The Orthodox Parish of St Martin and St Helen

Charity number: 1192469

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles & Ireland

HE Metropolitan Silouan Oner



Editorial

On the 11th of November we will celebrate the Feast of one of our patron saints, St Martin the Merciful, Bishop of Tours. Much of what we know of St Martin's life comes from the writings of Sulpicius Severus, a fourth-century Gaulish (French) Christian and contemporary and follower of St Martin during the saint's life as Bishop of Tours in France. One important aspect of the life of St Martin which stands out with respect to the Christian life in general is his great humility. His father, a pagan, was opposed to Martin's love for Christ and had him enrolled against his will in the Roman army of the emperor Constantius, to try and diminish his son's obvious faith by immersing him in a life of soldiering. Martin consented nonetheless in peace to honour his father's wishes.

Later, when he had left military service he was again pressed, rather against his will, to be enthroned as bishop of Tours. The story is that he was tricked into leaving his retreat in the forest outside the city to answer a bogus request to come and heal a sick woman within the city walls. However, he was 'ambushed' by a huge crowd of ordinary people from Tours, physically carrying him into the church to be ordained! Again it was Martin's great humility which led to his reluctance to fulfil the wishes of the people of Tours, considering the honour too great for him.

The world is full of temptations, to power, to pride, to easy living, worldly praise and honour and the vanity of 'selfie' culture which at its worst tempts us to present to the world a puffed-up, trivial and dishonest version of our real personhood. Let us seek God in small actions, helping and loving each other with beautiful deeds and words, serving the church in the countless small and practical ways that make a difference, giving our time, energy and financial support. And if we are called to some high office or greatness, let us consider it a service to God and to our neighbour in humility and prayer. Let us be faithful to God in our lives of faith — which may often entail travelling on roads we find hard and challenging, inwardly and outwardly. Let us let go of the horrible modern fixation with 'living our best life' and consent to living God's best life for us, come what may. Happy Feast! Pray to God for us O Holy Martin, that our souls may be saved! **-Fr Mark**

Thanks to Father Panagiotis

My thanks go to Father Panagiotis Franklin from Lincoln who came to St Martin's to serve on Sunday 11 October (and indeed on Saturday the 10th) while Paula and I were away in Scotland. We enjoyed a much-needed break and it was good to know the parish was in safe hands while we were gone.

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The Very Reverend Fr Archpriest Alexander Haig (retired). Parish website: https://stmartinscolchester.org.uk



Library

Over the last couple of years we have accumulated, by various donations, a large quantity of books covering a wide range of Orthodox Christian subjects. With the help of several members of our parish these have now been organised into a library on shelves at the rear of the church. The plan is to open the library after the Divine Liturgy each Sunday and it will be good to have a team of volunteers who can take turns to staff it and record the details of books lent and the respective borrowers. If we have a good number of helpers then it will not be too much of a commitment for each person. Please speak to Khouria Paula if you are interested in helping with this important task.

Church Roof Repairs

I must issue a correction to previous information I released regarding the roof repairs. I had originally stated this November as a probable start time. However, there is unfortunately an additional piece of work required to complete our ecological surveys — especially in relation to our bats — of which I was unaware. We have been informed by our consultants that it might be necessary to avoid starting the repairs during the hibernation season and begin instead in March next year. The delay is also caused by the fact that Natural England, who issue the licence to undertake the work, have a 30–60 day response time on receipt of a licence application. The licence we require is also the most complex and expensive due to the multiple species which inhabit the church and grounds. Bakers of Danbury Ltd, our main building contractor, have acknowledged our letter of intent and are committed to the project, and are being very helpful in guiding us through this tricky situation. I apologise for raising everyone's hopes! I am on a steep learning curve, as they say. I will be sure to inform you of any changes. We must do what we are required to do and leave the rest to God.



St Raphael (Hawaweeny) of Brooklyn, †1915: a great son of the Antiochian Church

Born Rafla Hawaweeny in Syria, St Raphael of Brooklyn (1860–1915) served as a devoted archimandrite and bishop, becoming a pivotal missionary to the Arab Orthodox faithful across North America. Following his theological studies and service in Moscow and Kiev, he travelled to New York in 1895 to care for dispersed Arab immigrants. In his tireless pastoral work, he founded St Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn, established a parish cemetery, and published the journal Al-Kalimat (The Word). Recognising the needs of the youth, he strongly encouraged English-language services and instruction to keep their faith alive. Consecrated in 1904 as the very first Orthodox bishop ordained in the Americas, he guided the Syro-Arab Mission to expand to thirty parishes and over 25,000 believers prior to his falling asleep in the Lord in 1915. He was glorified among the saints by the Orthodox Church in the year 2000. His missionary zeal and commitment to serving in the local language remain to this day a lively feature of the Antiochian Orthodox tradition. May his prayers be with us!

Nativity Fast

Please remember that the Nativity Fast starts on Sunday the 15th of November. The fasting rules for 2026 are in the newsletter and if you have any questions or concerns then do come and ask.



Remembrance Sunday 8 November 2026

After the Divine Liturgy on Sunday 8 November we will serve, as is our custom, a short service of remembrance to honour those who have given their lives in defence of our country. As most of you know there is a war memorial on the south aisle wall, commemorating the men of the parish who were killed during the First World War (1914–18). It is a poignant reminder that the historic parish of St Martin's, only a few local streets, lost a good proportion of its young men, in the prime of their lives in that terrible conflict. Reader Nicholas prepared some time ago a very moving and interesting folder containing information about the people behind the names on the memorial, which is on the table beneath. Of course these days, war again touches our parish family and the European continent and looms ever more dauntingly over the whole world and this uniquely British custom can be used as a time to reflect on the utter tragedy of war, wherever it is fought and for whatever reason, and to pray for the repose of the souls of the departed regardless of nationality or creed. God save the King!

From the Fathers

We should let God be the One to praise us and not praise ourselves. For God detests those who commend themselves. Let others applaud our good deeds.
Clement of Rome

Orthodox Parish of St Martin & St Helen

November 2026 Services

Sunday 1 November	Ss Cosmas & Damian. Matins & Holy Liturgy from 9:30am, St Martin's Church.
Saturday 7 November	Great Vespers, 4:30pm St Martin's Church
Sunday 8 November	Matins & Holy Liturgy from 9:30am, St Martin's Church. *Followed by the Act of Remembrance*.
Wednesday 11 November	**Patronal Feast. St Martin the Merciful, Bishop of Tours. Hours & Holy Liturgy from 8:10am, St Martin's Church.**
Saturday 14 November	Great Vespers, 4:30pm St Martin's Church
Sunday 15 November	**NATIVITY FAST BEGINS** Matins & Holy Liturgy from 9:30am, St Martin's Church.
Wednesday 18 November	Service of the Small Paraklesis; 6pm St Helen's Chapel
Saturday 21 November	**The Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple**. Hours & Holy Liturgy from 8:15am, St Helen's Chapel. Great Vespers, 4:30pm St Martin's Church
Sunday 22 November	Matins & Holy Liturgy from 9:30am, St Martin's Church.
Wednesday 25 November	Leavetaking of the Entry into the Temple; Great Martyr Catherine of Alexandria. Hours & Holy Liturgy from 8:10am, St Helen's Chapel.
Saturday 28 November	Great Vespers | 4:30pm St Martin's Church
Sunday 29 November	Matins & Holy Liturgy from 9:30am, St Martin's Church.

+Confessions on Saturday evenings after Great Vespers or by appointment.+

2026 Fasting Calendar

LEGEND:
Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs, fish, olive oil, wine
Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs, fish, olive oil
Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs, fish
Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs
Abstain from meat

Note: On the day of a parish's patronal feast, fish, wine and oil are allowed if it falls on a fasting day.

January						
			1	2	3	
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March						
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29	30	31				

April						
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May						
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November						
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December						
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27	28	29	30	31		

When fasting, please consult your spiritual father for guidance.

STANDING ORDER FORM

To My Bank Manager:

Bank Name	
Bank Address	
Bank Account Number	
Bank Sort Code	

Please Pay:

Payee Bank Name	BARCLAYS BANK
Payee Account Name	The Orthodox Parish of St Helen of Colchester
Payee Sort Code	20-22-67
Payee Account Number	50349364
Payment Amount	
Payment Frequency	
First Payment Date	
Please Quote Ref:	XP-Giving

My Details:

Name	
Address	
Signature	

The Orthodox Parish of St Martin and St Helen, Colchester

(registered charity number: 1192469)

Gift Aid Declaration

Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made (tick ALL relevant boxes)

☐ today ☐ in the past 4 years ☐ in the future

Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate

Gift Aid is reclaimed by The Church from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.

By completing this form you confirm:

"I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference."

Title	**Forename or initials***	**Middle name or initials**	**Surname***
Address*			
Signature:			
Date:			

***Please note that the details marked with * are mandatory.**

Please notify the Parish Treasurer if you:

- Want to cancel this declaration
- Change your name or home address
- No longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

If you pay Income Tax at a higher rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self Assessment tax return or ask HMRC to adjust your tax code.

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