

Methodist
Church

Partnership News

1 January 2011

Epiphany



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

1 January - Epiphany

9.30 am St. Mark's - Morning Worship

Preacher - Deacon Jane Mason
Leadership – Mr M Ovenden
Intercessions – Mrs A Holden

11.00 am Putnoe - Morning Worship

Preacher – Deacon Jane Mason
Leadership - Mr Gordon Evans
Intercessions - YPF

8 January - Baptism of Jesus

9.30am St Mark's - Family Worship

Preacher - Mr Richard Ledger
Leadership – Morag Stewart
Intercessions - Mr Ian Farthing

11.00 am Putnoe - Family Worship

Preacher - Mr Richard Ledger
Leadership - Mrs Sam Ware
Intercessions - Mr Alan Bayliss

Bible Readings

Genesis 1:1-5, Acts 19:1-7, Mark 1:4-11

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 Veta Hudson-Rae in loving memory of her parents, especially her father, whose birthday was on January 1st.

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 the Week

We worship the Saviour with joy,
as the Magi travelled far to bring praise.
The infant child received gifts,
Lord accept the gifts of our hearts and minds.
The holy family lived in exile
in the shadow of death,
look with mercy on those who suffer
and all who are poor and powerless.
Father, we rejoice in our fellowship
with the shepherds, the angels, the magi,
the Virgin Mary, and Joseph
and all the faithful departed,
In your unfailing love for us and for all people.

The Reverend Dr. Sam Cappleman

107 Dover Crescent, Bedford MK41 8QR
266952 Fax- 402624 nsm@thisischurch.com
(Sam also works full time as a Vice President 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

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 Geoff Gypps 365630 mob 07947 902846
Leadership Team Mrs. Linda Hoare 782717
Treasurer Mr Ian Morse 21428 treasurerph@thisischurch.com
Gift Aid Administrator John Hitt 404186
Youth Worker Emma Gordon email - 07593266091
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 - Laura Farthing 210892
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 –3.45 pm Mon and Wed/ 9.15-12.15pm Tues/Thurs/ Fri. Putnoe Heights Pre-school. See website for more details www.ThisChurch.com

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)

.9.45am - 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 (see contact details below)

12.15pm 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. Contact Emma Gordon ☎07593266091

2.00pm U3A History Group St Marks.(see contact details below)

2pm U3A Music Appreciation - (see contact details below)

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

☎01767699399 or 07720713738.

6.15 Pilates at Putnoe Heights Jane Butcher 300859

6.15 - 8.15pm

6.30pm Weightwatchers. St. Mark's Sam Thompson

☎07766421000

7.15pm Fit for Life Yoga - Putnoe Heights Contact Jane Butcher ☎07891879571

7.00pm Sugarcraft Guild St Mark's 1st week Pat Nicholson ☎353518

7.00pm Cancer Care Society. St Mark's. 1st Week. Mr J Dewhurst ☎01908 377020

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

7.30pm Whist Drive. St Mark's 3rd & 5th week . Next meeting– 16th January Judith Stanton. ☎823313

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

8pm '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 ☎07790206016

9.30am Candlewicking (Needlework). Putnoe Heights. Pat McCart ☎365507

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 (see contact details below)

1.15pm Toddlers Playtime/Sing & Stomp - Putnoe Heights for toddlers and their carers.Run by Putnoe Childre's Centre Trudy Hamilton ☎340552

1.15pm U3A Cinema Group. St Mark's (see contact

details below)

2.00pm U3A Book Group 1 St Mark's (3rd Wk) (see contact details below)

2.00pm U3A Book Group 2 St Mark's (2nd Wk) (see contact details

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

2pm U3A Photography Group 3 St. Mark's (1st Wk) (see contact details below).

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

6.15pm Pilates St Mark's Church Jane Butcher ☎07891879571

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

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

7pm Tabernacle of Truth Church Putnoe Heights Bible study & prayers. Sacha Ojo ☎07590597891 or www.tabernacleoftruth.co.uk

7.30pm Putnoe Heights Ladies Tuesday Club - Meets fortnightly. Next meeting January 3 Afternoon Tea at 2.30pm at Putnoe. 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.

10am-2pm Open House at St Mark's for those with learning disabilities., their friends, family , carers and supporters ☎342613.

10am U3A Gardening Group 3 St Marks.(see contact details below)

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

10am U3A Card Making,St Marks (see contact details below)

12.30pm Luncheon Club. Putnoe Heights fortnightly. Next meeting 4 January 2012 Putnoe Heights Office ☎365630

1.00-3pm Police Surgery at Putnoe Heights (Fortnightly)

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

2.00-4.00pm U3A Craft St Marks.(see contact details below)

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

3.45.- 5.30pm Messy Church. St Mark's (3rd Wk). for children of lower school age and their carers. Bible-based story, crafts, singing and a meal. Next meeting 18th January Jean Banks 355698.

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

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

6.00pm Shooting Stars. Youth Group for 9-13yrs at Putnoe Heights fortnightly. Contact Emma Gordon 365630.

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 4th January 2012. Everyone welcome. All dances called, only £1 including refreshments. Ring Valmai 219555 Rosemary 405594 or Graham 406359 for more details.

8.00pm Bedford Wine and Social Club St Mark's 1st week in the month. Jean Ross ☎771870

Thursday

9.30am Thursday Prayer Group. Putnoe Heights. 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

8.00am Chat and Play St.Mark's. A group for Mums & toddlers. Jo Garner 400071 or 07719670624 Restarts on 12 January 2012

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 1st and 3rd Thursdays St. Mark's ☎267444

1.30pm Toddler Playtime. Putnoe Majella Atkinson ☎325293

1.45 Friendly Chicago Bridge at Putnoe Heights £2 per session inc. refreshments. New members welcome. Contact Pat 01234 294220.

2pm Putnoe Bridge Club. Gerald Palmer ☎345991

2-4pm U3A Indoor Games. St.Marks.(see contact details below)

2.30 - 4.30pm Bedford Art Society St Marks Mary Rich ☎272470

6.15 pm Weightwatchers. St. Mark's. Clare Martin 07805408811.

6.15pm Brownies. Putnoe Heights Lou Watkins

6.30-7.30pm Bootcamp/Circuits. (Fitness) St Marks. Laura Amor.341152. 07976259081.

7.00pm Club 2000 Putnoe Heights Nina Ovenden ☎825059

7pm U3A Folk & Poetry St Marks (2nd and 4th week) (see contact details below)

7.15pm Putnoe Art Group Bob Wardale ☎406094

7.00pm Bedford Embroiderers' Guild St Mark's 3rd week in month. Carol Plant ☎01832710504

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 Pat Cass ☎294220

8.00pm Brickhill Ladies Group St Mark's 1st and 3rd week in month. Ann Pallister ☎272906

Friday

10am -12.00 U3A Photography St Marks.(4th week)((see contact details below)

10am - 12 & 1.15 - 3.15pm U3A Beginners French St.Marks (see contact details below)

2.00-4.00 pm Whist St Marks.Patricia Holland.☎262823

5-8pm Stars School of Dance Putnoe Heights Contact Esther Richardson ☎295862 or ☎07917 582468

6.00-7.00pm Zumba at St Mark's. Contact Laura Harrow ☎07834529833

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

7.45 - 10.45pm Bedford Astrology Club.St Marks(2nd week) 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

6.45pm 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

U3A For information on the U3A groups meeting at St Mark's and Putnoe Heights Church please contact Yvonne Francis ☎405119



Diary Dates



St Mark's Church Council – 21 February 2012

St Mark's Leadership Team - 16 February 2012

Putnoe Heights Leadership Team - 25th Jan 2012

7.30pm at 24 Loring Rd. Sharnbrook.

Putnoe Heights Management Meeting - Mon. 23rd

Jan 2012 7.30 Putnoe Meeting Room

St Mark's Forum Meeting - NA

Putnoe Church Council - 13 February 2012

Pastoral Group Meeting -

Churchyard Committee -

Brickhill Parish Council Meetings -

Circuit meeting - 8 February 2012 @ Kempston East

Deanery Meeting

Woodland Burial Trustees – 5th February 12.30pm

Putnoe Heights Children &

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

Epiphany

Opening Verse of Scripture Isaiah 60:1-2

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.



Collect Prayer (Before we read we pray)

Almighty God, your Son our saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world. May your people shine with the radiance of his glory, that he may be known, worshipped and obeyed to the ends of the earth; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Methodist Worship*

First Bible Reading Isaiah 60:1-6

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. "Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the hip. Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD. (This is the Word of the Lord — **All: Thanks be to God**)

Second Reading - Ephesians 3:1-12,

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. (This is the Word of the Lord — **All: Thanks be to God**)

Gospel Reading - Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." After they had heard the king, they went on their

way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. (This is the Word of the Lord — **All: Thanks be to God**)

Post Communion Prayer

O God, who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at last behold your glory face to face; 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

Hymns (Please distribute Hymns and Psalms and Morning Worship service sheet)

1. It came upon a midnight clear 109
2. Brightest and best of the sons of the morning 123
3. As with Gladness 121
4. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness 505
5. Joy to the world 77

Commentary

Christmas is in so many ways about gifts, centrally of course is God's gift to us in Christ, but also attached to it has become the tradition of giving gifts. Over recent days many of us will have enjoyed opening gifts, or if you're like me watching others open what you bought them which can be just as much fun! New Year, on the other hand, has become about 'resolutions' or giving things up or taking on new commitments, perhaps to make up for the excesses of Christmas!

Today we also mark the epiphany, the visit of the Magi or wise men, so let us look at the gifts they brought to see how we may link the two;

Gold: the most practical gift of the three on the face of it, certainly we imagine a gift of monetary value, rather than one of cherished beauty. In addition to the inevitable usefulness of such a gift, especially as the young family are forced to live in exile, it also represents the **Kingship of Christ**. Jesus was born to be a king, but not in the way the world knows, Paul talks about the call to 'Preach the unsearchable riches of God', suggesting that true wealth does not come from Gold but rather from LOVE which is far richer than any other gift is our heartfelt love, of God and neighbour. The gift we give back to God is that of PRAISE, just as people bow before kings so we pay homage to God, who is Lord of every moment of our lives, not worship alone.

Frankincense: Most of us will have heard of frankincense, if not actually seen (or rather smelt) it. It is a resin that is valued because of its fragrance and due to that was burnt in the temple to honour God. As a gift is seen to represent the **Priesthood of Christ**, at that time priests were seen as an intermediary between God and the people, normal men being seen as unworthy to approach God directly. In his lifetime Jesus witnessed priests taking advantage of this role, getting rich often at the expense of the most needy, the very opposite of the message he taught. Christ brought God and Man together in his very essence, being both divine and human, his victory at Easter, as symbolised by the tearing of the temple curtain, opened a direct relationship between God and all people. The call to 'Make known God's wisdom' was passed on to us, the Church (Ephesians 3v10). It is through FAITH that we receive Gods gifts in PRAYER.

Myrrh: The final and perhaps most obscure of the gifts, traditionally it has come to symbolise the inevitable death of Christ, due to its use in embalming/anointing of the dead. It is however another plant extract still used in herbal remedies and medicines today, so it can also be seen to mark that other integral part of Christ's ministry, that of a **Healer**. The message of Jesus' ministry was serving others, living with Christ as our example we can move towards our place in his kingdom. We have all been given uncounted gifts by God, some obvious, some less so, some that are only noticed in their absence, but the call is to use our God given gifts; to give back to God what he has given to us, however small it may seem to us, God values it. *Jane Mason*

Prayers for Sunday and the week ahead

Holy Jesus, before your infant form sages bowed the knee and acknowledged your Lordship over all power and wisdom. Grant us also clear vision and courage, that in the light of your light, we may devote our power and potential to your service even when that requires us to go home by another way. Amen. *Church of Scotland*

Almighty and everlasting God, you have revealed the incarnation of your son by the bright shining of a star, which the Magi saw, and offered costly gifts in adoration; let the star of your justice always shine in our hearts; that we may give as our treasure all that we are and all that we possess, to your service; through Jesus Christ our lord. Amen. *Gelasian Sacramentary*

Meditation Christmas Sermon 2011 from the Bishop of St Albans



Christmas is a wonderful time of year - a time of celebration, a time of peace on earth and goodwill. Though quite what the talking reindeer and singing Christmas tree in the shopping centre have to do with it I fail to know. Sometimes it's hard to believe that beneath all the razzmatazz is a festival commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ.

Whether or not you share my frustration and joy, Christmas at least gives us all a chance to draw breath, and catch up with friends and family. But it also gives us an opportunity to reflect on what has been a difficult year for our nation.

In August we witnessed riots in many of our towns and cities. Occupy camps pitched outside St Paul's and three other cathedrals have provoked a national debate about wealth and poverty. Our newspapers overflow with doom and gloom about the financial crisis facing Europe.

Nearer to home, some feel that they have little to celebrate this Christmas – not least the four people I have met recently who have lost their jobs.

How can we echo the angels' song of peace and goodwill when everyone says we are in crisis? How do we celebrate when so many appear to have lost sight of looking after their neighbour and instead seem to be out for themselves?

Well, these are not new questions. Similar challenges confronted the people of Israel in the 6th century before the birth of Jesus Christ – the passage with which our first lesson from Isaiah 62 deals. It is generally agreed that these closing chapters of Isaiah were written to the people of Israel who were living in exile in Babylon.

If you ever go to Israel, you may visit the excavations at Tirsah, in Nablus on the West Bank. Archaeologists tell us that when they excavated the levels from the tenth century BC they found that the houses were all basically the same – both in their design and in their size. It was a tenth century version of Welwyn Garden City. Whatever their wealth, background or occupation, families lived side by side.

Contrast the houses dating from the eighth century BC - 200 years later – that they also excavated. The community had divided. There is a group of larger, sturdier houses in one area, but in another area there is a number of much poorer houses huddled together. This polarisation in Israelite society exercised the minds of the prophets, most notably Amos and the school of Isaiah. They spoke powerfully about our mutual responsibility towards one another and to God's world. They did not criticise wealth creation. What they were fiercely critical of were those who did not see that greater wealth brought with it increased responsibility to think about how we share the fruits of our labours and how we need to work for the common good.

Then in 587 BC everything fell apart. King Nebuchadrezzar and his Babylonian army surrounded and conquered Jerusalem. The leaders of Israel were deported to Babylon and held in captivity for 50 years. When the exiles were eventually allowed to return home they discovered that the temple in Jerusalem had been desecrated and much of the country ravaged. They returned as a poor dispirited group, with only a distant memory of a golden age when God had been leading them as a nation. You can imagine them trying to make sense of why God had allowed this to happen. (*Continued page 8*)

Putnoe Heights New Year Lunch. Sunday 15 January 1.00pm. Tickets available from Putnoe Office or from Sue on Sundays after morning service. £8.00 adults, £4.50 children. Festive three course lunch with drinks included. Book early for this popular event.

Footprints New Year's Day Walk. Monday 2 January 10.30 am. Meet at Aspects (Cinema) Car Park (park on far side nearest the river). Easy 3 mile riverside stroll, no stiles, followed by lunch at Putnoe Heights. All welcome to join our traditional start to the New Year

Christmas Closures St Mark's Church office re-open Monday 9 January. **Putnoe Heights** will reopen 9am on Tuesday 3 January.

Brickhill Community Safety Forum, The next meeting which is also the Annual General Meeting, will be held on Monday 9 January 2012 at 7.30pm at St Mark's Church, Calder Rise.

Women's Network / MWiB The annual Daffodil Day celebration will be held on 5 March 2012 at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster. Corinne Thomas is organizing a coach- cost is £11. Anyone wishing to go please phone Corinne ASAP on 01525 403936.

St Mark's Church Craft Stall Thank you all for your support. We made over £570 .If anyone would like to come and join us you would be very welcome. Our next meeting will be on Tuesday January 10 at 1 Hailes Close at 7.30pm. Contact Maureen 262225 or Rosemary 405594

Christmas Greetings from Doreen Smart to all her friends at St Mark's Church . Thank you for all the Christmas Cards gratefully received . God Bless.

Story Box would like to thank all their volunteers. Story box restarts on Thursday 12 January

Bishop of Bedford Farewell Service. Please would you let us know if you would like to attend the special service to say thank you and farewell to Bishop Richard who is retiring. The service will take place at St Paul's on Saturday 3rd March 2012 at 4.00pm. Please tell Charlie as soon as possible.

A Concert to Celebrate the new organ at St Mark's Church Sunday February 12 at 6.30pm From Clive Simmonds. I have asked two friends of mine to join me on Sunday, 12 February 2012 at 6.30pm for a concert to celebrate the arrival of our new organ at St Mark's. They are both professional musicians and singers and they live in the Scottish lowlands in almost the highest village in Scotland. Stewart Kempster is a bass who sings both solo

and chorus work professionally in a wide range of venues. He has sung in a number of Covent Garden productions and is frequently involved as soloist in oratorios and a wide range of other solo performances both in this country and abroad. His wife, Taylor Wilson (Tracey to her friends) is a mezzo-soprano and has, for many years been involved in Scottish Opera. She performs regularly as soloist in a wide range of different styles – from cabaret and jazz to many varied classical styles - in many different countries. She is also often involved in Scottish Opera's Educational projects taking suitable productions into schools. We plan to share a time together at St Mark's of very varied music - songs from many styles, plus a few organ lollipops (Bach – Toccata and Fugue in D Minor and Widor's Toccata) and a couple of favourite hymns, so that there is plenty for all to enjoy. Please book the date in your diary and bring others with you who might appreciate the occasion.

A New St Mark's rota is on display in the foyer, please make ammendments and we will print out for next week. It is also online for the next quarter at http://www.thisischurch.com/ourchurch/stmarks_church_centre.htm

Please note 15 January will be a Covenant and Renewal of Baptism Vows Service. Will all readers please look out for new readings



Forthcoming Funerals

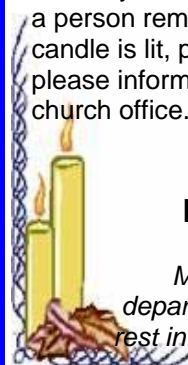
The funeral of Gladys Hoyte will take place at St Mark's Church on Friday 6th January at 11.00am

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.

**Sheila Neville
Doreen Joyce Hoole**

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



And it was into this uncertain situation that the prophet Isaiah spoke about the pressing need to “rebuild the city”: Go through the gates, prepare the way...; build up the highway, clear it of stones, lift up an ensign over the peoples.

But they are not to “rebuild the city” simply as it was before. They could not and must not go back to the old ways. They needed a new vision of their common life, of working together, where everyone had a valued place and an honoured role. As Isaiah put it: They shall be called, ‘The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord’;...A City Not Forsaken.’

In twenty-first century Europe we are in a very different place to that group of battered exiles. Nevertheless many people today feel we are in a mess – not least those involved in the Occupy London protest. I do not agree with some of their tactics or indeed everything they are saying, but they are articulating something which is felt by many across all walks of society. It was extraordinary that on the very day that the media were focussing on their protest, it was announced that the FTSE 100 chief executives had received average increases of 47%. This was this same group who had been preaching about the need for all of us to pull in our belts and share the pain together.

We need to rebuild a sense of corporate responsibility in every part of our nation: in politics, in private, public and voluntary sectors, in our churches and faith communities. The only message we hear from our three main political parties is to “rebuild the city” following the old street plan. They presume that only ever-increasing personal autonomy, consumption and choice will bring happiness and fulfilment. This is manifestly false. We all know – at least with our heads if not our hearts – that those of us in Western Europe cannot go on consuming more and more when so much of the world has so little, yet we keep doing it just the same.

Sadly there is no new narrative from our political masters, no vision other than homo economicus – the desire to get back onto the same old bandwagon that has careered into the ditch. I do not wish to decry those benefits that our political and economic system has brought. But I want to make a plea that it be accompanied by a new moral vision of what we do with our wealth and how we ensure that everyone has a fair share in it. And this is where the events of Christmas, with the proclamation of the God who comes among us, are transformative. The real Christmas story is not a tinsel and fairy lights narrative, but one shot through with dark threads. It speaks of a God who in Jesus Christ is born among us in powerlessness and vulnerability. For centuries this narrative has acted as a prophetic word to our nation, helping us envision what God’s world could be like, if only we would kneel at his manger. And it can still reshape our values and fire us to seek after the common good. The Christ child summons us to a new and better way of living.

May I finish with sharing with you a personal story? A few years ago I was helping out at a centre for the homeless at Christmas. I found myself working alongside a young volunteer, who I discovered was a lawyer. As we stood side by side washing up the dirty plates he told me that he came from a modest background but was now in the early years of a promising legal career. Yet he felt troubled. Was there nothing more to life than living in his own successful, comfortable world? What about the disparities in the community in which he lived?

As a result he had begun to search and it led him to embark on a journey of faith. There was no great flash of light, no Damascus Road conversion. He told me that in spite of his intellectual battles, he had become convinced that in the Christmas story God had revealed himself in a unique way. And this had led him to offer himself to God. And here he was, two years later, peeling potatoes and washing plates in his spare time. Not only that, I discovered that half a day a fortnight he gave free legal advice to the marginalised and poor. As we stacked the dishes he confided, ‘I think that is what Christmas is really about.’

So may God bless us all with his grace this Christmas, that we may be people of generosity. Amen.

Bishop Alan +

Epiphany If we want to know God, we must turn our eyes to Jesus. In his words and deeds, and most of all in his sacrificial death, he reveals God to us. On this day of Epiphany, let us thank God for making himself known to us in such a marvellous way. And let us renew our commitment to sharing this good news with the world.

Gracious God, today we thank you for making yourself known to us in Jesus Christ. Thank you for helping us to know your character, your glory, and your grace. Praise be to you, Lord Jesus, because you have shown us the Father and because you have embodied divine grace so that we might receive it. Praise be to you, Holy Spirit, for helping us to live in that grace each day. Fill us afresh with your power, Spirit of God, so that we might share the good news of Christ with the world . . . beginning with our friends and neighbours.