

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
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Mobile 07867803479
E-mail: frmichael1@aol.com

5th January 2025 The Epiphany of the Lord

The Collect

O God, who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at last behold your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, 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

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of

your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they

come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

[60. 1 - 6]

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

Psalm 72 7 - 14

**R/ Kings bow down before him;
all the nations do him service.**

Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the king's son; That he may rule your people righteously and the poor with justice; That the mountains may bring prosperity to the people, and the little hills bring righteousness.

**R/ Kings bow down before him;
all the nations do him service.**

He shall defend the needy among the people; he shall rescue the poor and crush the oppressor. He shall live as long as the sun and moon endure, from one generation to another.

**R/ Kings bow down before him;
all the nations do him service.**

He shall come down like rain upon the mown field, like showers that water the earth. In his time shall the righteous flourish; there shall be abundance of peace

till the moon shall be no more.

**R/ Kings bow down before him;
all the nations do him service.**

The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall pay tribute, and the kings of Arabia and Saba offer gifts. All kings shall bow down before him, and all the nations do him service.

**R/ Kings bow down before him;
all the nations do him service.**

For he shall deliver the poor who cries out in distress, and the oppressed who has no helper. He shall have pity on the lowly and poor; he shall preserve the lives of the needy. He shall redeem their lives from oppression and violence, and dear shall their blood be in his sight.

**R/ Kings bow down before him;
all the nations do him service.**

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians [3. 2-3; 5-6]

You have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
We saw his star as it rose
and have come to do the Lord homage.
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.

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."' Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

[St Matthew 2. 1-12]

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

For Your Prayers

That like the Magi we may come to find meaning and truth in Christ and that we may celebrate the Epiphany with joy and hope
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, James Burnam.

For the Departed:

The recently departed: David Aitken; Gerdien Versteeg; our own departed relatives & friends, and those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Muriel Sunderland; James Smart; Angela; Phyllis Meade; Connie Cook; Harlley Brooks, Margot Brooks.

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.

Innkeeper

Innkeeper: Please don't take this the wrong way, Jereboam, but I hadn't expected to see you around here again so soon.

Jereboam: No: I'm surprised myself, but I heard that some people had made their way here by following a star.

Innkeeper: Oh, our royal visitors, you mean...

Jereboam: So it's true that they're kings?

Innkeeper: When they first arrived, they certainly looked like royalty of some sort.

Jereboam: Am I right that they followed a star?

Innkeeper: Apparently so...and several of us have spotted an unusual star recently. I can only assume that these gentlemen had seen the same one.

Jereboam: Well, I don't know much about astronomy, but even I reckon I've seen some fairly unusual stars before – or some of them might have been planets, I'm not sure.

Anyway, the point is that I've never felt the urge to walk towards one of them!

Innkeeper: Strange, isn't it? From what I gather, these people somehow felt drawn towards the star.

Jereboam: There's another thing: I can see that a star could lead you in a certain direction – sailors use them for navigation, obviously -- but how

does the star tell you where to stop? It sounds like someone reaching the base of a rainbow: it just wouldn't happen.

Innkeeper: Such a curious business! They almost seem to have had their own connection with the star, as if it had summoned them personally. At least that would explain why half the world hasn't been turning up here.

Jereboam: That's a point: nobody else has followed this star, have they?

Innkeeper: Not as far as I know...although I think one or two of the shepherds might have mentioned it.

Jereboam: Look, can I pick you up on something you said a moment ago? You said that the men looked like royalty when they first arrived. Do you mean that they didn't look royal afterwards?

Innkeeper: They came into the town with great pomp and ceremony – all very impressive in its way. But then everything seemed to change, and you'd hardly notice that they were around. In the end they just slipped away, almost in secret.

Jereboam: I can explain that. From what I was told, they needed to avoid being spotted by certain people.

Innkeeper: I heard that rumour too – but there's more to it than that. Everyone that's seen this young family has gone away changed in some way – myself included. With those kings, or whatever they were, you could see they'd been humbled, even startled. Everybody seems to be affected in a different way.

Jereboam: I'm beginning to realise that too.

THIS WEEK

Sunday is the celebration of the Epiphany of the Lord. The light has come into the darkness of the world and our salvation was made known to the Gentiles. The Prophet Isaiah offers us a vibrant image of hope and fulfillment: "Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you." St

Matthew's Gospel brings us the story of the Magi and their encounter with Herod on the way to "do homage" to the newborn King of the Jews. "And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was."

In the week that follows the Epiphany we continue with more first readings from the First Letter of St John. He wants us to believe the message: we are from God and are loved by God and "whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love."

The Gospels this week are from all four gospel writers, St Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We read of Jesus traveling through Galilee "teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people." He feeds loaves and fishes to the hungry and exhorts his disciples, "Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!" when they are caught in a storm at sea. When he reads from the scriptures at the synagogue, he proclaims, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." On Saturday, John tells his followers he is not the Christ. "He must increase; I must decrease."

Next Sunday is the Baptism of the Lord. We hear the Lord say in the first reading from Isaiah, "Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit." Those words are echoed in the reading from Luke's Gospel, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." This feast marks the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of Ordinary Time on the Church calendar.

A Homily for the Epiphany

The word 'Epiphany' means revelation or 'showing forth.' Today's feast is really about God revealing himself to the entire world, not just to the chosen people of the Old, original Covenant. In many ways, in its use of themes from the Old Testament, St Matthew's is the most Jewish of the four Gospels. But here right at its beginning, it emphasises the message that God is reaching out to all peoples -- to both Jews and Gentiles alike. To everyone. The Old Testament is largely

concerned with God's dealings with the people of Israel, and the New Testament with his revelation of himself to the peoples of the whole world. That's what the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus represents, the offer of salvation to the whole world.

Matthew portrays the magi as having been led by a star to discover where the promised king of the Jews was to be born. He doesn't portray them as kings - that's a later tradition stemming from the idea of the leaders of all nations coming to the stable in Bethlehem. Matthew tells us they were from the caste of Zoroastrian philosopher priests and astronomers – they were the Magi from Persia, modern-day Iran. God is shown in this story as building upon their wisdom and their knowledge of the stars and using it as a starting point for their journey, a journey which leads them to faith, to a recognition that here in the new-born Jesus is God's revelation of himself to the world.

But what they read in the stars and the planets doesn't take them directly to Bethlehem, first they had to consult those who knew the Jewish prophecies as part of their tradition, and allow themselves to be guided. That's why they ended up in Jerusalem with the scholars and advisors of Herod's court. And when they reached Bethlehem, we see them offering the worship which is due only to God, the source and goal of our intellect, to a newborn baby, the most vulnerable of all living creatures.

The message of the Christmas season is that in the person of Jesus, the almighty and transcendent God, the creator of heaven and earth, expressed his love for his creation in becoming a human being. He could be seen and heard, held in his mother's arms and later, when he is a man, displayed to the world upon the arms of the cross.

As we know, the Magi brought gifts: gold, which acknowledges his kingship, frankincense which speaks of his divinity (you only burn incense to God) and myrrh which foreshadows his death (in other words this is someone whose death is the key to understanding his significance) In return, the Christ child gives them the gift of faith. St Matthew tells us they instinctively recognise who he is and they knelt and paid him homage.

This feast of the Epiphany, then, is all about calling, revelation and mission,

about a search, a finding and a sharing. God called the wise men from the East to recognise him and to welcome the salvation he was bringing about. When they returned home, as St Matthew says, avoiding the plots of Herod, they would have told others about the mystery they had seen.

But what does this strange story say to us? Like the magi, we are called to welcome Jesus with faith, and to be epiphanies, revelations to the world ourselves, proclaiming the Good News not only by what we say but also by the way in which we live. To do that we have first to encounter him. And the most accessible way God can be known is by being human like we are. We are led to his divinity by first meeting him in his humanity. Like the Wise Men, that's where our search leads us.

It's almost certainly true that all of the imperfections and problems of our human lives come about because we are looking for happiness, acceptance and fulfilment, and we're not sure how to find it. The answer to our search is the same as that of the Magi - in Christ - God as a human being - we find the ability to live truly human lives that reflect God's love and compassion.

The magi from the East were wise men, philosophers, those who studied the stars, the intellectual leaders of their culture. In a sense they are also representative of all those who look for the deepest meaning of life.

And today as we celebrate the Epiphany we ourselves are invited to continue our searching for God, our seeking of the deepest meaning of human existence. Yet as with the Magi, it isn't an unaided search, we are not journeying in the dark. God has come to meet us and share his life with us. Our search for God is in reality our recognition that it is God who has come searching for us.

We find him here, at the Eucharist, as the Wise men found him at the stable. We find him in the humble elements of Bread and Wine. Those symbolic gifts the Magi brought are exchanged for the gift of faith and belief and meaning. The gifts of bread and wine that we offer are themselves transformed by God himself into the person of our crucified and risen Lord who gives himself to us as nourishment, sacramental food, to strengthen us in our lives as Christian disciples.

So really the message of the Epiphany is the message of the Incarnation itself, of the mystery of the divine life shining through the human, becoming part of his creation in order to restore it and renew it. It's the recognition that there is a God who loves us and who comes to us, as one of us, in order for us to find the acceptance, fulfilment and meaning that we are all in some way searching for. +

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

Fr Michael is off duty this week

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

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY

***The Epiphany of the Lord
5th January 2025***

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

NEXT SUNDAY

***The Baptism of the Lord
12th January 2024:***

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

Readings:

Isaiah 43.1-7

Psalms 29

Acts 8.14-17

St Luke 3.15-17, 21-22

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

Puddings and Alpha! Starting in the New Year

The Alpha course is a free 10 week course involving eating puddings, meeting others and learning about the Christian faith in an informal way. Each session we will share a delicious pudding, watch a video and have time for discussion where different thoughts, ideas and opinions can be raised. Sundays 7pm - 8.45pm 12th January to 23rd March at St Christopher's Bulwark.

Alpha is for those new to faith, and it's also for those who want to explore their faith further. For more information, contact Zoe or Barney at SaintsChepstow@cinw.org.uk

THE EPIPHANY PROCLAMATION 2025

Dear brothers and sisters, the glory of the Lord has shone upon us, and shall ever be manifest among us, until the day of his return. Through the rhythms of times and seasons let us celebrate the mysteries of salvation.

Let us recall the year's culmination, the **Easter Triduum** of the Lord: his last supper, his crucifixion, his burial, and his rising celebrated between the evening of the Seventeenth day of April and the evening of the Nineteenth day of April. Easter Sunday being on the Twentieth day of April.

Each Easter -- as on each Sunday -- the Holy Church makes present the great and saving deed by which Christ has for ever conquered sin and death. From Easter are reckoned all the days we keep holy.

Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, will occur on the Fifth day of March. **The Ascension** of the Lord will be commemorated on

Sunday, the First day of June or Thursday, the Twenty-ninth day of May.

Pentecost, joyful conclusion of the season of Easter, will be celebrated on the Eighth day of June.

And, this year the **First Sunday of Advent** will be on the Thirtieth day of November, 2025.

Likewise the pilgrim Church proclaims the passover of Christ in the feasts of the holy Mother of God, in the feasts of the Apostles and Saints, and in the commemoration of the faithful departed.

To Jesus Christ, who was, who is, and who is to come, Lord of time and history, be endless praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

Epiphany Blessing of Chalk 2025

“Chalking the door” is a traditional way to celebrate and physically mark the occasion of the Epiphany and God’s blessing of our lives and home. With time the chalk will fade. It is a reminder to let the meaning of the written symbols sink into the depths of our heart and be manifest in our words and actions.

Instructions for Blessing the Home

Using the blessed chalk write **20 + C + M + B + 25** on the lintel of your front door (*or front porch step or other convenient location*) while saying:

The three Wise Men, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, followed the star of God’s Son who became human two thousand and twenty-five years ago. May Christ bless our home and remain with us throughout the new year. **Amen.**

The following prayer may be said:

Visit, O blessed Lord, this home with the gladness of your presence. Bless all who live or visit here with the gift of your love; and grant that we may manifest your love to each other and to all whose lives we touch. May we grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of you; guide, comfort, and strengthen us in peace, O Jesus Christ, now and for ever. Amen.