
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



From February 2026 the newsletter will be in a new multipage format, focusing primarily on useful information relating to parish life, services, fasts and feasts and ways in which people can practically help the parish. As we approach Lent it is a good time to reorder our priorities and to think about ways we can move closer to God through our thoughts, words, and deeds. We can consider what things we value which separate us from God and from our neighbour, and whether we can set these aside to start out anew, on a more intentionally holy path. After Forgiveness Sunday we will again start our cycle of Presanctified Liturgies and the Akathist Hymn during the weeks of the fast. Try to attend these and engage with them prayerfully. **-Fr Mark**

Departed. Please pray for the repose of the soul of our departed sister Maria Aristodimou. Keep her mother Kalisthene and her family in your prayers at this sad time. The funeral will be held on Monday 23 February in St Martin's Church at 11:00am, with the burial at 12:30pm at Colchester Cemetery.

Holy Baptism. We warmly welcome our newly illumined sister Thea (baptised Theoctiste). Please keep her and her Godmother Khouria Paula in your prayers. Glory to God.

Children in Church. It is a great blessing to have so many children in our community. It is natural for small children to be restless and sometimes noisy, but please bear in mind the following:

1. Try to keep your children with you and don't let them wander off to play with their friends. Help them participate in the liturgy by helping them notice and respond to what happens. If your toddler wants to walk around, go with them to help them stay calm and quiet.
2. Don't bring noisy toys. A small teddy or soft toy is fine if a child is comforted by it, but please do not bring plastic or mechanical toys which emit sounds!
3. Encourage them to stand properly and quietly in the line for Holy Communion. Hands out of pockets, no toys or hats. Babies first.
4. Finally, as adults and parents, we have a duty to model good behaviour in our children. If we are not paying attention to the liturgy, and are whispering and chatting then we cannot be surprised if our children do the same!

News

St Martin Parish Information

WhatsApp group



Parish WhatsApp. Please do join the parish WhatsApp group. It is a very useful way to keep in touch about things. If things need to be rearranged or cancelled we can get information out quickly to nearly 80 people.

Christian Giving. You will see in this edition that we have included a form to instruct banks to set up a regular payment to the parish. Please consider doing this according to what you feel you can afford. Regular giving means that our income is more predictable and that we can plan for the future as well as covering our regular outgoings. Consider that a Premium Netflix subscription is currently £18.99 per month. That same amount given sacrificially to the church means a regular donation of £227.88 per year! This year we will be focusing on regular giving as part of our Orthodox Christian life, to build and nurture Christ's Holy Church.

Safeguarding. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility - our parish safeguarding lead is Dusan Radunovic, also one of our stewards. If you are concerned about a child or an adult who you think may be at risk of harm please talk to Dusan or to me (Father Mark). It is part of our Christian duty to look out for for one another's welfare and safety, and to take action if needed.

Homily on the beginning of Great Lent (St John Chrysostom)

I speak not, indeed, of such a fast as most persons keep, but of real fasting; not merely an abstinence from meats; but from sins too. For the nature of a fast is such, that it does not suffice to deliver those who practise it, unless it be done according to a suitable law. *"For the wrestler,"* it is said, *"is not crowned unless he strive lawfully."* (2 Timothy 2:5) To the end then, that when we have gone through the labour of fasting, we forfeit not the crown of fasting, we should understand how, and after what manner, it is necessary to conduct this business; since that Pharisee also fasted, (Luke 18:12) but afterwards went down empty, and destitute of the fruit of fasting. The Publican fasted not; and yet he was accepted in preference to him who had fasted; in order that you may learn that fasting is unprofitable, except all other duties follow with it. The Ninevites fasted, and won the favour of God. (Jonah 3:10) The Jews, fasted too, and profited nothing, nay, they departed with blame.

Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your works! Is it said by what kind of works? If you see a poor man, take pity on him! If you see in enemy, be reconciled to him! If you see a friend gaining honour, envy him not! If you see a handsome woman, pass her by! For let not the mouth only fast, but also the eye, and the ear, and the feet, and the hands, and all the members of our bodies. Let the hands fast, by being pure from rapine and avarice. Let the feet fast, by ceasing from running to the unlawful spectacles. Let the eyes fast, being taught never to fix themselves rudely upon handsome countenances, or to busy themselves with strange beauties. For looking is the food of the eyes, but if this be such as is unlawful or forbidden, it mars the fast; and upsets the whole safety of the soul; but if it be lawful and safe, it adorns fasting. For it would be among things the most absurd to abstain from lawful food because of the fast, but with the eyes to touch even what is forbidden. Do you not eat flesh? Feed not upon lasciviousness by means of the eyes. Let the ear fast also. The fasting of the ear consists in refusing to receive evil speakings and calumnies. *"You shall not receive a false report,"* it says.



Catechesis. Instruction classes for inquirers and newcomers will start again in March (date to be announced). These will take place every other Sunday after the Divine Liturgy for about an hour and will focus on the Christian life and Orthodox faith and practice.

Orthodox Parish of St Martin & St Helen
+ February 2026 Services +

Sunday 1 February	Holy Baptism, Hours & Divine Liturgy: Sunday of the Tax Collector & The Pharisee 9:30 St Martin's Church
Monday 2 February	Meeting of Our Lord & Saviour Jesus Christ in The Temple, Hours and Divine Liturgy from 08:15 St Helen's Chapel
Saturday 7 February	Great Vespers 4:30pm St Martin's Church
Sunday 8 February	Matins & Divine Liturgy: Sunday of the Prodigal Son 9:30 St Martin's Church
Tuesday 10 February	Hours and Divine Liturgy: Hieromartyr Haralambos 8:15am St Helen's Chapel.
Saturday 14 February	Hours & Divine Liturgy: Saturday of Souls St Martin's Church 9:30 Great Vespers 4:30pm St Martin's Church.
Sunday 15 February	Matins & Divine Liturgy: Sunday of Meatfare 9:30 St Martin's Church.
Tuesday 17 February	Hours and Divine Liturgy: Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit 8:15am St Helen's Chapel
Saturday 21 February	Great Vespers 4:30pm St Martin's Church
Sunday 22 February	Matins & Divine Liturgy: Cheesefare Sunday; The Expulsion of Adam & Eve From Paradise; Forgiveness Sunday 9:30 St Martin's Church. + <i>Liturgy concludes with Forgiveness Prayers</i> +
Wednesday 25 February	Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts 6pm St Martin's Church
Friday 27 February	Akathist - First Salutations, 6pm St Helen's Chapel
Saturday 28 February	Great Vespers 4:30pm St Martin's Church

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

OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2026

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS	THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week FEBRUARY 1st	 <i>TRIDION WEEKS</i> Publican and the Pharisee Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week FEBRUARY 8th	 The Prodigal Son Returns! Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare FEBRUARY 15th FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY	 The Last Judgement Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare FEBRUARY 22nd FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY	 Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise! <i>FORGIVENESS SUNDAY</i> Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent MARCH 1st	 <i>GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS</i> SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent MARCH 8th	 ST GREGORY PALAMAS Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent MARCH 15th	 VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS <i>HALF WAY TO PASCHA!</i> Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent MARCH 22nd	 ST JOHN of the LADDER Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent MARCH 29th	 ST MARY of EGYPT Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! APRIL 5th GREAT WEEK BEGINS	 <i>GREAT AND HOLY WEEK</i> ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY APRIL 10th	 GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY <i>JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS</i> CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! APRIL 12th NO FASTING!	 <i>BRIGHT WEEK</i> HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!) Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!

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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