
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



Dear ones, I often talk in my homilies and at other times about the fact that our parish, our Orthodox Christian community is a type of family. Our local church should not simply be somewhere we come occasionally to have confession, to receive Holy Communion or attend some of the Sunday Liturgy, or once in a while for a baptism or a nice Holy Week service. We should not treat it like a shop where we come only when we feel like it, to take something we want. This makes us merely consumers. When we think of the church like this, we have missed something vital to our Christian life. The parish is so

much more than this, for it is in community with others that we find the fullness of our Orthodox Faith and ultimately our own salvation. We should not think so much about what we can take, but what we can give and how we can serve. We should strive to be present each week (not just when we feel like it), faithfully, regularly, to worship God and encourage our Christian brothers and sisters. Being there to help and comfort each other, to welcome new people and to worship and pray together is the ancient model of the Christian community [Acts 2:42-47]. There is great spiritual benefit in being present to help and support and in the struggle to work out our differences (sometimes this is difficult!) with the other souls we encounter in the parish, with multiple opportunities to practically live out Christ's command that we forgive and love our neighbours. There are also many practical ways we can become involved, giving our time and resources and helping with the many jobs that need doing. Families (our own and that of the Church) need our love and attention, otherwise they disintegrate and die. If we don't come because we don't like this person or that person, or we're too tired or 'busy', or we don't 'feel' like it for some reason, then we have tragically missed the point. Just as we have to show up for our parents, children and relatives, we have to show up for God and for our Christian family too. Glory to God for all things! **-Fr Mark**

Catechesis

The new catechism class will start on Sunday 3 May after the Divine Liturgy. This first session will be focused on orientation and overview for the coming sessions, and will also look at some matters of church etiquette, and some simple practical things about Orthodoxy which will help give context to future learning. I am very pleased to be helped by Reader Andreas Moran, whose knowledge and experience will I know be of great benefit. All are welcome to this course, newcomers and those already Orthodox who also wish to come along.

Feast of Helen & Constantine and Holy Ascension.

This year, because of the date of Holy Pascha, the Feast of one of our patrons, St Helen, Equal to the Apostles, falls on the same day (Thursday May 21) as a Great Feast of the Lord, The Ascension of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. On this day we will serve the Divine Liturgy for the Ascension at 8:30am in St Helen's Chapel and afterwards bring out the relic of St Helen for solemn veneration by the faithful. I encourage as many as possible to attend.

Those who serve and those who sing



Khouria Paula and I thank all of you who helped with the services and preparations for Holy Week and Pascha. From singing in the choir, serving in the altar to cleaning, prosphora baking, printing and stewarding; each of these is a great and blessed service to God and his Holy Church. Everything went very well, thanks to God, and as we enjoy this Paschal season and the lovely sunshine which has replaced the dreary rain of the early months of the year, let us give thanks that we are able to enjoy and take part in such a vibrant and growing community.

Fasting

As usual each month, I include the Antiochian Orthodox fasting calendar and I encourage you as members of our community to fast according to this tradition and rule. If you have any questions or concerns, then please ask me. In the Antiochian tradition, we don't fast at all (even Wednesdays and Fridays) between Holy Pascha and the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (May 21).



War and Peace

I know many are worried about the recent terrible outbreaks of war in the world, and the threat of shortages and hardships which may, as a result, reach us here in Great Britain. Our duty as Christians is to pray, in all times and places and especially for peace, in our own hearts, between people and nations. Here is a prayer you can include in your daily prayers which will help you.

For Those Suffering in War

O Merciful Lord, have compassion on those suffering from acts of war. Heal the sick and injured, shelter the homeless, feed the hungry, and defend the innocent. Soften the hearts of those who destroy your image within their fellow human beings. Stir to compassion those who are able to end the conflicts which rise between nations and peoples. Raise up your faithful people to imitate the Good Samaritan and ease the sufferings in your Name. For you are the Prince of Peace and the Savior of our souls, and yours is the glory, with your Father and your Holy Spirit, both now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.
(From the Anthologion - St Ignatius Orthodox Press)

Safeguarding: Children in the Churchyard



I must remind all parents that YOU are responsible for YOUR children at all times while they are at church, both during the services and afterwards. **We have a rule that NO child is allowed in the churchyard without a responsible adult to accompany them and be with them.** This does not mean popping out into the churchyard occasionally to see if they are ok! This might seem a little harsh, especially to those who sometimes or even usually attend the monastery where children seem to have a great deal of freedom. But, I must ask you to remember that our church is in the middle of a very busy city centre, and that because we do not own the church yard, then anyone can come through while the gates are open. This includes people

who use drugs and misuse alcohol, and who can sometimes be quite anti-social. Also, we cannot be sure that drug paraphernalia, such as syringes etc. have not been left lying around in the churchyard. I do my best to keep an eye on such things but I can't guarantee that I won't miss something of that sort. Please follow this rule, it is for the children's safety and to prevent any problems for the parish.

Thanksgiving Project

I mentioned our Thanksgiving Project in April's newsletter and I'm announcing here that this will culminate On Sunday May 24 with a special Thanksgiving Sunday. In the weeks ahead I will be preaching and teaching on the importance of a commitment to regular giving in the life of a Christian, for the flourishing of the parish and its activities and as a practical, embodied sign of our love for God, His Holy Church and our neighbours. Full details of the arrangements for Thanksgiving Sunday will be published soon, in the weeks prior.



Words from the Fathers on Pentecost

“Jesus tells us that His holy Disciples will be more courageous and more understanding when they would be, as the Scripture says, Endowed with power from on high (Luke 24:49), and that when their minds would be illuminated by the torch of the Spirit they would be able to see into all things, even though no longer able to question Him bodily present among them. The Saviour does not say that they would no longer, as before, need the light of His guidance, but that when they received His Spirit, when He was dwelling in their hearts, they would not be wanting in any good thing, and their minds would be filled with most perfect knowledge.” - St. Cyril of Alexandria

Orthodox Parish of St Martin & St Helen
+ **May 2026 Services** +

Saturday 2 May	Great Vespers 4:30pm St Martin's Church
Sunday 3 May	Matins & Divine Liturgy: Sunday of the Paralyse Man 9:30am St Martin's Church. (1st Session of Catechesis after the Liturgy)
Wednesday 6 May	Hours & Divine Liturgy: Feast of Mid-Pentecost 8:15am St Helen's Chapel
Saturday 9 May	Great Vespers 4:30pm St Martin's Church
Sunday 10 May	Matins & Divine Liturgy: Sunday of the Samaritan Woman 9:30 St Martin's Church.
Monday 11 May	Hours and Divine Liturgy: Saints Cyril and Methodius 8:15am St Helen's Chapel.
Saturday 16 May	Great Vespers 4:30pm St Martin's Church.
Sunday 18 May	Matins & Divine Liturgy: Sunday of the Blind Man 9:30 St Martin's Church.
Thursday 21 May	Hours and Divine Liturgy: The Ascension of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ 8:15am St Helen's Chapel. (<i>Following the Liturgy, the Precious Relic of St Helen will be brought out for solemn veneration by the faithful on the occasion of her feast.</i>)
Saturday 23 May	Great Vespers 4:30pm St Martin's Church
Sunday 24 May	Matins & Divine Liturgy: Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council 9:30 St Martin's Church (Thanksgiving Sunday)
Saturday 30 May	Hours and Divine Liturgy: Saturday of Souls 9:30am & Great Vespers 4:30pm St Martin's Church
Sunday 31 May	Matins & Divine Liturgy: Holy Pentecost 9:30 St Martin's Church.

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

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						
			1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

February						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

March						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

April						
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May						
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

June						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

July						
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

August						
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

September						
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

October						
			1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

December						
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

When fasting, please consult your spiritual father for guidance.

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.

giftaid it