

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., 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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The Vicarage, St Arvans

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15th December 2024 The Third Sunday of Advent

The Collect

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you: grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **AMEN**

A reading from the prophet Zephaniah

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgements against you, he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival.

I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the LORD.

[3. 14 - 20]

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

Canticle: Isaiah 12. 2-6

**R/ Shout aloud and sing for joy,
for great in your midst
is the Holy One of Israel.**

Surely God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid,
for the LORD GOD is my strength
and my might;
he has become my salvation.
With joy you will draw water
from the wells of salvation.

**R/ Shout aloud and sing for joy,
for great in your midst
is the Holy One of Israel.**

And you will say on that day:
Give thanks to the LORD,
call on his name;
make known his deeds
among the nations;
proclaim that his name is exalted.
Sing praises to the LORD,
for he has done gloriously;
let this be known in all the earth.

**R/ Shout aloud and sing for joy,
for great in your midst
is the Holy One of Israel.**

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Philippians [4; 4 - 7]

Rejoice in the Lord always;
again I will say, Rejoice.

Let your gentleness be known
to everyone.

The Lord is near.

Do not worry about anything,
but in everything by prayer and
supplication with thanksgiving
let your requests be made known to God.
And the peace of God,
which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds
in Christ Jesus

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
The Spirit of the Lord
has been given to me.
He has sent me to bring
good news to the poor.
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.

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him,
'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin 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.' And the crowds asked him, 'What then should we do?' In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.' As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.' So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

[St Luke 3.7–18]

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

For Your Prayers

That we may rejoice as we prepare for the coming of Christ among us.
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
The people of Georgia
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, & 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; Naylor & Eira Firth; Margi & Bob Osborne.

For the Departed:

The recently departed: Elizabeth Arnold-Davies, deacon; Jean Davies; David Aitken; Robert Thompson; Gerdien Versteeg; our own departed relatives & friends, and those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Reg Owens;

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.

Unknown Lady

Jereboam: Excuse me; I think I saw you speaking to John the Baptist just now.

?: Yes, that's right.

Jereboam: I'm Jereboam from the Jerusalem and Galilee Gazette. Would you be happy to tell us a little about your conversation? What were your impressions?

?: I've come away feeling quite hopeful.

Jereboam: That's good – may I ask why?

?: Well, when John addressed the crowd earlier, he said that the Lord will come and baptise us with the Holy Spirit and with fire. So afterwards I approached John and said that this Holy Spirit and fire could have no effect on me – I feel so dead and empty inside.

Jereboam: I don't mean to be flippant, but you look very much alive to me.

?: I'll explain: my husband finally left me a few months ago, but for years he's been persecuting me relentlessly. It's been like living through a nightmare; I've been drained of all energy.

Jereboam: Maybe things won't be so bad now that he's left...assuming that you have somewhere to live, that is.

?: It's even worse now: he uses our children as a means to bully me. Look, I'd prefer not to say any more about it, if you don't mind.

Jereboam: Of course that's fine; I don't mean to pry. But anyway, you feel more hopeful after speaking to John.

?: John looked me straight in the eye and asked me to visualise a fire. Then he asked which part of the fire reminded me of myself. I said it was the dry, lifeless twigs. He replied that that the dry, lifeless twigs give really strong, warm flames, and that the Lord will make good use of my dry and lifeless feelings.

Jereboam: Did he give you any other advice?

?: Yes: he told me to remain aware of those feelings, but not to struggle with them. When the Lord comes, he said, we shall not need to struggle.

Jereboam: So life will be easy?

?: That's just what I asked. He said, no, life won't be easy, but the Lord won't need me to struggle. He told me to think of the time when my children were babies: life then was certainly not easy, but I knew clearly enough what I needed to do. It will be like that when the Lord comes, or so John said.

Jereboam: So you felt pleased with the conversation?

?: I felt accepted by John -- in my position you get used to being excluded from so many things. And he also managed to encourage me, without telling me to pull myself together. I can't tell you how welcome that is.

Jereboam: That's good. One more thing: you've told me some fairly personal information. Are you sure that you're happy for us to include all of it in the Gazette?

?: I think perhaps I'd prefer that you didn't mention my name.

Jereboam: Of course.

THIS WEEK

The readings for the Third Sunday of Advent begin with the Prophet Zephaniah's announcement of liberation and God's presence among the people after decades of their own infidelity. In St Luke's Gospel John the Baptist is the focus of the expectation in the people who come to him asking what to do. He exhorts them to integrity and charity and announces the one who is to come: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

On Monday we reach the last eight days of Advent and the focus of the weekday readings returns to the gospels with

stories from Jesus' family in the time before he was born.

In St Matthew's genealogy, we see the ancestors of Jesus. Joseph decides to divorce the pregnant Mary until an angel appears to him in a dream, saying, "It is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her." The rest of the week we have nearly all of the first chapter of St Luke's gospel. Elizabeth and Zechariah, struggling with their inability to have a child, are told they will have a child named John who will be filled with the Holy Spirit. When Zechariah doubts, he is struck speechless. Thursday's gospel is the story of the Annunciation with Mary's humble response, "May it be done to me according to your word." Mary sets out to visit her cousin, Elizabeth. "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb" and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Mary's response to Elizabeth: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior for he has looked upon his lowly servant...From this day all generations will call me blessed."

Next Sunday begins a brief, two-day final week of Advent. The reading from Micah reminds us that from the seemingly unimportant town of Bethlehem, "from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel." St Luke's gospel offers again the story of Mary's going to visit her cousin. Elizabeth understands immediately Mary's situation and praises God saying, "How does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy."

A Homily for the Third Sunday of Advent

+ The mood of Advent shifts today away from ideas of penitence and judgement and towards hope and joyful anticipation. Although one could say that despite (from the rather squeamish modern perspective anyway) our reflection on themes such as death and judgement, heaven and hell and the end of the world, the keynotes of Advent as it unfolds are always "hope and joy" because of our reflection on the three comings of Christ: at his birth in Bethlehem, here and now in word and Sacrament, and in glory at the end of the world. But the quality of joy becomes

much more explicit in today's first two readings.

And we do have to be a bit careful during Advent not to give the impression of being too censorious about all the pre-Christmas glitz and frantic activity going on around us. It would be an odd thing to do to turn this Advent message of liberation and freedom into a grouchy message about poor timing and commercial exploitation. Advent is meant to be a time of hope and joy, and in looking forward without jumping the gun all we are saying is to ourselves "is hold on a minute; I need time to get ready for all this."

The idea of Advent is that we try to find joy & hope precisely in the waiting, in the hope that we may rediscover within us the joy of God's coming to us as one of us. We can find joy in a certain amount of deliberate simplicity. Much of the joy and meaning of a great deal of human experience comes through the expectation of it. And we find the real meaning and the joy of Christmas in the waiting and expectation of Advent.

If we examine the readings of the liturgy over these few short weeks before Christmas we can see a longing which overflows in joy. The penitential themes of Advent always give way to salvation. That's the point of our Advent austerity, all our reflection and prayer on the ultimate meaning of life and death. In the Incarnation we see the meaning of life and the meaning is love.

Today is also called *Gaudete* or *Rejoice* Sunday, the liturgy gives us a kind of head start in beginning to think about what is to come, to make our path straight for rejoicing, to liberate us from the deep-down unhappiness and sense of injustice of much of modern life that sense of powerlessness which feeds so much of the misdirected anger and hatred abroad in the world right now.

Advent is here for us to learn again to be joyfully expectant and to learn again to share our joy with others. It's about rediscovering the reason for the joy, and that's what our readings today bring home to us: God has come to be with us. And that's not to turn our backs on the problems of the world – and that's difficult enough at the moment - or to forget the pain and suffering of one form or another that is inevitably part of human life wherever it's lived. But much of the problem with the entirely secular

Christmas and the idea that somehow it has to be perfect is that that's exactly what it tries to do and it can set up a world of unreal expectations which can explode in open displays of family tension or, ironically, makes worse the inner wounds of exclusion and isolation that many people have. Whatever the faults of the Christian Church may be, and there are so many, depending on your point of view, *but we don't do that.*

The Advent and Christmas story in the Gospels looks reality in face without trying to ignore it or prettify it. The child who will be born in the stable is the man who will die on the cross, and if we take up our cross and follow him, doing what he did, and trying to live with openness, compassion and generosity, we can't but be involved in reality, in fact, the greatest reality there is. However overlain with other things it may be, that essentially is the Advent and Christmas message of the Church.

And for a week or so more while Advent continues, we continue our pilgrim journey of interior preparation with our eyes fixed on God's kingdom of truth, justice, peace and love. Those things get sneered at a lot – particularly by those who think their interests are served by performative cruelty - but if they're the message given to us by the creator of all things, then we should probably reflect on them and give them priority in our lives. This last week is a chance to give ourselves the space to recognise what it is we really need, and to ask for the help to try to live according to the Gospel of hope and joy.

Christ becomes one of us in the Bethlehem stable. Thomas Merton sums up our Advent task in this crucial way & it's particularly appropriate for us in an age of AI and disinformation:

"Speak words of hope. Be human in this most inhuman of ages. Guard the image of man for it is the image of God." +

St Arvans Tea and Chat

January 11th and usually every second Saturday of the month

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift please ring Diane on 628084

Many thanks to those who made Saturday's Christmas Tea and Chat such an enjoyable afternoon.

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

**The Third Sunday of Advent
15th December 2024:**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
11.30 a.m. 'Preparing for Christmas'
Advent Service at Holy Cross,
Kilgwrrwg

NEXT SUNDAY

**The Fourth Sunday of Advent
22nd December 2024:**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans
11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
at St Deiniol's, Llton

Readings:

Micah 5.2-5a

Canticle: Magnificat (*St Luke 1.47-55*)

Hebrews 10.5-10

St Luke 1.39-45

6 p.m. Nine Lessons & Carols
at St Arvan's

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

The Eucharist is celebrated daily (except Mondays) **at St Arvans** at 09.30 a.m. *Please note new time.*

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

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.

What is Advent?

The great Advent Antiphons

O Sapientia - December 17th
O Wisdom, you come forth from the mouth of the Most High. You fill the universe and hold all things together in a strong yet gentle manner. O come to teach us the way of truth.

O Adonai - December 18th
O Adonai and leader of Israel, you appeared to Moses in a burning bush and you gave him the Law on Sinai. O come and save us with your mighty power.

O Radix Jesse - December 19th
O stock of Jesse, you stand as a signal for the nations; kings fall silent before you whom the peoples acclaim. O come to deliver us, and do not delay.

O Clavis David - December 20th
O key of David and sceptre of Israel, what you open no one else can close again; what you close no one can open. O come to lead the captive from prison; free those

who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

O Oriens - December 21st

O Rising Sun, you are the splendour of eternal light and the sun of justice. O come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

O Rex Gentium - December 22nd

O King whom all the peoples desire, you are the cornerstone which makes all one. O come and save man whom you made from clay.

O Emmanuel - December 23rd

O Emmanuel, you are our king and judge, the One whom the peoples await and their Saviour. O come and save us, Lord, our God.

And in the English (Sarum) tradition

O Virgo Virginum – December 24th

O Virgin of virgins, how shall this be? For neither before you was any like you, nor shall there be after. Daughters of Jerusalem, why do you marvel at me? What you behold is a divine mystery!

OUR CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Wednesday 18th December:

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

Friday 20th December:

6 p.m. Carols around the Christmas Tree in St Arvans Churchyard with Chepstow Town Band (*held in church if bad weather*)

SUNDAY 22nd December:

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans

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

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

Tuesday 24th December

CHRISTMAS EVE

9.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist (*said*) in the Lady Chapel at St Arvans

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 at St Arvans

Wednesday December 25th:

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

SUNDAY 29th December

The First Sunday of Christmas

The Holy Family

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans

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