



Methodist
Church

Partnership News

14 December 2008

3rd Sunday in Advent - Christingle



Church of
England

Partnership Church Services Today

8.30am Holy Communion every Sunday

1st, 3rd and 5th Sunday at Putnoe Heights
2nd and 4th Sunday at St. Mark's Church

9.30am St. Mark's – Christingle

Preacher - Revd Charles Royden
Leadership Team - Mrs Delia Shephard
Intercessions - Mrs Pat Leusby

11.00am Putnoe Heights—Christingle

Preacher - Revd Charles Royden
Leadership Team – Mrs Jean Kirk
Intercessions - YPF

Services for Sunday 21st December 4th Sunday in Advent

9.30am St. Mark's Church—Holy Communion

Preacher - Mr Richard Ledger
Leadership Team - Mr Mike Cooper
Intercessions – Mrs Margaret Appleton

11.00am Putnoe Heights - Holy Communion

Preacher – Mr Richard Ledger
Leadership Team – Mrs Wendy Nash
Intercessions – Ministers

Bible Readings

- 1.2 Samuel 7:1-11,16
- 2.Romans 16: 25-27
- 3.Luke 1: 26-38

Thank You

The flowers at Putnoe Heights have been given by Vincent & Pearl James on the occasion of their Diamond Wedding Anniversary.

Hospital and Poorly People

If you know of anybody who is in hospital or who is poorly at this time, please tell the ministers this morning. We are also pleased to take communion to anybody who is genuinely housebound and cannot come to church at Christmas. Please advise the ministers if you would like a visit.

A Prayer for Sunday

People of God: Be glad!
Your God delights in you.
He will give you joy for sadness
and turn the dark to light.
Be strong in hope therefore;
for your God comes to save.
You are God's children
Lord make us one in the love of Christ
today and for ever. Amen.

Contact Details

The Reverend Dr. Sam Cappleman

107 Dover Crescent, Bedford MK41 8QR
266952 Fax- 402624 NSM@ThisisChurch.com
(Sam also works full time as a General Manager for Hewlett Packard)

The Reverend Charles Royden (Day off Thursday)

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

For Data Protection Purposes

Please note that any items submitted for inclusion in Partnership News will automatically be posted on our website.

Partnership News is also archived on our church website www.ThisisChurch.com

Partnership Pastoral Support Team Co-Ordinator & Churchyards Administrator

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

Putnoe Heights Church Centre

Open Monday to Thursday 9am - 5pm, Friday 9am - 1pm
Tel/fax & Answering Service 365630 putnoe@thisischurch.com
Centre Manager Mr Barry Snelson 365630 & 344417
Leadership Team Mrs. Wendy Nash 357119
Treasurer Mr Ian Morse 216428 treasurerph@thisischurch.com
Gift Aid Administrator - Mr John Hitt 404186
Youth & children's worker - Mrs Spavins 302349
youth@thisischurch.com

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

Tel/fax & Answering Service 342613 office@thisischurch.com
Centre Manager Miss Wendy Rider 342613
Leadership Team - Mr Mike Cooper 306751
Treasurer - Mr Ian Farthing 210892 treasurer@thisischurch.com
Gift Aid Administrator Mr Williams 360605

Regular Weekly Activities - A Guide To Our Churches

Monday

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

Headteacher Mrs Janet Smith ☎326685

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

Headteacher Mrs. Helen Harpin ☎312634

(See website for more details)

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

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

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

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

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

☎07999859980

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.15 pm Brownies Putnoe. Sharon Tanner ☎07720713738.

6.15 Pilates at Putnoe Heights Jane Butcher 300859

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

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

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

7.15pm Yoga. Putnoe Heights Lena Holland ☎244970

7.30pm Whist Drive. St Mark's 3rd & 5th week each month. Next meeting 15 December Judith Stanton. ☎823313

7.30pm House group 30 The Ridgeway. The home of Eddy & Margaret Peck ☎267567.

8.00pm 'Get Fit, Stay Fit' Putnoe Heights. Mrs Diane Field ☎404976

Tuesday

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7.30pm Putnoe Heights Ladies Tuesday Club - Meets fortnightly. Next meeting 16 December Christmas Event Details from Audrey Wilkins☎365068 or Margaret Gentle ☎309043

Wednesday

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

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

9.30am Body Control Pilates. Putnoe Heights. Stephanie Smith ☎07973174430.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.00-3pm Police Surgery at Putnoe Heights .

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

1.45 Scots Society Whist monthly .All welcome Nancy Barr 268147

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7.00pm Putnoe Guild Putnoe Heights monthly Janice ☎ Loxley 347073

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

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

8.00pm Tudor Reeds Folk Dance Club St Mark's, 1st, 3rd & 5th Wednesday. Next meeting 17 December Everyone welcome. Graham ☎406359 or Alan 345312.

8.00pm Bedford Wine and Social Club St Mark's 1st week in the month. Mrs Gansfield ☎215016
7.45 for 8pm God talk—women's group monthly meeting for worship and friendly chat at Wendy Nash's Contact Majella Atkinson ☎325293

Thursday

9.30am Thursday Prayer Group. Putnoe Heights in the quiet room. Sylvia Cohen ☎343424
Request for prayer can be written in the prayer diary on the information table.

9.45am Yoga Putnoe Heights Lena Holland ☎244970

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

12pm Storybox weekly at St Mark's welcome the under 5's and their carers to join them between 12 noon and 1pm for a sandwich lunch followed by a Bible based story and singing. Lots of fun. Contact Emma Strangwick ☎211070

1.30 - 3.00pm NHS Baby Clinic St. Mark's 267444

1.30pm Toddler Playtime. Putnoe Majella Atkinson ☎325293.

2pm Putnoe Bridge Club. Gerald Palmer ☎345991

5.30pm Police Surgery. St Mark's Foyer.

2.30—4.30pm Art Society at St Mark's

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Friday

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

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

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

2.00pm U3A Gardening Group Putnoe Heights Eve Whitehead ☎356875

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

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

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

Saturday

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

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

1.30pm Young Embroiders bi monthly Terry Fletcher Tel 357198

7.00pm Duplicate Bridge. St Mark's Mrs Pillinger ☎212066

Sunday

9.30 - 10.30 Church and Sunday School at St Mark's with crèche for under 3's

11.00 - 12.00 Church and Junior at Putnoe Heights for the under 9's and Young Peoples Fellowship (Y.P.F) for our young adults. A crèche is also available.

1pm Tabernacle of Truth Church Putnoe Heights Revd. Tarr ☎360188 or ☎07866775515

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

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

Diary Dates



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

St Mark's Leadership Team –
24 February

Putnoe Heights Leadership Team –

Putnoe Heights Management Meeting- 19 January, 20

April, 13 July

St Mark's Church Forum Meeting -
21 January 2009

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

Pastoral Group Meeting - Tuesday 20 January
4.30pm

Annual Congregational Meetings 26 April

Churchyard Committee -

Putnoe Heights Mission Group –

Partnership Council -

Brickhill Parish Council Meetings -

Deanery Meeting

Circuit/Deanery Meeting

Woodland Burial Trustees

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

Putnoe Heights Children & Youth –

3rd Sunday in Advent

Opening Verses of Scripture

Prepare the way for the Lord,
Make straight paths for him. *Luke Chapter 3*

Collect Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you: grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. *Common Worship*



First Bible Reading - Isaiah Chapter 61:1-4, 8-11

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations. "For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity. In my faithfulness I will reward them and make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the Lord has blessed." I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the soil makes the young plant come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations. (Reader: This is the word of the Lord – **Thanks be to God**)

Second Reading- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. (Reader: This is the word of the Lord - **Thanks be to God**)

Gospel Reading - John 1:6-8, 19-28

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" Now some Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the things of whose

sandals I am not worthy to untie." This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

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

Commentary

Matthew, Mark and Luke all record that the gospel, the good news, starts with John The Baptist. We are told by the Gospel of John that John the Baptist was at work 'on the other side of the Jordan.' This means Perea, one of the territories controlled by Herod Antipas. Josephus the Jewish historian tells us that John was later imprisoned in the fortress Machaerus in the same region. John is arrested in the place where he conducts his faithful ministry. The readers would know this and they would know that that John was beheaded by Herod for his preaching. He called for a way to be prepared and this was no cheap road. The Christian community knew that the way of the Lord was the 'via dolorosa', a way of the cross. Many of the Christians who read this Gospel would also be executed for their message and mission.

John is the first to proclaim God's kingdom. He announces it not in the Temple but in the desert the place where the faith of so many before had been tested and a place where people like Moses had encountered God. The Jewish people had built a Temple but they were called back to the desert across which they had come into the promised land.

The average person can only go a couple of day in the wilderness without water. In the prophets the desert is used as a metaphor for estrangement from God, it is frightening, lonely and dangerous, yet it is to here that John calls the people for renewal. Perhaps that is where God still wants to meet us, in the place where we are stripped of distractions and ready and anxious to listen. In the desert all our facades are removed.

There was confusion as to who John was. People asked him "Are you Elijah?" That might seem a strange question. The prophet Elijah had lived around 900 years previously, and tradition had it that he never actually died, but was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. (2 Kings 2:9-12). In the last verses of the Old Testament, the prophet Malachi prophesied his return (Malachi 4:5-6), so people might have suspected that this was some miraculous return.

John calls other people out into the desert and asks them to be baptised as a sign of a change of attitude. But the sign of baptism is not an independent formal and external ritual, it must be accompanied by them showing tangible proof of their change 'bear fruit worthy of repentance' Matt 3:8.

The actions of our lives are important, so important that John can speak of acceptance or rejection based on our deeds. The axe is laid at the root of the tree that does not bear fruit. There is wheat or chaff, no middle path 3:12. John calls for repentance, for us to change what is crooked, to seek justice and to prepare for an encounter with the Lord.

Advent is the time to prepare for the time of the Lord's nativity, it is time to prepare for our encounter with the Lord Jesus. Hence it is a time for all of us to determine what needs straightening, what needs levelling. John is saying that it is necessary to change the root of human behaviour, it is a substantial change and not something superficial. The whole panorama would be changed by Christ, the valleys would be lifted up and the mountains laid low. *Charles Royden*

Meditation There is a rabbinic saying, "Every service which a slave performs for his master shall a disciple do for his master, except the loosing of a sandal thong". Disciples often performed jobs or services for their teachers, but never the menial or dirty tasks, such as tying or untying sandals. John uses the service that the rabbinic saying states is too menial for any disciple to undertake and declares he is not worthy to perform even this task for the Messiah, the one who is to follow him. His humility and his desire to point to only to Christ challenge us in a world that constantly fosters self aggrandisement and often points only to self.

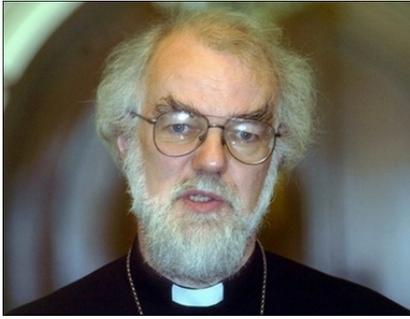
Post Communion Prayer Eternal Father, keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace, and bring the whole created order to worship at the feet of Jesus Christ your son. Amen

Hymns (*Please distribute special Christingle service sheets*)

On Jordans Bank, Make Way, Saint John, The orange of Christingle, Now praise the Father.

A Prayers for Sunday and the week ahead

O Love divine, to you I cry in the day and in the night, for you alone can speak to my condition. You alone can search the mind and purify the heart. You alone are infinite in love and you alone can flow over my darkness with the ocean of eternal light. O love divine, to you I cry in the day and in the night. Amen.



The Archbishop of Canterbury on Advent

I suppose if you did one of those word association tests on 'Advent', the other word you'd come up with straight away would be 'calendar'. That's all that most people these days are really aware of where Advent is concerned. Advent is a time when you have calendars, and the Advent calendar is a countdown to Christmas, and it means daily sweets and chocolates.

It's a slightly thin and rather inadequate account of what has been for a long time been one of the most important and significant times in the Church's year - a time of waiting we sometimes say. But once we've said waiting, of course that's not a very attractive word. We're not a culture that's very used to waiting. 'Take waiting out of wanting' - that's a slogan that was very popular some decades ago - and it still governs a great deal of the way we behave. We'd quite like to have things when we decide we want them. And so waiting seems negative, waiting seems perhaps passive, unexciting, the boring bit before we get to the exciting bit. So if there is a period of waiting, getting ready for Christmas, we pad it out with the daily chocolate, to make sure that we're not feeling too miserable.

Well it's that kind of waiting that Advent is about. We remember in Advent the time of waiting before the birth of Jesus, and we remember that time of waiting as the Bible shows it to us as a time when people were indeed longing for something that would change everything, and yet at the same time not quite knowing what that something would be.

During Advent, Christians go back to that time of waiting as the Bible shows it to us. They read again the prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Old Testament. They read about how people were longing for an end to slavery, longing to be back home in some sense, longing to be at home with God again, longing for reconciliation. And all of that is expressed in the most powerful metaphors, especially in the prophecies of Isaiah, metaphors about the desert blossoming, metaphors about the rain falling, metaphors about day dawning after there's been a long, long night.

So during this four weeks before Christmas, that's what Christians are reflecting on. When Jesus comes into the life of the world with something unplanned, overwhelming, something that makes a colossal difference, we long for it and yet we don't quite know what it's going to involve. But this is a bit odd isn't it, you might say. Surely Jesus has come into the world and by now we ought to know what sort of difference he's made? But the truth is that we don't yet know the difference Jesus might make. We know some of the difference he's made to our lives as individuals, to the life of the Christian community, the Church, to the whole world. And yet there's more. We're still waiting to see what might happen if Jesus was allowed into our lives that bit more fully; that bit more radically.

So again for Christians, Advent is a time when they do a bit of self-examination. Have I allowed Jesus in yet? Has the good news really made the full impact it might make, or is my life still locked into old patterns, into darkness, into slavery, into being not at home with myself or God or with other people? It's a time of self-examination, of repentance indeed, facing myself honestly and saying sorry for the things that don't easily face the light. And it's a time of expectation and a time of hope. A time, therefore, also of quiet.

It's been said so often it hardly needs saying again, but it is rather a pity that for a few weeks before Christmas we are saturated with Christmas carols. We don't have quite the sort of quiet we need to think, 'Well what would it be if Jesus really came as if for the first time into my life? What would it be for the good news really to change me.' Because for that to happen I need some reflective time; I need some peace; I need to slow down; I need, you might say, to take my time about things. And so all those bits of our contemporary culture which are about rushing to get gratification, getting the results straight away, all those habits in our culture which so drive the crises of our culture, whether it's the credit crunch or the environmental crisis, all those things we have to cast a rather cold eye on during Advent and say slow down, take time, let yourself grow and open up, rather like a flower coming to blossom - a time of expectation, a time of excitement, a time of waiting, a time of peace, a time where we're clearing our hearts and our minds a bit so we really can see clearly when Jesus arrives, and feel fully the impact of his coming.

It's a time, as I've said, for going back to the prophecies, the foreshadowings of Jesus' comings that we find in the Bible, and a time when two figures above all are representatives of how we're thinking and how we're feeling. In the New
(Continued on back page.....)

Christmas Posting Box is in the Welcome Area ready for you to post your cards to friends who attend Putnoe Heights church. The price is 10p per card or £1 for 12. Please put the money in the wooden 'flower' box. The money will be donated, as always, to NCH. Thank you Joy & Peter Parker

Putnoe Carol Singing Everyone welcome for warming refreshments at Putnoe at 11.15 on Saturday 20 December - and then to sing carols at Library Walk from 12.00 'til 12.30.

Chat and Play at St Mark's restarts on 8th January 2009 after church alterations. **Storybox at St Mark's** will take place on the 18th December.

Office closures - St Mark's Church office will close for Christmas from Tuesday evening 22 December and will re-open Monday morning 5 January 09

Putnoe Heights Church Office will close at 1pm on Wednesday 24 December and re-open at 9am on Monday 5 January 2009.

Cancer Research UK Monday 15 December Kempston Musical Society are giving a concert of 'Carols for All,' at Priory, starting at 7.30pm. Muse and Music' will be our guest artists. They have performed extensively both at home and abroad, and will bring a selection of Christmas music and readings. There will be a raffle. All proceeds are for charity. Please come and support this very worthwhile cause. Contact Sue & Richard Butler 01234 354183 or Howard Lawrence 01234 267837 for tickets at £5 each.

St Mark's Christmas Cards. These are now available for purchase and the cards can be ordered from St Mark's office. The cards cost 20p each and proceeds will be given to MAF. Orders taken right up to Christmas!

Christmas Cards in aid of Putnoe Heights Church will be available from the Church Office from 9 -14 December.

St Mark's Christmas Card Screen. This will be in place at the back of the church from Sunday 7 December for all to give their greetings to friends at St Marks. Please hand the card in at the office, or to one of the Leadership team, with any donation you may wish to give to our MAFF Mission project and they will affix with Velcro strips.

Putnoe Christmas Card delivery. Cards are available this morning for delivery around Putnoe. Please take a road and help us cover our area with these cards which give details of all our Christmas Services.

Putnoe Provender Last Sunday's sale resulted in a record £202.75. (All proceeds to Mission Aviation). Grateful thanks to all who provided cakes, jam, marmalade, chutney and the wonderful Christmas Puddings. Thank you for your support. John and Sally Gunning

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

Flowers at Putnoe Anyone wishing to donate flowers for a Sunday in the first six months of 2009, please enter your name on the rota in the welcome area, or speak to Jennie Cooper or Ann Hitt.

Shoebbox Appeal

The youth groups would like to thank everyone who supported our shoebbox appeal. We packed and sponsored 30 boxes. Thank you



Thank you very much to everyone who has sent cards, flowers and supported me over recent weeks with thoughts and prayers. This Christmas my greetings are through Partnership News with a donation to charity. Wishing you all a Blessed Christmas. Gwen Beswick

Blogging towards Christmas. Many people tell me they enjoy the blog of Rev Ross Royden on our church website thischurch.com. Ross is currently blogging his way through Romans and there is some excellent material. Check out his Talk 4 for Advent blog on Love and the Law.

Please remember to buy all your Christmas presents through Amazon, by clicking on the link at thischurch.com



Testament those two figures who are there right from the start of the gospel story, are John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin and forerunner, and the Blessed Virgin Mary, Jesus' mother. John the Baptist, you might say, sums up the whole drive, the whole story of the Bible so far. 'Yes,' says John the Baptist, 'something is about to happen and you've very little idea what it is and you've no idea how radical and how complete a change it will involve.' So John the Baptist can say when the Promised One arrives, 'I won't be worthy even to untie his shoe. He belongs in a different world; a different league.' So John the Baptist is pointing forward and saying, 'Everything you've always hoped for, everything you've longed for, the change, the freedom, the peace, is about to come. It will be a shock coping with that. Get yourself ready. Make straight the Lord's path,' says John the Baptist, quoting the old prophecies. And Mary, who in many icons of ancient Christian art stands on the other side of Jesus from the John the Baptist, the two of them flanking the figure of Jesus - Mary is the one who in quiet and receptivity receives into herself, into her body, heart and mind, the full reality of what's coming. She receives it so deeply that that promise actually becomes real, physically real, in her; it becomes the child that's going to be Jesus. And she has to wait with the long nine months of pregnancy, faithfully, quietly, waiting to see what comes, ready to be changed as every mother is changed by the birth of a child.

These are the two figures that Christians think about a lot in Advent. When you light Advent wreaths in churches, two of the candles represent Mary and John the Baptist. In Advent, Christians have for centuries thought about death and judgment, about heaven and hell. They've thought about the way in which when we're up against the truth for the first time, when we really see what the reality of God is like, it will be a shock to the system. It may be deeply painful as well as deeply joyful. Death and judgment, and hell and heaven. It will be that experience of confronting the

truth in such a way that you're changed for good. We say yes to all of that even with the pain and the risk. Or God forbid we say no we can't cope with the truth, we'd prefer our own darkness. And so part of our self-examination during Advent is looking into ourselves and saying, 'Well can I get myself to the point where I can look at God and say well there's truth and there's beauty and light and love and it's painful for me, weak and stupid though I am, to face that, and yet I'd rather be there with the truth, however much it costs, than be locked up with myself?'

During Advent, we try to get ourselves a bit more used to the truth - the truth about ourselves, which is not always very encouraging, but the truth about God above all which is always encouraging. The One who comes will come with a great challenge. It will be like fire on the earth as the Bible says. And yet the One who comes is coming in love. He's coming to set us free. And that's something well worth waiting for.

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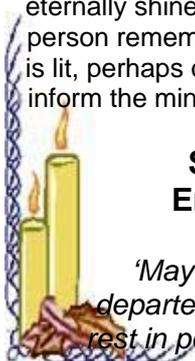
Mission Update A enormous thank you to everyone who has given so generously to this Autumn's mission project for MAF. To date between the churches we have raised a magnificent total of over £3500 including a record breaking contribution of over £200 from the Putnoe Provender stall last week. Through a range of events from Christmas Voices through to coffee mornings, the Provender contributions, selling Christmas cards and many others, a huge number of people have worked hard and given generously to make this project such a success. We will be sending our contributions to MAF shortly so if you haven't yet contributed and would like to do so please pick up an envelope at the end of the service and return it as soon as possible. Thank you once a gain for all your contributions which shows in a tangible manner the mission heart of the Partnership and will make a significant difference to those who benefit from the work of MAF as they demonstrate God's love and concern for all His world by His people. **Sam**

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.

Sven Axel Poulson
Eric John McKercher

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



We publish the banns and pray for the marriages of

Stephen Simmonds and Julie Capeling both of this parish (3rd time of asking)

Massimo Ciampi and Diana Maria Mignacca both of this parish and on electoral roll of All Saints Tudeley 2nd time of asking

Forthcoming Funerals



The funeral of Mr John Frederick Goldby will take place at Bedford Crematorium on Thursday 18 December at 4.00pm