

NEWSLETTER

for the Churches of St Arvans, St Mary, Penterry,
St Deiniol, Itton, St James, Devauden & Holy Cross, Kilgwrrwg
forming part of the Severn Wye Ministry Area

IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE

St Arvan's Church is open during the day both for worship and private prayer, Following the lifting of Covid restrictions, Holy Communion may once again be received in both kinds, although there is, of course, no obligation to do so.

Our live-streamed services are as follows: Sunday Eucharist at 10. a.m., and a reflection & celebration of Night Prayer usually on Wednesdays at 8 p.m. They can be accessed on the St Arvans Parish Group page on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/vicaragecello1/> and are available to watch at any time The St Arvans Parish website can be found here: <http://www.starvanschurch.org.uk/>

Please help to keep us informed of anyone who is in need or is isolated over the next weeks and months, and anyone in need of our prayer and support
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26th November 2023

CHRIST THE KING

The Sunday before Advent

The Collect

Eternal Father,
whose Son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven that he might rule over all things as Lord and King: keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace, and bring the whole created order to worship at his feet; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. AMEN

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel

Thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice. Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

[34. 11-16,20-24]

Reader / This is the Word of the Lord
Response / Thanks be to God

Psalm 100

**R/ We are his people
and the sheep of his pasture**

Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands;
serve the Lord with gladness
and come before his presence
with a song.

Know this: The Lord himself is God;
he himself has made us
and we are his;
we are his people
and the sheep of his pasture.

**R/ We are his people
and the sheep of his pasture.**

Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
go into his courts with praise;
give thanks to him
and call upon his name.
For the Lord is good;
his mercy is everlasting;
and his faithfulness endures
from age to age.

**R/ We are his people
and the sheep of his pasture.**

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians [1.15-23]

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far

above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Reader/ This is the Word of the Lord
Response / Thanks be to God

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
Blessings on him who comes
in the name of the Lord!
Blessings on the coming kingdom
of our father David!

Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:
And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ
according to St Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord

Jesus said to his disciples:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell

you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

[St Matthew 25.31-46]

This is the Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you, O Christ

For Your Prayers

That we recognise our following of Christ and the values of his Kingdom as the foundation of our lives.
The peoples of Gaza and Israel & for lasting peace in the Middle East
The people of Ukraine and a just and peaceful end to the war there
The departed in this month of November
Those who suffer as a result of the climate emergency
For responsible stewardship of our planet
For compassion and responsibility in those elected to govern us.
For migrants & refugees, and all forced to flee from their homelands

For the Church:

For the bishops of the Church:
Cherry, Bishop of Monmouth, Philip, Episcopal Visitor of the Society of the Holy Cross in Wales, Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury. & for all who hold and teach the Catholic faith that comes to us from the Apostles.
All bishops, priests and deacons and all baptised Christians
For the reunion of all Christians: for Pope Francis, for Orthodox Patriarch

Bartholomew, & for the leaders of the Reformed traditions

For the Severn Wye Ministry Area, for its priests, licensed lay ministers and all its people.

For the Sick & those in need:

Roy Staples, Ralph Hamilton, Sylvia; The Revd Helen Rodwell; Elisabeth; Lisa; Anne-Louise; Helen; Abigail; Mary; Peter; Kenneth Cameron; Ken Reece; Margaret; Margot Davies, Margi.

For the Departed:

The recently departed; Rosemary Higgs; Eric Brewer; Judith Unwin; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Elizabeth Jane Gollop

A Prayer of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that you are in the Blessed Sacrament.
I love you above all things, and I long for you in my soul.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.
As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.
(The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament)

The Jereboam Interview

We continue our series of extracts from the Jerusalem and Galilee Gazette, an imaginary first-century newspaper. Week by week the correspondent Jereboam interviews various people whose lives have been affected in some way by Jesus Christ and his teaching.

Our thanks to the Parish of St Catharine's Chipping Campden & to the author for permission to reproduce 'Jereboam'

Gehazi

Jereboam: You were very kind to that blind boy just now, Gehazi.

Gehazi: I don't think I did anything extraordinary.

Jereboam: I'm not so sure: people can be cruel sometimes. It's hard to understand, to be honest. Whenever I see anyone with a disability, I always sense this wave of compassion inside me. I

suppose they look helpless in a way, and I respond to that. The trouble is that it almost sounds as if I benefit from their disability, when it gives me that lovely feeling. That doesn't sound quite right, does it?

Gehazi: I can't believe that disability is any way desirable. Mind you, the Lord did tell Paul: "My strength finds its full scope in thy weakness." Look, perhaps we can learn a lesson here. That blind boy may look helpless, but, of course, we're all helpless without God's care. Maybe we should aim to look on everyone with that same tenderness that you described. Maybe everyone deserves our compassion. And you know what Jesus said: "In so far as you as did this to the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me." That's significant: if we treat someone kindly, we aren't merely being kind.

Jereboam: What do you mean?

Gehazi: Well, when you realise that Jesus identifies with a person, you're motivated by more than goodwill. You're also honouring them as...how can I put it?...as a sort of embodiment of our Lord. In a sense you're meeting Jesus.

Jereboam: You're talking about members of the Church, presumably?

Gehazi: I'm talking about anyone. Think back to those words of Jesus: "In so far as you did this to the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me." He didn't explicitly mention anything about the people's beliefs or traditions. He certainly didn't say that they'd prayed for his help. I'm inclined to think that he can be present in anyone's life. And anyway, it's not up to us to decide who is Jesus' brother or sister. It's probably wiser if we look for him in everyone.

Jereboam: I'm heartened to hear what you say. Thank you, Gehazi

THIS WEEK

Sunday is the last Sunday of the year and the Feast of Christ the King. Jesus tells the parable about how we will all be judged - as a shepherd separates sheep from goats, based upon our care for the poor and those in need. On Thursday we celebrate the Feast of Saint Andrew, the Apostle.

The first reading this last week of the liturgical year is from the Book of Daniel. These apocalyptic and mystical readings were written to give encouragement to the Jewish people in the face of persecution. The stories in the Gospel according to St Luke this week offer a look at the meaning of generosity as the poor widow offers her two small coins. Jesus cautions against those who will come in his name promising salvation: "Do not follow them!" The cost of following his teaching is made clear, "You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed." In a dramatic look at the end time, echoing the Daniel readings, Jesus says, "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Jesus continues the "end time" message saying, "know that the Kingdom of God is near. Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place." He cautions, "Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap."

Next Sunday marks the beginning of a new liturgical year with the First Sunday of Advent. The first reading is from the Prophet Isaiah as the people repent before God: "Would that you might meet us doing right, that we were mindful of you in our ways!" St Mark's gospel offers the image of the master who leaves his servants in charge while he is away. Be watchful! Be alert!

A homily for Christ the King

+ One of the challenges the Church faces, if not in every generation at least every generation or two, is to keep pace with the change in the way human society uses words and concepts. We have an example this morning: the Feast of Christ the King - what does that conjure up for us? I suppose if we were to decide to keep in step with the way we use the language of authority today we should rename this Sunday Christ the Prime Minister, or even Christ the global billionaire. Maybe not. When we talk about the Mystery who is God Christ we have to do so with something of the elements of

mystique, antiquity, and power which traditionally surround the title of 'King', however far this is from the actual historical reality of the exercise of human power in any age. So, I'm afraid "Christ the constitutional monarch" won't really do it either! Are there any words left we can use to capture our need for the spiritual and the divine? We live in a culture which now doesn't have a common language to speak about these things at all. Someone has said, though, that, ironically, "Christ the King" is in many ways a particularly apt title to use today for other reasons. Like Christ himself, most of the world's kings and monarchs have been deposed and are living in exile and obscurity, seen by many as relics of bygone days. How can we talk about Christ's Kingdom or Christ's rule when, for so many, those things are associated for many with the politics of elections, with that ever-fluid and very sinister concept, "the will of the people," or the frankly insane but dangerously cruel men (it's usually men, I'm afraid - not always, but usually) who are once again strutting the world stage as authoritarian strongmen.

It's not such a shock, or at least it shouldn't be, for us to accept the fact that Jesus is Universal King in a world in which he is ignored, and the values he teaches despised. Our faith has at its very centre the image of the Crucified Lord - the Gospels describe the mockery which attended his death - the purple robe, the crown of plaited thorns - "This is the King of the Jews". The earliest crucifixes weren't the realistic images we are so used to, but the Christus Rex - the symbol of Christ, crowned, dressed in priestly garments and portrayed as reigning from the cross. The cross is the sign of glory and of God's power. This is a king who reigns paradoxically by stripping himself of power, and who identifies himself with his people totally, radically by sharing their experience of life and death in order to transform, heal and bring to new life.

There was a recognition by the Church from the earliest days not only that the language we use about God is

one of analogy - that's fairly obvious; but that the analogy in terms of attributing to God concepts of kingship and power and authority has been deliberately subverted - turned on its head, made to mean something completely different.

It's absolutely vital to recognise that when we speak of Christ as Lord and King we are using those words in a way which God himself has *redefined* in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We are speaking not of an authority imposed by overwhelming force and power but of a force of humility, gentleness, empathy and service which is built into the *fabric of things* by the one who created them.

So today's readings play particularly with the idea of a king as a shepherd. But, again, we have to be careful because what we are being given as an illustration is the biblical shepherd who doesn't drive the flock but leads it. Christ is the one who leads his people and guides them to fresh pasture and to springs of living water. And the Gospel goes on to develop this in the context of the shepherd - king who knows the secrets of our hearts, who at the end of time will judge and divide his flock both completely justly and totally mercifully on the basis of the good they do or fail to do. Today's Gospel shows us unequivocally that if we wish to serve Christ, we must do so in the poor, the needy and the suffering. What will count most when we stand before the Judge of all is the way we loved and cared for others.

So, yes, we can use the language of kingship and power in relation to Christ, but never precisely in the way any human society has ever done, or can ever aspire to do and, we have to say, to our shame, not in the way the structures of the Church have always tended to operate either. What can we do about *that*, I wonder?

What today's feast says to us, coming at the end of the liturgical year, is that the God who reigns from the cross, the shepherd who leads us to conquer the power of alienation, sin and death - Christus Rex - says to us that the only true power is that of love - almost impossibly hard, costly,

sacrificial love, a love which both offers itself for us and in turn demands that by the grace of God we strive to emulate in our faltering, stumbling way. In Christ crucified, God loved all there was and gave all he had - he gives us the gift of life in the midst of a cruel, destructive world. The cross is not an ideology, it's not a political tool or a visual soundbite, above all it's not a weapon. It's very gruesomeness and starkness should make even the most fanatical and hating of people in our world stop and consider: that this is what we are capable of, even to God. And that even this sign of barbarity, torture and degradation can become in the hands of God a sign of his love for us all.

The Feast of Christ the King couldn't be more relevant for us today, because it says to us that there is hope beyond the possibility of hope, even for this most bitterly divided of worlds, if instead of fearing we try to understand, if instead of hating, we try to love, if instead of taking life we learn to preserve it and renew it. Because the Christ who reigns from the tree does so always in the light of the resurrection to come. And because of him that resurrection can be ours too. As we seek at the altar this morning to deepen our relationship with him, to grow in grace and love and service, we are called to recognise and serve him in one another, and we are led to a realisation that in this way his kingdom is already among us +

Thought for the Week

"Now the Greeks leave home and traverse the sea in order to gain an education, but there is no need to go abroad on account of the Kingdom of Heaven, nor to cross the sea for virtue. For the Lord has told us before, the kingdom of God is within you."

- St Anthony of Egypt -

Advent

During Advent this year in the Ministry Area we are going to open the live-streamed Wednesday evening celebration of Night Prayer at St Arvan's to a congregation. It will be preceded by a seasonal reflection and a period of silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament

All are very welcome to join us for this time of preparation and renewal as we approach Christmas.

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

26th November 2023:

CHRIST THE KING

(The Sunday before Advent)

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
Hymns: *(New English Hymnal)*
443; 345; 352,
'Christ Triumphant ever reigning'

11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
at St Deiniol's, Itton

NEXT SUNDAY

3rd December 2023:

The First Sunday of Advent

9 a.m. Family Service
at St James' Devauden
10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
at St Mary's, Penterry

Readings at the Eucharist:

Isaiah 64. 1-9;
Psalm 80. 1-7;
1 Corinthians 1. 3-9;
St Mark 13. 24-37

For services in the wider Ministry Area
please see www.severnwyema.co.uk

What's On

St Arvans Drop in Tea & Chat

2.30–4 p.m. at the Meeting Rooms
Everyone Welcome

*December 10th
& every second Saturday
of the month*

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift
please ring Diane on 628084

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### St James Church, Devauden invites you to

#### **Sponsor a Slate**

to help much needed roof repairs.  
£10 per slate. Forms available from  
Devauden Village Shop.  
Please help to preserve this wonderful  
listed building.

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### The Severn Wye Ministry Area Prayer Group meets each Thursday at 7.30 p.m. In one of our churches All are welcome!

#### **30<sup>th</sup> November**

St. Pierre Church - Rev  
Robert Sanday (retired) will  
be following a Celtic form  
of prayer

#### **7<sup>th</sup> December**

St. Pierre Church

#### **14<sup>th</sup> December**

St. Pierre Church

#### **21<sup>st</sup> December**

St. Pierre Church – with  
mince pies!

*Future dates to follow ....*

## Ministry Area Prayer

**D**ear Lord,

we thank you for the opportunity  
to work together as a Ministry Area.  
May we engage with each other  
with faith and encouragement.  
May we manage each situation  
with wisdom and mutual respect.  
May we serve with integrity,  
creativity and purpose.  
May we speak with openness  
and gentleness.  
May we offer our gifts, time  
and finances with generosity.  
May we face each challenge  
with courage and the desire  
to grow through it.  
May we all be drawn deeper  
into our relationship with you  
and be known as your disciples.  
Help us to show your love, proclaim  
your Good News and grow your Kingdom  
in this place.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,  
our Lord and Saviour. **AMEN**

## A Prayer for Ukraine

*written by Ukrainian Christians*

**O** Lord our God, look down with  
mercy on the Ukrainian people.  
Protect and save them from the unjust  
aggressors who seek to subdue them.  
Grant them steadfast trust in your  
mercy and protection.  
O Mother of God, who gave us your  
miraculous icon at Zarvanytsia,  
intercede for the Ukrainian people,  
who run to the shelter of your mercy  
in their times of need.  
O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on  
us. Grant peace and protection to the  
people of Ukraine. Give them strength  
and courage to defend what is good,  
right, and holy. Keep them safe from  
harm and provide for all their needs,  
both temporal and spiritual.  
Hear our prayers, O Lord, and deliver  
us from distress, for You are merciful  
and compassionate and love mankind.  
To you we give glory: the Father,  
the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever. **Amen.**

