
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



Now we enter the great fast of Lent. For the next few weeks until Holy Week in April, our schedule will reflect the solemn, penitential and reflective tone of the season. Once again we will serve the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on Wednesday evenings and the five Fridays of Salutations; the Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God. This is a time to pause and consider our spiritual life in depth. Where have we allowed fear, envy, carelessness, despondency, anger, dishonesty and pride to creep into our hearts, our thoughts our words and deeds? Attending these quiet, prayerful and beautiful services gives us a much needed space in our busy lives to allow ourselves to draw nearer to God and to ask in prayer for a renewed spirit of humility and repentance. Make the time to come to the services during Lent, even if, or perhaps most especially if you are busy. You will not regret doing so. As the psalmist says: "Create in me a clean heart O God and renew a right spirit within

me" (Psalm 50:10). Let this prayer be on our lips often during the struggle ahead. Good strength, dear brothers and sisters! **-Fr Mark**

Funeral

The funeral service for our dear departed sister Maria Aristodimou was served on Monday 23 February at St Martin's Church, with a burial afterwards at Colchester Cemetery. Many people attended, including some friends from the monastery in Tolleshunt Knights. Continue to pray for the repose of her soul and for her mother Kalistheni, and her brother Andreas and his family. May her memory be eternal!

Roof Works

Please pray for the successful completion of the permissions process for work to start on the church roof. Bakers of Danbury, a leading heritage builder has been contracted, which design and health and safety advice provided by Daniel Connal Partnership. This is a large and complex project involving many different areas of the roof. The application for listed buildings consent is currently with the Colchester City Council planning department for consideration. We have the funding in place and are waiting on this decision!

Retreat

The Antiochian Archdiocese Retreat will be held from 22-25 May 2026 at the Othona Community in Bradwell-on-Sea. The theme will be Faith Lived: From Baptism to Life in Christ. The retreat will be a wonderful opportunity as families and individuals to renew our spiritual life and connect with our Antiochian Orthodox brothers and sisters. Please pick up a flyer from church by the notice board.

The prayer of St Ephraim



During Lent, this wonderful prayer, a treasure of the Orthodox tradition, becomes a part of our daily life. It is said only on the weekdays (Monday to Friday) of the fast and not on Saturdays or Sundays.

It is a good practice to include it in your morning and/or evening prayers. It should be said slowly and with attention and traditionally includes prostrations. Prostrations are an ancient Christian custom going back to the very beginning of our Faith.

On a historical note, it is likely that in its early years, Islam was influenced to some extent by this and other much older Christian ascetic practices, such as seasonal fasting. Below is the suggested format which has been the tradition in our parish for private use for many years.

O Lord and Master of my life, grant not unto me a spirit of laziness, despondency, lust of power, and idle talk. (1 × prostration)

But grant rather unto Thy servant a spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and of love. (1 × prostration)

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own faults and to judge not my Brother: for Thou are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen. (1 × prostration)

O God cleanse me a sinner (12 × with bows)

Repeat the prayer (do not repeat 'O God cleanse me a sinner') with only 1 × prostration, at the end.

Fasting

I have included in this issue, the fasting calendar for the Antiochian Orthodox tradition. Please, if you are not yet Orthodox, a newcomer or an enquirer then you are not expected to fast. However, if you are interested in discussing or exploring fasting come and talk to me before you do anything. Similarly, if you are Orthodox and have any concerns about fasting and health or any practical issues in your particular situation – do also come and talk to me. Our faith is not a 'one size fits all' faith, but if we are to be helped in our individual circumstances then it is important this happens with the advice and blessing of the priest.



Edifying Quote

If wishing to receive Holy Communion at the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on Wednesday evenings during, the faithful should fast from no later than 1pm onwards.

Catechesis



On Sunday March 8th, after the Divine Liturgy there will be an introductory catechesis session for inquirers and newcomers. Please grab a coffee or tea and gather in the South East corner, near the memorial candles. I expect the session will last for about one hour. All are welcome. This session will set out some of the themes which we will cover during the coming months and will be a chance to ask any questions you may have. The new catechesis course will start properly after Holy Pascha, dates TBC.

Cake Sale

I am happy to report that our dear sister Maryanna Lockwood (daughter of Sue and Marios Lingi) held a cake sale in church after the Liturgy on Sunday 8 February in aid of The Little Princess Trust. This charity makes wigs from real hair donated by benefactors, for children who have lost their own hair because of cancer treatment or other illness. Maryanna raised £180 in church from the cake sale and has raised in total £555 – she has also donated her own hair. May God bless Maryanna's works of mercy and the generosity of our wonderful parish.

Baby Changing Station

Many thanks also to Maryanna and Matthew Lockwood for the donation to the church of a baby changing station. This has been installed in the toilet and bolted securely to the wall by our trusty handyman Handy Carl. It will make to real difference to those with very little ones to have a clean and well designed changing surface at a back friendly height!

Memorials

It is the custom in our parish (and many parishes) to serve memorials for the departed after the Liturgy on Sunday. The bishop has asked that we follow Antiochian tradition from now on. Instead of going to the memorial table on the south side of the church, the koliva will be brought to the centre of the church in front of the iconostasis and placed on a small table. The priest will then serve the memorial facing the people. This is another change to bring us more in line with the customs of our Antiochian Patriarchate.



Clergy Conference

It was a great pleasure to attend the clergy conference on Cheesefare Saturday in Manchester at the parish of St Aidan's. Not all of our clergy were able to attend for reasons of distance or poor health but happily a good number were present. Sayedna Silouan spoke to us about various dogmatic and liturgical matters and we discussed many issues such as catechesis, parish finances and growth. Sayedna's main message however was that we priests should be men of genuine prayer, repentance and humility. At the start of Great Lent he reminded us that everything we do as priests should proceed from our prayer; that we should stand before holy altar without pretence, offering ourselves, that we practice what we preach with real humility and love, and not simply be glorified organisers or managers. He reminded us that everything we do in our parishes and communities, pilgrimages, retreats, meetings, should be a bridge to bring the faithful closer to Christ.

St Martin Parish Information

WhatsApp group



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 canceled we can get information out quickly to nearly 80 people.

Orthodox Parish of St Martin & St Helen

Services for Lent & Holy Week to Great & Holy Pascha 2026

Wednesday 25 February	<i>Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts</i> , 6pm St Martin's Church
Friday 27 February	<i>Akathist, First Salutations</i> , 6pm St Helen's Chapel
Saturday 28 February	Great Vespers 4.30pm, St Martin's Church
Sunday 1 March	<i>First Sunday of Great Lent, Sunday of Orthodoxy</i> Matins and Holy Liturgy from 9.30am St Martin's Church.
Wednesday 4 March	<i>Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts</i> , 6pm St Martin's Church
Friday 6 March	<i>Akathist, Second Salutations</i> , 6pm St Helen's Chapel
Saturday 7 March	Great Vespers 4.30pm, St Martin's Church
Sunday 8 March	<i>Second Sunday of Great Lent, St Gregory Palamas</i> Matins and Holy Liturgy from 9.45am St Martin's Church.
Wednesday 11 March	<i>Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts</i> , 6pm St Martin's Church
Friday 13 March	<i>Akathist, Third Salutations</i> , 6pm St Helen's Chapel
Saturday 14 March	Great Vespers 4.30pm, St Martin's Church
Sunday 15 March	<i>Third Sunday of Great Lent, Veneration of the Holy Cross</i> , Matins and Holy Liturgy from 9.30am St Martin's Church.
Wednesday 18 March	<i>Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts</i> , 6pm St Martin's Church
Friday 20 March	<i>Akathist, Fourth Salutations</i> , 6pm St Helen's Chapel
Saturday 21 March	Great Vespers 4.30pm, St Martin's Church
Sunday 22 March	<i>Fourth Sunday of Great Lent, St John of the Ladder</i> Matins and Holy Liturgy from 9.30am St Martin's Church.
Wednesday 25 March	<i>The Annunciation of Our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos, The Mother of God & Ever Virgin Mary</i> , Hours 8:10am & Holy Liturgy 8:30am, St Helen's Chapel (NO PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY)
Friday 27 March	<i>Akathist, Fifth Week</i> , 6pm St Helen's Chapel
Saturday 28 March	Great Vespers 4.30pm, St Martin's Church
Sunday 29 March	<i>Fifth Sunday of Great Lent, St Mary of Egypt</i> Matins and Holy Liturgy from 9.30am St Martin's Church.
Wednesday 1 April	<i>Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts</i> , 6pm St Martin's Church
Saturday 4 April	<i>Lazarus Saturday</i> Great Vespers 4.30pm, St Martin's Church
Sunday 5 April	<i>Palm Sunday, Entry into Jerusalem</i> Matins and Holy Liturgy from 9.30am St Martin's Church.

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

NB: If wishing to receive Holy Communion at the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on Wednesday evenings, the faithful should fast from 1pm onwards.

SERVICES FOR GREAT & HOLY WEEK AND HOLY PASCHA 2026

All Services in St Martin's Church

Great and Holy Monday 6 April	<i>Bridegroom Matins</i> (sung in anticipation of Holy Tuesday) 6pm.
Great and Holy Tuesday 7 April	<i>Bridegroom Matins</i> (sung in anticipation of Holy Wednesday) 6pm.
Great and Holy Wednesday 8 April	<i>Service of Holy Anointing</i> , 6pm.
Great and Holy Thursday 9 April	<i>Vesperal Liturgy of St Basil</i> 9:30am <i>The Twelve Passion Gospels</i> 6pm.
Great and Holy Friday 10 April	<i>Women and girls to decorate bier/epitaphios with flowers</i> 9:00am <i>Vespers & Deposition</i> 12pm <i>Matins (Lamentations) & Procession</i> 6pm.
Great and Holy Saturday 11 April	<i>Vesperal Liturgy of St Basil</i> 9:30am <i>Acts of the Apostles & Midnight Office</i> from 10pm.
<i>Holy Pascha</i> - The Resurrection of Our Lord & Saviour Jesus Christ	<i>Holy Liturgy</i> 1am <i>Agape Vespers</i> 4.30pm



2026 Fasting Calendar

LEGEND:	
Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs, fish, olive oil, wine	
Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs, fish, olive oil	
Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs, fish	
Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs	
Abstain from meat	

Note: On the day of a parish's patronal feast, fish, wine and oil are allowed if it falls on a fasting day.

January						
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31						

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November						
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December						
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27	28	29	30	31		

When fasting, please consult your spiritual father for guidance.

OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2026

Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)

SUNDAYS	THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week FEBRUARY 1st	 <i>TRIODION 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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