



# Partnership News

## Putnoe Heights & St Mark's Church

### 5 January 2014

### Epiphany



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

#### Today – 5 January 2014 Epiphany

**9.30 St Marks - Morning Worship**  
Preacher – Reverend Canon Charles Royden  
Leadership – Mrs Margaret Appleton  
Intercessions – Mrs Margaret Appleton  
Organist - Mr Clive Simmonds

**11.00 am Putnoe — Morning Worship**  
Preacher – Reverend Canon Charles Royden  
Leadership Team - Mr Gordon Evans  
Intercessions — Young People  
Organist - Mr Clive Simmonds

#### 12 January 2014 - Baptism of Jesus

**9.30 St Marks – Morning Worship**  
Preacher – Mrs Wendy Waters  
Leadership – Mrs Elizabeth Bean  
Intercessions – Deacon Jane Mills  
Organist - Mr Philip Bond

**11.00 am Putnoe – Morning Worship**  
Preacher – Mrs Wendy Waters  
Leadership Team - TBC  
Intercessions — TBC  
Organist - Mr Philip Bond

**Readings** 1. Isaiah 42:1-9 2. Acts 10:34 - 43  
3. Matthew Chapter 3:13-17

**Midweek 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 kindly given by Gwen Beswick in loving memory of her husband Peter, and by Veta Hudson-Rae in loving memory of her parents.

The flowers at St Mark's Church have kindly been given by Mike Cooper in memory of his parents and wife Helen.

#### Prayer for Sunday

Stars cross the sky,  
wise men journey from pagan lands,  
earth receives its saviour in a cave.  
Let there be no one without a gift to offer,  
no one without gratitude  
as we celebrate the salvation of the world,  
the birthday of the human race.  
Now it is no longer,  
"dust you are and to dust you shall return",  
but,  
"you are joined to heaven  
and into heaven you shall be taken up".

*Basil the Great (AD 330 - 379)*

**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.ThisChurch.com](http://www.ThisChurch.com)**

**Partnership Pastoral Support Team Co-Ordinator**  
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.*

**Churchyards Administrator**  
Mrs Avril Williams 01234 342613

**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 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** - Mr Michael Ovenden 826738  
**Treasurer** - Mr Ian Farthing 210892  
treasurer@thisischurch.com

# 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](http://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 (see contact details below)

**1.30pm Chat & Make. For babies and toddlers 0-5.**

**Crafts, toys, songs, story and refreshments £1. More details email-chatandplay@hotmail.co.uk**

**2.00pm U3A Calligraphy** at St Mark's (2nd week in the month) Mrs Yvonne Francis 405119.

**12.00 noon Story box** 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](mailto:youth@thisischurch.com) 365630

**2pm U3A Music Appreciation** Putnoe Heights( see contact details below)

2.00pm U3A Italian Putnoe Heights– fortnightly

**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

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

Contact Jane Butcher 07891879571

**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 92nd week each month) Cheryl Green 07729187399

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

**7.30pm Whist Drive.** St Mark's (3rd & 5th week in the month).. Next meeting– 20 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

## Tuesday

**9.30am Jo Jingles.** St. Mark's. Music & movement for pre-school children. Charlotte Williams 07968207442

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

**9.30am -12.30 & 4-9pm Slimming World** St. Mark's. Helen Skinner 07989080389

**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 U3A Cinema Group.** St Mark's Mrs Yvonne Francis 405119

**1.30pm U3A Choir.** St Mark's Mrs Yvonne Francis 405119

**2.00pm U3A Book Group 1** St Mark's (3rd Week in month) Mrs Yvonne Francis 405119

**2.00pm U3A Book Group 2** St Mark's (2nd Week in month) Mrs Yvonne Francis 405119

**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) Mrs Yvonne Francis 405119

**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

**7.30-8.30pm Pilates** St Mark's Church Jane Butcher 0789187957

**7pm - 8.30pm Daisy Birthing** Putnoe Heights Susie 07980447390

**6.00-7.00pm Zumba** at St Mark's. Contact Denise Worker 07900 232648

**7.00pm Keep Fit.** St. Mark's Jan Gregory 328455

**7.30pm Ladies Tuesday Club** at Putnoe Heights (Meets fortnightly). Afternoon meeting at 2.30pm on 7 January Details Janet King 313946

8.00pm Hearts in Beds Committee St Mark's (4th week 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. Mrs Yvonne Francis 405119

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

**10am U3A Card Making,** St Marks Mrs Yvonne Francis 405119

**10am U3A Diet and Nutrition-** Putnoe (contact below)

**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 15 January 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

**2.00-4.00pm U3A Craft** at St Marks. Mrs Yvonne Francis 405119

**2pm U3A Gilbert and Sullivan** Putnoe Heights

**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 15 January 2014 Wendy Waters 401834 Jean Bank 355698

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

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

**6.15pm Yoga and Relaxation** Putnoe Heights Racheall Monton 01234 297138 or 07910835994.

**7.00pm Bunyan Bridge.** St. Mark's Colin Jackson 363398

**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 344600

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

**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 15 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 (1st week 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. Valerie Capon 356306. Request for prayer can be written in the prayer diary on the information table.

**9.30am Spanish for total beginners.**at Putnoe Heights. Elena 01234 266968

**9.45am Chat and Play** St.Mark's. A term time group for Mums & toddlers.0-5 Jo Garner 400071 or 07932616468

**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

**1.30 - 3.00pm NHS Baby Clinic** at St Mark's (1st and 3rd week in 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

**2-4pm U3A Indoor Games.** St.Mark's Mrs Yvonne Francis 405119

**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 Watkins .

**7.00pm Club 2000** Putnoe Nina Ovenden 825059

**7pm U3A Folk & Poetry** St Marks (2nd and 4th week in month)Mrs Yvonne Francis 405119

**7.15pm Putnoe Art Group** Bob Wardale 406094

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

**7.30pm Gentle Birthing** St Mark's. Pat Wood 07946 847231

**8 -10pm 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). Mr Newton 01525 378193

**8.00pm 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

**10am -12.00 U3A Photography** St Marks.(4th week in month) Mrs Yvonne Francis

**10am - 12 & 1.15 - 3.15pm U3A Beginners French** St. Marks Mrs Yvonne Francis 405119

**2.00-4.00 pm U3A Whist** St Marks. (2nd week in month) Mrs Yvonne Francis 405119

**2pm U3A Gardening** - Putnoe Heights

**4.50pm-8.15pm Stars School of Dance** Esther Richardson 295862 or 07917582468

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

**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.

**7-9pm Tae Kwon Do** St Mark's Adrian Felice [www.bedfordtkd.com](http://www.bedfordtkd.com) 07964356355

**Messy Church Dates** Weds 20 Nov, 15th Jan., 12th Feb., 19th March, 16th April, 21st May, 18th June.

## Diary Dates

**St Mark's Church Council** – 25 February

**St Mark's Leadership Team** - 21 January 2014

**Annual Congregational Meetings**

**Putnoe Heights Leadership Team** -

**Putnoe Heights Management Meeting**

**Putnoe Church Council** - 18 February

**Pastoral Group Meeting** - 10 January at 10.00am

**Churchyard Committee** -

**Commemoration Service**

**Circuit meeting** - **Deanery Meeting** -

**Woodland Burial Trustees**– 15th December 12.30pm

**Putnoe Heights Children & Youth Meeting** –10th February 2014 1.30pm

**New Year Lunch 19 January at Putnoe**

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

# Epiphany

## **Sentence of Scripture** John Chapter 8:12

Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."



The Adoration of the Magi from a Roman sarcophagus, 4th century. From the cemetery of St. Agnes in Rome

**Collect Prayer for the Day** - 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. Amen. *Methodist Worship*

## **First Bible Reading - Isaiah Chapter 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 Reading - Ephesians Chapter 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 men 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 God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable 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 which 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 Chapter 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 in the east 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 Christ 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 be the shepherd of 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 make a careful search 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 in the east 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 and of incense and of 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.

**Hymns** (Please distribute Hymns Sheets and Morning Worship)

## Commentary

*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.'*

So starts the Gospel of Matthew. It finishes in a similar way, specifically in Chapter 27 where the phrase 'King of the Jews' is used, but nowhere more prominently than over the dying body of Jesus, fixed to the cross were the words THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS (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 the clear point, the death of Jesus was all part of God's plan. 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.

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. We are even led to believe that Jesus was a child and no longer a baby (verse 9)

Matthew's gospel uses the story of the Magi (or magicians) for drama: the star moves across the sky and takes up station above the place where Jesus was born. 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. And, that 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.

I do love the sound of the Authorised King James, version of the Bible being read out aloud in church. Especially perhaps at Christmas, those old familiar words have a special resonance. Sadly it does not serve us well in the episode from Matthew Chapter 2 which we read today in our lectionary for Epiphany. It recalls,

*'Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, behold there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem.'*

The Feast of the Epiphany, on the 6th January, remembers and celebrates the adoration of Jesus by

the Magi from the East. However the original greek text just calls them 'Magi'. The story of these 'Magi' is shrouded in much legend and the description used in the Authorised King James does not help us, as the words 'wise men' are without justification. Since there were three gifts we have often thought that there were three Magi . Often we think of them as three wise men, surely their actions do show them to be wise, but there is nothing to suggest that there were only three or that they were only men. We might just as easily assume that since they brought rich gifts, they were also kings and have them wearing crowns, and we could also imagine that they travelled by ship, (I saw three ships.!)

What we do know is that pagan astrologers existed whose divinatory skills were widely respected in the Graeco-Roman world. Astrology had become popular as the 'science' of the East, and everybody agreed that the best astrologers lived in the East. The Old Testament was not kind to this interpretation of signs (Deut 18:11, Is 2:6), so it is perhaps surprising in some ways that Matthew includes the story. However the fact remains that many people are firm adherents to the notion that we can consult with astrologers to best determine our path in life. Throughout the ages we can remember famous people and world leaders such as Queen Elizabeth or the Reagan's who would not take important decisions without first being advised by astrologers.

The story of the Magi has provided material not only for countless school plays but also for centuries of prolific Christian art and paintings. The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is said to have been saved from destruction by invading Persians because they saw representations of the Magi on the walls and recognised them as fellow countrymen in the portrayal of them. What we do know is that these Magi recognise Jesus for who he is, and give him their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Their learning leads them to the destination of their searching into the presence of the infant Christ.

Christians have understood these gifts to be profoundly symbolic and prophetic.

- Gold represents the kingship of Jesus.
  - Frankincense is a fragrant resin which is burned as incense to symbolize the presence of God, it therefore acknowledges the divinity of Jesus.
  - Myrrh is a precious oil used for anointing the body, which serves to foretell the death of Jesus.
- Perhaps that gift of gold would be used to help pay for the subsequent flight of Jesus and the holy family to Egypt.

The Greek word 'epiphany' is about 'manifestation', 'making known', and it has been used for the last two thousand years to describe God coming closer to the people, revealing himself in his Son, Jesus. At Christmas the light is born, at Epiphany that light is made known to all people. Such universalism is enshrined in the story of the Magi, Jesus is for all people not just one religious group. No longer will salvation be seen in terms of the hereditary principle 'we are children of Abraham.'

Epiphany Eve is twelfth night and we are encouraged to make sure that we have removed the Christmas decorations. As Jesus, the light, has been born into the world, so that light is surrounded by darkness. In a sense this is a time for getting back to reality. If they haven't already, then now the tinsel and the glitter must give way to real life. The gifts remind us of the wonder of who Jesus is, but they also proclaim that his life is one of suffering and death. Soon the holy family must flee an attempt on the life of the child and innocent babies will be slaughtered by Herod, jealous of the one born to be King of the Jews. At Epiphany the light of the world is made manifest in Christ, visible to good and bad alike, to the wise men and to Herod. Each of these reacts differently one with joy and one with confrontation. Each of us must measure our own reaction and the gifts which we bring.

Jewishness had been the principle upon which salvation rested until Jesus. The children of Abraham were marked by circumcision to show that they belonged to the chosen few. This symbol of exclusiveness set them apart as belonging to God's family. This circumcision was soon to be replaced with a new symbol, baptism would proclaim to the world that a person had died to sin and was alive in the new kingdom which Jesus proclaimed and established. This would no longer be restricted to a certain people by birth, it would be available freely to all people.

The visit of these Magi at Epiphany is the beginning of this new understanding of the wideness of God's revelation of himself. The Magi were gentiles and they would be the first to represent the new inclusion of the many nations of the world. Just as the Magi were guided by a star that was brighter than all of the others, from this time on all the nations would see in Jesus a revealing of God's love which was greater in magnitude than had ever been seen before. The Magi might have been very wise, they might even have been men, we will never know. However in the very mystery of their background lies some of their most enduring attraction, for they have come to symbolise not only the opening of the entire geographic world to the revelation of Jesus, but also the entire intellectual world as their astronomy, science and learning brings them close to Christ. *Charles Royden*

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

**Christmas closure at Putnoe Heights Church Office.** The office will be closed from 1.00pm Friday 20th December and reopen on Monday 6 January.

**Chat and Play** at St. Mark's restarts on Thursday 16 January 2014

**Chat and Make** at St. Mark's restarts on Monday 13 January 2014

**Story Box** at St Mark's starts again on Thursday 9 January 2014.

**Footprints Walking Group.** New Year's Day Walk. Wednesday 1 January, 2014. All welcome to join us at the start of the year. Meet at St. Mark's Church at 10.30am for gentle 2-3 mile walk via Anjulita Court and Clapham Wood. Lunch afterwards at Putnoe Heights Church. Sue Allen

**Putnoe Heights New Year Lunch** Sunday 19 January 2014. Starter, roast, dessert, wines and coffee. Tickets available from Putnoe Office or after Sunday services. £8.00 (£4.50 children under 10)

**Nominations for High Sheriff's Awards Sought**  
Nominations for the High Sheriff's Citizenship Awards in Bedfordshire are now being sought. If you know of someone who has given their time freely to their community and who deserves to be recognised, nominate them now. For more information, <http://voluntaryworks.org/news/nominations-high-sheriff%E2%80%99s-awards-sought> here

**Thank You** to Judith Stanton whose whist drive raised a magnificent £230 for St. Mark's Church.

**Putnoe Prayer Group** will meet on Thursday January 9 2014.

**Footprints walk:-** There will be a footprints walk from Shefford on Sunday the 12 of January 2014.

Meet at the car park (Free) at the end of Old Station Way off of the High Street in Shefford 2.00pm. About 2 miles in length, a bit muddy in places, a steep longish hill to climb (Cockshoot hill) No stiles. Any queries contact Alan or Margaret at [massey-1@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:massey-1@tiscali.co.uk)

### **Equipping God's People**

There are many training opportunities for those interested in learning more about the Christian faith or discipleship. Courses range from leading church prayers to pastoral care. A leaflet entitled Learn and Grow Together is available at the church offices or online at [www.stalbans.anglican.org](http://www.stalbans.anglican.org)

**The Very Reverend Dr Jeffrey John Dean of St Albans Cathedral** will be returning to BELIEF to speak on '**Means of Grace**' Saturday, 22 February, 2014 10.00am to 1.00pm St Andrew's Church Centre, Kimbolton Road, Bedford MK40 2PF £10 per person, payable on the day  
*register in the 'Contact' section of [www.beliefbeds.org](http://www.beliefbeds.org), email [belief@standrewsbedford.org](mailto:belief@standrewsbedford.org) or phone 01234 330314*

### **County Ecumenical Development Officer**

Are you passionate about working alongside Christians from other traditions?  
Are you a self starter with organisational skills?  
Churches Together in Bedfordshire needs a County Ecumenical Development Officer  
10 hours a week Starting Salary: £24,564 pro rata  
Closing date for applications: 31st January 2014  
Interviews: Week commencing 17th February 2014  
Further details: <http://together.ourchurchweb.org.uk/bedfordshire/>

**Pastoral Support Group Meeting** takes place this coming Friday 10 January at 10.00am in St Mark's Chapel. There will be a presentation on understanding dementia - members of the Church Leadership Teams are invited to join the pastoral support team for this event

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## **Meditation**

Christmas is nearly over, the celebrations, the awe and wonder and for most of us the break in the routine of work life. Holidays must end, the baubles and fairy lights have to go back in the box, we have to get back to reality. So is it with our lectionary as we move on to Epiphany, the revelation of who Jesus is. Epiphany means 'manifestation' and this time in the church year celebrates the manifestation by God of himself to the world in Jesus. Jesus is the epiphany of God's love!  
The reading from Isaiah prophesies that God will show forth his glory in a concrete way, and in the reading from Matthew the Christ child is seen by the Magi. These star gazers see a star and come to offer to Jesus royal gifts and worship - because they see the divinity present in him. With this revelation there comes the reality check, that not everybody is happy with our Jesus. There are those like Herod who recognise in Jesus a threat to their own power and authority.  
But there is a challenge for us also. Whilst Epiphany is about God revealing himself to the world in Jesus, we also are challenged to be a part of God's manifestation. This is part of what being a Christian is all about, revealing the love of God to the world by living out the example of Jesus in our own lives.

**As the former Project Director of Bedford Street Angels** and then nationally as Director of Development for the charity, I am delighted to be able to share the news that BBC 1's popular religious programme Songs of Praise is to feature the work of Bedford Street Angels on Sunday 19th January 2014. Timing to be confirmed.

The programme, which looks at how Christians respond to the needs of the community in the night time economy, features a sequence where Diane Louise Jordan joins the Bedford Street Angels on a busy Saturday night and finds out first hand how the Street Angels play a vital role in keeping people safe – and in a moving interview with Fred and Fran Gill from Wilstead, Bedfordshire, we learn how the tragic murder of their son Robert acted as a catalyst to the formation of Bedford Street Angels. We hope to play the sequence from Songs of Praise at the next Churches Together in South Bedford meeting on Thursday 23rd January attended by the Lord Lt of Bedfordshire, Helen Nellis. Thank you for your continued commitment to South Bedford Churches Together. Blessings, Adam May

**Bethlehem Unwrapped** A festival of Bethlehem at Christmas can be seen at St James's Piccadilly, London. December 23rd 2013 – January 5th 2014 Through music, food, art, poetry, debate and more Bethlehem Unwrapped goes behind the romanticised Christmas card images of the ancient city to show what life is like for people in Bethlehem today. The festival celebrates the culture and stories of those living behind the wall and their work for peace. Hope, humour and humanity are reflected throughout the programme, The Revd. Lucy Winkett explains that the decision of her church, St. James Piccadilly, to erect a life-size replica of the Israeli security fence in Bethlehem as part of an art installation, is not about denying the right of the state of Israel to exist or taking sides in the conflict, but is about fuelling free expression and debate.

*'Twenty people from this church visited Bethlehem in October. Our only authority in hosting this installation derives from the people we met there who say, with dignity and in peace, that their lives are intolerable, and that they feel they have no hope and no future. In standing with them, we absolutely refuse to denounce a population because of the*



*actions of a government. This applies to every nation and population, including Israel. It is because of our understanding that grief and*

*suffering is universally destructive to Palestinian and Israeli families that we are supporting the development of the Bethlehem Future Peacemakers project, training young Palestinians in leadership and peacemaking, which includes a trip to Auschwitz.'*

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/02/bethlehem-unwrapped-not-taking-sides-israel-security-wall>

"The most unhelpful thing you can do is be pro one side; it just adds to the conflict. We have to not only understand those people who are oppressing us, but try to walk in their shoes, and ultimately to really engage with what it means to love our enemies."  
- Sami Awad, Director, Holy Land Trust

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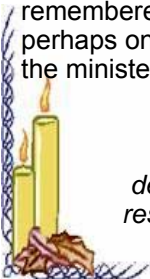
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Please also remember the Easyfundraising link. This is really a very good way to shop as it has lots of voucher codes which can save you a fortune on purchases and we receive a commission.

## 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.'*



## Forthcoming Funerals

Members of Putnoe Heights Church will be saddened to hear news of the death of Kath Hooley, a lovely lady who has been a friend of the church over many years. The funeral details will be confirmed next week in

Partnership News and is expected to take place week commencing 20 January at Bedford Crematorium.