

Orthodoxy: Christian teaching and life as it has always been

Orthodox Parish of St Helen of Colchester

Antiochian Orthodox Deanery

NEWSLETTER 151

FEBRUARY 2009



AT ST HELEN'S

SUNDAY 1 FEBRUARY: Holy Liturgy 10.30 am
Meeting of Christ in the Temple
(Parish observance)

TUESDAY 24 FEBRUARY: Holy Liturgy 9.30 am
First and Second Findings of the
Head of St John the Forerunner and Baptist

“Back to porridge and old clothes!” my dear mother used to say....

We were at the end of a feast or reunion or something similar, unwinding perhaps after the departure of guests and a happy time together. Mother would assume her best Scottish accent, partially lost after many years down south in England. She would come out with that saying - actually something more like (if I remember correctly) “Och weel, back to purridge and auld clathes...” It meant of course that we must cut down from perhaps slightly increased spending and ‘luxury’ to resume ordinary life again.

It was always a joke, God rest her! But there is more than an element of good sense in the saying. You must use what you already have and you must use it carefully. That will give a little leeway to have a feast when you need it. We do need our feasts. But continued overspending will get us into trouble and debt—a consideration that perhaps the world might meditate on in our time.

Last month's *Newsletter*, our 150th edition, was larger than usual, you recall, and used colour. It was, I am glad to say, generally well received. I had a number of kind and generous comments.

But it did cost a lot more than the usual format. We must return to our usual A4 size in black and white—though I think we may use some colour occasionally, as it does make it look much more attractive and alive.

All this also reminds us about our Christian living. “Life is not just a bed of roses,” we also say, and that means we must introduce some sterner discipline into our daily life from time to time, even though it is certainly right that we must enjoy our feasts.

Both feasting and fasting are characteristics of the Orthodox way of life.

That's what Lent, the Great Fast, is all about.

Getting our life in trim now, so we can fully enjoy the great Feast of Feasts, Holy Pascha.

Now, before the Fast, we have a few weeks when we *gradually prepare* for the severities of the Fast.

The Sundays and weeks before the Great Fast

- This preparing for the Fast begins with the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee (8 Feb). The week following is fast-free—no fasting at all even on the Wednesday and Friday.
- The next week, after the Sunday of the Prodigal Son (15 Feb) is *normal fasting*, Wednesday and Friday.
- The following Sunday (22 Feb) is Meatfare Sunday. This is the *last day we eat meat* until Easter, but in that week we can eat even dairy food every day.
- Then Cheesefare Sunday (1 Mar) is the *last day we eat dairy foods* until Easter.
- The next day (2 Mar) is the First Day of Lent, always a Monday. We begin the *full* Great Fast, with the first week being *stricter* than the following ones. (Great and Holy Week itself is again *stricter*.)

We need ascetic effort all through the year—every Wednesday and Friday reminds us of that.

But the Great Fast and its preparation period call us to special effort. God give us his grace to respond.

HOLY PASCHA this year is 19 April, a week after western Easter

Father Alexander

Continued over page

We gathered to discuss our very life and future....

It was touching to receive the following email from the Brotherhood of St Edward at Brookwood in connection with our Parish Meeting:

Dear-in-Christ, Father Alexander, bless! - We will be remembering you in our prayers for what that is worth, and we hope that your people do not lose heart. - With love in Christ, Fr Alexis

Paul Lansley reports on the meeting:

On Sunday 18 January twenty-three members of St Helen's Parish met at the Castlegate Centre for lunch together and, at Fr Alexander's request, to discuss 'the challenge of our future needs and responsibilities'. This is particularly in view of the arrival in the Town of another Orthodox Parish with spacious buildings and facilities.

Some important decisions were made:

1. A Parish Council and Constitution are legally necessary for us to have Charitable Status, enabling us to claim back tax and other advantages. A council was duly elected: Fr



The Meeting of Christ in the Temple celebrates the bringing of the 40-day old Child to claim his own place, as it were. Mary and Joseph meet Simeon, who recognises in this Child the Saviour of the world. Old Anna also comes and praises God for him. We are celebrating the feast this year on the day before, Sunday 1 February. It is a feast with beautiful and immediate meaning.

Holy Liturgy
ST FURSEY'S
Sat 7 Feb 9.30 am

UNIVERSITY
Sat 14 Feb 10.00 am

CLACTON
Sat 21 Feb 10.00 am

FELLOWSHIP OF ST ALBAN AND ST SERGIUS

NE Essex Branch meeting
Tuesday 24 February 7.30 pm
in St Helen's Chapel

Acquiring the Holy Spirit

We are privileged that, under this title, our friend Father ATHANASIOS will introduce the Orthodox teaching on 'Divinisation'
Come and learn the Orthodox faith: open to all

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 Balkeine Hill), to Northgate; go straight along St Peter Street to Castle Park; continue round, up into Maidenburgh Street. Nuns Road NCP is the nearest car park.

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 after Vespers, or by arrangement
Holy Marriage, Baptism, Funerals, Memorials etc: by arrangement

Parish Priest: Father Alexander (Alistair) Haig
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Reader: Stephen Weston

St Fursey's House, 111 Neville Rd, Sutton, Stalham NR12 9RR Tel: 01-692-580-552

New Parish Website: <http://www.orthodoxcolchester.org.uk>

St Fursey's Chapel, 111 Neville Rd, Sutton, near Stalham, Norfolk
Divine Liturgy: usually first Saturday 9.30 am

At St James Anglican Church, Beatrice Rd, Clacton-on-sea
Divine Liturgy: usually third Saturday 10.00 am

At University of Essex Chaplaincy Centre: Divine Liturgy: one Saturday per term 10.00 am

Parish Meeting: continued from page 1

Alexander (ex officio), Khouria Hilary, Carol Aristodimou, Paul & Suzanne Brighton-Cross, Tom Carter, Christodouli Cobbold, David Davies (Treasurer), Alex Haig, Paul & Alexia Lansley, Mary Morris. Because of the distance some members have to travel, meetings need not be very frequent.

2. We decided not to move to St Martin's for Easter this year. The amount of effort involved was too heavy, and the Church has continued meanwhile to be used for unsuitable purposes, while the possibility of our taking it over has become more remote.

3. We all agreed that St Helen's is now too small for us; we are quite cramped on most Sundays. Ideas for more space were aired, but all depends on whether or not we can buy the Chapel, or obtain permission to extend westwards. Or should we perhaps look for another building, or land to build a Church?

4. Volunteers were found for these tasks:
Stewards: Suzanne Brighton-Cross & Mary Morris; *Sacristan:* Paul Brighton-Cross; *Maintenance:* Paul Brighton-Cross; *Catering:* Christodouli Cobbold & Carol Aristodimou; *Sacristy washing:* Suzanne & Paul Brighton-Cross; *Sacristy sewing:* Hazel Lawrence.

When we blessed the River after Holy Theophany...

The Procession went very well again this year on the Sunday following the feast. Again it was fine and sunny, if cold. Nearly everyone came down from the church after the Holy Liturgy .

MIKE DAVIES took more photos of the occasion. They are displayed in the Porch: lovely ones of both children and adults.

You can order copies if desired — @ 30p, 50p and £1. Mike has generously donated the cost to church funds.

Get your order in by 2 February and you will receive them within a few days. Otherwise it will take some weeks - but they are good pictures, worth waiting for!

A Word from the Fathers

Let us therefore forsake the vanity of the crowd and their false teachings and turn back to the word delivered to us from the beginning, watching unto prayer, and continuing steadfast in fasting, beseeching fervently the all-seeing God to lead us not into temptation, as even the Lord said, The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Let us then hold steadfastly and unceasingly to our Hope and to the Pledge of our righteousness, that is, Christ Jesus, who bore our sins in his own body on the tree, who committed no sin, neither was guile found on his lips. But for our sakes he endured everything that we might live in him.

Therefore let us be imitators of his patient endurance, and if we suffer for the sake of his name, let us glorify him.

For he set us this example in his own Person, and this is what we believed.

Hieromartyr Polycarp, 70-156, Bishop of Smyrna, feast 23 Feb



St Helen's Chapel as a workshop, not long before 1886, when it was restored as it is today - though it did not become a church again until 2000, after 461 years in other use! Note the garage-like door in the east wall, the extra window in the north wall, and the houses on the right, close to the church, which were demolished.

Here and There

THE NEW ICON of St Helen has been completed in Athens, but we are having problems with getting it here. I hope it will arrive early in February.

STEWARDS NEEDED: At the Parish Meeting we had some volunteers for Stewarding. Would others like to volunteer, so that individuals do just an occasional duty? *Duties include:* welcoming people with a smile; taking the collection if need be; giving out the weekly bulletin; shepherding people away from the door so others can get in; assisting anyone in need; and just 'being there'. It is a most worthwhile job - a real act of service to other worshippers.

RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION: I find it sad that a surprising number of our people receive the Holy Gifts seldom if ever, even some who bring children. Obviously there are some who do not receive because they may not, perhaps being in a relationship not approved by the Church, or for some other reason. But it is a real privilege to receive, and while this must be done with some preparation, it is by no means impossible for most people.



THE SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON (15 February)
We may be a long time away in our sins, but as soon as we start back towards Christ and the Faith, the Lord himself runs out to us. He embraces us. He clothes and feeds us, and crowns us with glory.

We Three Kings... St Helen's on radio

St Helen's got its moment of fame when IAN HISLOP presented a pre-Christmas Radio 4 programme about the Three Kings. St Helen is said to have found their bodies and their crowns in the Holy Land, much later enshrined in the great cathedral at Cologne. He and producer PHILIP SELLARS came in November, and it was broadcast just before Christmas.

From all the comments I have heard it was well received, and it raised interest not only among people in the area of Colchester but also much more widely: visitors have since come from some distance.

PAUL BRIGHTON-CROSS has produced cds of the programme, on sale at the book-stall at cost price, 40p each.

Visit of HE Archbishop JOHN
This will take place on **SUNDAY 15 MARCH** (not as previously announced). Please be here and stay for the Parish Lunch.

The People Column

UNEXPECTEDLY and sadly, JEAN TURNER of Frinton has died. She was almost 80, and had been in good health until a week beforehand. It was of course a great shock for her husband the Rev Dr JOHN and their son FRANCIS. Jean was a great and knowledgeable friend of Orthodoxy, and keenly supported the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius both nationally and locally. We shall miss her very much indeed, having known her for many years. Eternal memory!

SOMETHING of a shock it was - after attending the above funeral in Kirby-le-Soken church - to pop across to say a prayer at the grave of ANDROULA MURDOCH, whom I buried there 11 years ago, to find that the body of her dear husband DAVID was lying there also, having died in 2007! I knew we were out of contact, for his Newsletter had been returned 'gone away' or suchlike. But we had no idea he had died—and sadly he had been buried without the benefit of Orthodox prayers. David was a lovely man, a quiet Scot—there are not many Orthodox Scots and I was always glad to have him on our books even if he was not in church. He had met his wife as a national serviceman on Cyprus many years ago. They later ran the refreshment van that parks on Harwich quay. Just before she died, she gave us the large icon of St Luke - it arrived only at her funeral. Eternal memory!

MOVED: ANTHONY (Alan) and ELIZABETH (Jean) STEVENS were founding members of this Parish in 1996, living at Sible Hedingham. But not long afterwards they moved to Rutland. Anthony died several years ago, and Elizabeth has just moved into sheltered accommodation in Lincoln. There she will be very close to the Antiochian parish church—she already knows Fr PHILIP and Fr GEORGE—while still being within visiting distance of her son PAUL. Her son JAMES lives in Volos in Greece. We hope she will settle quickly and happily, and are certain she will be happy to be so close to the Orthodox church.

MANY YEARS was sung for KATHARINE (Kay) ALEXANDER after the Holy Liturgy in St Fursey's Chapel on St Fursey's day, 16 January, her 80th birthday. She became Orthodox only a year ago, at 79, a brave example to us all!

FEBRUARY DAYS

Sun	1	Meeting of our Lord (transfd), Pentecost 33
Tue	3	Righteous Simeon and Anna
Fri	6	S Photios Patriarch of Constantinople
Sun	8	Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee, New Martyrs of Russia, Gt Martyr Theodore Stratelates
Mon	9	S Peter of Damascus
Tue	10	Hieromartyr Charaklambos of Magnesia
Sun	15	Sunday of the Prodigal Son S Oswy of Northumbria
Tue	17	Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit, S Finan of Lindisfarne
Wed	18	S Leo the Great, Pope of Rome
Sat	21	Memoira Saturday
Sun	22	Sun of Meatfare, Sun of Last Judgment
Mon	23	Hieromartyr Polycarp of Smyrna
Tue	24	1st & 2nd Finding of the Head of S John
Wed	25	S Ethelbert of Kent
Thu	26	Martyr Photini (Svetlana) the Samaritan Woman
Fri	27	S Raphael (Hawaweeny) of Brooklyn
Sat	28	Commemoration of All Monks and Nuns S John Cassian the Roman

A full list of the month's Feasts and Fasts available on request