



Partnership News

Putnoe Heights & St Mark's Church
16 July 2017
Trinity 5 Ordinary 15



Sunday Services

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

16 July 2017 - Trinity 5 Ordinary 15

9.30am St Mark's - Holy Communion
Preacher - Rev. Canon Charles Royden
Leadership - Mr Jim Williams
Intercessions - Mrs Delia Shephard
Organist - Mr Cliff Barton
11.00 am Putnoe - Holy Communion
Preacher - Rev. Wendy Evans-Wood
Leadership - Mr Barry Southam
Intercessions - Mrs Claire Pack
Organist - Mr Cliff Barton

23 July 2017 - Trinity 6 Ordinary 16

9.30am St Mark's - Morning Worship
Preacher - Rev. Sam Cappleman
Leadership - Mrs Wendy Waters
Intercessions - Mr Richard Ledger
Organist - Mr Clive Simmons
11.00 am Putnoe - Morning Worship
Preacher - Mr. Jim Ragless
Leadership - A. & S. Dennison
Intercessions - Mrs. Sue Allen
Organist - Mr Clive Simmons

Readings 1. Wisdom 12: 13,16-19 2. Romans 8: 12-25
3. Matthew 13: 24-30,36-43.
Mid Week Holy Communion at 10.00am at St Mark's
Chapel every Wednesday and at Sir William Harpur House
first Monday of every month

Thank You

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



Prayer for Sunday

Take our bodies O Christ,
to do your work;
for here on earth
you have no body now but ours.
Take our hands
to be your hands
and our feet to
walk in the ways of your feet.
Take our eyes to be the eyes
of your own compassion,
shining out in a troubled world;
for your own mercies sake. Amen

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

The Reverend Dr. Sam Cappleman

Assistant Rural Dean of Bedford
107 Dover Crescent, Bedford MK41
Tel: 266952 nsm@thisischurch.com

The Reverend Wendy Evans-Wood

c/o Putnoe Heights Church Centre
Tel: 346317 wendyeanswood@yahoo.co.uk

The Reverend Canon Charles Royden

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

Reader: Mrs Wendy Waters
Pastoral Support Team Co-Ordinator
342613 office@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.

Partnership News is sent out by email every Saturday in a colour edition. To receive a copy please email vicar@thisischurch.com. 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

St Mark's Churchyard Administrator

Mrs Avril Williams 01234 342613

Putnoe Heights Church Centre

Open Mon-Thur 9-5.30pm, Friday 9-1pm
Tel/fax & Answering Service 365630 putnoe@thisischurch.com
Centre Manager Mr Geoff Gypps 365630
Leadership Team Mrs Sue Allen 407264
Treasurer Mr John Hitt 404186 treasurerph@thisischurch.com
Gift Aid Administrator Mr Lawrence Wyatt 350188
Youth Team Leader Carolyn Morris youth@thisischurch.com

St. Mark's Church Centre Charity No 1164416

Open Monday - Friday 9am - 5.00pm
Tel/fax & Answering Service 342613 office@thisischurch.com
Centre Manager Miss Wendy Rider 342613
Leadership Team - Mrs Wendy Waters
Treasurer - Mr Ian Farthing 210892
treasurer@thisischurch.com
Gift Aid Administrator Mr Jim Williams 360605
Music Copyright CCL1501

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Regular Weekly Activities - Putnoe Heights Church

Monday

Hazeldene Heights Pre-school. Sessional and Full Day care available—open Mon.—Fri. Full Day Care 8.30am to 5pm Sessional times 9am—12noon and 12.45pm -
3.45pm For more info please contact Laura Leggett 01234 326685 or www.hazeldeneheights.com
9.30-10.30am - Body Control Pilates –Stephanie Smith 357787 or 07973174430
12.00 noon Storybox Welcomes under 5's and carers to between 12noon and 1pm. Sandwich lunch followed by a Bible based story and singing. Contact Carolyn Morris youth@thisischurch.com 365630
2.00pm U3A Music Appreciation Chris Fordham 217396
2.00pm U3A Italian – fortnightly Chris Fordham 217396
4.15pm Kumon Maths Mrs Raksha Mistry 01908 392698
6.15 pm Brownies . Sharon Tanner 01767 699399 email firstputnoebrownies@hotmail.co.uk
6.15-7.15pm Pilates Jane Butcher 07891879571
7.15pm-8.15pm Fit for Life Yoga Jane Butcher 07891879571
6.30pm-8pm Cubs Ages 8 –10.5 Michelle Davis 07711916870 email: michelle@putnoescouts.org
6.30pm Fit For All – Laura Amor 341152 / 07976259081
7.30pm House group 30 The Ridgeway. The home of Eddy & Margaret Peck 267567
7.45-9.15 Get Fit Keep Fit Diane Field 01234 404976

Tuesday

9.30am Candlewicking (Needlework). Jenny Snelson 344417
11-12.15am U3A Keep Fit Chris Fordham 217396
2.00pm Library Walk W.I. meets monthly. Jo Fordham (President) 01234 217396 Margaret Bull (President) 01234 267866 Cheryl Gardner (President) 01234 261584
2.30pm. Ladies Tuesday Club (meets monthly) Next Meeting Tuesday 18 July - Priory Marina. Details Diane Bayliss 268101
2.30-4.30 U3A Play Reading Chris Fordham 217396
6.30pm– 8.00pm Cubs 6.30pm—8.00pm Ages 8-10.5 michelle@putnoescouts.org

Wednesday

9.30am Body Control Pilates. Stephanie Smith 357787 or 07973174430.
10am-12 Community Coffee Morning (Fortnightly) Next date 21 June contact Jenny Snelson 365630
11.00am U3A Keep Fit. Chris Fordham 217396
12.30pm Luncheon Club. Fortnightly. Next meeting 12th July, Closed till 6th September Contact Putnoe Office 365630
2-4pm U3A Ukulele Group. Beginners welcome. Contact Chris Fordham 217396
2.00pm - Fifty plus Keep Fit. Mrs Webster 856966
4.15pm Kumon Maths. Mrs Raksha Mistry 01908 392698
5.00–6.00pm Rainbows Mrs Gill Lake 218091
6.15-7.15pm ATSK Karate Kevin Stark 01234 353865
7.00pm-9.00pm Scouts ages 10.5-14; Michelle Davis 07711916870 email:michelle@putnoescouts.org
7.00pm Archaeological & Local History Society monthly. Sylvia Woods 365095
7.15pm Putnoe Guild Putnoe 3rd Wednesday in every month except August Mrs Jo Street 344600

Thursday

8.15-2.15pm Sing & Sign. Julie Warriner 01767 691488
9.30am Thursday Prayer Group. Valerie Capon 356306. Request for prayer can be written in the prayer diary on the information table. Will meet again on August 17.
10.00-12pm U3A Painting & Sketching Chris Fordham 217396
1.30pm-3.00p.m Play and Learn(Dropin) Contact Trudy 341977
2pm –4pm U3A Current Affairs Chris Fordham 217396
2.30pm-3.30pm U3A Spanish (Weekly) Chris Fordham 217396
5.15-8.15pm NHS Eat Smart Think Active contact : Laura Rocket 355122
6.00pm-7.30pm Beavers Ages 6-8 michelle@putnoescouts.org
6.15pm Brownies. Putnoe Heights Lou Brennan. 07919402797.
7.00pm Club 2000 Putnoe Monthly second Thursday in the month. Sandra White 313645
7.15pm Putnoe Art Group Bob Wardale 406094
8.00pm Bedford Folk Dancers (formerly Barn dancers) Meet weekly with different guest callers each week.Except August. All welcome, cost £2. Including refreshments. More details Ron 825574 or Shirley 01767 651767

Friday

9.30pm Spanish Holiday Survival Elena 01234 266968
9.30am –3.30pm Machine Knitting group 2nd week per month.. Contact Marion Sutton 217647
10am-12 U3A French Conversation Chris Fordham 217396
2pm U3A Gardening Chris Fordham 217396
6.30pm-8.00pm Beavers Ages 6-8 Michelle Davis 07711916870 email: michelle@putnoescouts.org

Saturday

Young Embroiderers bi monthly Terry Fletcher 357198
2.15pm Society of Recorder Players at Putnoe Heights. G Parry 01462 674792

Sunday

11.00 - 12.00 Church and Junior for the under 9's . A crèche is also available.

Diary Dates

St Mark's Church Council - 26 September, 22 November & 21 February 2018
St Mark's Leadership Team-18 September, 6 Nov
Annual Congregational Meetings - 15 April 2018
Putnoe Leadership Team – 9 Oct.
Putnoe Management Meeting – 11 Oct
Putnoe Church Council - 17 October
Pastoral Group Meeting – 12 September 4pm
Churchyard Committee -
Circuit Meeting —
Deanery meeting -
Woodland Burial Trustees –
Putnoe Heights Children & Youth Meeting -
St Marks Messy Church - 20 September

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

Regular Weekly Activities - St Mark's Church

Monday

7.30am-6.00pm Pre-school Mon-Fri St Mark's
7.30am-6.00pm Top Marks Mon-Fri St Mark's
Manager Mrs. Helen Harpin 312634
(See website for more details)
9.00am-12noon St Mark's Pre-School Nursery
Manager Mrs. Helen Harpin 312634
10.00am Bakers Barn Art Group. Mrs M. Berry 211955
10.00am U3A Playreading Chris Fordham 217396
9.45am - 10.45am & 11.00am-12noon Pilates Liz Mason
07816522200
6.00pm Brownies Mrs C Mathew 826190
7.30pm Sugarcraft Guild St Mark's (1st week in month)
Mary Daly 217127
7.00pm Cancer Care Society. (1st week in month)
Mr J Dewhurst 01908 377020.
7.00-8.00pm Laughter Club on 2nd week each month
Cheryl Green 07729187399
7-9pm Rangers. Nikki Lake 07584028653
7.15pm Guides. Mrs Gill Lake 218091
7.30pm Whist Drive. Weeks 3 & 5 in the month. Next
meeting- 17 July Judith Stanton. 823313

Tuesday

9.15am-11.15. Chat & Make A term time group for
Mums and toddlers 0-5. For more details ring St Mark's
Church Office 01234 342613 or Janine 01234 297481
9.30am -12.30 & 4-9pm Slimming World
9.30, 11.30, 3.30, 5.30, 7.30. Lorrie Pearson 340473
1.15pm U3A Cinema Group. Chris Fordham 217396
1.30pm U3A Choir. Contact Chris Fordham
217396
2.00pm U3A Book Group 1 (3rd Week in month)
Contact Chris Fordham 217396
2.00pm U3A Book Group 2 (2nd Week in month)
Contact Chris Fordham 217396
2.00pm U3A Photography Group 3 (1st Week in month)
Contact Chris Fordham 217396
2.30pm Knit & Natter Group. (Alternate Tuesdays)
Wool and knitting needles provided. Mrs Maureen Watling
262225
2.00-3.30pm Tuesday Afternoon Housegroup. A social
and Bible Study group. Meets alternate Tuesdays. Mrs
Jean Bank 355698
6-7pm Supple Strength Yoga Amanda Alcock
07769747393
7.15-8.15pm Pilates Jane Butcher 07891879571
7.30-9pm Faith Community Church Audua Ogilvie
01234 308644
8.00pm Hearts in Beds Committee (4th week in month)
Mrs N Aspey 309816

Wednesday

10.00-2pm Open House for those with learning
disabilities., their friends, family , carers and supporters
342613.
10.00am U3A Gardening Group 3 Chris Fordham
217396
10.00am Holy Communion. St. Mark's Chapel. A half
hour service followed by coffee. All welcome.
10am U3A Card Making, Chris Fordham 217396
10-4pm Sewing group 4th week of the month. Contact
Sue Sewell 07979797747
1.15pm Social Bridge Club Mr Barnes 261811
2.00-4.00pm U3A Craft 1st week of the month Chris
Fordham 217396
3.45.- 5.30pm Messy Church. (3rd Week in month). for
children of lower school age and their carers. Bible-based
story, crafts, singing and a meal. Next meeting 20th

September. Wendy Waters 401834 Jean Bank 355698
6.00pm Brownies. Mrs C Warden 219731
7.00pm Bunyan Bridge. Colin Jackson 363398 or Brian
Sallows 407725.
8.00pm Tudor Reeds Folk Dance Club at St Mark's
(1st,3rd & 5th Wednesday in month). Next meeting will be
19 July Everyone welcome. All dances called, only £1
including refreshments. Call Rosemary 405594 or Graham
406359 for more details or come and join our friendly
group and have a try.
8.00pm Bedford Wine and Social Club (Week 1 in the
month) Jill Cooper 357960

Thursday

9.45am Chat and Play A term time group for Mums &
toddlers.0-5 St Mark's Church Office 01234 342613 or
Janine 01234 297481
12pm Storybox . We 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 342613
2-4pm U3A Indoor Games. Chris Fordham 217396
2.30 - 4.30pm Bedford Art Society
5.15-6.45pm Weightwatchers Jodi Henderson
07449890830
6-7pm Supple Strength Yoga Amanda Alcock
07769747393
7.00pm U3A Singing for Fun (1st & 3rd week in month)
Chris Fordham 217396
7.00pm Bedford Embroiderers' Guild
(3rd week in month). Carol Plant 01832710504
7.30pm Magpies Ladies Group St Mark's (2nd & 4th
week in month)An Illustrated Talk on Gilbert & Sullivan—
Philip Street. Next meeting 27 July 'Call Rosemary
405594 for more details and visit our friendly group.
7.30pm Brickhill Ladies Group St Mark's (1st and 3rd
week in month) Rose Beal 212157
8.00pm Bedford Writers Circle. St Mark's (1st week in
month). John Broadhouse 01525 404014

Friday

10am -12.00 U3A Photography (4th week in month)
Contact Chris Fordham 217396
10.45am - 12 U3A Poetry & Literature St. Marks
Contact Chris Fordham 217396
2.00-4.00 pm U3A Whist (2nd week in month) Contact
Chris Fordham 217396
7.00pm-9.00pm Meditation Cheryl Green
07729187399
7.45 - 10.45pm Bedford Astrology Club. St Marks(2nd
week in month)Carol Brown 01438 233385
6.30 -8.30pm Pakua Martial Arts John Waugh
07802755914

Saturday

9.00am Faith Community Church (1st week in month)
Audua Ogilvie 01234 308644
10.00-1pm Theatretrain Dancing acting, singing. Kate
Howard 01234 782414

Sunday

9.30 - 10.30 Church and Sunday School at St Mark's
with crèche for under 3's
10 - 5.30pm Bedford Stamp Fayre at St. Mark's. 1st
Sunday August. P Harris 01623 621143
11.30-2.30pm Faith Inspired Ministry. Pastor James
Mudokwani 07411154809

Ordinary 15

Opening Verse of Scripture - Romans 8:14

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Collect Prayer for the Day -

Before we read we pray

Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: graft in our hearts the love of your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of your great mercy keep us in the same; 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

First Bible Reading - Isaiah 55: 10 - 13

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed." (This is the word of the Lord -- **Thanks be to God**)

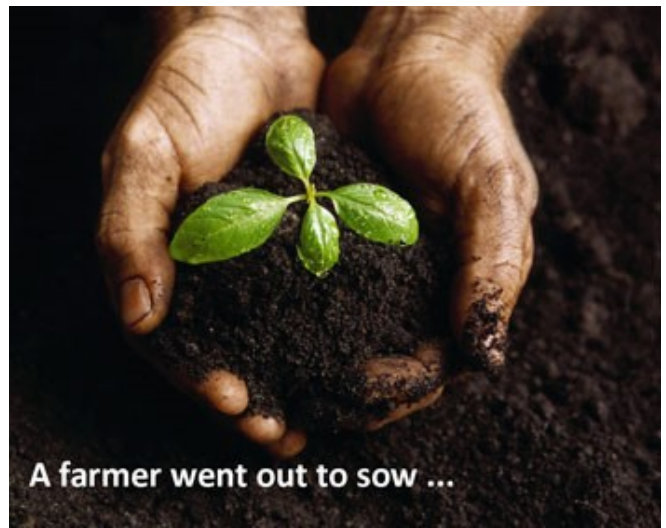
Second Bible Reading- Romans Chapter 8:1-11

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. (This is the word of the Lord -- **Thanks be to God**)

Gospel Reading - Matthew Chapter 13 : 1-23

(Please stand and use the response in the service sheet)

1-9 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop--a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears, let him hear."



10-18 The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it

18-23"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown." *(Please use the response in the service sheet)*

Putnoe Heights Church

Joshua 14:6-12

Now the people of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, but my fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt in fear. I, however, followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly. So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly.'

"Now then, just as the Lord promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the wilderness. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said."

Philippians Chapter 3:7-16

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

St Mark's Church *(Please distribute Holy Communion booklet and hymn sheets)*

1. The church's one foundation (Aurelia) MP 640 HP 515 2. As the deer pants for the water (as) MP 37 3. We have a gospel to proclaim (Fulda) MP 728 HP 465 4. Shout for joy, the Lord has let us feast (Lansdown) SF 598

Putnoe Heights Church

1. Angel voices 39 2. Colours of day 167 3. When memory fades 621 4. An Upper Room 569 5. Captain of Israel 459

Post Communion Prayer

Lord God, whose Son is the true vine and the source of life, ever giving himself that the world may live: may we so receive within ourselves the power of his death and passion that, in his saving cup, we may share his glory and be made perfect in his love; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever. Amen.

Meditation

If you are engaged in Christian ministry, and that means all who call themselves followers of Jesus, then this is an encouraging parable. Too often we feel sad and disillusioned that we are so slow to change the world, so poor at making those new disciples our churches want to see. Well slow down and listen to the words of Jesus to us this week, it is the Parable of the Sower, God is the sower and not us. The work is not our work, the work is God's and we are called to share in this work, to co-operate in order for his will to be achieved. It is true that we have the capacity within us to either work with God, or to completely do our own thing. God does not control us, he seeks to co-operate with us. We all have that free decision, 'do I accept and follow God or not'? However we should never think that God's purposes in the world will be achieved by us running faster or speaking louder, or inventing new discipleship programmes.

Commentary

The Gospel reading today tells the parable of the sower. It is such an important parable in many ways, which is reflected by the fact that all three Gospel writers have included it in the teachings of Jesus. Parables are really important examples of Jesus teaching, whilst there are examples of others using parables, it is Jesus who by far stands out as the master of parables. In the Old Testament prophets like Nathan used parables. Nathan confronted King David by using a parable to shame him over his adultery with Bathsheeba and subsequent murder. There were also people in other cultures in the ancient Graeco Roman world who used parables, such as Seneca. However nobody used them as much as Jesus, indeed 43% of his teaching in Matthew is in parables and in Luke it is even higher at 52%. Perhaps the most significant fact is that after Jesus the early church did not use parables to teach. This is significant because it means that they did not place these words in Jesus mouth after his death. The parables are the closest we can possibly come to the actual words which Jesus used. This is what most scholars agree to be the bedrock of the teaching of Jesus. Historically we know that a man named Jesus lived and his life is attested to by Jewish and Roman historians outside the Christian community. Today we can assuredly say that not only did he exist, these words were his, spoken from his own mouth.

So much for the accuracy and authenticity of what Jesus taught, what did he mean when he spoke this parable? It is important to recognise that Jesus was a Jew and he often spoke in a way which reflected his own Jewish tradition and the reading of the Jewish scriptures, what we now know as the Old Testament. If you read Ezra it speak about seeds being sown in Adam's heart and producing ungodliness. In 4 Ezra 8:41-44 it says

'For just as a farmer sows many seeds in the ground and plants a multitude of seedlings, and yet not all that have been planted will take root; so also those who have been sown in the world will not all be saved.'

Images about seeds, sowing, failure of crops or fruitful harvests are very common metaphors to describe life and judgement and God's blessing.

The most significant reference to the Old Testament is however in the verses which our lectionary chooses to miss out ! Jesus quotes Isaiah Chapter 6

You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'

Jesus is using words from Isaiah which spoke of hardness of heart and judgement of Israel. The language is uncomfortable and so it is understandable, if not excusable why the lectionary organisers wanted to leave it out! Jesus appears to say that he uses parable to stop people from understanding the truth, which is clearly nonsense. Some commentators have gone so far as to try to have the words removed as not being authentic. Jesus did not tell parables to make it hard for people to understand. Like prophets before him he was unafraid to speak words which would be very unpopular to the nation of Israel. Jesus stands in this tradition and his words in this parable are a judgement against those who

refuse to listen to him and set themselves up against him, not just to challenge his teaching but also to plot his death. The passage from Isaiah is all about hearing and it explicitly refers to a remnant using the image of - a 'holy seed.' It is impossible to resign all of this to mere coincidence. The parable of the sower is about God sowing his seed in the proclamation of His kingdom. Participation in the kingdom is open to everybody everywhere, the seed is scattered even where it might seem to have no earthly chance of survival. Once sown the fate of the seed depends upon how it is received and nurtured by those who hear it with their ears and hold it in their hearts.

There is a warning here that those who listen to the words of Jesus should respond to the message and not be guilty of a hardness of heart which prevents understanding.

This brings us to what our position will be in response to the parable. Will we like Israel harden our heart, hear and yet remain hard of heart. The parable is a description of how different people might respond to hearing God's word through the teachings of Jesus. There is a contrast between those who hear and respond negatively or superficially and on the other hand those who receive the word and respond productively in obedience. The Hebrew word for hearing (Sama) is often translated in English as 'obey.' The ending of the parable with the words '*Let the one who has ears to hear, hear*' stresses the importance and encouragement by Jesus to all people to take his words to heart and move deeper into his truth. Those who heard but did not progress beyond the superficial would discover nothing more and miss the progressive revelation of the kingdom.

Parables are therefore clever ways to teach. They provide a way into the teachings of Jesus for those who wish to have faith to understand. In an odd way they actually hide the truth in order to make it known. The hard of heart will hear a story and no much more, those wanting to be drawn closer to Jesus will find that his parables have a life of their own, enlivening and quickening the soul. Parables seek a response and those who respond positively find them a start to a changed life.

Jesus places great store upon hearing, the word is spoken and our ears hear it. There is a challenge therefore to those who hear and also to those who speak. If we wish to be transformed as children of God then we must hear and take to heart the teachings of Jesus and be willing and receptive to obey them. Some will decide it is not for them, others will go along with it but only so long as it is convenient to do so. They will like Israel bring upon themselves their failure to enjoy God's goodness. This is not about eternal judgement, which we so quickly presume, it is about inadequate and unproductive hearing ! Of course the importance of the parable is about great fruitfulness. Many will not only respond positively to what they hear, their reception will be marked by lives of growing and deeper discipleship. Today we ask ourselves how we are hearing Jesus words. Are we taking them deep into our consciousness and seriously seeking to give of our lives in obedience? If this is what we are doing then we will put down deep roots for our lives which will sustain us. *Charles Royden*

Prayers for Sunday and the week ahead

Friends in our Lord Jesus, God calls us to consider the needs of our sisters and brothers, to love our neighbours as ourselves and to love even those who hate us. So we offer our prayers for the church and the world.

Lord God may our ears be quick to hear the words of grace which you speak to us through your Son our Lord Jesus Christ. May our heart be good soil in which your word is planted and so may grow and our souls be so receptive to your truth that we show forth fruitful obedience to you in our daily living.

May we desire to be filled with your love which reaches out to make known your ways. As you cared for the lost and the lonely may we never be so preoccupied with ourselves that we forget the many who are so much less fortunate than ourselves. As you reached out to touch those who were frail or sick may we never be so concerned with our own ailments that we pay less regard to those who carry burdens so much greater than our own.

Give to us your compassionate heart of love which is shown in obedience to your gentle way of living May we who have known the abundance of your goodness give ourselves to service of our neighbours and all people as your children. By your Holy Spirit empower us to stand for the dignity and equality of all your people, speaking your words of love and forgiveness, that other may be drawn into your kingdom.

Life giving God, who loves all that you have made and in whom nothing is lost. We remember before you those who have died and commend them to you merciful keeping. We pray that your everlasting arms would be a comfort to all of those who in sorrow mourn the loss of a loved one. May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace and rise in glory. Lord in your Mercy....

Bedford Food Bank are very grateful for all the donations given via St Mark's. They are running low on the following items Tinned Vegetables, Tinned Tomatoes, Tinned Spaghetti Hoops, UHT Milk, UHT Fruit Juice, Tinned Tuna, Tinned Soup, Tinned Rice Pudding, Jam, Cup-a-soup, Tinned Meat eg Beef, Chicken).

New Church Bibles

The Leadership Teams of our churches have agreed that it would be good for us to move to the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Bible translation in our churches. This is the most widely authorised translation by churches and has received the widest acclaim and broadest support from academics and church leaders of any modern English Translation. It is also the only Bible translation which is ecumenical. It draws heavily on newly available sources and manuscripts such as the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as new understandings of Greek and Hebrew Grammar. It is appropriately inclusive in that it is careful to make clear where the original text intended to include all humans, male and female, and where they intend to refer only to the male or female gender.

This is an easy exercise in that we can print off text in Partnership News immediately in the NRSV. However we would like if possible to renew the Lectern Bibles in our churches with the new versions. These Bibles are costly and each will cost up to £400. We would therefore like to offer the opportunity for anybody who would like to donate money toward the entire or part cost of a Bible. We would be grateful to hear from anybody who would like to do this, perhaps in memory. If you would like to do so then please contact one of the ministers as we would like to have the new translation in place for September.

North Beds Circuit Farewell to Deacon Jane Mills. Sunday 23 July 2017 at Priory. The Farewell starts at 4.00 pm with a performance by Tony Vino, well known Christian Comedian, followed by tea and finishing with a "Songs of Praise" service. All welcome to come and share in a good show of appreciation for Jane.

The Great Gappo will be at Putnoe Heights Church on Monday 24 July 2017 at 12 noon to 2pm "The Great Gappo" 12 noon to 1pm, Sandwich lunch provided 1pm to 2pm. Raffle in aid of church funds. Tickets: £2.00 in advance, £3.00 on the door, free to children under 1 yrs old. Donations for the raffle welcome. Available from the church office. contact: Carolyn Morris Tel: 07751348925 Email youth@thisischurch.com or Putnoe Heights Church office on Tel: 01234 365630

Junior Church at St Mark's will finish on Sunday 16 July and restart on Sunday 10 September. **Chat and Play** finishes on 20 July but will take place on 3, 17, & 31 August from 9.30 - 11.30 during the holidays and restart on 14 September. **Story Box** restarts 7 September 2017

St Mark's Country and Western Night with live band Nine Blind Ravens. Tickets go on sale this week for a great night out on Saturday 2 September. It is a little while since we had one of themed nights so expect this to be a fantastic night

Junior Church at Putnoe Heights will not be meeting during August. We will meet again on Sunday 3rd September for our All Age Service at 11am.

Storybox at Putnoe Heights Church will finish for this term on Monday 17 July. We will start next term on Monday 11th September at 12 noon.

Putnoe Thursday Prayer Group will meet again on Thursday 17 August at 9.30am.

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.



Rest In Peace

This week heard the sad news of the death of Iris Perry. Iris was one of the long standing members of St Mark's with her husband Cyril and a great friend to many of our congregation. Her funeral will be held at St Mark's when we will have the opportunity to give thanks for her life.

Forthcoming Funerals

The funeral of Iris Pauline Perry will take place at St Mark's Church 10.00am on Thursday 27th July 2017

All funerals at Bedford Crematorium can be found @ www.bedford.gov.uk/obituaries

