

**Orthodox Parish of  
St Helen of Colchester**  
*Antiochian Orthodox Deanery of the UK & Ireland*  
**NEWSLETTER 183**      **JANUARY 2012**



**WEEKDAY LITURGIES AT ST HELEN'S, 9.30 AM**

**Friday 6 January**

**HOLY THEOPHANY OF  
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

**Thursday 2 February**

**MEETING OF OUR LORD  
IN THE TEMPLE**

# 'Down at the Riverside' we shall pray for Colchester...

**O**n Sunday 8 January we go down to the River Colne below St Helen's Chapel to bless the waters as usual. It is the Sunday after Theophany, and that is what we have done for some years.

The walk to the water is the ancient custom of the whole Orthodox Church, inspired by the lovely feast of Theophany (6 January). We recall the Baptism of Christ in the River Jordan, when the Lord at the very beginning of his ministry entered the waters to identify himself in every way with our sinfulness, though himself without sin.

Water has a manifold meaning for us as Christians and as human beings, spiritually and naturally. As in nature, it clearly symbolises *life itself*, for without water there can be no life. Astronomers look for water on the surface of other bodies in the sky, to see if there is the possibility of life ever having been on them. We can live a while without food, but a much shorter time without water.

But it also symbolises death, for if we fall into it we can drown: the very gift that reminds us of life, reminds us also of death.

These basic human references to water are the reason they also mean so much in the Christian Faith.

### Water rich in meaning in the life of the spirit

We use water in Holy Baptism, in sprinkling our homes and buildings and things and people with sanctified water.

This reminds us of the occasions that water is vitally important in the whole Old Testament story - the waters of chaos in the creation of the world; the waters of the Nile through which the Hebrews had to pass to escape; the water so necessary in the forty years in the wilderness, springing from the rock; the waters of the Jordan through which the Hebrews had to pass to enter the promised land of freedom.

It reminds us too, in the New Testament, of the waters of the Jordan which we contemplate now at the time of Theophany - the water into which Christ descended, the water which was the life-depriving mixture of sin and death for the human race, the product of the fall, but the water also which now gives life, spiritual life, eternal life, since Christ has entered it and cleansed it, the divine life given to all who will enter into it.

So it is entirely *natural* to go to the water-side and bless it once a year. Yet it is also entirely *super-natural* to bless it.

We call upon Christ again to enter, to renew his entrance, into our sinful, our death-filled, existence, to renew it, to make it pure again and life-filled. Not just with its own inherent natural life but also with his divine life.

Thus the blessing of the water at Theophany symbolises, realises, makes real, that bringing together, of the natural and the supernatural, of the human and the divine, which is a characteristic of our Holy Faith. Heaven and earth are united, God and Man are reconciled, Heaven is not dragged down to earth, but earth is drawn up into the life of heaven.

And of course the blessing of the river will also mean the blessing of the natural and supernatural life of this town of Colchester, and of this country and world.

**This world so needs our prayers - including Syria, a land which means so much in the life of the Church, and Egypt, which also means a great deal in the life of the Church. Pray this Theophany for these countries and for their peace.**

And God bless us all.

*Father Alexander*



## Holy Theophany

**Sunday 8 January**

<b>Friday 6 January</b>	<b>10.15 am Hours</b>
<b>9.30 am Holy Liturgy</b>	<b>10.30 am HOLY LITURGY with</b>
<b>Saturday 7 January</b>	<b>GREAT BLESSING OF WATERS, &amp;</b>
<b>4.30 pm Great Vespers</b>	<b>BLESSING OF THE RIVER COLNE</b>

**Join us for this great and lovely feast**

### 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 Street to Castle Park; continue round, up into Maidenburgh Street. Nunns Road NCP is the nearest car park.

**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 after Vespers, or by arrangement*  
*Holy Marriage, Baptism, Funerals, Memorials etc: by arrangement*

*Parish Priest: Father Alexander (Alistair) Haig*

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*The Parish of St Helen is Registered Charity No. 1134418*

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

*Churchwardens: David Davies 01-473-745-167 Dusan Radunovic 01-206-710-073*

*At St James Anglican Church, Beatrice Rd, Clacton-on-sea*

*Divine Liturgy: usually third Saturday 10.00 am*

*At St Basil's Catholic Church, Luncies Rd, Timberlog Lane, Basildon*

*Divine Liturgy: usually first Saturday 11.00 am*

*Contact: Paul Brighton-Cross 01-702-305-527 orthodox.basildon@hotmail.co.uk*

*At University of Essex Chaplaincy Centre: Divine Liturgy: one Saturday per term 10.00 am*

<b>HOLY LITURGY</b>
<b>BASILDON</b>
<b>7 January</b>
<b>11.00 am</b>
<b>CLACTON</b>
<b>21 January</b>
<b>10.00 am</b>

## Here and There

**CHURCH PORCH:** Is there a volunteer who could paint the interior of the porch, please?

**BEACON HOUSE** in East Hill cares for the homeless. Their work reminds me of the words of Christ, *The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head*. We should care for the homeless. Beacon House provide washing facilities, clothing, food, etc. **I recently sent a gift of £100 from the Parish, and they sent a nice letter of thanks in return, displayed in the porch.** Before Christmas I asked in church for items which people could wrap up as Christmas gifts, and we had a box in the porch to gather them: it brought a generous response. There is of course a continuing need for suitable items, including socks, coats, scarves, gloves, etc.

**HOLY PASCHA** this year falls on **15 April**, one week later than western Easter. Other related dates you might like to note in your diary are:

**Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee** 5 February

**First day of Lent** 27 February.

**DEANERY CONFERENCE:** Those who attended the Conference in 2011 much enjoyed it—finding it enlightening and inspiring, I think. Why don't you join us for the 2012 Conference - again at Swanwick in Derbyshire, and over Monday 30 April to Wednesday 2 May? The full cost will be £130 per adult (children reduced), *but I shall ask the Church Council to contribute to the costs of those who go from here*, to make it considerably cheaper for those attending. The title will be *Discipleship Today*, and the Archbishop has promised to attend. Details from me.

**DEANERY CLERGY MEETING:** The Clergy of the Deanery will be meeting in London, at St George's Cathedral, on Saturday 14 January. There will be no Vespers in St Helen's that day.

**CHRISTMAS BAGS:** This year as in most years the Rotarians have provided some bags of goodies and asked me to distribute half-a-dozen, and I have been pleased to pass them round. They fund them from the Rotary Christmas street collections, and I find that many recipients appreciate the kindness.

### *A Word from the Fathers*

See, Fire and Spirit in the womb that bore you;  
See, Fire and Spirit in the river where you were baptised.

Fire and Spirit in our baptism:  
In the Bread and the Cup, Fire and Holy Spirit.

In your Bread is hidden a Spirit not to be eaten,  
In your Wine dwells a Fire not to be drunk.  
Spirit in your Bread, Fire in your Wine,  
A wonder set apart, yet received by our lips.

How wonderful your footsteps, walking on the waters!  
You subdued the great sea beneath your feet.

Yet to a little stream you subjected your head,  
Bending down to be baptised in it.

The stream was like John who performed the baptism in it,  
In their smallness each an image of the other.

To the stream so little, to the servant so weak,  
The Lord of them both subjected himself.

*St Ephraim the Syrian (+373)*

## Orthodoxy in Basildon: developments

Our next Holy Liturgy in south Essex will be at St Basil's RC Church on 7 January at 11.00 am.

It will be the last at St Basil's, at least for the moment.

We are most grateful to Father DOMINIC and his people for their hospitality for over a year, mainly at St Basil's but a few times at Holy Trinity.

At very short notice, it was not possible to hold the December Liturgy at St Basil's, and we hastily moved to a newly-arranged chapel in the garden of GEORGE and NEKTARIOS HARRISON at 18 St Agnes Road, just outside the Basildon boundary into Great Burstead, Billericay, off Noak Hill Road.

We dedicated the chapel to the **Holy Virgin-Martyr Agnes of Rome** (feast: 21 Jan). It is indeed tucked away in a delightful spot, and (as you can see in the photographs) it makes a lovely place to worship.

But the Basildon group under PAUL BRIGHTON-CROSS continue to look for somewhere more suitable as a permanent place of worship.

The group also plan to worship more frequently than just the one monthly Liturgy we have there at the moment. Contact Paul for full details.



## The People Column

**GHISSEH SARCO:** For several years, while studying for a PhD at our University, Ghisseh was a regular member of our congregation. Now she lives again in her home town of Latakia on Syria's Mediterranean coast, the town His Eminence our Archbishop comes from (I remember him and Ghisseh having a nice little chat at St Helen's about 'home!'). DAVID DAVIES spotted on Facebook that she had got engaged to RICHARD ANTONIOS. Richard is a dentist who studied in Romania and currently lives in Bania near Latakia. We are now delighted to hear from her that they are to be married on 12 February, and send our congratulations.

**ALEXIA LANSLEY** has returned home in time for Christmas after many weeks in hospital with a broken leg - first in Greece at Ioannina and Prebeza, and then, after a difficult experience with the airline, here at Colchester and Clacton. We are very happy for her, and pray that her recovery continues speedily and that we shall see her in church again before long.

**MIHAELA COCEA**, lecturing at the University of Portsmouth for over a year now, was recently awarded her PhD by Birkbeck College in London. Congratulations to her! She and her husband ALEX HAIG now live in Whiteley, near Fareham, between Portsmouth and Southampton.

**Churches Together in Central Colchester**  
**CHRISTIAN UNITY WEEK SERVICE**  
**at the Baptist Church, Eld Lane**  
**Sunday 22 January at 6.30 pm**

+ We are all invited +

## Fellowship of St Alban & St Sergius

Tuesday 7 February 7.30 pm,

at St Cedd's RC Hall, Frinton-on-sea

Rev Dr John Turner: *A Glimpse of Georgia*

The meeting is open to all: non-members welcome

The subsequent meeting will be on **Tuesday 6 March** in St Helen's Chapel, with the speaker Fr Michael Rear, a Catholic Priest, formerly Anglican Vicar of Walsingham.

## JANUARY DAYS

Sun 1	Circumcision of Christ, S Basil the Great
Mon 2	Repose of S Seraphim of Sarov
Tue 3	S Genevieve of Paris
Fri 6	<b>HOLY THEOPHANY OF CHRIST</b>
Sat 7	Synaxis of S John the Forerunner
<b>Sun 8</b>	<b>Sunday after Theophany</b>
Wed 11	S Theodosius the Great, the Cenobiarch
Thu 12	S Benedict Biscop, Abbot of Wearmouth & Jarrow
Fri 13	S Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, S Kentigern, Bishop of Glasgow & Strathclyde
Sat 14	S Nino, Enlightener of Georgia, S Sava I, Archbishop of Serbia
<b>Sun 15</b>	<b>Sunday of the Ten Lepers</b>
Mon 16	Veneration of the Precious Chains of S Peter S Furse of Burgh Castle, Apostle of Norfolk
Tue 17	S Anthony the Great
Wed 18	SS Athanasius the Great & Cyril, of Alexandria
Thus 19	S Macarius the Great of Egypt S Branwalader of Cornwall & Channel Islands
Fri 20	S Euthymius the Great
Sat 21	Virgin-Martyr Agnes of Rome, S Maximus the Gt
<b>Sun 22</b>	<b>Sunday of Zacchaeus, Apostle Timothy of the 70, S Vincent the Deacon, Protomartyr of Spain</b>
Tue 24	S Xenia the Fool-for-Christ, of St Petersburg, S Neophytos the Anchorite, of Cyprus
Wed 25	S Gregory the Theologian, Abp of Constantinople
Thu 26	S Xenophon, Mary his wife, & their sons
Fri 27	Translation of Relics of St John Chrysostom
Sat 28	S Ephraim the Syrian, S Isaac the Syrian
<b>Sun 29</b>	<b>Sunday of the Canaanite Woman, Translation of the Relics of S Ignatius the God-bearer, S Gildas the Wise, Abbot in Wales</b>
Mon 30	Synaxis of Three Hierarchs & Ecumenical Teachers Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, & John Chrysostom
Tue 31	Unmercenary & Wonderworkers Cyrus & John

A fuller list of the month's Feasts and Fasts is available on request