

# 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

Fr Michael Gollop,

The Vicarage, St Arvans

01291 622064;

Mobile 07867803479

E-mail: frmichael1@aol.com

## 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2024 The Fourth Sunday of Advent

### The Collect

God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son: grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour, so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge; 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 Micah

*The LORD says to his people:*

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labour has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

[5; 2 - 5a]

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

### Psalm 80 1 - 7

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

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, you that led Joseph like a flock; Shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim, before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your mighty strength and come to our salvation.

**R/ 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 angry at your people's prayer? You feed them with the bread of tears; you give them abundance of tears to drink.

You have made us the derision of our neighbours, and our enemies laugh us to scorn. Restore us, O God of hosts show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

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

### A reading from the letter to the Hebrews [10; 5 - 10]

When Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared

for me; in burnt-offerings and sin-offerings you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, "See, God, I have come to do your will, O God" (in the scroll of the book, it is written of me).'

When Christ said, 'You have neither desired nor taken pleasure

in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings'

(these are offered according to the law), then he added,

'See, I have come to do your will.'

He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

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

### **Gradual Hymn**

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the handmaid of the Lord;

Be it unto me according to your word.

**Alleluia!**

The Lord be with you:

**And also with you**

Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to  
St Luke

**Glory be to thee, O Lord.**

**M**ary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb.

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry,

'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

And why has this happened to me,

that the mother of my Lord comes to me?

For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy.

And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment

of what was spoken to her by the Lord.’  
[St Luke 1. 39 45]

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

## For Your Prayers

That we may celebrate with joy  
the birth of our Saviour  
Those travelling over Christmastide  
All who are caught up in war or conflict  
All those without adequate food or shelter  
The people of the Holy Land; 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; 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.*

## Isaiah

**Jereboam:** So, Isaiah, do you  
think that the Church has changed at  
all since it started twenty years ago?

**Isaiah:** Obviously we've  
grown in numbers for a start, and  
spread geographically, but I suppose  
that one of the biggest changes has  
been that we've gradually come to see  
ourselves as being quite distinct from  
the Jewish people. Of course Jesus  
himself was a Jew, so, to begin with,  
we thought of ourselves simply as a  
particular group of Jews, but that view  
has rather changed now.

**Jereboam:** Can you identify what  
caused this shift of opinion?

**Isaiah:** Well, first of all many  
Gentiles joined our numbers. They  
obviously didn't share our Jewish  
heritage or sense of identity. Then we  
began to notice how we interpret the  
Scriptures differently from the way the  
Jews do.

**Jereboam:** Can you give some  
details?

**Isaiah:** The main thing is that  
there are many places in the  
Scriptures that we feel refer to Jesus.  
So when, for example, the psalm says  
something like "may your hand be on  
the man you have chosen", to us that  
man is Jesus.

**Jereboam:** Excuse me, but it  
can't refer to Jesus: the psalms were  
written long before he was born.

**Isaiah:** Don't forget that no-  
one's disputing that the Scriptures  
were inspired by God. I think we can  
safely assume that He was capable of  
foreseeing Jesus' birth.

**Jereboam:** Fair enough, I  
suppose.

**Isaiah:** Then there are many  
prophecies that we understand as  
foretelling Jesus' life on earth. He is  
for us the Messiah that the Jews are  
still waiting for.

**Jereboam:** I can see that the  
significance of those passages will be  
very different for you.

**Isaiah:** I'll admit that it's also  
difficult sometimes: you read one of  
those texts full of impassioned longing  
for the coming of the Messiah, and it's  
hard not to replace that wonderful  
outpouring of emotion with a rather  
complacent sense that Jesus has  
already come to us. We can ruin the  
emotional tone of such passages, if  
we're not careful.

**Jereboam:** How do you deal with  
that problem?

**Isaiah:** In two ways: first of  
all, if you think of the longing the Jews  
feel for the advent of their Messiah, we  
feel a similar longing for Jesus' return  
– the so-called "second coming".

**Jereboam:** And the other way?

**Isaiah:** That way's rather  
personal to me: when I think about our  
Lord's birth, I try to adopt for a moment  
a Jewish frame of mind. I imagine that  
I'm still waiting for a Saviour; I try to  
hear in my mind the Jewish chants  
and recall their rituals. So in my  
imagination I deprive myself of Jesus,  
as a way of training myself to  
appreciate him more deeply.

**Jereboam:** Apart from anything else, that exercise must keep you sympathetic to the Jewish point of view.

**Isaiah:** I hope so, yes: I always try to honour the religion within which our Lord grew up.

**Jereboam:** Thank you for your contribution, Isaiah.

## THIS WEEK

Sunday sbegins a brief, three-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." 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." On Wednesday, **Christmas Day**, we celebrate the Nativity of the Lord. Whether we celebrate at midnight or early in the morning or later in the morning, we read the stories of the birth of Jesus. In our important feasts this week, the first on Thursday honours the **Saint Stephen, the first martyr**. Stephen was the first public witness who gave his life for his faith. The second feast on Friday remembers the disciple Jesus loved, **Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist**. Saturday is the **Feast of the Holy Innocents**, which honors the infant martyrs of Herod's jealous rage. Saturday is the fourth day in our eight days of celebrating Christmas – the first reading is from the First Letter of St John's, a powerful letter about God's love for us and our love for others, and from the beginning of St Luke's Gospel with the picture of the scene when Mary and Joseph present Jesus in the temple and encounter Simeon and his prophecies about the child and about Mary.

**Next Sunday** The First Sunday of Christmas is also known as the Feast of the **Holy Family**. There are wonderful readings from the Book of Sirach, and St Paul's letter to the Colossians. The Gospel is the story of the teenaged Jesus teaching in the temple while his parents

could not find him. Jesus goes back home with his family. "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man."

## A Homily for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

+ As we approach Christmas, today's Gospel goes back almost to the beginning of the story of God's coming among us, with the meeting of the cousins Mary and Elizabeth, both of whom are expecting the children who are to change the course of humanity's history.

There are a lot of experiences of human contact with the Divine recounted in the Scriptures and later in the history of the Church, but nothing quite resembles this first chapter of St Luke's Gospel. This seems to be of an entirely different order. We find it very difficult to believe that the Incarnation, an event so momentous as to concern the future destiny of the human race, should be announced so quietly to a young girl in a provincial town in an out of the way region of the ancient world. But we shouldn't be surprised, because here we see the consistency and truth of God's nature.

In today's Gospel we see Mary hurrying through the hill country of Judea to give her news about the angel's message to her cousin. She is shocked, confused; on a human level, she wants to spend time with perhaps the one person close to her who she thinks will understand. On another level, her great hurry says to us both how profoundly she has been moved by the Word she carries, and that to receive the divine Word is not to remain unaffected and as we were before, but to be almost forced to carry that Word, who is Jesus Christ, to others.

So we see in this story the joyful willingness with which Mary at once acts as a disciple, even if at a conscious level she doesn't realise it. She is revealed here to be her Son's first disciple. And at the same time as we see Mary's discipleship, we see the urgency of God himself to communicate his joy.

Israel has waited for long generations for the coming of the Messiah, here we see God acting decisively when the time is ripe.

What we have in today's Gospel, can most probably only have been originally handed down to us by the witness and later reflections of Mary herself in the early days of the Church. Of course, no one pretends that St Luke's account is a detailed fly on the wall account of the meeting between the heavenly messenger and Mary, or of today's meeting between Mary and Elizabeth - how could it be - but it's essentially a faithful recollection of a message of good news and of joy, which begins here, but doesn't end here.

Mary, Elizabeth and John are each animated, given new life and a new direction in life, by their contact with the as yet unborn Christ, the Word of God. They are all together caught up in the sacred drama of God's unfolding plan for the human race and for the whole creation. The atmosphere of today's Gospel is both a kind of sanctified excitement in the face of the hidden mystery of God, and also the resulting peace which comes from Mary's willing acceptance of what she has been chosen to do.

And the importance of this acceptance, this "yes" to God's purpose for humanity shouldn't be underestimated. It underlines Mary's importance as a kind of representative of all of us – of the entire human race - in that here we don't have God in some way forcing his will upon us, but always seeking our agreement and our co-operation in his vision for our future: a vision of love, redemption, and infinite possibilities. Mary's "yes" makes that future possible, she's not just a replaceable pawn in God's game (because that's not how the God we believe in behaves) but, as St Luke says, she is full of grace, a willing and joyful participant in the bringing about of the birth of the Incarnate Son.

In this story we see the God who respects the autonomy of his creatures, who works by persuasion and grace rather than through coercion, power, might and terror. The God, who is love, works through love, that is his nature.

And the love of God finds a response in the heart of Mary; as St Augustine wrote, she conceives and gives birth to Christ in her heart before ever she does so in her body.

And the God of love often acts quietly, operating in the silences of the world and the unexplainable experiences in our own lives, and in the poverty of the human

heart. The events of today's Gospel take place in the obscurity of a fairly humble Jewish home in the hill country of Roman-occupied Palestine.

Let's not leap ahead this morning. For the moment here in poverty and obscurity the world is turned upside down. But this is the mysterious nature of the Word of God among us, and even today he operates in the same kind of way – quietly but determinedly and joyfully to reassure us, to free us, to inspire us and to give us life and hope, even at those times when we think those things are impossible. +

## St Arvans Tea and Chat

**January 11<sup>th</sup>** and usually every second Saturday of the month

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift please ring Diane on 628084

**Many thanks to Chepstow Town Band and all who helped with the Carols around the Christmas Tree at St Arvans.**

**Out thanks to all those who have worked so hard to decorate our churches for the Christmas Season**

## SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

**The Fourth Sunday of Advent  
22<sup>nd</sup> December 2024:**

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 Arvan's**

## NEXT SUNDAY

**The First Sunday of Christmas  
29<sup>th</sup> December 2024:**

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist at St Arvans

Readings:

1 Samuel 2.18-20, 26  
Psalm 148 or 148.7-14  
Colossians 3.12-17  
Luke 2.41-52

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

**The Eucharist is celebrated daily this week in the Lady Chapel at St Arvans on Monday, Tuesday and Friday at 09.30, on Thursday and Saturday at 10 a.m.**

**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)

The Prayer Group will resume after the Christmas holidays

**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.

## OUR CHRISTMAS SERVICES

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> 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 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