

# 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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**3<sup>rd</sup> December 2023**

**The First Sunday of Advent**  
Year B

## The Collect

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him 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 Isaiah

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence – as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil – to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity for ever. Now consider, we are all your people. [64. 1 - 9]

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

## Psalm 80 1 - 7, 17 - 19

**R/ Restore us, O God of hosts;  
Show the light of your countenance  
and we shall be saved.**

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;  
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.  
In the presence of Ephraim,

Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up your strength and come to help us.

**R/ Restore us, O God of hosts;  
Show the light of your countenance  
and we shall be saved.**

Restore us, O God of hosts;  
show the light of your countenance  
and we shall be saved.  
O Lord God of hosts, how long  
will you be angered  
despite the prayers of your people?

**R/ Restore us, O God of hosts;  
Show the light of your countenance  
and we shall be saved.**

You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have given them bowls of tears to drink. You have made us the derision of our neighbours, and our enemies laugh us to scorn.

**R/ Restore us, O God of hosts;  
Show the light of your countenance  
and we shall be saved.**

## A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind – just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you – so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. [1; 3 - 9]

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

## Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Let us see, O Lord, your mercy  
and give us your saving help.

### Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:

### And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ  
according to St Mark

### Glory to you, O Lord.

*Jesus said to his disciples:*

**I**n those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in clouds” with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake – for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.’

*[St Mark 13.24–37]*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

### Praise to you, O Christ

## For Your Prayers

That we may prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of the Saviour  
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 Pamela Higgs; Gordon Hickman; Judith Unwin; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Edward Priddis; Nancy Stephens; David May; Derek Jones, priest.

## 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'*

## Hemor

**Jereboam:** Isn't that a marvellous sight? Just a moment ago that lamb was fast asleep, or seemed to be anyway. Now it's bounding away over there with the others. You'd think they'd show some fear so close to the precipice, but no, it's almost as if they don't realise it's there. Either that or they're just supremely confident in their own abilities. It's wonderful to behold: such energy, such accomplishment, such simplicity too. It reminds me somehow of that old psalm-text: "Like the deer that yearns for running streams..." I know that refers to a different animal, but there's still the same sense of pure desire. Don't you think?

**Hemor:** Sorry? Oh, excuse me, Jereboam: I was miles away.

**Jereboam:** I was just admiring the beauty of those young lambs over there.

**Hemor:** Yes. Good animals, aren't they?

**Jereboam:** Excuse me for asking, Hemor, but is everything all right? You don't look quite yourself today.

**Hemor:** Yes, yes, I'm fine, thank you...just a bit tired, that's all. I'm having problems sleeping at the moment. Ever since we had that burglary the other week,

I've been lying awake for hours every night.

**Jereboam:** How frustrating for you... You know, it was only recently that I heard Jesus telling people to stay awake at all times.

**Hemor:** Well, the irony of it is that I don't stay awake at all times. I seem to spend half the day unable to concentrate, dozing off, as you saw just now.

**Jereboam:** You poor chap... Look, I'm sorry if I seemed a bit flippant when I mentioned Jesus.

**Hemor:** Not at all.

**Jereboam:** Anyway, I imagine that he's got nothing against people sleeping. It's a perfectly natural process, after all. I know that one can sleep too much, and Jesus wouldn't encourage anyone to be lazy or anything like that, but I imagine that he's really telling people to stay alert - on their guard, if you like. I suppose, spiritually speaking, he wants people to be like those lambs, full of life, aware, sensitive, fast in the best sense. By the way, have you ever tried doing some gentle exercises before you go to bed? I often find that helps me to sleep more soundly. Hemor? Never mind, we'll talk another time...

## THIS WEEK

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!

Wednesday is the feast day of St Nicholas, Thursday that of St Ambrose and Friday the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

During the first part of Advent - until December 17 - we focus on the first reading at the Eucharist. This week it is taken from the Prophet Isaiah. These readings are about promises. Isaiah is consoling, building up and preparing his people to have hope. "In the days to come," he says over and over. When the day of promise comes, "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation

shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again." Even though King David's line, and that of his father, Jesse, are almost wiped out, Isaiah proclaims hope: "On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom." Who would believe even a peace in nature - lion lying down with the lamb? "There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD, as water covers the sea." God's unique ways of favouring the poor, which Mary comes to know and proclaims in her *Magnificat*, are seen when Isaiah says, "He humbles those in high places, and the lofty city he brings down; He tumbles it to the ground, levels it with the dust." Even Jesus' own statement about his mission is seen in the powerful images Isaiah uses to give us courage and hope: "On that day the deaf shall hear ... the eyes of the blind shall see ... the lowly will ever find joy in the LORD ... " "On the day the LORD binds up the wounds of his people."

The gospels for this first part of Advent are chosen to match the first readings and to show that the promises are fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus brings healing. He raises up the childlike. And Jesus calls and sends the twelve apostles to continue his ministry.

**Next Sunday**, the Second Sunday of Advent we hear Isaiah write of a voice that cries out in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!" These lines from the prophet are repeated in St Mark's Gospel as we are introduced to John the Baptist who prepares the way for Jesus. John says, "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

## A homily for the First Sunday of Advent

+ Advent is a celebration of hope. For us, in the northern hemisphere, it begins a few weeks before the shortest day, before the natural light begins to increase. It's about lighting a candle in the darkness and waiting ... hope is always about something which hasn't happened yet. That's why in the liturgies of Advent we hear so much

of the later prophets of the Old Testament, with their longing for the coming of the Messiah, the one who would save the people of Israel and the whole world.

The important thing Advent is that it is this time of quiet waiting on God. The meaning is in the waiting, as the poet R.S. Thomas reminds us. Advent is a journey, but it's saying to us that we don't have to travel to find Christ - unless we are prepared to find him in the travelling.

Today's Gospel ends with an exhortation by Jesus to his disciples to stay awake so that they don't miss the signs of his coming. What he's not doing, of course, is making an imminent prediction of the end of the world - he's using a typical exaggeration of the preaching of the day to make them sit up and take notice, but he admits he doesn't know when the world will end, only the Father knows.

So much of what we do - what we're forced to do, maybe - at this time of year runs counter to the spirit of expectation and longing.. Believe it or not, Shami our dog has been given an Advent calendar - she's not been well, so she deserves it. But the point about Advent calendars, whether you're a dog or a human being, is that they teach us patience, we open a door each day and it leads us on a journey. We don't open them all at once and get left with a tremendous sense of let-down.

There's a difference between being asleep and quietly waiting. The one is the complete opposite of the other, It's more its opposite than a kind of frenzied activity - which *is* a kind of sleep because it insulates us - deadens us - from the reality of God trying to break through into our lives - or better, from seeing that he is always breaking through, even if we don't perceive it.

It's December - it's dark, it's cold: the weather is grim, but it is what it is. It's a bit counter-intuitive, though to be jumping up and racing around when our body clocks are telling us, if not actually to hibernate, then at least to hunker down for the winter. It's not an energetic time of year - it's not where we are physically or

emotionally. So, the frenzied Advent we are all encouraged to take part in – let's face it, in some ways *compelled* to take part in - is poor human psychology, even if it's good retail management. That should tell us something.

It's a natural human instinct to want to brighten things up, to have something to look forward to – to shut the darkness and the cold out. And that's spiritually what Advent does. We light candles in the darkness – the darkness of the year, certainly, but also in the darkness and despair of what is going on in the world. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, we dare to hope. But in Advent our hope is gradual, it grows slowly like the light of the pre-dawn. We're preparing ourselves for the coming among us of God's Kingdom. Advent is about waking up to Christ's active presence in our lives now, and not only in the past, or in the future. We are being asked to be alert and on the lookout for the signs that he is with us now and in the life of the world. Life is only too short and sometimes tragically unpredictable - we obviously don't need to be reminded of that at the moment. This is the advent of the Lord which is taking place now. Our main task this Advent and every Advent, although perhaps particularly *this* Advent, is to ask the Lord to open our hearts and minds to his presence, to see him at work in our lives, to draw us more and more into the circle of his love and life. We are meant to ask ourselves where do we see And experience it In these few short weeks ironically when there's so much going on – so much jumping of the celebratory gun - we ask to be aware of our own inner spiritual poverty which is only made rich by Christ's coming among us. Our Advent task isn't to prepare for the end of all things, but for a new beginning for us. And that new beginning is offered constantly to us in the person of the child of Mary, whose birth we will celebrate at the end of Advent, but whose life surrounds us here and now if we have the eyes to see it and the faith to reach out and grasp it, and share his love –

his mercy, his kindness - with those around us. +

### Thought for the Week

“God only comes to those who ask Him to come; and He cannot refuse to come to those who implore Him long, often, and ardently.”

*Simone Weil (1909 – 1943)*

### SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> 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

#### **NEXT SUNDAY 10<sup>th</sup> December 2023: The Second Sunday of Advent**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans  
Hymns: (*New English Hymnal*)  
14, 1, 483; 7

11.30 a.m. Liturgy of the Word  
at St Deiniol's, Itton

Readings at the Eucharist:  
Isaiah 40. 1-11;  
Psalm 85. 8-13;  
2 Peter 3. 8-15a;  
St Mark 1. 1-8

*For services in the wider Ministry Area  
please see [www.severnwyema.co.uk](http://www.severnwyema.co.uk)*

### **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.

## 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.**

## What's On

**St Arvans Drop in Tea & Chat**  
2.30–4 p.m. at the Meeting Rooms  
Everyone Welcome

*December 9<sup>th</sup>  
& every second Saturday  
of the month*

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift  
please ring Diane on 628084

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

**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!

# Advent & Christmas 2023

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December:**  
**6 p.m. Carols around the Christmas Tree in St Arvans Churchyard**

with Chepstow Town Band  
*held in church in bad weather*  
*Refreshments after the carols*

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December**  
**7 p.m.**

**Christmas Concert**  
**at St Deiniol's, Itton**

*With St Woolos Sinfonia*  
*Chamber Music – Carols – Readings*

*Tickets £10 (students, under 16s free)*

*Available on the door*

*Proceeds for St Deiniol's church funds*

**SUNDAY 17<sup>th</sup> December:**

**The Third Sunday of Advent**

9 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
at St James' Devauden  
10 a.m. Sung Eucharist  
at St Arvans

**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2, 2023**

*Shirenewton Primary School's*  
*Nativity Play*

**'The Little Red Robin'**

**St Deiniol's Itton at 10 a.m.**

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> December:**

7 p.m. Nine Lessons & Carols  
by candlelight at Itton

**Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December:**

6 p.m. Nine Lessons & Carols  
at St Arvans

**SUNDAY 24<sup>th</sup> December:**

**The Fourth Sunday of Advent**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist  
at St Arvans

**CHRISTMAS EVE**

4.30 p.m. Carols by Candlelight  
at St Mary's, Penterry

6.30 p.m. Christmas Eve Carol  
Service at St James, Devauden

**11. p.m. Midnight Mass**

*(The first Eucharist of Christmas)*

at St Arvans

**Monday December 25<sup>th</sup>:**

**CHRISTMAS DAY**

9 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Carols  
at St James, Devauden

10 a.m. Christmas Morning Family  
Eucharist at St Arvans

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

**There will be a celebration of the Eucharist in the Lady Chapel at St Arvans each day at 10 a.m. throughout Christmas Week**

**SUNDAY 31<sup>st</sup> December:**

**The First Sunday of Christmas**

*(The Holy Family)*

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist  
at St Arvans

## *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.**