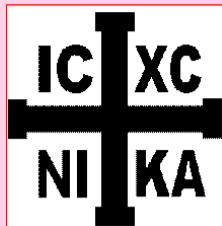


Orthodox Parish of St Helen of Colchester

*Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
of the British Isles and Ireland*
Metropolitan: His Eminence Archbishop Silouan

NEWSLETTER 250

MARCH 2018



LENT SERVICES AT ST HELEN'S CHAPEL

Sundays 10.30 am
HOLY LITURGY OF ST BASIL
except 25 March, Annunciation
HOLY LITURGY OF ST JOHN

Wednesdays 9.30 am
HOLY PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY
Fridays 6.00 pm
AKATHIST TO THE THEOTOKOS

St Martin's Church will be ours - if we raise £200,000: Appeal to open!

A historic meeting of our Church Council held on Sunday 11 February unanimously decided to open an Appeal to raise £200,000 to purchase the lovely St Martin's Church, West Stockwell Street, as a parish church witnessing to the power and truth of Holy Orthodoxy in the heart of Colchester.

The decision was not made lightly, and included the safety-net possibility of using any money raised for another building if the St Martin's project should fail.

But putting our faith in Christ, we took this step forward, and hope and pray for the help and assistance of all the faithful, of our circle of worshippers here, and of our many friends around the world. More than that we trust in the prayers of St Helen and of St Martin.

Soon an Appeal will be opened, which we hope will be widely distributed, and promoted by all our friends. The sum needed for the purchase from the Churches Conservation Trust in London is £150,000, to be raised within two years at the longest.

In addition we appeal for a further £50,000 to cover the installation of a heating system. The total is £200,000.

His Eminence our Metropolitan Silouan is blessing the project.

He encourages us to go all out to

obtain the building and only concern ourselves about the rest later on.

Here is a chance to bring back to life a church that was originally Orthodox, that is very beautiful, that is much more able to serve the needs of our Orthodox children and grandchildren than dear St Helen's Chapel could, and that is at the centre of the life of this Borough of Colchester, the oldest recorded town in Britain, close by the magnificent Town Hall.

We lost out on getting Holy Trinity Church, which in its wisdom the Town Council allocated to the secular *Mind of God* organisation. Yet it may prove in the *Mind of God* that long-desired St Martin's is actually better for us, in some respects at least.

How we must put our hope, our faith, our love, for God first, and pray and trust that he will honour this!

God bless us all as we learn to place our hope in him alone.

Father Alexander



Ancient, beautiful St Martin's Church, shown here, cries out to be used again as the Orthodox church it was originally (because it was originally built before the Great Schism between East and West). Actually we do not know how old it is, but there is pre-Schism Saxon work in the tower.

Later, in the English Civil War, when Colchester was besieged by the Parliamentarians, the tower was partially knocked down (they say) by cannon-fire and never rebuilt. St Martin's has not been used as for Anglican worship for some sixty years. For a time a youth theatre, it is now little used.

Taken over by the Churches Conservation Trust in London, they will now sell it to us if we can raise the £150,000 asked by them. This is a lot of money, but remember it is *less than half* the average price of a house in Colchester.

This picture shows how effective St Martin's was for temporary use in 2012 when Metropolitan John, now His Beatitude the Patriarch, served the Holy Liturgy here.

The Appeal will be for £200,000 to allow for some of the expense of fitting it up for worship.

May God be praised and all his saints be blessed.

May he reward our faithfulness.

If God is on our side who can be against us?
(Romans 8:31)



HOLY & GREAT WEEK

Lazarus Saturday, 31 March
4.30 pm **Great Vespers**
Palm Sunday, 1 April
9.45 am **Mattins & Palm Blessing**
10.30 am **Liturgy of St John**
Holy Monday, 2 April
6.00 pm **Bridegroom Mattins**
Holy Tuesday, 3 April
6.00 pm **Bridegroom Mattins**
Holy Wednesday, 4 April
6.00 pm **Holy Anointing**
Holy Thursday, 5 April
9.30 am **Liturgy of St Basil**
6.00 pm **Twelve Gospels**
Holy Friday, 6 April
3.00 pm **Vespers & Deposition**
6.00 pm **Mattins & Procession**
Holy Saturday, 7 April
9.30 am **Liturgy of St Basil**
10.30 pm **Acts of the Apostles**
11.30 pm **Midnight Office**
HOLY PASCHA, 8 April
12 midnight **Procession & Mattins**
1.00 am **Liturgy of St John**
3.00 pm **Agape Vespers**

**Confessions after any service
or by appointment**

**Flowers to decorate the Epitaphion:
Women & girls invited to prepare it
on Holy Friday at 9.30 am.**
Gifts of cash for flowers invited.

Read our news *on-line*

Would you like to read this *Newsletter* on line every month? Each person doing so will actually save the Parish over £4.00 a year, the cost of printing and posting it. Every month we shall send you the on-line address and you just click it to read it. We shall be happy to arrange that. Just email us saying "Email Newsletter" —

parishpriest@orthodoxcolchester.org.uk

On the other hand, we are happy to continue to send it by post, particularly if you cannot collect a copy in church. (In that case, don't bother to contact us.)

Please note that the postal version is normally in black and white only (this edition being unusual), but the on-line version has colour, so is easier to read.

*Even if you still want a 'hard copy' of the Newsletter, it would be great help for sending urgent Parish news, for you to let us have an email address, if you have one.

Appeal Committee reopening its work

The Committee stopped its work suddenly last August, because of the possibility of Holy Trinity. Now it will renew its work of course. You may like to know that **Catalin Fliscu** is Chairman, **Nick Taylor** Treasurer, and **George Harrison, Kikia Chatsiou, and Fr Alexander** are members. If you have financial or fund-raising strengths, do offer them.

Watch out for details of our Appeal. Please send no money yet.

This special edition of our *Newsletter* marks our 250th issue



Our first issue was back in 1994—before the Parish itself existed, when most of the founding members were not yet Orthodox.

We started as a *Pilgrimage to Orthodoxy* for Christians who were dissatisfied with western Christianity.

A group of about a dozen Anglican clergy from all over Britain arranged to meet His Beatitude Ignatius IV, Patriarch of Antioch, when he was visiting Paris that 1994.

He opened his arms widely and said, *Welcome home!* and without more ado constituted the *Antiochian Deanery of the British Isles*, arranging the reception of people who followed us and the ordination of suitable Priests.

Some groups were able to start straight away.

Others took longer. We finished off our life in Bocking by the end of 1995, with the family being chrismated in St George's Cathedral in London, and our moving to Colchester before Christmas. In February 1996 the Parish of St Helen began lay-led worship in the borrowed Anglican church of St Paul but by September had moved to the Co-op Funeral Chapel off the Mersea Road.

I had been ordained Deacon and Priest by the Antiochian Bishop Gabriel in the borrowed Greek cathedral in Paris in that year, 1996.

Four years later, in September 2000, we moved into St Helen's Chapel, and have been happily worshipping here ever since.

However, even before we started as a parish we had

been trying to find larger premises, believing that the full life of a parish needed some-where more suitable.

Extraordinarily, we are now about to raise the money, as we hope and pray, to buy St Martin's Church - 24 years after the local Anglican archdeacon actually asked me if we would like it!

Right from the start we have had cradle-Orthodox among us as well as converts. The Parish has always understood itself as a community of people of any ethnicity.

The Parish was to be a home for people of all Orthodox nations - and a mission to the British people, to offer them the fullness of the Holy Orthodox Faith, as relevant to them as to Greeks or Russians.

It has been thrilling to have a multi-ethnic congregation for all these years, latterly of course with many Romanians. But it must be acknowledged that while there has been a

steady trickle of British people into the Faith, about one a year perhaps, we have not yet begun to have the impact we would wish for.

My hope and belief is that with a bigger more adequate building we shall begin to grow both with British people and with incomers. (How Brexit will affect us is of course unknown as yet.)

It has been a real privilege for me to lead this community for 22 years—or perhaps in this particular issue of our *Newsletter* I should say, for 250 issues.

These *Newsletters* will, I hope, be preserved to tell future generations of our Orthodox faithful how we cared not just for our own salvation but for theirs too, that they might have somewhere to worship the Holy Tri-une God in the joy and beauty of the Holy Orthodox Faith.

God grant us forgiveness of our sins, and the joy of eternity with him.

CLACTON

Saturday 17 March
St Patrick of Ireland
Holy Liturgy
10.00 am

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 Balkeme Hill), to Northgate; go straight along St Peter's Street to Castle Park; continue round the bend, up into Maidenburgh Street. Nearest car-park NCP Nunns Rd. Very little street parking available.

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 3.15 pm

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
Churchwardens: David Davies 01-473-745-167 Dusan Radunovic 01-206-762-553
Children of St Helen: Sanja Radunovic 01-206-762-553 Silvia Lefley: 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 CE15 1LE
Divine Liturgy: usually third Saturday of month 10.00 am

Here and There

OUR THANKS to Milena Simic-Lawson who has looked after (and often supplied) the church flowers for some while. She is now having to give up the position of **Flower Secretary** as she is starting a new research post in London - as well as having to care for her children. So we are looking for someone to replace her. It really needs someone who can pop in to church two or three times a week. Milena has also done a bit of cleaning, and we are certainly in need of a **Cleaner** as well. This would be a paid job. Is there anyone who would be interested in either of these two important posts?

FATHER PAULINUS HEGGS from Norwich came to us last year for Holy Thursday. His ministry was warmly welcomed, and he will be here again this year. The services of that day are very demanding for the Priest and it is a great help to have his assistance. This year **Father Deacon Alexander Haig** will be with us too the whole of Pascha, and **Margaret Haig** will as usual be with us to lead the singing. *Your Parish Priest will be tempted to retire to his chamber for the whole feast.*

HOLY RESURRECTION PARISH: The Clergy of the Archdiocese were called together one recent Saturday - at Stoke-on-Trent, which is well beyond Birmingham, not so far from Manchester! For me it was a bit too far to go and return in one day. I went therefore by train on the Friday and stayed in a hotel, and came home on Saturday evening so as to be here for the Sunday Liturgy. Part of the Bishop's reasoning in having it all that distance was that it gave a chance to visit one of our Antiochian parishes: it's in the Dresden area of the former china-making city. Certainly I had not visited it before, though I had visited its daughter church, St Michael's, some years ago. A Victorian Anglican building, not too large and not too small (which St Michael's is) it makes a very good Orthodox temple. They have had sole use for some years, and are in the process of buying it! In some ways the arrangement will be like ours here, if our purchase of St Martin's proceeds satisfactorily and we keep St Helen's. But where we have to raise £150,000, they hope to pay a 'peppercorn', a token payment! Father Samuel made us welcome, and we lacked a number of our clergy (because of distance, or sickness or other matters) and, not least, we lacked our **Bishop** himself, who is still unwell and needs our prayers. Anyway, it was a delight to visit another of our churches, and to see others of our clergy. Being the Saturday of Souls, we had a memorial for our departed brother Priests and Deacons, of whom there are now several. You can see Holy Resurrection church on the Antiochian Diocesan website.

Confession is the admission of my weakness and of my need for healing.

Orthodox people should seek forgiveness and healing at least once a year before Holy Pascha. I am a sheep that has gone astray. Christ my God and Shepherd comes out looking for me. Placing me on his own shoulders, he brings me back into the fold of the Church.

I should receive the Holy Gifts in the Liturgy frequently, and Confession certainly at least yearly.

Confessions are normally heard on Saturday evenings after Vespers, but, if that does not suit, at other times by arrangement. Just ask.

And if you have not confessed at all before, or not for a long time, you can just say, *Christ welcomes me back.*

Seek the Lord while he may be found.

THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION commemorates the start of the *human existence of Jesus Christ (as God of course he has always existed). It is usually shown on the Holy Doors or Gates of the Altar, so our illustration here is of a set of Doors.*

Sometimes the Angel is shown larger than Mary to show that he comes from God himself. Sometimes Mary is shown larger than



Gabriel to show that she will have the supreme joy of becoming Mother of God, Theotokos, setting her above the Angels. Gabriel comes to Mary at the Well where she is drawing water. She takes fright at meeting God's Messenger (Greek: Angelos) and runs home. Gabriel follows her and at her home takes place the scene described in Luke 1.26-38. He "announces" she is wanted to give birth to God in human flesh.

Mary consents to God's will: "Be it unto me according to thy Word." Thus the "impossible" occurs: God becomes human. "What is impossible to man is possible to God."

This central truth of Christianity is called the Incarnation. We commemorate it on 25 March, this year the fifth Sunday of Lent, the Great Fast.

It gives us hope and joy that whatever our personal or community problems, God can deal with it: he enters into our human problems and expels all despair, giving us eternal life.

Church Annual Meeting

We always hold our annual meeting (which must legally be held) after the Holy Liturgy on Sunday. This is because we are likely to get more people present and also because some of our people live some, even many, miles, from the church.

This year we had a good meeting but very speedy as it unfortunately fell on Forgiveness Sunday so we had to celebrate those ceremonies as well.

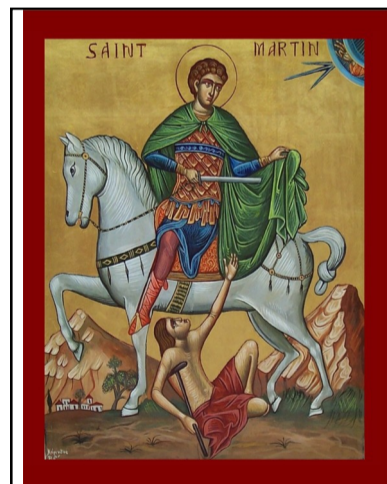
The Priest's Report was all thanks to the various people who work to keep the Parish running efficiently.

The accounts for 2017 had been prepared by David our Treasurer, approved by Margaret our Auditor, gone over by our Church Council, and now were passed by the meeting with thanks to all. They show a

generally improved financial position, due to our much more widely-used committed-giving scheme and our greater use of Grant Aid. News of the imminent Appeal for the cost of St Martin's was passed on.

Elections to the Council resulted in the following membership: David Davies, Dusan Radunovic, Mary Morris, Khouria Hilary, Teodor Petica, Theodora & George Harrison, Kalisthene Aristodimou, Kakia Chatsiou, Paul Lansley, Nick Taylor, Jon Kanaar, and Karim Guirguis. Fr Alexander is ex-officio chairman of the Council.

This is the team to lead the Parish during the next year, which may well prove one of the most momentous since the Parish began in 1995/6.



This icon of St Martin in St Helen's was painted for us some years ago by Chrysoula Psomas of Ancient Corinth in Greece. Her nephew Lambros was studying here for a master's degree. The family presented it to us - prophetically of our acquisition of St Martin's church perhaps? Sadly Chrysoula died not long after, following a road accident. **Now it has been printed as a card with the story of the saint on the back. Available in church free, you can have as many copies as you want, to distribute to friends to tell them of the wonderful holy temple that we may finally be able to have as our place of worship.** May the prayers of Holy Martin the Merciful, Bishop of Tours in France in the fourth century, encourage us and lead us into eternity. He is a saint greatly beloved of the French (he is patron of France) and of many others. Devotion to him spread rapidly in Britain after his death in 397 AD. The first church dedicated to him was in Galloway in Scotland, as early as the year of his death. St Ninian, who built it, was probably his disciple.



A Word from the Fathers: St Andrew of Crete, Sermon on Palm Sunday

Come, come, let us go up together to the Mount of Olives. Together let us meet Christ, who is returning today from Bethany and going of his own accord to that holy and blessed passion to complete the mystery of our salvation.

And so he comes, willingly taking the road to Jerusalem, he who came down from the heights for us, to raise us who lie in the depths to exaltation with him, as the revealing word says, 'above all authority and rule and power and above every name that is named.'

He comes without display, without boast. 'He will not contend,' he says, 'or shout out, and no one will hear his voice.' He is gentle and lowly, and his entrance is humble.

Come then, let us run with him as he presses on to the passion. Let us imitate those who have gone out to meet him, not scattering olive branches or garments or palms in his path, but spreading ourselves before him as best we may, with humility of soul and upright purpose.

So may we welcome the Word as he comes, so may God who cannot be contained within any bounds, be contained

within us.

For he is pleased to have shown us this gentleness, he who is gentle and who 'rides upon the setting sun', which refers to our extreme lowliness. He is pleased to come and live with us and to raise us up or bring us back to him through his kinship with us.

As the first-fruits of the whole batch of man he is said to 'ride upon the heaven of heavens to the rising of the sun', which I interpret as his own glory and divinity. But because of his love for man he will not cease until he has raised man's nature from the ground, from one degree of glory to another, and has manifested it with himself on high....

As those who were formerly scarlet from sin but became white as wool through the purification of saving baptism, let us offer not palm branches but the prizes of victory to the conqueror of death.

Today let us too give voice with the children to that sacred chant, as we wave the spiritual branches of our soul: 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel.'

How are we doing at St Helen's?

To some degree, you can see from the statistics below how the Parish is doing.

On the other hand it cannot show the warmth of prayer and devotion offered or generated here, the conversion of souls, the joy in heaven shown as we sincerely repent of our sins and turn back to Christ.

Nor does it give any indication of the witness we bear to our faith in Christ to the visitors who come in or pass by, not even to the pilgrims we welcome individually or occasionally in parties.

So these figures are of limited value.

Yet some among us may be interested to see some sign of our life, and—tossing them in the air, make something of them that convinces them. either that we are making little impact in this town, or that we are offering a powerful witness and song to the Lord!

He anyway welcomes our praises, and our praises of him strengthen us. God be praised at all times and in all places.

PARISH STATISTICS

	Baptisms Children	Baptisms Adults	Chrismations	Marriages	Funerals	Average Sunday Liturgy Attendance*
1995	-	-	**5	-	-	-
1996	-	-	4	-	-	10
1997	-	-	1	-	2	16
1998	2	-	5	-	1	20
1999	-	-	-	-	-	17
2000	1	1	6	2	1	22
2001	2	-	1	2	3	26
2002	2	-	2	1	4	27
2003	1	-	2	1	4	29
2004	3	-	1	1	5	29
2005	-	-	1	-	2	32
2006	6	-	-	1	4	33
2007	8	1	1	1	2	40
2008	4	-	2	1	4	41
2009	6	1	6	1	3	44
2010	2	-	1	-	1	40
2011	8	2	-	3	6	41
2012	6	-	-	3	4	44
2013	11	1	2	3	3	43
2014	5	-	***2	-	1	40
2015	12	1	2	1	4	40
2016	12	1	-	1	3	42
2017	14	1	1	1	4	40
TOTAL	105	9	45	23	61	

* Sunday Liturgy includes Liturgy on Pascha, but not Baptisms, Marriages etc, after a Liturgy.
** this is the Haig family *** plus 5 repeated

Monastery of St John the Baptist

In one way our Parish is one of the most blessed in the country, the nearest Orthodox parish to the Holy Monastery at Tolleshunt Knights, just 11 miles from St Helen's. Founded by the Holy Elder Sophrony in 1959, it has - very unusually - both monks and nuns. It is known throughout the Orthodox world for its devotion to St Silouan the Athonite. Some of our people go there often to attend the Holy Liturgy, to share a little in their life. They have beautifully frescoed walls in their four chapels and two refectories, and lovely outdoor mosaics. There is a very useful bookshop, also selling icons etc. But the main thing of course is the holy life of the fathers and sisters. Do make an effort to share their life for an hour or two from time to time. The open and friendly community welcomes all. God will bless you.

MARCH DAYS

Thu 1	S David of Wales
Fri 2	S Chad of Lichfield, S Nicholas Planas of Athens
Sun 4	Lent 2, S Gregory Palamas
Tue 6	Discovery of the Precious Cross & Nails by S Helen
Thu 8	S Felix, Enlightener of East Anglia
Fri 9	Forty Martyrs of Sebaste
Sun 11	Lent 3, Veneration of the Cross
Mon 12	S Gregory the Dialogist, Pope of Rome
Wed 14	S Benedict of Nursia
Thu 15	S Aristobulus, Apostle of Britain
Fri 16	S Christodoulos
Sat 17	S Withburga, Hermit in Norfolk
Sun 18	Lent 4, S John Climacus, S Edward the Martyr, King of England
Tue 20	S Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne
Sat 24	Saturday of the Akathist
Sun 25	Lent 5, ANNUNCIATION OF THEOTOKOS
Sat 31	LAZARUS SATURDAY