

# 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, Our live-streamed services are as follows: **Sunday Eucharist at 10. a.m., and a reflection & celebration of Night Prayer usually on Wednesdays at 7.45 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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Mobile 07867803479  
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## 1<sup>st</sup> December 2024 The First Sunday of Advent

### 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 Jeremiah

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'

[33. 14 - 16]

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

### Psalm 25, 1 - 10

**R/ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul;  
my God, I put my trust in you;  
let me not be humiliated,  
nor let my enemies triumph over me.  
Let none who look to you  
be put to shame;  
let the treacherous be disappointed  
in their schemes.

**R/ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**

Show me your ways, O Lord,  
and teach me your paths.  
Lead me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
in you have I trusted all the day long.

**R/ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**

Remember, O Lord, your compassion  
and love, for they are from everlasting.  
Remember not the sins of my youth  
and my transgressions;  
remember me according to your love  
and for the sake of your goodness,  
O Lord.

**R/ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**

Gracious and upright is the Lord;  
therefore he teaches sinners in his way.

He guides the humble in doing right  
and teaches his way to the lowly.

**R/ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**

All the paths of the Lord  
are love and faithfulness  
to those who keep his covenant  
and his testimonies.  
For your name's sake, O Lord,  
forgive my sin, for it is great.

**R/ To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.**

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

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

[3; 9 - 13]

*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 Luke **Glory to you, O Lord**

*Jesus said to his disciples:*

**T**here will be signs in the sun, the moon,  
and the stars, and on the earth distress

among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in a cloud” with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.’ Then he told them a parable: ‘Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.’

[21.25–36]

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

## For Your Prayers

That at the beginning of Advent we may prepare to meet the Lord in the detail of our lives.  
All who are caught up in war or conflict  
All those without adequate food or shelter  
The peoples of Gaza, Israel and Lebanon  
& for lasting peace in the Middle East  
The people of Ukraine and a just and peaceful end to the war there  
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;  
The Revd Stuart Jackson; Anne-Louise;  
Helen; Mary; Peter; Kenneth Cameron;  
Margaret; Althea; Eira Firth;  
Margi and Bob Osborne; Michael Bengé;  
Jean Davies.

### **For the Departed:**

The recently departed: Elizabeth Arnold-Davies, deacon; our own departed relatives & friends, and those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time:  
Elizabeth Jane Gollop; Edward Priddis;  
Nancy Stephens.

## 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 people whose lives have been affected in some way by Jesus Christ and his teaching.*

## Tom

**Jereboam:** Excuse me: I recognise you, don't I?

**Tom:** Yes, I'm Tom. You spoke to me the other week with my brother Ben.

**Jereboam:** Of course, yes. So you've just been listening to Jesus too, have you?

**Tom:** There's not much else to do 'round here.

**Jereboam:** Well, I don't know. Let's just say that I don't live in this area, so I can't really comment. What did you think of Jesus, anyway?

**Tom:** He actually seems a really nice bloke, but I'm not so sure about people like him telling everybody to stay awake. I know he's quite interesting himself, but, considering the number of rabbis I've heard droning on for hours about the Scriptures, it seems a bit rich for one of them to start telling people to stay awake.

**Jereboam:** You know, I don't think he was speaking literally: he meant more that people should be on their guard. I think he used the phrase, “watch yourselves.”

**Tom:** I know that's what he really meant, but it's just that...

**Jereboam:** Hey, watch out!

**Tom:** What's up?

**Jereboam:** You were going to step on that snake. Let's mind the way: those ones are really poisonous.

**Tom:** Goodness, Jereboam, thank you – that was a close thing. So what were we saying?

**Jereboam:** We were talking about constantly staying awake and being on your guard...perhaps referring not just to snakes, but also to our actions and attitudes generally.

**Tom:** Does he really need to go on about that, though? I mean, most people are basically nice, aren't they? We don't need so much of this doom and gloom stuff. Or don't you agree?

**Jereboam:** Well, since you ask, I believe he has got a good point, and

I'll tell you why. If I don't work for a week, I start losing the knack of writing. If I don't work for two weeks, I get even worse, but I stop noticing that my standards have deteriorated. That's the big problem: not realising. I reckon Jesus is warning us not to let our standards slip. It can happen easily enough, believe me – just as easily as stepping on a snake.

**Tom:** All right, then. Maybe he does have a point after all.

**Jereboam:** I'm only really here as a reporter, but to my mind this Jesus chap talks a lot of sense; I think it's good that you're listening to him. Look, I'd better go now, but thanks for the chat, and do remember me to Ben, won't you?

**Tom:** Sure.

## THIS WEEK

Sunday is the beginning of the new Church year with the First Sunday of Advent. The first reading from the prophet Jeremiah offers a comforting promise of safety to beleaguered Israel: "those days Judah shall be safe and Jerusalem shall dwell secure." St Luke's gospel advises us to be alert and vigilant, watching for signs. "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

Tuesday is the feast day of Saint Francis Xavier, the legendary missionary, and Saturday is that of Saint Ambrose, bishop and doctor of the Church.

At the Eucharist during the first part of Advent - we focus on the first readings. This week it is 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 plowshares 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 favoring 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 from several gospels. They are meant 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 readings begin with these words from the prophet Baruch: "*Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendor of glory from God forever.*"

St Luke's Gospel offers us a first look at the promise of John the Baptist as he cries out, "*Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*"

## A Homily for the beginning of Advent

+ I think a lot of us – more and more of us – begin Advent in a bit of a dilemma. Call it cognitive dissonance, if you want. The clergy stand up on Advent Sunday and speak in addresses and sermons about Advent as a time of quiet reflection, of spiritual preparation, of using this quite short season before Christmas as a way of discerning the presence of the Lord in our lives. And, then, at the end of the day, we all go home and look at our diaries for December, and think ... right ..hold on a minute, what have I been saying or what have I just heard... ? How does this resonate with the lives we actually live in December? How does any of it make sense?

Advent is meant to be a quiet reflective time to prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ in the celebration of Christmas, in the detail of our daily living, and at the end of our lives. How do we manage to carve out space for reflection at what is in many ways the busiest time of the year?

The tension we all feel comes about because Advent isn't really about *doing* anything at all: it's about waiting, watching, listening, discerning – all the things our culture outside, and for that matter *inside* the church, finds so difficult to do. That prayerful waiting is what we've been robbed of – yes., I'll put it that strongly – by the all-pervasive commercialism of Christmas. We come face to face with the reality that the One who grows up to turn the money changers out of the Temple becomes himself an indispensable cash cow for a dysfunctional economic system which seems to have a habit of corrupting everything it touches.

But if that's all we have to say, then we might as well give up, go home and party, party, party until it's December 25<sup>th</sup>.

Whatever Advent is, or should be, it's not about negativity. It's the exact opposite. Our vocation in Advent is to try to find a way in our busy schedules, and in our hearts and minds, for this prayerful waiting, this waiting on God in hope and love.

There's a short poem by the Spanish mystic, St John of the Cross, which sums up what we are called to do in this short season which is inevitably one of tension and contradiction, of joy anticipated but also delayed. It's more of a haiku than a poem maybe ... This is the translation by Roy Campbell – the original Spanish is even more concise:

*"With the divinest word, the Virgin  
Made pregnant, down the road  
Comes walking, if you'll grant her  
A room in your abode."*

We are encouraged to live out our Advent journey not in a spirit of stressful anxiety but in the following of Christ's own revealing of God's love. Advent is a kind of pregnancy – Like Blessed Mary herself we're waiting for something – *someone* - to be born in us. Like her, we are guided in our journey by the hidden fire of the Holy Spirit.

One of the themes of the Advent and Christmas story is that of half-forgotten things, things on the margins - seemingly

unimportant ideas, events and people becoming absolutely central – pushed centre-stage in the story of salvation. So maybe we shouldn't worry too much about operating undercover, being quietly counter-cultural in a kind of disguised spirit of Advent resistance. It's what we are called to do in all kinds of ways – perhaps mainly these days to remain *defiantly kind*, as someone has said, in a world which increasingly revels in hatred and division. We're called to do that with the defiant compassion and mercy which is at the heart of the message of our faith. The story of the coming of the Saviour is in all kinds of ways God's own protest movement at the ways things are. So Advent begins in the darkness and cold of early December. At this darkest time of the year, we are waiting and hoping for light, however we each care to define that in the concrete detail of our lives. At this blackest time of the year, we light our first Advent candles long before the shortest day – before the natural world turns towards the light. This week the Church will celebrate St Nicholas, and we all know what the prevailing seasonal culture has turned *him* into, but perhaps he reminds us that one of the most important gifts, is given to us before Christmas comes – and that's the gift of Advent itself ...

**Many thanks to everyone who worked to make the Christmas Crafting Session such a success!**  
**St Arvans Drop in Tea & Chat**  
2.30–4 p.m. at the Meeting Rooms  
Everyone Welcome

**December 14<sup>th</sup> and usually every second Saturday of the month**

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift please ring Diane on 628084

On 14<sup>th</sup> December entry will be £6 per person which includes a free raffle ticket with a guaranteed prize for everyone. There will also be Christmas carols led by Dorothy

We would be very grateful for donations of small gifts such as chocolate, biscuits, toiletries etc and Christmas wrapping paper. Please pass these on to Maureen, Sheena or Diane by 6<sup>th</sup> December

## SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

### ***The First Sunday of Advent*** **1<sup>st</sup> December 2024:**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans  
11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
at St Mary's, Penterry  
4 p.m. All Age Eucharist  
at St James', Devauden

### ***NEXT SUNDAY*** ***The Second Sunday of Advent*** **8<sup>th</sup> December 2024:**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans  
11.30 a.m. Liturgy of the Word  
at St Deiniol's, Itton

Readings:  
Baruch 5.1-9  
Canticle: Benedictus (*St Luke 1.68-79*)  
Philippians 1.3-11  
St Luke 3.1-6

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

**The daily celebration of the Eucharist** will resume at St Arvan's this week on Tuesday at **09.30 a.m.**

*Please note the new time.*

We also hope to resume a Wednesday evening reflection and Night Prayer (Compline) which will also be live-streamed. More details next Sunday.

## **The Ministry Area Prayer Group meets every Thursday 7.45pm – 9pm**

During these colder months, prayer meetings will be held in David Carne's house, The Cedars, Chapel Lane, Pwllmeyric. If there is anyone or anything which you would like to be prayed for, please email [david@bedlambeds.com](mailto:david@bedlambeds.com)

## **Advent Courses**

Four Tuesdays at 7:30pm at St.Christopher's Church, Bulwark with Fr Chris Blanchard: a new **Meditation course** that will be the second ever to be run in the UK! All are welcome. Starts on Tuesday **26th November**.

Also, on Tuesday afternoons, an **Advent course based on the life and teaching of St Francis** at 2.45pm, on Tuesdays, in Collingwood, Chapel Lane, Pwllmeyric. Starting on 19th November.

**The Devauden Calendar is now available to buy ! £10.** Proceeds to St James Devauden. This will make a Great Christmas present !! Available from Devauden shop.

