Thank you

The flowers in Church this week have been given by Audrey & Derek Young for their Wedding Anniversary and in loving memory of Derek’s parents.

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**Church Services**

**8 December Advent 2 - Purple**
- 8.30am Holy Communion
- 9.30am Morning Family Worship
  - Preacher - Mr Richard Ledger
  - Leadership - Mr Jim Williams
  - Intercessions - Mr Warwick Holden
  - Organist - Mr Clive Simmonds

**Lectionary Readings**
- Isaiah 11:1-10, Romans 15:4-13, Matthew 3:1-12

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**15 December Advent 3 - Rose Candle**
- 8.30am Holy Communion
- 9.30am Holy Communion
  - Preacher - The Reverend Canon Charles Royden
  - Leadership - Mrs Janet Warren
  - Intercessions - Mr Ian Farthing
  - Organist - Mr Clive Simmonds

**Lectionary Readings**
- Isaiah 35:1-10 James 5:7-10 Matthew 11:2-11

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**Midweek Services**

**Wednesday Communion** 10.00am in the Chapel
Please join us for a service followed by coffee
**First Monday of every month.** Holy Communion

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**Advent Prayer**

*With axe and winnowing fork you clear a holy space where hurt and destruction have no place, and a little child holds sway. Clear our lives of hatred and despair, sow seeds of joy and peace, that shoots of hope may spring forth and we may live in harmony with one another. Amen.*

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**Parish News is available online at** [www.stmarkschurch.com](http://www.stmarkschurch.com)
You can also sign up online to receive each edition by email.
Regular Weekly Activities - St Mark’s Church

Monday
7.30am-6.00pm Pre-school Mon-Fri St Mark’s Manager Mrs. Helen Harpin 312634 (See website for more details www.thisispreschool.com)
10.00am Bakers Barn Art Group. Mrs M. Berry 211955
10.00am U3A Play reading Rod Frewings 07718390188
9.45am - 10.45am & 11.00am-12noon Pilates
Liz Mason 07816522200
2-4pm U3A Meditation & Wellbeing
Rod Frewings 07718390188
2-3.15pm U3A Recorder Group
Rod Frewings 07718390188
6.00pm Brownies Mrs C Mathew 826190
7.00 to 10.00 p.m. Whist Drive third Monday each month or fifth if there are five. Judith Stanton 01234 823313.
7.30pm Sugarcraft Guild
(1st week in month) Heather Buckley 824503
7.00-8.00pm Laughter Club on 2nd week each month
Cheryl Green 07729187399
7-9pm Rangers. Nikki Lake 07584026653
Indoor Games. Rod Frewings 07718390188
7-8.5pm Happy Body Project Julie Holl 0780873965
7.30pm Whist Drive Third Monday in the month and fifth if there are five Contact Judith Stanton 823313.

Tuesday
9.30am-11.15. Chat & Make A term time group for Parents, Carers and toddlers 0–5. For more details ring Church Office 342613 or Janine 01234 297481
1.15pm U3A Cinema Group. Rod Frewings 07718390188
1.30pm U3A Choir. Contact Rod Frewings 07718390188
2.00pm U3A Book Group 1 (3rd Week in month) Contact Rod Frewings 07718390188
2.00pm U3A Book Group 2 (2nd Week in month) Contact Rod Frewings 07718390188
2.00pm U3A Photography Group 3 (1st Week in month) Contact Rod Frewings 07718390188
2.30pm Knit & Natter Group (Fortnightly) Wool and knitting needles provided. Mrs Maureen Watling 262225
2.00-3.30pm Tuesday Afternoon Housegroup. Fortnightly Social and Bible Study Mrs Jean Bank 355698
6-7pm Supple Strength Yoga Amanda Alcock 07769747393
11am-12.30pm Faith Community Church Audua Ogilvie 01234 308644
8.00pm Hearts in Beds Committee (4th week in month) Mrs N Aspey 309816
8.20-9.20pm Restoration Pilates Johanna Debnam 07753418170

Wednesday
10.00-2pm Open House For those with learning disabilities, friends, family, carers etc 342613
10.00am U3A Gardening Group 3 Rod Frewings 07718390188
10.00am Holy Communion. St.Mark’s Chapel.
10am U3A Card Making. Rod Frewings 07718390188
10-4pm Sewing Group 4th week of the month Contact Sue Sewell 07979797747
1.15 Social Bridge Club. Mr Barnes 261811
2 4pm U3A Craft 1st week in the month Contact Rod Frewings 07718390188
3.45– 5.30pm Messy Church Bible stories, crafts, singing and a meal. For children primary school age and their carers. Meeting dates 20 Nov, 11 Dec, 15 Jan, 19 Feb, 18 March Wendy Waters 401834
6.00pm Brownies Mrs. C Warden 219731
7.00pm Bunyan Bridge Peter Cullum 07545508185
8.00pm Tudor Reeds Folk Dance Club (1st,3rd and 5th Wednesday of the month. Except August). Everyone welcome. All dances called. Call Rosemary 405594 or Graham 406359 for more details. £2 including refreshments.
The next Tudor Reeds is our Christmas party on Wednesday 18 December at 7.30 p.m.
The first meeting of the New Year will be on Wednesday 8 January 2020
8.00pm Bedford Wine and Social Club (1st week in the month) Jill Cooper 357960

Thursday
9.30-11.25am Chat & Play. A term time group for Parents, Carers & toddlers 0-5. Church office or Janine 297481
12pm Storybox. For the under 5’s and their carers between 12 noon and 1pm. Sandwich lunch and a Bible based story and singing. Contact Jaana Sawaab 3422613.
2-4pm. U3A Indoor Games. Rod Frewings 07718390188
2.30 - 4.30pm Bedford Art Society
Jea Purrow 307210
2.30pm - 4.30pm Putnoe Art Group (PAG) Contact Bob Wardale 408094 Mob:07914451198
6-7pm Supple Strength Yoga Amanda Alcock 07769747393
7-9pm Bedford Community Gospel Choir Weekly meeting. Contact 07554148540
7.00pm U3A Singing for Fun (1st & 3rd week in month) Rod Frewings 07718390188
7.00pm Bedford Embroiderers’ Guild (3rd week in month). Carol Plant 01832710504
7.30pm Magpies. Meet on 2nd & 4 Thursday Call Rosemary 405594 for details. Next meeting of the year is on Thursday December 12 - our Christmas Party Tickets still available. The first meeting of 2020 is on January 9 - ‘All about Alpacas’
8.00pm Bedford Writers Circle. (1st week in month). John Broadhouse 01525 404014

Friday
10am -12.00 U3A Photography (4th week in month) Contact Rod Frewings 07718390188
10.45am - 12 U3A Poetry & Literature Contact Rod Frewings 07718390188
2.00-4.00 pm U3A Whist (2nd week in month) Contact Rod Frewings 07718390188
7.45 - 10.45pm Bedford Astrology Club. (2nd week in month )Carol Brown 01438 233385
6.30 – 7.30pm Pakua Martial Arts
John Waugh 07802755914
7-9pm Mindfulness Meditation Bhante Samitha 07983466105

Saturday
9.00am Faith Community Church (1st week in month) Audua Ogilvie 01234 308644
10.00am-1pm Theatrerein Dancing acting, singing. Kate Howard 01234 782441
10am-1pm Sugarcraft Guild Cygnets (2nd week in month) Margaret Baldry 07919404906

Sunday
9.30 - 10.30 Church and Sunday School with creche for under 3’s
10 - 11am Hatha Yoga Contact Tracy Langford 07473033750
Second Sunday of Advent

Opening Sentence
John Chapter 8 v 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."

Collect Prayer for the Day
Before we read we pray
Almighty God, purify our hearts and minds, that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as judge and saviour we may be ready to receive him, who is our Lord and our God.

First Reading
Isaiah Chapter 11:1-10
A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious. (This is the word of the Lord -- Thanks be to God)

Second Reading Romans Chapter 15:4-13
Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, ‘Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles, and sing praises to your name’; and again he says, ‘Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people’; and again, ‘Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him’; and again Isaiah says, ‘The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope.’ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (This is the word of the Lord -- Thanks be to God)

Gospel Reading Matthew Chapter 3:1-12
In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’ This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, ‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”’ Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food
was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our ancestor”; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.

(This is the word of the Lord -- Thanks be to God)

Post Communion Prayer
Father in heaven, who sent your Son to redeem the world and will send him again to be our judge: give us grace so to imitate him in the humility and purity of his first coming that, when he comes again, we may be ready to greet him with joyful love and firm faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Hymns
1. Hail to the Lord’s anointed
2. Make way, make way, for Christ the King
3. Thou who wast rich beyond all splendour
4. Lord Jesus Christ You have come to us
5. The kingdom of God is justice and joy

Commentary
Today’s gospel reading is about John the Baptist who Jesus described as a great man (Matthew 11:11). He was dedicated to God for the task to which he was called. He was very realistic about right and wrong. He saw that there is a big difference between them – there were no shades of guilt and confusing complexities for him! He was rather like a surgeon lancing a boil in case the poison spread and killed. He required integrity in daily life. Luke 3:10-14 tell us that people must do right, be neighbourly in kindness and avoid the temptations of wealth and rank. We should bear the fruit of integrity. John is lowly – very much the forerunner of the New Testament. He calls people to repent – to have a radical change of mind that looks to the past with honesty and remorse and then in a complete turnaround looks to the future resolving to follow a totally new way of life. We, on the other hand, often try to avoid considering our own sins by comparing ourselves favourably with others. “They are skinflints”; “I am only careful and thrifty.” There are echoes here of the splinters and planks that Jesus talked about. Repentance, though, needs more than a resolve. We need the gift of God’s grace if we are to change. (Acts 5:31 and 11:13, Romans 2:4 and 2 Timothy 2:25 suggest this.) Our wills are indeed weak but we should note that Jesus said, “repent and believe the good news” (Mark 1:15) thus giving the doctrine of repentance a new power and a new hope.

Matthew sees John as Isaiah come to life: both were sent to prepare the way of the Lord. Isaiah 40 has the radical programme in wonderful language – lifting valleys, lowering hills and smoothing rough roads! The Magnificat takes up this theme too. (Luke 1:46-55). So people may then be ready for Christ to come – to listen to Him – no longer hungry and embittered. John’s words shook the land: it was as if he said my life shows the kingdom that is at hand. The King, he says, will give new life. Note that the Pharisees trusted to their descent (we have Abraham as our father). They trusted to outward respectability which can be a danger for us, for respectability and going to church are not the same as a living faith though they are or can be good and positive. The Pharisees saw themselves as better than others so they would, of
course, be saved. Jesus had words for them about who would be first to inherit God’s kingdom and we would do well to ponder on Psalm 51 6:10. We need God at work within us.

This is a new way that reflects our Old Testament reading which deals with the ideal king with the virtues that God requires. They are in three pairs: wisdom and understanding, counsel and right and knowledge and fear of the Lord. Isaiah says that rulers should be ruled by the knowledge of God. What would our country or our world be like if rulers had intellectual power, moral force and religious faith? Isaiah in verses 3 to 5 shows how it might work out. Should all this guide us as we vote? How much should we expect of our leaders? Note that C H Spurgeon, a 19th Century Baptist preacher, said that when we elect MPs we simply replace one lot of sinners with another lot of sinners. The New Testament urges us to pray for all our leaders: in Peter’s case it was Nero — and you don’t get much worse than him. Matthew 6 37 urges us to seek first God’s kingdom and then there will be a new order. We tend to go first for economic and social reform that somehow fail to deliver the “broad sunlit uplands” of peace and harmony: only a change of heart will do this — and only God through His grace, forgiveness and love can do this. “You can’t change human nature” is often used as a despairing cry. But God can and does! “Behold I make all things new” is not a vain hope. We can have confidence in the power and purpose of God. Revelation 11 15 says “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He will reign for ever and ever”. This faith is based on the decisive act of God, who on the cross of Christ took on sin and death and triumphed over them and because of the cross and resurrection we know how things will turn out even in this dark and fractured world.

This is the Advent hope always. We remember that “in Him was life and that life was the light of men. The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it”! (John 1) Richard Ledger.

**Meditation**

I told them he was coming; spared nothing to get the message home, yet did they listen? Well, I used to think so, I really did. They certainly seemed to at the time. Came in their droves to hear me — partly out of curiosity, no doubt, partly because their friends were doing the same, but they came and they responded. I lost count of how many I baptised, but there were hundreds, thousands probably, and each one of them sincere, I’m sure of that. They believed the time was at hand, that the Messiah was coming at last, and they wanted to be ready to receive him, ready to respond. Yet did they understand what they were taking on? That’s what I’m not sure about.

I am afraid of saying “yes” Lord. Where will you take me? Lord, help us to say “Yes” when You call. Enlarge our vision, strengthen our resolve and increase our sense of your all-sufficient grace, that we might be used mightily for your glory and for the serving of your world.

**Prayers for Sunday and The Week Ahead**

At Advent we should try the key to our heart’s door. It may have gathered rust. If so, this is the time to oil it, in order that the heart’s door may open more easily when the Lord Jesus wants to enter at Christmas time. Lord, oil the hinges of our hearts’ doors that they may swing gently and easily to welcome your coming. Prayer of a New Guinea Christian.

Advent God, we worship you: the God who comes. You are not remote from the world you have made, but each day you come to us, blessing us with your presence. Grant us the grace to welcome your coming. Inflame our love to yearn for your presence. Enlarge our vision to recognise your coming day by day. We greet you Advent God. Gathering for worship

Father, through John the Baptist you tried to prepare your people for the coming of Jesus. Will you prepare our hearts and minds that we may show the joy of the Advent message in our lives day by day. Prayers before worship

**Making a Difference** A group of Christians has been taking the words of Isaiah literally in recent years. In places where gun and knife crime are maiming and destroying communities, they have been collecting guns and knives, melting them, and turning them into garden tools, inspired by Micah and Isaiah’s vision of God’s people beating their ‘swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Christian waiting and looking forward is never just a passive thing. It is about allowing our hope for the future to change the world in which we live. It is about being open to the challenge of the Spirit, recognising where God is already at work so we can join in. We are not just imagining the future. We have a God who works today in our lives to make this future a reality and calls us to join in with him. **Archbishop Justin Welby and Rev Isabelle Hamley**
Second Candle
The Candle of Peace
(Purple Candle)
The prophets who foretold the birth of Jesus

Leader May your hearts be filled with peace as you hear the words of the prophet Isaiah who told of one who would be born the Prince of Peace.

All Thanks be to God

Last Sunday we lit the First Candle of Hope in our Advent Wreath, and celebrated the patriarchs. We light it again as we place our hope in Jesus the blessing of God for all nations.

(A person now lights the first candle)

Isaiah Chapter 9
For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. (NRSV)

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Of old you spoke by the mouth of your prophets, but in our days you speak through your Son, whom you have appointed the heir of all things. Grant us, your people, to walk in his light, that we may be found ready and watching when he comes again in glory and judgement; for you are our light and our salvation. Blessed be God for ever.

(A person now lights the second candle)

Leader Let us pray:

All Lord God you spoke through your prophets and promised a kingdom of peace. We welcome you Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace and our hearts long for the establishment of your kingdom of justice and righteousness. Amen.

Bedford Foodbank

During Advent instead of just opening our advent calendar for ourselves, Bedford Foodbank are asking folks to do things the other way round and consider giving something to Foodbank every day through Advent. The calendar above gives you some ideas, just bring things along through Advent, put them in the box in the foyer and let’s see if we can help hungry local families this Christmas with some extra supplies!
Carlo Crivelli was born in Venice and he spent most of his life in the Marches (eastern central Italy), after periods in Venice and Zara. Crivelli was active as a painter by 1457 when he was condemned in Venice for adultery. He was very successful as a fine technical maker of altarpieces. He painted two for the small church of San Domenico, in Italy. In the nineteenth century parts of both altarpieces were sold to a Russian prince, Anatole Demidoff, who mounted them in a grand frame to make a three-tiered altarpiece for the chapel of his villa in Florence. The whole complex is now known as the Demidoff Altarpiece. The National Gallery bought the Demidoff Altarpiece in 1868, and in 1961 panels from the smaller altarpiece were removed and are now displayed separately, like this of John the Baptist.

There are hundreds of paintings of John, the forerunner who prepared the way of the Lord. He is one of the first characters in the New Testament and yet he also looks back to the prophets of the Old Testament. So he is someone who connects the past and the future. You can tell John the Baptist in art. In some paintings it is easy because you see his head chopped off and on a plate. In others he is still in possession of his head but his rough clothing is a give away.

To indicate his life as a hermit in the wilderness, Crivelli has painted him dressed in animal skins and standing in a landscape of rocks and sparse plants. A bird is perched, hunched up with its back to us to the Baptist's right. The splash of red just visible on its head suggests that it is a goldfinch. The goldfinch was said to have acquired its red face by plucking a thorn from Christ's brow on his way to Calvary to be crucified, and being splashed by his blood.

Another feature that you will often see is that he is pointing with his finger, John literally points to Christ. Sometimes there will be scroll with the Latin words 'Ecce Agnus Dei' which mean 'Behold the Lamb of God'. The Lamb of God was John's description of Jesus, the one who would die to take away the sins of the world. These have become important words immortalised in the words used in the Eucharist when the bread and wine are consecrated and represent the presence of Christ among the congregation.

John often carries a reed cross which reminds us of the crucifixion of course, but the fact that it is made of reeds reminds us of his time spent by the River Jordan where John did his baptising. In this painting he is shown on the riverbank and we are facing him, Crivelli is inviting us to participate, to go forward and into the water!
Bishop Richard to Deliver Advent Course!

We are delighted to announce that Bishop Richard has agreed to come and deliver our Advent Course evening on Thursday 19 December. We will start at 7.00pm for coffee, then at 7.30pm for an hour. At 8.30pm we hope you will stay for some festive enjoy Wine and Mince pies! If you would like transport for this evening please let us know as there is sure to be somebody who can offer a lift.

Lee Abbey proposed St Mark's group stay

Monday 23 to Friday 27 March 2020. Lee Abbey in North Devon has rooms available for the week Monday 23 to Friday 27 March 2020. During this week there is a choice of two themes: ‘Walk and Talk’ and ‘Faith, Hope, Love’. The cost for full board is from £279 to £351, depending on the type of room. If you are interested, or would like to know more, please speak to Wendy Waters by Wednesday 18th December. More details can be found at https://leeabbeydevon.org.uk

Future dates: 3.45 to 5.30pm Wed 11 December, Wed 15 January, Wed 19 February

Minutes of Church Council

The minutes of church council are now available on the church website www.stmarkschurch.com

Bereavement Support Group

Just for January we will meet on the second Sunday of the Month at 11.00am in the Chapel, instead of New Years Day

Tiddlers

For many years I have been collecting tiddlers, small change which you have left in your pocket or purse. Putting them in a jar and then bringing them along to church can make a real difference. Please can you collect and let’s see all those tiddlers add up for St Mark’s Fiona Cook

Last Sunday we launched our Christmas Gift Appeal, we had an inspiring talk by Araba Taylor on behalf of the Trustees which gave us all an appreciation for the work undertaken by JustUs helping homeless people in Bedford. Envelopes are available this morning to make a donation if you would like to do so and we will keep this appeal running up until Christmas.

Christmas Closing

The Church Office will close at Mid-Day Friday 20 December and re-open on Monday 6 January 2010

Rota for Church Services

We want to include as many people as possible on our worship rota. If you would like to be included for bible reading, prayers, or other duties please put your name on the list or let one of the Leadership Team know - everybody is welcome!

Please support St Mark’s Church by using www.easyfundraising every time you shop online. Go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk and in the middle where it says ‘Search for a Cause’ type St Marks Church, Bedford. Enter your details and register. The best way is to download the app and it will remind you to donate. Always go to Easyfundraising before you go to Amazon or John Lewis etc, that way we can receive a donation of up to 5% and it costs you nothing!

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

The funeral of Raymond Charles Izzard will take place on Monday 23 December at 10.00am

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

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