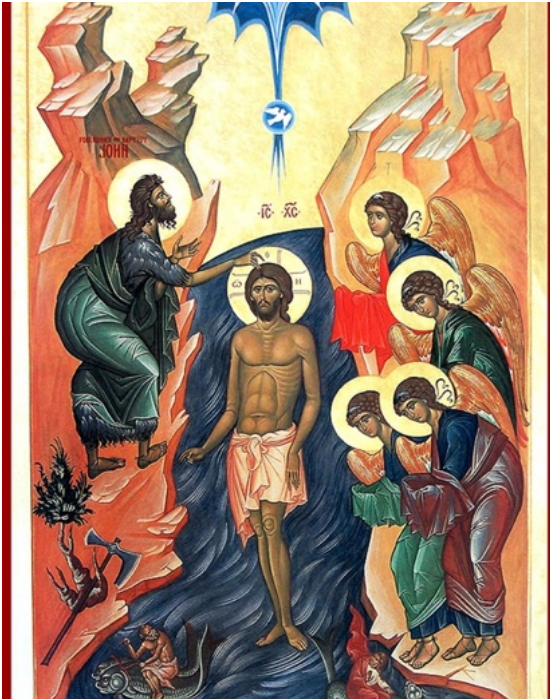


The Orthodox Parish of St Martin and St Helen

Charity number: 1192469

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles & Ireland
HE Metropolitan Silouan Oner



The Holy Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Once again the majestic cycle of the Great Feasts of the Church brings us to the Theophany, the visible manifestation of God as Trinity. The beautiful icon of this feast has much to tell us of the divinely rich significance of Theophany. We see Jesus, The Christ standing in the waters of the River Jordan; everything in the icon centres on Him and leads to Him. The river divides the land in two and these two halves or regions represent heaven and earth. As we face the icon, the left hand region represents earth, John the Forerunner and Baptist is depicted and stands for humanity. On the right hand land mass, representing heaven, we see angels. Jesus in the centre is the bridge between heaven and earth; He Who brings heaven and earth together, as the incarnate God Man (Θεάνθρωπος *Theanthropos*), fully human and fully divine. The angels are waiting to clothe Jesus in heavenly garments. Whereas Adam sinned against and broke communion with God, becoming aware of his nakedness, Christ, the new Adam is clothed,

thus doing what the old Adam could not: reuniting God and humanity. John, the last of the Old Testament prophets shows deference to Christ, the living New Testament and the tree with an axe at its root represents John's words (Matthew 3:10) that the tree which does not bear good fruit shall be thrown into the fire. Therefore, our baptism is not to be wasted in spiritual laziness but cultivated to bear fruit in the virtues and obedience to Christ, lest on the Day of Judgement we shall be found without help. The small, curious figures riding sea monsters and fish at Christ's feet represent the Jordan River (left) and the oceans of the world (right). They respectively symbolise the Jordan witnessing the ultimate event in its long biblical history and the forces of chaos running away from the incarnate God, the old paganism struck down. Both flee in terror as God Himself enters creation. Let us attend, let us stand with awe! It is later than we think. -Fr Mark

Outdoor Blessing of the Water

It is with joy that we hope to return to our parish custom of serving the Theophany Outdoor Blessing of the Water at Middle Mill bridge on the River Colne; a short walk from St Martin's. Since the bridge collapsed a few years ago we have been unable to observe our custom, but now that it has been rebuilt and even enlarged we are again able to do so. We will hold this short service after the Sunday Liturgy on 11 January, all are invited. The service of the Great Blessing of the Water in the church will take place on the feast itself (6 January) in St Martin's after the festal liturgy.

Regular Services: Saturdays: Great Vespers 4:30pm. Sunday: Matins & Holy Liturgy, from 9:30am. **St Martin's Church.**

Additional Services

Tuesday 6 January: H. Theophany, Hours & Holy Liturgy; Great Sanctification of Water. **St Martin's Church from 8:15am.**

Friday 16 January: Veneration of the Precious Chains of St Peter, Hours & Holy Liturgy. **St Helen's Chapel from 8:15am.**

Thursday 22 January: Holy Apostle Timothy, Hours & Holy Liturgy. **St Helen's Chapel from 8:15am.**

Friday 30 January: Synaxis of the Three Holy Hierarchs, Hours & Holy Liturgy. **St Helen's Chapel from 8:15am.**

News

Iconostasis



On the Saturday before Christmas, the final icon in our beautiful iconostasis was finally installed. Our iconographer Sophronia Kelpi and woodworker Silviu Iftime attended and the topmost icon of the Mystical Supper was fitted securely into its enclosure. In the new year we will have our curtain and various other fixtures and fittings added and this momentous project will, if God allows, be complete. It is a holy and beautiful thing. Many who visit the church, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, tourists and neighbours are genuinely moved by its reverent beauty and craftsmanship. Against the raging sea of our culture of ugliness and secular modernism, the wonderful iconostasis of St Martin's church stands as a veritable lighthouse of spiritual truth and harmony.

Memorials

It will be very helpful if you can let me know if you wish to have a memorial served after any Sunday Liturgy. There are certain times throughout the church year when it is not really permitted to serve memorials and I will be publishing information to let you all know when these times fall. In the meantime contact me personally by email, WhatsApp or phone to obtain my permission.

Thanks from Fr Mark and Khouria Paula!

Thank you for our many Christmas cards and thoughtful, generous gifts. It is humbling to be on the receiving end of such thoughtfulness and love. Please know that we love and pray for you all too! Khouria Paula and I did not send cards this year but instead made a donation to St Helena's Hospice.

News (cont'd)

Work in Church



Work is nearly complete on converting an old toilet into a helpful passage linking the kitchen area to the space behind the holy altar. This will make a great deal of difference in future as we can now access this quite large space without continually disturbing the altar; it will be suitable for such things as meetings and classes I hope. The next phase of this work will be the creation of a free standing wooden screen to serve as the back wall of the altar, which will properly separate this most sacred of spaces in the temple; reserving it for its proper use only.

Roof Repairs

We are delighted that through prayer, with God's help, with the blessing of Sayedna Silouan and the agreement of the Archdiocesan Board we have been approved for funding by the Antiochian Archdiocese from its capital projects fund, for an interest free loan of £30k which we will match with the same amount from our appeal funds to pay for the complete repair and restoration of the roof. The loan is interest free and repayable on easy terms over five years. Now we await the completion of our application to the local planning authority and the outcome of final negotiations with our contractors Bakers of Danbury. Continue to pray, please, for the successful fulfillment of this vital work.