



Partnership News

Putnoe Heights & St Mark's Church
4 January 2015
Epiphany



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

4 January - Epiphany

9.30am St Mark's - Family Worship with Baptism

Preacher - Rev. Canon Charles Royden
Leadership - Mr. Edward Parry
Intercessions - Mr Ian Farthing Ministers
Organist - Mr Clive Simmonds

11.00 am Putnoe - Morning Family Worship

Preacher - Rev. Canon Charles Royden
Leadership - Mrs. Veta Hudson-Rae
Intercessions - Young People
Organist - Mr Clive Simmonds

11 January -

9.30am St Mark's - Morning Worship

Preacher - The Reverend Canon Charles Royden
Leadership - Mrs Elizabeth Bean
Intercessions - Deacon Jane Mills
Organist - Mr John Mower

11.00 am Putnoe - Morning Worship

Preacher - The Reverend Canon Charles Royden
Leadership - Mrs Jenny Snelson
Intercessions - Deacon Jane Mills
Organist - Mr Joh Mower

Readings 1 Genesis 1:1-5 **2.** Acts 19:1-7
3. Mark 1:4-11

Midweek Holy Communion at St. Mark's Chapel every
Wednesday at 10am 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 Derrick Wren in loving memory of his wife Betty, by Patricia Pollard in loving memory of her mother Eva Hopkins, and by Veta Hudson-Rae in memory of her parents and to celebrate her wedding anniversary.

Welcome

A warm welcome to our worship today and especially to the family and friends of Lleyton Robert Mann at St Mark's and Sydney Amelia Grace Cook at Putnoe Heights who have been brought for baptism

Prayer for Sunday

Grant merciful Father,
that we may be strengthened in your service.
That we might show forth the wonder of your love for us in giving to us yourself in the form of Jesus, the child of Bethlehem. May our lives so reflect your glorious life of sacrifice, that others may come with us to worship. We offer to you our gifts of loving hearts, obedient service and joyful lives, that your glory might be known among all people. Amen.

The Reverend Dr. Sam Cappleman

107 Dover Crescent, Bedford MK41 8QR
Tel: 266952 nsm@thisischurch.com

Deacon Jane Mills

c/o Putnoe Heights Church Centre
Tel. 348091 Mobile 07807 146535
jane@thisischurch.com

The Reverend Canon Charles Royden

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

Partnership News is sent out by email every Saturday in a colour edition. If you would like to receive a copy please send an email entitled 'Partnership News' to vicar@thisischurch.com. 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

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Partnership Pastoral Support Team Co-Ordinators

Mrs Wendy Waters 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.

Churchyards Administrator

Mrs Avril Williams 01234 342613

Putnoe Heights Church Centre

Open Monday to Thursday 9am - 5.30pm, Friday 9-1pm
Tel/fax & Answering Service 365630 putnoe@thisischurch.com
Centre Manager Geoff Gypps 365630
Leadership Team Mrs Jenny Snelson 344417
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

Open Monday - Friday 9am - 5.00pm
Tel/fax & Answering Service 342613 office@thisischurch.com
Centre Manager Miss Wendy Rider 342613
Leadership Team - Mrs Jean Bank 355698
Treasurer - Mr Ian Farthing 210892
treasurer@thisischurch.com
Gift Aid Administrator Mr Jim Williams 360605

Regular Weekly Activities - A Guide To Our Churches

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

8.30-12.30pm St Mark's Pre-School Nursery

Headteacher Mrs. Helen Harpin 312634

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

9.00-3.45pm 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 M. Berry 211955

10.30am U3A Play reading Putnoe Heights Contact Janet King 313946

11am-12noon Pilates St. Mark's. Liz Mason

07816522200 (starts 8 Sept.)

1.30pm Chat & Make. Term time for babies and

toddlers 0-5. Crafts, toys, songs, story and refreshments

£1. More details contact St Mark's Church Office on 01234

342613 or Janine 01234 297481 Restarts 12 January

12.00 noon Storybox Putnoe Heights 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. Contact Carolyn Morris

youth@thisischurch.com 365630

2pm U3A Music Appreciation Putnoe Heights Contact Janet King 313946

2.00pm U3A Italian Putnoe Heights— fortnightly

4.15pm Kumon Maths Putnoe Heights. Mrs Raksha

Mistry 01908 392698

5.30 - 8.30 NHS Eat Smart Think Active at Putnoe

Heights. For more details contact Emily Taverner 01234

792013

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

6.15pm-8.15pm Fit for Life Yoga - Putnoe Heights

Contact Jane Butcher 07891879571

6.30pm-8pm Cubs at Putnoe Ages 8 –10.5

Email:phxg.enquiries@gmail.com Tel Tom 07974566509

6.30pm Boot Camp Putnoe Heights – Laura Amor

341152 / 07976259081

7.00pm Sugarcraft Guild St Mark's (1st week in month)

Pat Nicholson 353518

7.00pm Cancer Care Society. St Mark's. (1st week in

month) Mr J Dewhurst 01908 377020.

7.00-8.00pm Laughter Club at St. Mark's 2nd week each

month) Cheryl Green 07729187399

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

7.30pm Whist Drive. St Mark's (Weeks 3 & 5 in the

month).. Next meeting— 19 January Judith Stanton.

823313

7.30pm No Fear Bridge Club St. Mark's Mrs. Susan Ford 300218.

7.30pm House group 30 The Ridgeway. The home of

Eddy & Margaret Peck 267567

7.45-9.15 Get Fit Keep Fit at Putnoe Heights Diane

Field 01234 404976

Tuesday

9.30am Candlewicking (Needlework). Putnoe Heights.

Pat McCart 365507

9.30am -12.30 & 4-9pm Slimming World St. Mark's.

Lorrie Pearson 01234 340473

11.15am U3A Keep Fit Putnoe Heights Contact Janet King 313946

1.15pm U3A Cinema Group. St Mark's Contact Janet King 313946

1.30pm U3A Choir. St Mark's Contact Janet King 313946

2.00pm U3A Book Group 1 St Mark's (3rd Week in

month) Contact Janet King 313946

2.00pm U3A Book Group 2 St Mark's (2nd Week in

month) Contact Janet King 313946

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

2pm U3A Photography Group 3 St. Mark's (1st Week in month) Contact Janet King 313946

2.30pm Mother Teresa Support Group. St Mark's (1st & 3rd week in month). Wool and knitting needles provided. Mrs Maureen Watling 262225

2.15pm Tuesday Afternoon Housegroup. St Mark's (2nd & 4th week in month) Mary Stubbs 406784.

4.00pm-6.15pm Stars School of Dance at Putnoe

Heights. Esther Richardson 295862 or 07917582468

7.15-8.15pm Pilates St Mark's Church Jane Butcher

07891879571

7pm - 8.30pm Daisy Birthing Putnoe Heights Susie

07980447390

7.30pm Ladies Tuesday Club at Putnoe Heights (Meets monthly Next meeting 6 January Afternoon Tea 2-3pm. Details Diane Bayliss 268101

8.00pm Hearts in Beds Committee St Mark's (week 4 in month) Mrs N Aspey 309816

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. Contact Janet

King 313946

10.00am Holy Communion. St. Mark's Chapel. A half

hour service followed by coffee. All welcome.

10am U3A Card Making, St Marks Contact Janet King

313946

10am U3A Diet and Nutrition- Putnoe Contact Janet

King 313946

11.15am U3A Keep Fit at Putnoe Heights

12.30pm –4pm St Mark's Nursery

Headteacher Mrs. Helen Harpin 312634

12.30pm Luncheon Club. Putnoe fortnightly. Next

meeting 14 J anuary Putnoe Heights Office 365630

1.15pm Bridge Club for the Retired. St. Mark's.

Mr Barnes 261811

2.00-4.00pm U3A Craft at St Marks.Contact Janet King

313946

2pm U3A Gilbert and Sullivan Putnoe Heights Contact

Janet King 313946

2.15pm - Fifty plus Keep Fit. Putnoe Heights

Mrs Webster 856966

3.45.- 5.30pm Messy Church. St Mark's (3rd Week in

month). for children of lower school age and their carers.

Bible-based story, crafts, singing and a meal. Next

meeting 21 January.

2014 Wendy Waters 401834 Jean Bank 355698

4.15pm Kumon Maths. Putnoe Heights Mrs Raksha

Mistry 01908 392698

5.00–6.00pm Rainbows at Putnoe Heights Mrs Gill

Lake 218091

6.00pm Brownies. St Mark's. Mrs C Warden 219731

6.15pm Yoga and Relaxation Putnoe Heights Racheall

Monton 01234 297138 or 07910835994

6-7pm ATSK Karate at Putnoe Height Kevin Stark Tel. 01234 353865

7.00pm-9.00pm Scouts at Putnoe ages 10.5-14;
Email:phxg.enquiries@gmail.com Tel Tom 07974566509

7.00pm Bunyan Bridge. St. Mark's Colin Jackson 363398
or Brian Sallows 407725.

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

7.00pm Putnoe Guild Putnoe 3rd Wednesday in every month except August Mrs Jo Street 3446008

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

8.00pm Tudor Reeds Folk Dance Club at St Mark's (1st,3rd & 5th Wednesday in month). Next meeting will be 7 January Everyone welcome. All dances called, only £1 including refreshments. Rosemary 405594 or Graham 406359 for more details.

8.00pm Bedford Wine and Social Club St Mark's (Week 1 in the month) Greta Cansfield 215016

Thursday

8.30am-12.30pm St. Mark's Pre School Nursery

Headteacher Mrs. Helen Harpin 312634

9.30am Thursday Prayer Group. Putnoe Heights. Will meet again on 8 January 2015

Valerie Capon 356306. Request for prayer can be written in the prayer diary on the information table.

9.15am Spanish for beginners Plus. at Putnoe Heights

10.30pm Spanish Holiday Survival at Putnoe Heights. Elena 01234 266968

9.45am Chat and Play St.Mark's. A term time group for Mums & toddlers.0-5 Contact St Mark's Church Office 01234 342613 or Janine 01234 297481 Restarts 15 January 2015

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 342613 Restarts 8 January 2015

1.30 - 3.00pm NHS Baby Clinic at St Mark's (Weeks 1 & 3 in the month)Contact 897401

1pm-2.30pm Drop in (small hall) Next Steps 9-24months Putnoe Children's Centre.Please call Trudy Hamilton (centre assistant) for more information 340552. 2pm - **Friendly Chicago Bridge** at Putnoe Heights £2 per session inc. refreshments. New members welcome. Contact Pat 01234 294220.

2pm U3A Current Affairs - Putnoe Heights Contact Janet King 313946

2-4pm U3A Indoor Games. St.Mark's Contact Janet King 313946

2.30 - 4.30pm Bedford Art Society St Mark's Jean Paterson 307210

3.15-5.15pm Social Care Solutions Drama Group Claire Creek 262650

5.45pm Weightwatchers. St. Mark's. Clare Martin 07805408811.

6.15pm Brownies. Putnoe Heights Lou Brenna. 07919402797.

7.00pm Club 2000 Putnoe Nina Ovenden 825059

7pm U3A Folk & Poetry St Marks (2nd and 4th week in month)Contact Janet King 313946

7.15pm Putnoe Art Group Bob Wardale 406094

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

Bedford Folk Dancers (formerly Barn dancers) Meet weekly at Putnoe Heights Different guest callers each week.Except August. All welcome, cost £2.50 Including refreshments. More details Ron 825574 or Shirley 01767 651767

8.00pm Bedford Writers Circle. St Mark's (1st week in month). John Broadhouse 01525 404014

7.30pm Magpies Women's Group St Mark's (2nd & 4th week in month) Mrs Marie Cotchin 402089

8.00pm Brickhill Ladies Group St Mark's (1st and 3rd week in month) Susan Perugi 300219

Friday

8.30am—12.30pm St. Mark's Nursery

Headteacher Mrs. Helen Harpin 312634

8.30am Diabetic Centre St Mark's (1st week in month) Deborah Hennessey 792013

9am -1pm Machine Knitting group at Putnoe Heights, fortnightly . Contact Marion Sutton 217647 (9.30 am— 3.30pm from January.)

10am -12.00 U3A Photography St Marks.(4th week in month) Contact Janet King 313946

10am - 12 & 1.15 - 3.15pm U3A Beginners French St. Marks Contact Janet King 313946

2.00-4.00 pm U3A Whist St Marks. (2nd week in month) Contact Janet King 313946

2pm U3A Gardening - Putnoe Heights Contact Janet King 313946

4.50pm-8.15pm Stars School of Dance Esther

Richardson 295862 or 07917582468

6.30pm-8.00pm Beavers at Putnoe Ages 6-8 Email: phxg.enquiries@gmail.com Tel Tom 07974566509

7.00pm-9.00pm Meditation St Mark's.Cheryl Green 07729187399

7.45 - 10.45pm Bedford Astrology Club. St Marks(2nd week in month)Carol Brown 01438 233385

Saturday

9.00am Faith Temple Ministries St Mark's (1st week in month) Dawn Kelly 07863762593

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

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. 1st Sunday Feb/Apr/ Jun/Aug /Oct/Dec. Contact P Harris 01623 621143

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.

2- 4.30pm Indoor Bowls at St. Mark's 2nd & 4th Sunday. Ray Seymour 305695 or church office.

Messy Church Dates 15 Oct,19 Nov,10 Dec



Diary Dates



St Mark's Church Council – 10 February 2015

St Mark's Leadership Team - 26 January 2015

Annual Congregational Meetings - 26 April 2014

Putnoe Heights Leadership Team -

Putnoe Heights Management Meeting -

Putnoe Church Council - 20 February 2015

Pastoral Group Meeting -

Churchyard Committee -

Commemoration Service -

Circuit meeting –

Deanery meeting -

Woodland Burial Trustees–

Putnoe Heights Children & Youth Meeting - Monday 19 January 2015

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

Epiphany

Sentence 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 for the Day

Before we read we pray

Creator of the heavens, who led the Magi by a star to worship the Christ-child: guide and sustain us, that we may find our journey's end in Jesus Christ our Lord. *Common Worship Shorter Collect*



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 arm. 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 – **Thanks be to God**)

Second Bible 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-- **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 – **Thanks be to God**)

Post Communion Prayer Lord God, the bright splendour whom the nations seek: may we who with the wise men have been drawn by your light discern the glory of your presence in your Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymns for Sunday

1. Bethlehem of noblest cities (Stuttgart)
2. Camel Shuffle, Calypso Carol
3. Every star shall sing a carol
4. We three kings of orient are
5. As with gladness, men of old

Commentary

Our reading from Matthew today begins with

Matthew 2:1 '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 in the east and have come to worship him.'

The Gospel will finish using the same description of words which were fixed over the dying body of Jesus on the cross.

Above his head they placed the written charge against him: this is Jesus, the king of the Jews. Matthew Chapter 27:37 (Note John records 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews' John 19)

Matthew does not just throw his Gospel together, he uses the materials carefully and in so constructing his Gospel he makes clear this point, the death of Jesus was all part of God's plan - Jesus was the man born to die. The birth of Jesus was God's idea and his death also was not just because of human hate, God gave Jesus to the world. Read the opening chapter of Matthew and this becomes clear

Matthew 1:21

'She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" --which means, "God with us."

We are being led to recognise that in the birth of Jesus God was acting powerfully to save the world from sin.

There is no need to wonder why Herod was so angry at one who was *'born King of the Jews.'*

Herod was king and he liked to call himself the 'King of the Jews', but even he was not born a king, he had been made one by Rome. There is with Herod a strange irony, he was the leader of the Jews and he sought the death of the Messiah, whereas pagans come to offer Jesus worship. Matthew is disparaging towards Herod, in John Chapter 7 we see a crowd of ordinary people who are said to know that the Messiah will come from Bethlehem, the town where David lived, but here we have Herod, the King of the Jews, ignorant and having to consult others on scripture.

So what of these Magi, whom only Matthew mentions? The story has led to fascinating stories and hymns such as 'We three kings of Orient are', however nowhere does Matthew mention 'Kings' and neither does he say how many there were. There is no indication of where they came from, their racial characteristics, their names or their mode of transport. Some have said they came on ships, others say camels. Some say that there were three, because there were three gifts recorded. Western Tradition has named them as Melkon, Balthasar and Caspar. These names were first used by Origen (d. 254) and became popular from the 6th Century. The term Magi come from the Greek *magos*, a word which gives us the term 'Magician.' These men were sorcerers, readers of the stars. Perhaps the best guess is that they came from Persia or Babylon. In Persia these men were seen as almost a priestly caste of people, they would be consulted by kings because they were known for their magic, their powers of divination and their ability to predict the future. The key point is that they were not Jews. They may have had no knowledge of Judaism, they were visitors from the east and so the birth of Jesus is seen to bring benefits for all people not just the Jews.

A Messiah for the Jews was expected, the descendants of Abraham would be blessed by God. However on this Sunday we are reminded that the birth of Jesus came with very unexpected consequences. Salvation is shown clearly to be inclusive and extends to such an extent that even star gazers without knowledge of the Bible or proper religious background find their way to Jesus and are welcomed. We probably need to remind ourselves just how shocking this would have been. The early Christians themselves struggled over how they could welcome Gentiles into worship of Jesus without them becoming Jews first. Yet right at the time of his birth we find these astrologers among the first to recognise that the baby born in Bethlehem was one to be worshipped. Epiphany is a marvellous moment in the church lectionary when we are reminded that there are no boundaries to who Jesus welcomes, he draws all people to himself.

Matthew's gospel uses the story of the Magi for drama: the star moves across the sky and takes up station above the place where Jesus was born. The births of Pliny and Alexander the Great had supposedly been attended by astral events. Virgil notes that a star led Aeneas to the place where the city of Rome was to be founded. What is distinctive and interesting about this star is that it leads not to somebody famous, but rather to the child of a peasant couple perhaps living in a cave.

The magi bring gifts, of course gifts would be brought and presented to kings. These gifts have been interpreted in all sort of theologically convenient ways.

Gold represents the kingship of Jesus.

Frankincense is a fragrant resin which is burned as incense to symbolize the presence of God, it has been seen to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus.

Myrrh is a precious oil used for anointing the body, Romans used it to mask the smell of burning corpses. Nero had reportedly burned a massive amount at the funeral of his wife Poppaea. This gift is therefore seen to foretell the death of Jesus.

Who knows if this great theological insight was shared by the Magi, I am not sure that the Magi had such a well developed understanding of who and what Jesus was. I do however see them as not having all of the answers themselves. They were on a journey of discovery and God's revelation takes different forms and people can discover God in many ways which we might not understand. Perhaps today above all others we need to praise God for the variety and richness of God's gifts given to so many people in ways which we do not understand

We do not know where Jesus was living, we are even led to believe that Jesus was a child and no longer a baby, indeed the family are no longer living with the animals but in 'house' (verse 11). In the second century Justin Martyr (*Dial* 79) noted that the Holy Family went to live in a cave near the village of Bethlehem, many peasants at the time did live in such caves.

Whatever the details, the message is clear, that the created world is being called to bear witness to this momentous event. The heavens declare the glory of God – in yet another way Matthew is making a statement about Jesus' ministry and the church: the gospel is to be taught to all nations. As in the subtle additions to his genealogy, which break the pattern by naming women who have been under a cloud, with poor reputations, many of them with Gentile connections, so here Matthew wants us to see the deeper significance of the story. This is a celebration of inclusiveness: the Magi prove Jesus is for all people. Matthew shows in the story of the Magi that seekers from all nations will come to recognize Christ and be welcome in his presence. The promise of Israel's being a light for the nations, as the prophets anticipated, is now fulfilled in Christ.

Matthew shows how the Magi behave and encourages us to do the same, they saw the demands of God's gift and so they left and followed. The story of the Magi today is not an encouragement to study the stars or to think God speaks to us in dreams. Rather it is a story of God meeting people where they are and speaking to them powerfully. The Magi were driven to visit Jesus, they did not know all the answers but they were moved to travel to discover more, to find out about Jesus. The Magi remind us that God's grace works through many different means. *Charles Royden*

Prayer for Sunday

O God who by the shining of a star didst guide the Magi to behold thy Son, our Lord; show us thy heavenly light, and give us grace to follow until we find him and finding him rejoice. And grant that as they presented gold, frankincense and myrrh, we now may bring him the offering of a loving heart, an adoring spirit and an obedient will, for his honour and for thy glory, O God most high. *Prayers for the Christian year*

Grant O Lord, that as we go forth once more to our daily labour we may remember the truths that we learnt, and may carry out the resolutions we made on thy holy day. Keep us from sin and strengthen us to do thy holy will, that we may never forget that we are yours and serve you through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Clear out your wardrobe St Mark's have installed a textile clothing bank in the car park and we want your old clothes, curtains, sheets, soft toys, belts, handbags and shoes. Every kilo which you give us will help raise money for church funds

Christmas closure at St Mark's Church office. The office will be closed from 1pm Wednesday 24 December and will reopen 9am Tuesday 6 January

Christmas closure at Putnoe Heights Church office. The office will be closed from 1pm on Friday the 19 December and will reopen at 9.00am on Monday 5 January 2015

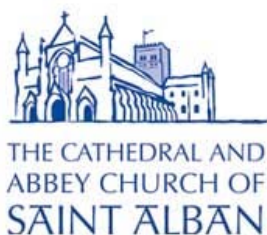
The Christian Aid Christmas Appeal: The government will match pound for pound all donations sent to Christian Aid this Christmas to further support the work being done in Kenya with mothers and newly born children.

Junior Church at Putnoe Heights will have a break on the 28 December. We will meet again at Family service on January 4 2015. Carolyn

Lent 2014 Oscar Romero - Blood and Sweat

We are running a trip to St Albans Cathedral to participate in an evening lecture 'Witness of Oscar Romero's Life and Death'. This is being offered by the Abbey, as part of the Dedication 900 lecture series.

The event takes place on Monday 23 March and we will need to be in St Albans for 7.30pm - so expect to leave Bedford around 5.30pm. Tickets will cost £5. The lecture will take place in the crypt and will be given by Jan Graffius who is Curator of the extraordinary collections held at the Jesuit College at Stonyhurst in Lancashire, which has good claim to be the oldest museum in Britain. Her work with their unique collection of English Catholic relics and artefacts led directly to her involvement in the Romero Trust project to conserve the relics and possessions of Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was murdered by Salvadoran death squads in 1980, and who appears among the new martyr statues being installed at St Albans Cathedral. Romero's poignant bloodstained clothing and his simple possessions are preserved today in his tiny house in San Salvador, where they are a focus for pilgrims worldwide. Jan's work has revealed some startling insights into Romero's life and the last few seconds before his death. Such insights are valuable in a world where truth and justice are all too often clouded by powerful vested interests, and, with the likelihood of Romero's imminent beatification by the Vatican, this is a story with deep relevance for our own times. Tutor: Jan Graffius, Curator of Stonyhurst College



Please give your name to Charlie if you wish to join this event

BELIEF have the following events confirmed in 2015



The Very Reverend Dr Jeffrey John will be speaking to BELIEF on The Book of Revelation On Saturday 21 February 2015 at St Andrews Church Kimbolton Road Bedford MK40 2PF

From 10am to 1pm £10 per person (including refreshments) Payable on the day – No advance booking

Alistair Burt MP for North East Bedfordshire will be talking to BELIEF about Being a Christian in politics. On Saturday 14 March 2015 at Priory Methodist Church Newnham Avenue Bedford MK41 9QJ From 10am to 1pm £10 per person (including refreshments) Payable on the day – No advance booking

Andrew Bradstock National Secretary for Church and Society at United Reformed Church will be speaking to BELIEF on How should we as Christians be approaching a general election? On Saturday 18 April 2015 at Priory Methodist Church Newnham Avenue Bedford MK41 9QJ From 10am to 1pm

For more see beliefbeds.org

Putnoe Heights New Year Lunch

Sunday 18 January 2015 at 1.00pm
Tickets £8.00 adults, £4.50 children under 10.
Traditional 3 course lunch including drinks.
Post-Christmas bring and buy stall from 12.00 - 1.00pm. All proceeds for church funds.

Footprints Walk Sunday January 11th. 2.00pm
Meet in the car park at Priory Marina for easy circular walk. Boots recommended. Details from Sue.

Open House Last year we said goodbye to Cheryl Green as the leader of the Open House group. We are grateful to Cheryl who has contributed so much to the group making it the thriving and happy place which it is for all of our visitors.

Open House will start again on Wednesday 14 January offering a welcoming centre which Open every Wednesday from 10.00am - 2.00pm No need to book, just turn up. This group is free of charge to all who wish to access the service. Great for people with learning disabilities friends, family, carers and supporters. Open House will also welcome others who would value the accepting nature of the group, including those who have additional physical difficulties. we would really appreciate more volunteers for Open House if you would like to get involved, then please speak with Charlie.

Archbishop of Canterbury's New Year Message

The National Memorial Arboretum is a place of reflection, remembrance and prayer, dedicated to those who have served, suffered or sacrificed for this country. To those who are remembered here, we owe a debt of unspeakable gratitude. This New Year is particularly significant, marking the end of one of the longest wars that our modern services have fought. There is a danger that the sacrifice and suffering of those caught up in war and disaster will slip from our minds.

Each day brings its toll of bad news, of disasters inflicted on the innocent by war and disease. In 2014 we saw so much of that in the Middle East, in north-east Nigeria, with the persecution of Christians and other minorities. And in the week before Christmas itself, there was the horrendous massacre of children in Pakistan.

There is so much suffering that at the New Year it is tempting to look inwards in despair. But we are not a country that turns our back on the suffering and the weak and the helpless.

In the week just before Christmas I was in Sierra Leone, very briefly. There I saw the result of British generosity, of aid poured in to support a country torn apart by Ebola, and the extraordinary dedication of British service personnel, working with charities, funded by our aid budget.

I saw the profound heroism of local people dealing with something that none of us understand which makes lethal the basic instincts of touch and embrace for the sick and the dying.

The week before that I was in the South Sudan, and saw again the open-handedness of the British people who have contributed to a programme that has saved one and a half million sufferers, war-battered, from starvation.

We are a country formed in a Christian heritage, which calls us to sacrifice and self-giving, to open-handedness and hospitality.

In the last year, travelling all over the world to see Anglican Churches and to meet their leaders, with my wife, we've seen the impact of this country both historically and today.

When we are at our best, living out the generosity of Jesus Christ, as that has formed itself in our national character; when we turn outwards and use our best resources to change this world in which we live; we see what a wonderful heritage we have - and the hope we can bring to the poorest, and those with the greatest suffering on the face of our planet.

So what do we hope for in 2015? My hope and prayer is that we are the kind of country that goes on looking outwards; that is full of a generous spirit. Because when we're generous we find joy and others find comfort and hope.

So may that joy and comfort be yours in this coming year.

Justin Welby

Archbishop of Canterbury

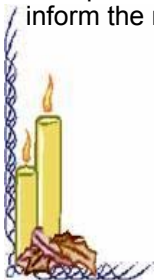


Rest In Peace

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

Derick Alan Butterfield

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



Sale Shopping ?



Please can you make a point of always going to Amazon through the link on www.ThisChurch.com. If you look at an item through Amazon direct they put a cookie on your machine and we don't get any commission! Please make it a habit to always go through the church website. This costs you nothing and we get a bit of commission. For some reason very people have registered for www.easygiving.com. This works exactly the same when you shop with John Lewis, M&S and a whole host of other shops. This has an added benefit that you will also get some special offers - you can't lose !

**Please always shop through
www.thischurch.com**

Forthcoming Funerals



The funeral of Doris Louisa Jane Temple will take place at Bedford Crematorium on Tuesday 6 January at 10.45am