

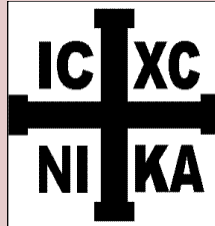
+ **Holy Orthodoxy: a glorious Faith, ever-old, ever-new!** +

Orthodox Parish of St Helen of Colchester

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
of the British Isles and Ireland

Metropolitan: His Eminence Archbishop Silouan

NEWSLETTER 237 DECEMBER 2016



ST NICHOLAS THE WONDERWORKER
Tuesday 6 December
HOLY LITURGY 9.30 AM

Christmas comes but once a year

....and a jolly good job! you will hear many parents say: *I couldn't cope with it all if it were more often - the decorations, the food, the callers, the visits to grandparents: it would all be just too much!*

And of course that's true - in purely secular terms.

So this year my Christmas message to you must be: Don't let that happen in your house!

Put first things first. Put Christ first in your celebrations and everything will work out a little more easily.

It is lovely to celebrate together. It is lovely to get together with family and friends. But let the first and central thing be *worship*.

Everything else is secondary. Everything else will slot into place if Christ and his Holy Birth as God-become-Man are at the core of your life and of your family life.

There are several services in church this year at the feast of the Nativity of Christ; times are given on this page. Not many will be able to be present at all of them—but many could stand before Christ in church at least once and probably more than once.

They will certainly help us enter the true reality of Christmas. Listening attentively to the wonderful words will feed our minds and hearts with the food of eternal life.

We will understand the meaning of the Birth rather more deeply. We will enter the true drama of God-made-Man.

For that mind-boggling belief is at the heart of the Christmas message. We call it the Incarnation.

We are not only *moved* by a charming story of a poor woman giving birth in a back-street barn. We are *overwhelmed* by the fact that God the invisible, God the unknowable, God the undying, "so loved the world" that he himself took flesh, became Man, became a Human Being, became visible, knowable, "dying-able", just like us.

This precious Truth has changed the world, so that the world "BC" was different from the world "AD". This Truth can also change you and me.

Praise to God who took human flesh! Praise to God who at the first Christmas changed everything! Praise to God who poured out his love for us at Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago!

Placing that belief at the centre of our celebrations will mean all the rest of our life becomes at one with itself.

The Prince of Peace, Christ our God, will fill you with this same peace!

Father Alexander



**Father Alexander & Khouria Hilary
wish all readers and friends
a very happy and holy Christmas**

SAYEDNA SILOUAN brought a group of pilgrims to the Monastery to spend a short time in Colchester before they returned to St George's Cathedral. Apart from a mix-up at the beginning about where we were to meet, it all went well.

Two car-loads arrived, and a good number of our people turned out to greet them. I told them about the ancient British tradition of St Helen and Colchester and we venerated the holy Relics. Then there was socialising over tea.

I led them back to their cars via the Castle, the High Street, and St Martin's. They seem to have enjoyed their visit.

Thank you to our people who came or provided food, which was excellent under George Harrison's guidance.

It was good to see our Bishop too!

St Helen's Chapel, Maidenburgh St, High St

St Helen's is 200m down behind the George Hotel in the High Street, but accessible from there only on foot. By car: leave Middleborough Roundabout (between dual carriageways Westway and Balkerne Hill), to Northgate; go straight along St Peter's Street to Castle Park; continue round the bend, up into Maidenburgh Street. The nearest car park is Nunns Road NCP, off St Peter's Street.

Saturday: Great Vespers usually 4.30 pm (check before coming)
Sunday: Mattins 9.45 am (or Hours 10.15 am), Divine Liturgy 10.30 am

Confessions: Saturday 5 pm, after Vespers, or by arrangement
Holy Marriage, Holy Baptism, Funerals, Memorials etc: by arrangement
Children of St Helen (Pre-school & Primary): 1st Saturday 11.00 am

Parish Priest: **Father Alexander (Alistair) Haig**

17 Maidenburgh Street, Colchester CO1 1UB

Tel: 01-206-530-530 Mob: 07-947-047-201 Eml: parishpriest@orthodoxcolchester.org.uk

Rdr Andreas Moran, 6 Woodlands, Welshwood Park CO4 3JA Tel: 01-206-865-697

Rdr Martin Gröb, 21 Alexandra Road CO3 3DF Tel: 07-702-579-743

Churchwardens: David Davies 01-473-745-167 Dusan Radunovic 01-206-762-553

Children of St Helen: Sanja Radunovic 01-206-762-553 Silvia Leffley: 01-206-835-715

Orthodox Parish of St Helen Registered Charity No. 1134418

Bank Account: Sort Code 20-22-67 Account No. 50349364

Parish Website: <http://www.orthodoxcolchester.org.uk>

At St James Anglican Church, Beatrice Rd, Clacton-on-sea CO15 1EE

Divine Liturgy: usually third Saturday of month 10.00 am

CLACTON
HOLY LITURGY
Saturday
17 December
10.00 am

CHILDREN OF ST HELEN is now up and running for pre-school and primary children - a parent stays with the child at the moment. They meet in St Helen's Chapel on the first Saturday of the month (so 3 December) 11.00 am till noon. **Details from Sanja 01-206-762-553 or Silvia 01-206-835-715.**

We lose another Founding Member: the ever-memorable Alexia Lansley

Irena Lansley, known to many as Alexia—to others as Dolly, and I think there were other names some used – was not just a *founding member* of this parish: she was actually a *foundation-stone* of this parish (one of them anyway)!

She left Greece for England many years ago, and settled in these parts. Soon she was connected to the new Monastery of St John the Baptist and its founder Elder Sophrony, and frequently worshipped there.

Then, in the early 1990s, the Church of England was going through a difficult period and numbers of us were increasingly unhappy there. Having consulted numbers of Anglicans and Orthodox, and in the company of others similarly minded, I decided to leave the Anglicans to their own way and seek admission to Holy Orthodoxy.

With the blessing of both Bishop and Monastery we set up a brand-new Orthodox parish for north-east Essex, and I looked not only for other disaffected western Christians to join me but also for cradle-Orthodox, to give strength and stability. Alexia was a cradle-Orthodox who responded with enthusiasm.

She supported me wholeheartedly and I will ever be grateful for that. She saw this as an opportunity to serve the Holy Church she loved. Married to an Anglican priest very sympathetic to Orthodoxy, Paul, she knew something about the problems of Anglicanism. (Later of course Paul himself joined us.)

She in no way cut herself off from the life of the Monastery, but was also committed to parish life here. She was generous in financial support and delighted to give necessities for worship such as vestments. She was also generous to my family and me in an early and difficult period.

Alexia was of course a *dramatic* woman. A singer with a fine and strong voice, she loved to sing Puccini, and such operatic roles matched her personality. But though we all knew well that she could be difficult and exasperating, yet I think it is true to say that large numbers of people *loved* her. Nor was she afraid to tell me if I was doing something wrong: I sometimes had to deal with her a little firmly, but she always respected, honoured her Priests.

She was a Princess of the Komnenos Imperial dynasty of Byzantium and particularly of the Trebizond Empire, and somehow managed to convey that at all times. Her house was slightly exotic and her dining chairs, set round an impressive table, were decorated with the Byzantine double-headed eagle—and were



entirely suitable to be borrowed, as indeed they were, for use when we had a Bishop in church.

Towards the end of her life she was not able to walk very far, so, both in Colchester and at her second home in Lefkas in Greece, used a tricycle - but even that became a throne for her! Again, her arrival in church was often late and always impressive. So at the Liturgy in St Helen's we managed to have *three* Entrances - the *Alexia* Entrance as well as the *Little* and the *Great* - and this remained true even after she entered with a walking-frame!

A matter of months before she died our new Archbishop, His Eminence Silouan, made his first proper visit to Colchester. I felt that as a faithful founding member, now housebound, she ought to have a visit, and I took him to her: he blessed her tenderly, and she was delighted, thrilled, but even then, when he asked her age, she refused to reveal to him what she never discussed with anyone (word has it that she was either 94 or 95 when she died, by the way!).

It was a privilege to me to have cared for her pastorally. She received the Holy Mysteries of Holy Communion and Anointing a couple of days before she passed on to heavenly places. I served her funeral in St John of Shanghai and San Francisco church by kind permission of Father Andrew. Besides her family and friends there were also present Father Kyrill, Abbot from the Monastery, and some of the Sisters, who sang for their old friend at her burial, in Colchester Cemetery. Her soul meanwhile has flown to the God in whom she deeply trusted and whose angels she now entertains no doubt with operatic flights!

Memory eternal, dear Sister in Christ! We pray for you and for Paul, who cared for you so devotedly, and for Stephen and all his family.

Here and There

ST HELENA HOSPICE has been going for many years now and has been highly successful in providing Christian care for patients at the end of their life, particularly ones with cancer. Several of our people have benefitted, including beloved Archimandrite ATHANASIOS, who died there in 2011. Recently our JOSEPH (Bryan) DEVENPORT has been helping there on behalf of his Rotary Club, and in October he brought two of its leaders to see St Helen's Chapel, the Rev GILL MOORE who is now Chaplain, and KAREN CAUSTON who is Director of Inpatient Services. It was good to meet them and to pass on a little about St Helen and her traditional links with our church and city.

GIFTS: Christmas gifts are being sent from the Parish to the following good local causes:

- **St Helena Hospice**, our long-time friend.
- **Little Haven Children's Hospice**, caring for children in the whole area.
- **Beacon House**, caring for people living in Colchester on the streets or in very poor conditions.

A Word from the Fathers

The Lord came in a visible way into his own domain. His own creation sustained him, that creation which he himself sustains. By his obedience shown on one tree he retraced the disobedience which had been shown through another. The harmful seduction of Eve, a virgin shortly to be married, was remedied by the saving truth which the angel announced to Mary, who was also a betrothed virgin.

St Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (c. 130-200)

DECEMBER DAYS

Sat	3	S Birinus, Bishop of Dorchester, Oxfordshire
Sun	4	Pentecost 24, Great Martyr Barbara, S John of Damascus
Mon	5	S Saba the Sanctified
Tue	6	S Nicolas the Wonderworker, of Myra in Lycia
Wed	7	S Ambrose, Bishop of Milan
Fri	9	Conception of the Theotokos by Righteous Anna
Sun	11	Sunday of the Holy Forefathers
Mon	12	S Spyridon the Wonderworker, Bishop of Trimythous
Tue	13	S Herman of Alaska
Wed	14	S Venantius Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers
Thu	15	Hieromartyr Eleutherius, Bishop of Illyria
Sat	17	S Dionysius the Wonderworker, Bishop of Aegina
Sun	18	Sunday before Nativity
Mon	19	Martyr Boniface of Tarsus in Cilicia
Tue	20	Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer, Bp of Antioch
Sat	24	Eve of Nativity
Sun	25	NATIVITY ACCORDING TO THE FLESH OF OUR LORD & SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST
Mon	26	Synaxis of the Mother of God
Tue	27	Protomartyr & Archdeacon Stephen
Wed	28	20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia
Thu	29	Holy Innocents, the children slain by Herod
Fri	30	S Makary, Metropolitan of Moscow
Sat	31	Saturday before Theophany

A FULLER LIST OF THE MONTH'S FEASTS AND FASTS IS AVAILABLE