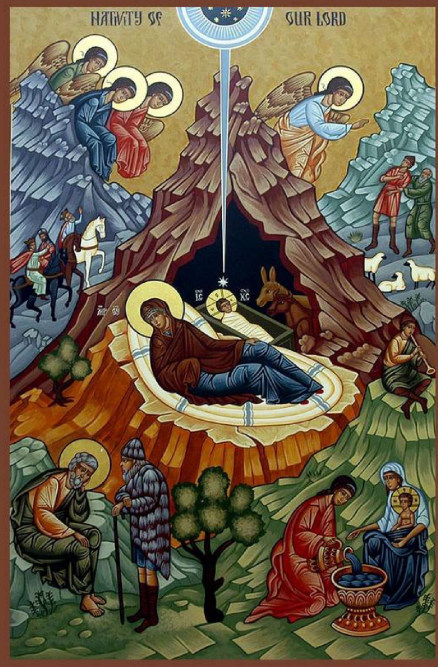


THE ORTHODOX PARISH OF ST MARTIN & ST HELEN

Newsletter: December 2024 | Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles & Ireland | HE Metropolitan Silouan Oner



The Nativity According to the Flesh of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In Western lands, and in the Christianity that developed within them, the focus at this time of year has very much been on this great Feast of the Nativity According to the Flesh, or Christmas as it has come to be known. The more ancient and still extant Eastern tradition is that this wonderful feast is part of a whole, culminating in the baptism of Our Lord at the Feast of Holy Theophany. It is at Christ's baptism that the astounding revelation of this entrance of the Most High God into the created world as one of us, is fully accomplished. It might be argued that in the West, Christmas has assumed an importance greater even than that of Pascha/Easter! Nonetheless, we should strive to embrace the event of the actual birth as a human child of Our Lord as the indispensable beginning of a journey of revelation, which has its fulfillment at His Theophany. There are many themes upon which Christians might meditate at this time of Christmas, but we can perhaps take time to contemplate the following. It was Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor who commanded that the imperial census be taken, who compelled many to suspend their everyday lives and travel to their home cities or towns to be counted. But, after His birth from the womb of the Most Holy Theotokos, it is Christ Himself, the King of Kings who commands us to be counted. And to which town will we travel? To mighty Rome or Athens, centres of worldly power, wealth and military might? Or to humble Bethlehem? Brothers and Sisters, let us choose the path of meekness, humility and simplicity. Let us come home to Bethlehem, to be with our Lord, a little defenceless baby, not putting our faith in our own strength or wealth or prowess, nor that of any worldly force or power, but trusting instead in God's infinite mercy and compassion. Let us, during this earthly life, consent to have our names enrolled in that humble little town so despised and even overlooked by the world, that we through weakness may become whole at last. Happy Christmas from Fr Alexander, Khouria Hilary, Khouria Paula and me!

Fr Mark

News & Views

Help with the Feast on 29 December

Khouria Paula asks for help organising the feast after the liturgy. Help will be needed to set up the tables at Castle Methodist Church on Saturday 28th, and there will be people needed to usher guests, staff the kitchen, prepare drinks, lay out food and clear up afterwards. Please see Khouria Paula and offer your time, energy and resources!

Roof Repairs

Following the roof survey, it looks as though the cost of the repairs will be around £50k. This may seem a high amount, given that the basic fabric of the roof is in good repair. However, the price reflects the fact that there are several areas of the roof which will each require quite substantial repairs, mostly around the verges and edges and some areas where tiles need replacement. The North West Corner will also need scaffolding for several weeks. **In the new year we will begin fundraising in earnest, while final planning permission for the work is sought.**

A VISIT FROM OUR METROPOLITAN SILOUAN: SUNDAY 29/12/24

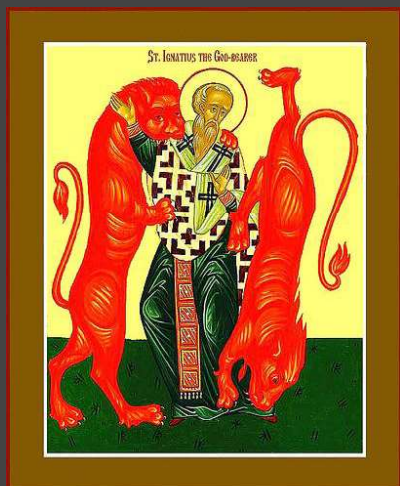
On Sunday 29 December, God willing, Our Most Reverend Father and Metropolitan Silouan, will visit the parish to accept the resignation of Father Alexander Haig, and install Father Mark Shillaker as parish priest. Father Alexander founded the parish in the mid 1990s and supported by Khouria Hilary has faithfully served as its dedicated parish priest ever since. It is impossible to overstate what Father Alexander, with God's help has achieved over all those years and his wisdom and experience will remain indispensable to our God blessed community. Our friends at Castle Methodist Church have kindly agreed to let us use their hall for a feast after the liturgy.



Next month's newsletter, January, will be dedicated to covering some of the key events and occasions which have characterised Father Alexander's ministry and the life of the parish. Please come on Sunday 29 December to welcome the Metropolitan and celebrate Father Alexander and Khouria Hilary's ministry and legacy.

ST IGNATIUS THE GOD BEARER, BISHOP OF ANTIOCH

“Christianity is not a matter of persuading people of particular ideas, but of inviting them to share in the greatness of Christ. So pray that I may never fall into the trap of impressing people with clever speech, but instead I may learn to speak with humility, desiring only to impress people with Christ himself.” *St Ignatius of Antioch*



The Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-Bearer was a disciple of the holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian, as was also Saint Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna (February 23). Saint Ignatius was the second bishop of Antioch, and successor to Bishop Euodius, Apostle of the Seventy (September 7). Holy Tradition tells us that when Saint Ignatius was a little boy, the Savior embraced him and said: “Unless you turn and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven” (Mt. 18:3). The saint was called “God-Bearer” (*Theophoros*), because he bore God in his heart and prayed unceasingly to Him. He also had this name because he was held in the arms of Christ, the incarnate Son of God. To divert attention from the Christians of Antioch, Ignatius openly confessed his faith in Christ before the wicked emperor Trajan, who urged him to worship idols, and was thus condemned to death by being torn apart by wild beasts. He was unflinching in his great faith even when faced with this awful torment, urging his flock not to attempt to prevent it. After being taken to Rome, on December 20, the day of a pagan festival, Saint Ignatius was led into the arena, and there turning to the people cried: “Men of Rome, you know that I am sentenced to death, not because of any crime, but because of my love for God, by Whose love I am embraced. I long to be with Him, and offer myself to him as a pure loaf, made of fine wheat ground fine by the teeth of wild beasts.” **Holy Saint Ignatius, pray to God for us, that our souls may be saved!**

Catechesis and Reception into the Church

We receive many inquiries and requests to be received from people exploring Holy Orthodoxy. This is a growing phenomenon across Orthodox communities in the Anglosphere and while it is a great blessing it can be a challenge to find new ways to respond helpfully and with pastoral care. It needs to be said that anyone who wishes to be received into The Orthodox Church must expect to commit to regularly attending Divine services and to have some instruction in The Faith. It is not like signing up for a political party, or a ‘team’, and no matter how much enthusiasm a newcomer may have initially, a period of study, reflection and orientation into Orthodox faith and practice is essential. Catechesis classes run twice a year currently and are open to all, Orthodox included. Please contact Fr Mark for details or check the parish website.

+Additional Services for December 2024+

Friday 6 December

St Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia | Hours & Divine Liturgy from 9:15 am St Helen’s Chapel

Thursday 12 December

St Spyridon the Wonderworker, Bishop of Tremithus | Hours & Divine Liturgy | from 9:15 am St Helen’s Chapel

Friday 20 December

+Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ | Hieromartyr Ignatius the Godbearer, Bishop of Antioch | Hours & Divine Liturgy from 9:15 am St Helen’s Chapel
Christmas Eve Tuesday 24 December

Royal Hours at 9:00 followed by Divine Liturgy of St Basil at 10:30 | all in St Martin’s Church.

Christmas Day Wednesday 25 December

+The Nativity According to the Flesh of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ | Hours & Divine Liturgy from 9:15, followed by Christmas Carols.

We are grateful to those continuing to support our church by regular or occasional gifts; may God bless you. Bank details:
Orthodox Parish of St Martin & St Helen:
Registered Charity No: 1192469 IBAN:
GB05BUKB20226780219819 Sort Code:
20-22-67 Account No: 50349364 Appeal
Account No: 80219819



Regular Service Times:

Saturdays: Great Vespers 4:30pm

Sundays: Matins & Holy Liturgy from 9:45am

Weekend services ALL at St Martins.
Additional (weekday) services usually at St Helen’s Chapel unless otherwise stated.

St Helen’s Chapel is open daily for prayer and pilgrimage.

St Martin’s Church, West Stockwell Street, CO1 1HN

St Helen’s Chapel, Maidenburgh Street, CO1 1UB.

Both temples are off the High Street, but accessible from there only on foot. Nearest car park NCP: Nunns Road, CO1 1EJ.

Confessions: Saturdays 5pm, after Vespers or by arrangement. **Holy Marriage, Holy Baptism, Funerals, Memorials etc: by arrangement.**

CLERGY: Father Alexander Haig, 17 Maidenburgh Street, CO1 1UB. Phone: 01206 530 530 \ Mobile: 07947 047 201 Email:

parishpriest@orthodoxcolchester.org.uk **Father Mark Shillaker** 24 Orchard Gardens, Ipswich Rd, CO4 0BX Mobile: 07917 161 295 | Email:

markshillaker@gmail.com - **parish website: orthodoxcolchester.org.uk**