



Methodist  
Church

# Partnership News

9 January 2011  
Baptism of Jesus



Church of  
England

## Partnership Church Services Today

**8.30am Holy Communion every Sunday**  
1st, 3rd and 5th Sunday at Putnoe Heights  
2nd and 4th Sunday at St. Mark's Church

### 9 January - Morning Worship

Preacher - Mr Chris Izzard  
Leadership – Mrs Avril Williams  
Intercessions – Mr Richard Ledger

### 11.00 am Putnoe - Morning Worship

Preacher - Mr Chris Izzard  
Leadership - Mrs. Jean Kirk  
Intercessions - Mrs. Sue Allen

### 16 January

### 9.30 am St. Mark's - Holy Communion/Covenant

Preacher - Bishop Alan (By DVD)  
Leadership – Mrs. Morag Stewart  
Intercessions – Mrs. Wendy Waters

### 11.00 am Putnoe - Holy Communion/Covenant

Preacher - Bishop Alan (by DVD)  
Leadership - Mrs. Sam Ware  
Intercessions - Mr. Alan Bayliss

**Readings** 1. Exodus 24:3-11, 2. Jeremiah:31:31-34  
& Romans 12:1-2, 3. Mark 14:22-25

### Midweek Worship

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

## Thank You

The flowers at Putnoe Heights Church this week  
have been given by Gwen Beswick in loving  
memory of her husband Peter, and by Pat Pollard in  
loving memory of her mother and brother.

The flowers at St Marks Church this week have  
been given by Doreen Smart in loving memory of  
her husband on his birthday and by May Dingwall in  
memory of her friend Jean Wallis on her birthday.

*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 This Week

Steadfast God,  
you have enriched and enlightened us  
by the revelation of your eternal Christ.  
Comfort us in our mortality  
and strengthen us to walk the path  
of your desire,  
so that by word and deed  
we may manifest your grace . 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 Mobile 07807 146535  
jane@thisischurch.com

### The Reverend Charles Royden

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

### For Data Protection Purposes

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

Partnership News is also archived on our  
church website [www.ThisisChurch.com](http://www.ThisisChurch.com)

### Partnership Pastoral Support Team Co-Ordinator & Churchyards Administrator

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

### Putnoe Heights Church Centre

**Open Monday to Thursday 9am - 5pm, Friday 9am - 1pm**  
**Tel/fax & Answering Service** 365630 putnoe@thisischurch.com  
**Centre Manager** Mr Barry Snelson 365630 & 344417  
**Leadership Team** Mrs Samantha Ware 304058  
**Treasurer** Mr Ian Morse 216428 treasurerph@thisischurch.com  
**Gift Aid Administrator** John Hitt 404186  
**Youth Worker** Emma Gordon email - youth@thisischurch.com

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

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

# Regular Weekly Activities - A Guide To Our Churches

## Monday

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

Head teacher Mrs Janet Smith ☎326685

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

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

Headteacher Mrs. Helen Harpin ☎312634

(See website for more details)

**9.00am 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 12.15 and 1.15 for a sandwich lunch followed by a Bible based story and singing.

### 3.30pm Storybox Plus Putnoe Heights for 4-9 year olds.

Meet at 3.30 for refreshments & games. Then until 5pm stories, drama, singing & craft activities.

### 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—17 January St. Mark's 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

### 1.15pm Sing and Stomp. For toddlers & their carers. Run

by the Putnoe Children's Centre. 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.

**2.15pm Putnoe Heights Women's Fellowship.** Next meeting 11 January. Talk by Revd Martin Hounsfeld on Coventry Cathedral. 2011 For more details contact Betty Wyatt ☎350188.

### 2.30pm Mother Teresa Support Group. St Mark's

Fortnightly . Wool and knitting needles provided. Mrs

Maureen Watling ☎262225

### 2.15pm Tuesday Afternoon Housegroup. St Mark's

Fortnightly. Mary Stubbs ☎406784.

### 3.45pm-6.15pm Stars School of Dance. Putnoe Heights.

Esther Richardson ☎295862 or 07917582468.

### 6.30pm Creative Card making. Putnoe Heights Church.

Carol Houghton ☎346718

### 6.30pm 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 in Beds. Cardiac Support Group 1st

Tuesday in the month at St Mark's. 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 January 11 'General Health' Dr.

Jenny Wilson. For more details call Janet King 313946

### 8.15pm - 10.15pm Bedford Advanced Dancers St.

Mark's 1st Tuesday in month. Shirley Sadler ☎01767

651767

## Wednesday

### 9.30am Body Control Pilates. Putnoe Heights. Stephanie

Smith ☎357787 or 07973174430.

### 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. Janet Fitch 838689

### 12.30pm Luncheon Club. Putnoe Heights fortnightly.

Next - 15 January 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

### 3.45.- 5.30pm Messy Church. St Mark's for children of

lower school age and their carers. Bible-based story,

crafts, singing and a meal. Monthly. Next meetings 8

December. Wendy Waters 401834

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

Mistry ☎01908 392698

### 6.00 pm Brownies. St Mark's. Mrs Carol Warden

☎219731

### 6.15pm Yoga and Relaxation Putnoe Heights Racheall

Monton ☎01234 297138 or 07910835994.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**8.00pm Tudor Reeds Folk Dance Club** meet at St Mark's 1st,3rd & 5th Wednesday in month. Next meeting will be January 19 2011 Everyone welcome. All dances called, only £1 including refreshments. Ring Graham 406359 or Rosemary 405594 for more details.

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

### Thursday

**9.30am Thursday Prayer Group.** Putnoe Heights in the quiet room. Valerie Capon ☎356306 .

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

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

**9.45am Chat and Play** St.Mark's. A group for Mums & toddlers. Jo Garner 40007112354rrrr7651

**11am-12noon Citizens Advice Bureau** 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 ☎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

**2-4pm U3A Indoor Games** St Mark's Contact Radmila Dancer ☎404811

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

**7pm U3A Folk & Poetry** 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 -10pm Bedford Folk dancers** (formerly Barn dancers) Meet weekly at Putnoe Heights . Different guest callers each week. All welcome, cost £2 Including refreshments. More details Ron Law 825574.

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

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

**8.00pm Brickhill Ladies Group** St Mark's 1st and 3rd week in month. Julia 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

**5-8pm Stars School of Dance** Putnoe Heights Contact Esther Richardson ☎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

**7-9pm Tae Kwon Do** St Mark's Contact Adrian Felice 07964 356355☎

**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.

**7-9pm Tae Kwon Do** St Mark's Contact Adrian Felice 07964 356355☎

## Diary Dates



**St Mark's Church Council –**

**Annual General Meeting** 10 April 2011

**St Mark's Leadership Team** 31 January

**Putnoe Heights Leadership Team -** 7 February

**Putnoe Heights Management Meeting - .**

**St Mark's Forum Meeting -**

**Putnoe Church Council -** 14 February

**Pastoral Group Meeting -** 8 February 4.15pm

**Churchyard Committee -** 26 January at 11.00am

**Putnoe Heights Mission Group**

**Brickhill Parish Council Meetings**

**Deanery Meeting - .**

**Woodland Burial Trustees –** 13 February 2011

**Putnoe Heights Children & Youth –** 10th January 2010 1.30pm

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



## Baptism of Jesus

### Opening Sentence from Scripture Psalm 29

The LORD is enthroned as King forever.  
The LORD gives strength to his people;  
The LORD blesses his people with peace.

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

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit, that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children; 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*

### Old Testament Reading – Isaiah Chapter 42:1-9

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope." This is what God the LORD says-- he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you."

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

### Second Reading Acts 10:34 - 43

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached-- how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen--by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

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

### Gospel Reading – Matthew Chapter 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the



Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (This is the word of the Lord—**All: Thanks be to God**)

### **Post Communion Prayer**

Lord of all time and eternity, you opened the heavens and revealed yourself as Father in the baptism of Jesus your beloved Son: by the power of your Spirit complete the heavenly work of our rebirth through the waters of the new creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Hymns** (*Please distribute morning worship, Mission Praise*)

1. O Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness 529 (*Tune Was Lebet*)
2. From heaven you came 162 Mission Praise
3. Safe in the shadow of the Lord 583 Mission Praise (*Tune Creator God*)
4. Let earth and heaven combine Hymns and Psalms 109 (*Tune St John*)
5. Come now with awe 98 Mission Praise (*Tune Finlandia*)

### **Commentary**

After living in total obscurity his entire life, in his late twenties Jesus left his family in Nazareth and joined the movement of his eccentric cousin John. Some scholars think that John was part of the apocalyptic Jewish sect of Essenes who opposed the temple in Jerusalem. At least this much is clear — John the Baptizer was a prophet of radical dissent, so much so that his detractors said that he had a demon (Luke 7:33). Whereas John's father had been part of the religious establishment as a priest in the Jerusalem temple, John fled the comforts and corruptions of the city for the loneliness of the desert. There he dressed in animal skins, ate insects and wild honey, preached, and baptized. Living on the margins of society, both literally and figuratively, he preached "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4).

Contrary to what we might have expected from such an ascetic man with an austere message, the gospels say that people flocked to John. Even twenty years later in far away Ephesus (1,000 miles by land or 600 miles by sea), people submitted to the baptism of John (Acts 19:3).

John's preaching in the Judean desert and baptizing in the Jordan river confronted both the religious and the political powers of his day. About six months after John emerged from the desert like some scraggly lunatic and baptized Jesus, he was beheaded at the whim of Herod the tetrarch, who at a dinner party capitulated to the sadistic demand of his girlfriend's daughter. John was the forerunner of Jesus, but he was also a forth-teller to Herod, having rebuked Herod for sleeping with his brother's wife (Mark 6:14–29). But as with many perverse politicians, Herod had his way with him who had spoken truth to power, so John was murdered.

The temple establishment in Jerusalem, which exercised a gate-keeper monopoly on mediating God's grace to people, didn't like him preaching from the periphery either. John castigated these religious authorities as a "brood of vipers" (in one translation, "snake bastards"). The religious experts, said Jesus, spurned John's call to baptismal repentance, and in so doing "rejected God's purpose for themselves" (Luke 7:30).

The prophetic word of God from John the Baptist, then, did not originate with the state powers or the religious establishment, nor did it find a receptive audience with them. Instead of cooperation, accommodation, or resignation, John challenged these religious and political powers with his anti-establishment message of "protest and renewal." By joining John the Baptizer's fringe movement, Jesus did likewise.

Then comes a shock — Jesus himself asks to be baptized by John. With some important stylistic differences, all four gospels tell the story of Jesus's baptism by John: "When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased'" (Luke 3:21–22 = Mark 1:9–11 = Matthew 3:13–17; John 1:29–34). After his radical rupture with his family and conventional society by identifying with the desert troublemaker, to the point of submitting to his baptism, Jesus's own family tried to apprehend him. The village of Nazareth tried to kill him as a deranged crackpot (cf. Mark 3:21, Luke 4:29, John 7:5).

Why did Jesus the greater submit to baptism "for the forgiveness of sin" by John the lesser? Did he need to repent of his own sins? The earliest witnesses of his baptism asked this question, because in

Matthew's gospel John the Baptizer tried to deter Jesus: "Why do you come to me? I need to be baptized by you!" In other words, John insists that Jesus was not getting baptized for his own sins. Even a hundred years after the event, Jesus's baptism made some Christians feel uneasy. In the non-canonical Gospel of the Hebrews (c. 80–150 AD), Jesus denies that he needs to repent. He seems to get baptized to please his mother: "The mother of the Lord and his brothers said to him, 'John the Baptist baptizes for the forgiveness of sins; let us go and be baptized by him.' But he said to them, 'In what way have I sinned that I should go and be baptized by him? Unless, perhaps, what I have just said is a sin of ignorance.'" Others have suggested that Jesus set an example for us, that just as he was baptized, we too should be baptized.

We get some clues to this question if we back track to the beginning of Matthew. On page one of his gospel Matthew lists forty-two men in Jesus's genealogy, then four women with unsavory pasts. Tamar was widowed twice, then became a victim of incest when her father-in-law Judah abused her as a prostitute (Genesis 38). Rahab was a foreigner and a whore who protected the Hebrew spies by lying. Ruth was a foreigner and a widow, while Bathsheba was the object of David's adulterous passion and murderous cover-up (Matthew 1:1–17). These four women were forbears of Jesus.

On page two, Matthew describes the birth of Jesus through five disturbing dreams. He pits Herod "the king of the Jews" against Jesus "the king of the Jews." The pagan magi worship Jesus, whereas Herod tries to kill Jesus by slaughtering the baby boys of Bethlehem. Jesus escapes to Egypt, the sworn and symbolic enemy of Israel, and finds refuge there.

Jesus's baptism inaugurated his public ministry by identifying with "the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem." He allied himself with the faults and failures, the pains and problems, of all the broken people who had flocked to the Jordan River. By wading into the waters with them he took his place beside us and among us. Not long into his public mission, the sanctimonious religious leaders derided Jesus as a "friend of gluttons and sinners." They were right about that.

With his baptism, Jesus openly and decisively stands with us in our fears and anxieties. He intentionally took sides with people in their neediness, and declared that God was biased in their favour:

*"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:15–16, NIV).*

God's abundant mercy, Jesus declared, is available directly and immediately to every person; it's not the private preserve doled out by the temple establishment in Jerusalem. Jesus's baptismal solidarity with broken people was vividly confirmed by God's affirmation and empowerment. Still wet with water after his cousin had plunged him beneath the Jordan River, Jesus heard a voice and saw a vision — the declaration of God the Father that Jesus was his beloved son, and the descent of God the Spirit in the form of a dove. The vision and the voice punctuated the baptismal event. They signaled the meaning, the message and the mission of Jesus as he went public after thirty years of invisibility — that by the power of the Spirit, the Son of God embodied his Father's unconditional embrace of all people everywhere.

## **Meditation**

Christianity can be seen as a religion of public words to be proclaimed from Christian billboards, by street evangelists complete with sandwich boards or celebrity preachers. People seem to be deaf to our message and disinterested in our words. In all the words do we show grace and love? Perhaps the word we need to hear from Jesus' baptism is that God seems to like quiet proclamation. No raised voice, no huge public displays (note Jesus' rejection of the temptations to this kind of attention grabbing). Rather, a quiet affirmation here, a gentle act of justice there, a constant lived love and grace that gently, but profoundly, touches and changes lives. I wonder if God might be calling communities of faith to this kind of quiet proclamation in community, seeking to bring life and grace and love and justice, without expecting anything back. Giving a voice, where possible and necessary, to the voiceless and challenging whatever brings pain and destruction, but doing so with a strong, gentle, enacted message – not loud, emotive and actionless words. What might it mean for us to put our baptism into practice? What might it mean for us to take St. Francis' words seriously – "Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary."

*We do not draw people to Christ by loudly discrediting what they believe, by telling them how wrong they are and how right we are, but by showing them a light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the source of it. Madeleine L'Engle, 20th century*

## Prayers for Sunday and the Week Ahead

May God the Father, and the eternal High Priest Jesus Christ, build us up in faith and truth and love, and grant us our portion among the saints with all those who believe on our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray for all saints, for kings and rulers, for the enemies of the cross of Christ, and for ourselves we pray that our fruit may abound and we be made perfect in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Polycarp*.

Glorious God, give me grace to amend my life and to have an eye to mine end without grudge of death, which to them that die in thee, good Lord, is the fate of a wealthy life.

Give me, good Lord, a full faith, a firm hope and a fervent charity, a love to thee incomparable above the love to myself.

Give me, good Lord, a longing to be with thee, not for the avoiding of the calamities of this world, nor so much for the attaining of the joys of heaven, as for the very love of thee

*Thomas Moore, from a prayer written a few days before his execution*

In his baptism in the Jordan, all the waters of the world were made new, creation itself was cleansed, even as you have cleansed us of sin and joined us to Christ as one body. As the heavens were opened, so open to us the gates of your mercy. As the Spirit descended upon him, so keep your Holy Spirit within us. As Jesus heard your voice above the waters, so may we listen to your word and keep it. Let your favour rest upon us, whom you have called to be your daughters and sons in Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Lord, you know all that lies before us, both of duty and temptation. Keep us, we pray, from all things hurtful to the body and the soul. Strengthen within us all that is praiseworthy and true, and grant that nothing may come between us and your holy presence; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen John Hunter, 1849-1917



**Messy Church** We continue to be delighted by the response from families to Messy Church, at our December gathering there we 20 children plus Mums and one Dad! However we

could do with a few more

people to help, especially if some of our regular, enthusiastic, team members are unable to be at a session. From January Messy Church will be held from 3.45 to 5.30pm on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month. If you are interested in helping please speak to Jean Bank or Wendy Waters

**Rotas.** St Mark's Rota for the next three months is now available in the foyer

**Putnoe Heights New Year Lunch** Sunday 9 January 2011 at 1.00pm A festive lunch with 3 courses inclusive of drinks. All proceeds to church funds. Tickets (from Putnoe Office) £8.00 (£4.50 for children under 10)

**Church Chairs.** St Marks Church have ordered new chairs which we hope will arrive just after Christmas. We would be very grateful to any members of the congregation who felt able to contribute towards the cost of the chairs which will cost £50 each. Please make cheques payable to St Mark's Church and remember to

**Priory Methodist Church** is pleased to announce that the Rev. Glayne Morgan has accepted the appointment at Priory from September 2011.

**Carol Singing** at Library Walk on Saturday December 18th raised £107.79 for BeCHaR. Many thanks to all who helped.

**Footprints** The next walk will be on Sunday 16 January. Meet at 2pm in Sandy Town Centre (Budgens) for circular walk following the Greensand Ridge path along the River Ivel and through the Roman Fort. Further details from Sue Allen.

**The Christmas Posting Box** contributions this year were almost £45.00 which has been sent to Action for Children. Thank you to everyone who used the service and helped with the distribution of all of the cards. Joy and Peter Parker

**Thank you** to Judith Stanton and her supporters for their generous donation of £204 following their Christmas Whist Drive.

**Thank you** to those who kindly gave their time and energy to clear the Garden of Remembrance at St Mark's. Many floral tributes and wreaths had been left and this was a huge effort to tidy the Garden and make it presentable.



## A Hymn for Sunday

- 1 Let earth and heaven combine,  
Angels and men agree,  
To praise in songs divine  
The incarnate deity,  
Our God contracted to a span,  
Incomprehensibly made man.
- 2 He laid his glory by,  
He wrapped him in our clay,  
Unmarked by human eye,  
The latent Godhead lay;  
Infant of days he here became,  
And bore the mild Immanuel's name.
- 3 Unsearchable the love  
That has the Saviour brought;  
The grace is far above  
Or men or angels' thought:  
Suffice for us that God, we know,  
Our God, is manifest below.
- 4 He deigns in flesh to appear,  
Widest extremes to join;  
To bring our vileness near,  
To make us all divine:  
And we the life of God shall know,  
For God is manifest below.
- 5 Made perfect first in love,  
And sanctified by grace,  
We shall from earth remove,  
And see his glorious face:  
His love shall then be fully showed,  
And man shall all be lost in God.

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

Copied from HymnQuest 2010: CLUE Version  
HymnQuest ID: 56743

**Printer Cartridge Recycling** St Mark's are collecting printer cartridges from home or office printers for recycling. If you would like to help with this please bring them to St Mark's and place in the box in the foyer or hand in to the church office. We would appreciate your support as this raises funds and also helps the environment.

**Flower Donors.** Anyone wishing to contribute towards the cost of flowers at Putnoe for any Sunday in the first six months of 2011, is invited to enter their name on the rota on the board in the welcome area.

**Magnet** This uplifting magazine, at a cost of £10 per year, is produced quarterly. Hilda Hicks and Margaret Stamdley distribute it at Putnoe Heights and St. Mark's Church. Please contact either of them to make sure you have your copies next year, as payment is required and orders will be placed before the end of December 2010. Thank you for your co-operation. Margaret Standley.



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## Rest In Peace

On the Sunday following a funeral service we remember in church those who have died. We light a candle to symbolise the light of Christ which eternally shines and brings hope. If you would like a person remembered in our service when the candle is lit, perhaps on an anniversary or birthday, please inform the ministers, or telephone the church office.



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

**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.

## Forthcoming Funerals

There are no funerals this week

