

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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Mobile 07867803479
E-mail: frmichael1@aol.com

11th May 2025

The Fourth Sunday of Easter

Good Shepherd Sunday

The Collect

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life:
raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness,
that we may seek those things which are above, where he reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God,
now and for ever. **AMEN**

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

In Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, 'Please come to us

without delay.' So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, 'Tabitha, get up.' Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner. [9; 36 - 43]

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

Psalm 23

**R/ The Lord is my shepherd:
I shall not be in want.**

The Lord is my shepherd;
therefore can I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters.

**R/ The Lord is my shepherd:
I shall not be in want.**

He shall refresh my soul
and guide me in the paths
of righteousness for his name's sake.
Though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

**R/ The Lord is my shepherd:
I shall not be in want.**

You spread a table before me in the
presence of those who trouble me;
you have anointed my head with oil,
and my cup shall be full.
Surely goodness and loving mercy
shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house

of the Lord for ever.

**R/ The Lord is my shepherd:
I shall not be in want.**

A reading from the Revelation to St John [7; 9 - 17]

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!' And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, singing, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.' Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, 'Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?' I said to him, 'Sir, you are the one that knows.' Then he said to me, 'These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'

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

Gradual Hymn

Alleluia, alleluia!
I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;
I know my own and my own know me.

Alleluia!

The Lord be with you:

And also with you

Listen to the Gospel of Christ

according to St. John. [10, 22 - 30]

R/ Glory to you, O Lord.

At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered, 'I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord

R/ Praise to you, O Christ.

For Your Prayers

That we follow where Christ the Good Shepherd leads us
For our brothers and sisters in the Roman Catholic Church and for newly elected Pope Leo XIV
The government & people of Ukraine and a just and peaceful end to Russia's war of aggression there.
All who are caught up in war or conflict
All those without adequate food or shelter
The people of Gaza, Israel, Lebanon & Syria, & for lasting peace in the Middle East
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 Leo, 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; Mary; Peter; Kenneth Cameron; Margaret; Althea; Naylor & Eira Firth; Margi & Bob Osborne, Yvette; Val Higgs, Marilyn.

For the Departed:

The recently departed: Ron Painter; our own departed relatives & friends, and those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Chris Hogben; Diane Pattison; David Thomas, bishop.

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.

Eli

Jereboam: Lovely to see you again, Eli. You're looking well. How are the sheep?

Eli: Oh, they're keeping pretty well, thank you...not quite as old and creaky as I am myself, but then they haven't been around as long.

Jereboam: I remember you telling us once about how Jesus was like a shepherd. Maybe today you could explain a bit more about what a shepherd's life involves?

Eli: I'll have a go. The first thing to say is that it's a slow life. Everything happens at the sheep's pace. You watch over them as they go about their daily routine of eating, drinking, resting and so on. You supervise and you protect them. Very often you're just there, not doing anything much – at least not in the way people usually mean. Every so often you'll lead them to new pasture land. So, for example, we always go further up into the hills during the warmer months. Wherever you are, you just live with the sheep and check that they're safe, and that they have enough to eat and drink. A lot of the time they're probably not even aware that I'm around. Mind you, they'd probably notice soon enough if I weren't.

Jereboam: I'm reminded of when my children were young. I'd sometimes sit with them while they were asleep.

Eli: It is a bit like that, I suppose. Even when the sheep are awake, you're not entertaining them or playing with them, as you might with children. As I say, you're just there. Mind you, it's fascinating to watch them and see how they relate to each other. And you're always on your guard – that's another thing. You're always aware of potential dangers. You develop an instinct for such things. It's curious in a way: even with such a steady, slow life, there will still be moments when you suddenly have to act very decisively to preserve the safety of your animals.

Jereboam: Do you have favourites among them?

Eli: I don't know – that's a tricky question. I think I'd say that

some of the sheep trust me more than others do, so you build up more of an understanding with those ones. But I'm not sure that I have favourites.

Jereboam: Can you identify them all individually?

Eli: I'd say so, yes: they're all different from each other, when you know what to look for.

Jereboam: And are you glad to be a shepherd?

Eli: It's hard to imagine being anything else, to be honest. It's my life and, yes, I'm happy with it. Of course there are difficulties and so on, but everybody has their fair share of those.

Jereboam: Here's the obvious question now: it had to crop up sooner or later. Why do you think Jesus described himself as a shepherd?

Eli: Well, thinking back to all I've just said, Jesus essentially does the same thing as I do, but with people. Just go back and substitute the word "people" for "sheep". It's all the same, I reckon. Mind you, I've heard some people refer to Jesus as a lamb, which starts confusing me.

Jereboam: Let's leave that bit for another day, if you don't mind...

THIS WEEK

On the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Jesus offers comfort to those who follow him: "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

Wednesday is the Feast of Saint Matthias, Apostle, with its own special readings.

The first readings this week continue the story of the growth of the community, through the Acts of the Apostles.

For the gospels this week, we read from St John's Gospel, chapters 10, 12, 13 and 14 - all emphasising who Jesus is - from the Father and one with the Father. He has come to bring us light and life. He promises us that he is the gate, the way to life. And, he assures us that if we make our home in him, he will be in us, and we will thereby be one with Jesus and the Father. He says, "I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved." "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life,

and they shall never perish." "Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me sees the one who sent me."

"From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I AM." "Do not let your hearts be troubled." "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." "If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it."

Next Sunday: St John's Gospel returns to the Last Supper as Jesus gives his followers a new way of living: "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

A Homily for Easter 4

+ In a way which is in sharp contrast to what we see as the gentle pastoral image of the shepherd among his sheep, today's gospel reading comes at a crucial point in the Gospel according to St John. The Lord's words, 'I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me,' come at a point where the opposition to him and the threat to his life are gathering and growing stronger. St John tells us that he has just cured the man born blind, and that the authorities are looking for ways to destroy him. It's also clear that they are beginning to persecute those who follow him. Opinion is divided and polarised, between those who are prepared to listen to the teaching of Jesus and those who won't. There is a very deep division developing between those who accept Christ and those who reject him. It's in this context that Jesus describes as the Good Shepherd. So the illustration he uses here of the sheep and the shepherd is about as far removed as we can image from any kind of image we might have of the countryside, particularly on a beautiful Mat morning like this. Firstly, the landscape Jesus calls to mind is not the one with which we would be familiar here, but is the rocky, semi-barren hill country of the middle east. To enter into that landscape at that time is to recognise an ever-present threat of violence and insecurity, from wild animals and human thieves and robbers, not to mention the inhospitable nature of the climate for much of the year.

The safety and even the survival of the sheep depends upon the strength of their bond with their shepherd, the one who

continually watches over the flock. If the sheep don't listen to his voice; they will wander off to almost certain disaster. It's really not a comfortable, pastoral image that Jesus very carefully and deliberately calls to mind with his metaphor of the good shepherd, but a troubled, uncertain scene, with the threat of danger never far away.

But Jesus describes himself as the good shepherd, who calls out to his flock in the midst of the troubles and uncertainties of human life. He is the one who leads and guides us to a place where we can thrive, where we can grow, where we can be at peace. And when he says, "The Father and I are one," he makes it very clear that this unity is not just an earthly belonging together, but is founded upon the unity of the Holy Trinity. When Jesus tells his disciples that he and the Father are one, he is telling them that the community he is calling them into, the sacramental community of the Church, is not just an earthly institution, but a sign of the divine purpose at work both in this world and the next.

Today on this Good Shepherd Sunday, we are very familiar with the image of the Lord as the Shepherd lovingly caring for his sheep. Today's Gospel reminds us that it is Christ, who calls each one of us, who truly knows each one of us, and that his knowing us gives us new life - the Easter life of Resurrection.

And what of that calling? Traditionally this particular Sunday was a day on which we heard appeals from the pulpit to consider vocations to the sacred ministry of the Church, to consider whether we ourselves could have a vocation as deacons or priests in God's Church. Well, that need is always there, perhaps *particularly today* and that call always goes out from Christ himself to those he wishes to hear it, sometimes in the most unlikely and inconvenient circumstances which upset our most carefully laid plans and visions for our future. As the apostles themselves found out, God is just like that..

But we are also aware that "vocation, "calling" whatever word you want to use to describe it, is something which is addressed *to all of us* because we are baptised Christians, part of the flock of the Good Shepherd. If we are Christians then we have a vocation; Christ calls us to follow him in the way he has in mind for each one of us. We all have a calling, and

part of that calling is to listen for the way he wants us to go. It's all too easy to take this vocation as a Christian for granted and for the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd to be drowned out amid the noise, internal and external, of our daily concerns and the things we have to do to get on with life. We can take too much for granted sometimes; any calling has to be deepened and renewed.

We have to keep returning to the source, we have to keep returning to Jesus himself, who here - now- at the Eucharist - renews his life within us. Where the Eucharist is, there is Christ, where Christ is, there is the Church.

But other people, too, help us to recognise the voice of Christ in our life. We have to ask ourselves who are the men and women who show us the face of God and the love of Christ? We all have known or still know those who heard the voice of the Good Shepherd and shared that voice with us. If we're lucky they are there for us still. If they're not we can be sure that they pray for us, as we pray for them.

One of the most pressing questions which faces us here as part of Christ's Church, is where and in what does our future lie?

Certainly, one aspect of our future role as communities in a very secular culture such as our own is as places of prayer or pools of deep reflection where, in sharp contrast to the ever more frantic nature of life as we more or less have to live it these days, the abundant life of God can be encountered. Alternative communities away from the strident performative cruelties of others where mercy, acceptance and forgiveness can be proclaimed and practised – places where Christ leads us, feeds us and teaches us the ways of peace.

In what specific ways, then, can Jesus be the Good Shepherd for those who follow him in these uncertain and troubling times? The Risen Lord comes to us even as he did to the Apostle Thomas, bearing the Easter wounds of crucifixion, spreading his arms wide, like an open door to the life of heaven. We watch the world going by quite *unaware* and sometimes, in its growing hatreds and divisions, even hostile to the message of peace, love and redemption which the Christian faith proclaims – and at our best we live up to - but the message of Christ the Good Shepherd - to us and to all ages - is one of hope and not despair, and it's a

message which - by its nature - because it's the nature of God himself - is one which has to be shared in whatever way we can, not just huddled to ourselves in shrinking congregations. Today, then, on this Good Shepherd Sunday let's pray that we can recognise more and more God's life given to us in baptism and which is constantly renewed here at the altar and focus on everything which helps us live that life more fully, more profoundly, more essentially. We must keep our eyes on Jesus as our Good Shepherd and follow him with joy and hope in the Resurrection life which begins here and now. +

Rogationtide Walk

A pilgrimage around our churches
Saturday 24th May

Further details on the email

24/7 Prayer Room

St Christopher's, Bulwark

10 a.m. Friday 30th May to 10 a.m.

Saturday 31st May

See poster for further details

Bible Study

at St Christopher's

starting 11th May 7 – 8.30 p.m.

The Seven 'I am' sayings of Jesus

SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

TODAY

The Fourth Sunday of Easter

11th May 2025

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist

at St Arvan's

11.30 Liturgy of the Word

at St Deiniol's, Itton

NEXT SUNDAY

The Fifth Sunday of Easter

18th May 2025

10 a.m. Sung Eucharist

at St Arvan's

11.30 a.m. Holy Eucharist

at Holy Cross,
Kilgwrrwg

Readings:

Acts 11.1-18

Psalms 148 or 148.1-6

Revelation 21.1-6

St John 13.31-35

Fr Michael's day off this week is Tuesday.

Daily celebrations this week resume on Wednesday at 10 a.m.

Friday's mass is at 09.30.

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

The Ministry Area

Prayer Group

meets every Thursday 7.45pm – 9pm

at David Carne's house, The Cedars,

Chapel Lane, Pwllmeyric.

email david@bedlambeds.com

St Arvans Tea and Chat

June 14th and usually every second

Saturday of the month

Childrens activity table

For assistance or a lift

please ring Diane on 628084