we claim has God as its creator. Also like you, I have found the compassionate response of people in our own country and across the world enormously moving. Let me attempt, albeit briefly, to outline a perspective on the problem of suffering and what a Christian response to it might be.

If we want to hang on steadfastly and rationally to the belief that God is the creator and is dynamically related to, and connected with his creation and is also profoundly good, what are the perspectives to consider?

Let me offer a suggestion, which is this. The only kind of world in which you and I, as human beings can have come into existence is the one we have. Adjust the initial conditions of creation by the merest fraction and we would simply not be here. A different kind of creation from the one we have would have resulted in an entirely different set of outcomes – and we, as human beings would not have featured in it.

So what kind of world do we inhabit?

The world as it is seems to consist of structures which are relatively stable, for example, gravity, and structures which are relatively unstable, for example, the movement of the atmosphere. Certainty and chaos exist in a state of uneasy coexistence. If there were only certainty, then life would be stable but could not and would not evolve; if there were only chaos, then there would be - only chaos.

The commixture of certainty and chaos exists not only in the physicality of our world, but also exists in us as human beings, physically, emotionally and spiritually. And this mixture of chaos and certainty,

which we all are, as human beings, means that we are capable therefore of moral choices which can be inherently good or inherently evil. If there is no possibility of pain, there would be no possibility, either, of courage, heroism or love. In brief, it is only in the world as it actually is, that you and I could come into being, and only in the world as it actually is, that we could discover the capacities for goodness or evil, which exist in each one of us. If this is the case, then if God is good, the world itself came into being as it actually is, not by a twist of God's plan but because it was the only kind of world that could have brought us to birth.

This still does not 'solve' the problem of evil and suffering, because it is patent that there is terrible and innocent suffering, and it is patent that there is terrible wickedness, just as it is patent that there is heart-aching goodness - but at least a world which could not have been other than it is, provides a platform of some stability for our thinking. In a world as full of potential as ours is, however, what part can a good God play?

I turn, you will not be surprised to know, to the person of Jesus Christ. The incarnation, the death and the resurrection of Christ, provide the key to unlock the secrets of how God relates to the world as it is. The created world, as we know, is one of risk, of chaos and certainty. The only God whom I can begin to contemplate as 'good' is one who, having created the world as it actually is, does not then stay outside it, indifferent, but is present within every fibre of its being. If God is to enter the world as it actually is, then He has to become subject to the same chaos and certainty as all of us, and submit Himself to it (the usual phrase is to refer to this as 'self-emptying'). More than that, He not only has to enter it and be subject to its joys and agonies, He has also, because of His inexpressible goodness, to enter into suffering and death. Only a creator who enters and subjects himself to his creation, in love, is one worthy of adoration. Even further, that entry has to be total - all of himself, nothing held back.

At this point, let me offer an image. You may recall that astonishing photograph of a Swedish woman running towards the tidal wave, which towered above her, to warn and rescue her family. That is, for me, an image that reflects God - not a playing God, not an indifferent God, but a God who risks His very self for the sake of the world and the people He has created.

In Jesus' death on the cross, the abandonment of Christ to matter, to the annihilation of death, was God plunging into the chaos in order to love it and recreate it, to bring out of it all that is new and possible.

And we see this activity of God not only in the events of Jesus' death and resurrection; we see it throughout his entire life. In the healing of 'Legion' he brought peace and newness where there had been chaos. In the healing of the Centurion's servant he entered into the anguish of both the master and the slave and brought redemption. In the stories of the kingdom he revealed how God works within and through the very structures of our world to re-new and refresh creation. Jesus' life was all of a piece with his death and all of a piece with his resurrection.

But also running through Jesus' life and his teachings was a profound awareness of his closeness to God (Abba, Father), and a profound awareness, therefore, of eternity. He showed us through his life and death and resurrection that we are 'en route' to our final destiny with the eternal love of God.

It is true that he cried out "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken me?", on the Cross, when he experienced the absolute desolation and pain of our human condition; yet he also, with the gentlest courtesy, at the Resurrection, whispered Mary's name.

Her terrible grief was transformed when he named her, that is, when he took her very desolation and made it the beginnings of a new life. I want to suggest, therefore, that one of the truths about God is that He not only creates the world and enters its suffering but also contains it within His own infinity of compassion and love. This earth, this universe, if created and contained by God, really is not all that there is - all that there is, is God, Himself, and we are pulled towards eternity where we shall find our ultimate purpose.

Our suffering, our pain and terror, which He enters with love and for love, is ultimately taken up by Him into a new form of expression - into life with Christ in God. So, only a crucified God will do and only a risen God will do. And just as He enters our suffering, so He also, enters our compassion so

that this, too, can be given new life; God is within the victim; God is within the compassion of the one who responds to the victim's need. And if this is so, which I believe with all my heart because of God's revelation of Himself to us, in and through Jesus Christ, it follows that as disciples of Christ, we, too, are called to live like Him: to enter the suffering, and to live with hearts overflowing with compassion. That is what our humanity is all about.

I realise that I have probably not satisfactorily answered the question many are asking, why a good creator God allowed such a horrible event to happen. Rather, I have tried to reflect more widely on why suffering is part of the created order and how a good and loving God relates to such a reality. In doing so I hope I have communicated a way to understand how God is related to the events of 26 December and a way for us to enter into what God is doing, as mysterious and difficult as that can be at times like these.

You will also be aware, as I am deeply aware, that no letter of this kind or this length can ever answer all the questions, nor can it begin to meet all the needs. I hope, however, that it may help you and others to reflect and find your own way of understanding where God might be in all that has happened, and is happening, since 26 December. I have tried, as honestly as possible within my own limitations to write from the heart.

I pray for you. Pray also for me, but pray above all for the victims and for the bringers of aid, that by God's grace this appalling tragedy may bring new life and new modes of living together into being.

**Christopher +
Bishop of St Albans**

Our Response to the Tsunami disaster ...

Aid for Asia. In anticipation of our fundraising efforts, our churches have each sent a donation of £1,500 to Methodist Relief and Development Fund. Please continue to be generous towards this most extraordinary situation of utmost need.

Handmade Christmas cards raised over £100 for charity. Following the Tsunami disaster the money

was given to the aid appeal. Thank you for your continuing support. Margaret and Clare Peck.

Well done to Kezia and Eden Bramble-Chapman who collected money in buckets at the Putnoe Morning Service and raised £368.04. Thank you to all who contributed.

A Hymn for Sunday

- 1 Come, let us use the grace divine,
And all, with one accord,
In a perpetual cov'nant join
Ourselves to Christ the Lord:
- 2 Give up ourselves, through Jesu's power,
His name to glorify;
And promise, in this sacred hour,
For God to live and die.
- 3 The cov'nant we this moment make
Be ever kept in mind:
We will no more our God forsake,
Or cast his words behind.
- 4 We never will throw off his fear
Who hears our solemn vow;
And if thou art well pleased to hear,
Come down, and meet us now.
- 5 To each the cov'nant blood apply,
Which takes our sins away;
And register our names on high,
And keep us to that day. *(Tune: Dundee)*

Coming Soon Storybox Plus is an After School Club for 4—9 year olds which will be starting in January from 4.00 to 5.00pm on Thursdays. The group will rehearse a short drama and make the props and costumes for a performance at the Family Service at Putnoe.

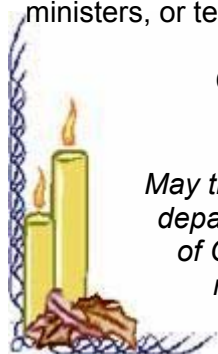
Volunteers will be needed to make refreshments, help with the crèche and support the group. Please ring Joan on 344536.

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.

Christine Milway

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



Storybox Could you spare 2 hours every 6—8 weeks to help with Storybox lunches on Thursday at St. Mark's. If you can spare some time. Please contact Patricia Izzard 212164

Lunch Club - Please can you help. Lunch Club will be operating from Putnoe Heights Church from February. It is very important to help Lunch Club as they seek to make the transition from St Mark's as smooth as possible. They would very much appreciate your help in the following ways.

Transport. Can you help with a lift to enable somebody to get to Lunch Club? Please consider if you might offer some transport, especially in the first few weeks. **Cooking, serving meals.** Do you feel that you are able to offer some practical help with cooking or serving meals. This would be very much appreciated. If you do think that you could help in any of these ways please contact Pam Kinselly 354480 or Margaret Standley 305352

Thank you to everyone who bought Christmas cards, we raised £40. Peter & Joy Parker.

Security Marking Bedfordshire Police is offering a free security marking service for bicycles and mobile phones at Brickhill Community Centre on Saturday 15th January 2005 from 10.00-13.00.

Footprints (formerly Putnoe Ramblers) are holding their second walk of this year on Sunday 16 January. Meet at the Visitor Centre, Priory Marina at 2pm for a walk to Danish Camp. Arrangements can be made for those wishing to return from Danish Camp, Willington by car. Please contact Barry or Jenny 344417.

NCH. On behalf of NCH I would like to express my gratitude to all friends and supporters at Putnoe Heights Church who generously gave donations through the Smartie Tubes and purchased Christmas cards and Diaries. The final totals were as follows:- Christmas cards and diaries £152.00
I would also like to thank both Peter & Joy Parker who delivered Christmas cards on behalf of Putnoe Heights members and gave the £40 raised to NCH—which will add to the Smartie Tube collection—again my sincere thanks to all and wish you all a very happy New Year. Grace (Foster)

MHA The final total for money raised for MHA Sunday was £114.30. My sincere thanks to all Church members at Putnoe Heights for their continued support to this worthy charity.

Rest In Peace

The funeral of Mrs Irene Dorothy Harvell will take place at Bedford Crematorium on Monday 17 January at 2.30pm.