

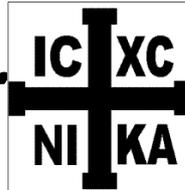
# +Holy Orthodoxy: Teaching the Truth since AD 37+

**Orthodox Parish of  
St Helen of Colchester**

Antiochian Orthodox Deanery of the UK & Ireland

NEWSLETTER 160

DECEMBER 2009



FEAST OF THE CONCEPTION OF THE HOLY THEOTOKOS BY ST ANNA

Wednesday 9 December 9.30 am

HOLY LITURGY IN ST HELEN'S CHAPEL

## Christmas at St Helen's

EVE OF THE NATIVITY, Thursday 24 December

9.30 am ROYAL HOURS

4.30 pm VIGIL (Compline and Mattins)

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY, Friday 25 December

10.15 am Third and Sixth Hours

10.30 am DIVINE LITURGY and Carols

THIRD DAY OF THE NATIVITY, Sunday 27 December

10.30 am Third and Sixth Hours and TYPICA

Confessions Sat 19 Dec 5.00 pm, or after any service, or by appointment

# Christmas is a good family time —but there's much more to it!

**Y**es - there's much more to it than that! For what we celebrate at Christmas is what you might consider an *absolutely impossible thing to happen* - THE BIRTH IN THIS WORLD OF OUR GREAT AND HOLY GOD.

Now, part of the problem is that this belief is so much the centre and heart of our religion. We as Orthodox Christians are so used to hearing it said that we do not really take in the enormity of the claim.

Certainly if you said it to an atheist, he would pooh-pooh it. 'That is quite impossible to believe,' he would say. 'There is no God anyway.'

But if you said it to many a religious man too, he also would dismiss it; he would say, 'God does not act in that sort of way. God is quite beyond us. We worship him, but only from afar.'

†

**Y**et that belief is at the heart of the Christian Faith. We call it the doctrine of the Incarnation.

It teaches us that God not only *made* us, he also *loves* us. He loves us so much that he was willing to come and share our very existence as human beings.

What a God! A God who has himself experienced what it means to be human - with all the

implications of being limited in activity and experience in the way that God in himself is never limited, never restricted. And suffering too!

The Incarnation - the belief that Jesus Christ, the Babe in the manger, fully human, is also fully God - gives us hope, joy, and peace.

God loves us. - If that be so, as Christians believe and teach, the world with all its sadnesses and problems is no longer an alien planet on which we live out our lives alone, with forbearance and courage, an uncomfortable and tragic existence.

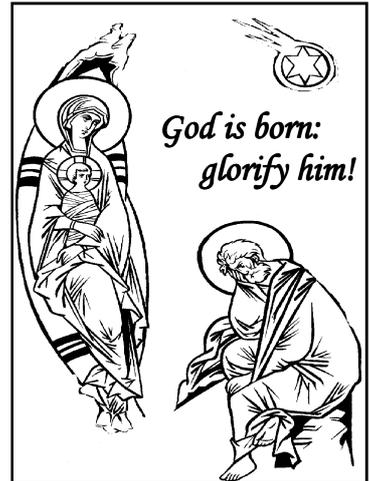
**It is instead the place where God has dwelt in Christ, still dwells by his Holy Spirit. Where the Kingdom of heaven is itself to be found, in spite of the troubles and problems.**

When you enjoy your family and friends this Christmas time (as many of you will), just give a little thought also to the Holy Incarnation of Christ.

Recall what gives substance to our joy, what is the very cause of our Christmas family joy.

Rejoice with your family, yes. But rejoice with and in Christ our God, come to earth, united with us, to show the love of the Father even for us poor sinners.

God bless you all.  
**Father Alexander**



### Interlude

Above the water and earth  
Moving through the heavens  
In formation, the guardians of  
Light sang with joy to  
Lowly men. Their ardour  
Echoed the burning star that brought not  
Neighbours but strangers to the  
Nativity, the birth of the great  
I AM. To some this is  
unbelievable, but Man's life is full of  
Miracles.

From a series of poems by MARGARET HAIG  
about the bridges of London. This one, inspired by  
the Millennium Bridge, has the acrostic: *A Millennium*

## St Theodore Icon Calendar for 2010

£11.99

- ◆ An icon a month by Aidan Hart, many icons of British Orthodox Saints.
- ◆ British Saints prominent in daily entries.
- ◆ Probably the first wall Calendar for the Orthodox community in Britain
- ◆ Published by the Antiochian Deanery, produced here in Colchester.
- ◆ Have a copy in your home. Treat a friend.
- ◆ Collect it at church - or 75 p by post in UK .

## 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**

17 Maidenburgh St, Colchester CO1 1UB

Tel: 01-206-530-530 Mob: 07-947-047-201 Eml: orthodox.colchester@ntlworld.com

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

### HOLY LITURGY

ST FURSEY'S

Saturday 5 December  
9.30 am

CLACTON

Saturday 19 December  
10.00 am

### St Ignatius the God-bearer (Feast 20 December)

He was said to be the child Christ took in his arms and set as an example to his followers. He became **second Bishop of Antioch**, so is specially important in a parish of the Church of Antioch. In AD 107, on his way to Rome to be thrown to the lions, he wrote letters that today give important insights into the teaching and ways of the Church in the period just after the Holy Apostles.

## Orthodox Unity in the West nearer?

Orthodoxy prides itself that it is totally united in its teaching, and how *The Truth* matters. Yet we are often divided about other things—there are as many as 11 jurisdictions in Britain in different degrees of communion, but all agreeing they are all Orthodox. This is a scandal almost everywhere outside the traditional Orthodox homelands (but *not* in Africa).

However, the problem is now being tackled, and a coming *Great and Holy Council* is planned to deal with that and other problems. No date has been set for it, but a preparatory committee has ordered that (for example) we Orthodox in Great Britain and Ireland start working together now, and prepare to be *one Orthodox Church*.

This is great news, and bodes well for the establishing of (perhaps) a British Orthodox Church.

## Here and There

**£410 FOR THE NEEDY:** We had a special collection towards a 'ShelterBox' for the people of Sumatra and Samoa suffering after recent natural disasters, via the Colchester Rotary Club. Our friend, Rotary Secretary IAN McMEEKAN wrote a note of thanks:

*Please convey the thanks of the Rotary Club of Colchester to the congregation of St Helen's, for the generous donation to ShelterBox of £410. The sum will immediately be despatched to help them continue their invaluable work.*

Thank you to those who contributed, especially for one very generous gift.

**A PERSONAL INVITATION FROM A CHURCH'S FIRST HIERARCH** is hard to resist! Metropolitan HILARION, head of the Russian Church Outside Russia (now a part of the Russian Church), invited me to visit St John's Church, the old Garrison Church. I was visiting Fr Deacon ANDREW BOND's lovely new *Joy of All Who Sorrow* church at Mettingham in north Suffolk for the Metropolitan's visit there. Later the same day he was to visit St John's in Colchester and he asked me to go there also.

So after an excellent buffet lunch at Mettingham we returned to St John's for my first visit there. Those who know the history will realise it was not entirely easy for me, but Fr ANDREW PHILLIPS and others greeted me, and several St Helen's people were present. Here Archbishop MARK of Berlin and Great Britain was also present. It was good to meet two of their prominent hierarchs and to visit St John's.

**YOUTH CHOIR FESTIVAL** 'with an Orthodox and Christmas flavour' in Lincoln 10-12 December. Young people from the local university and elsewhere in Britain are coming together, and the Orthodox contingent of this choir will sing Great Vespers on Saturday and the Liturgy on Sunday. Anyone interested should contact DEINIOL CLARKE (deiniolclarke@googlemail.com).

**THE ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING** will be on **Sunday 31 January**, following the Holy Liturgy. Please note the date in your new diary. We expect it to be short, so hope that you will stay behind for it.

## A Word from the Fathers

The Word was made flesh so that the wisdom of God could come within the reach of human beings.

For his Word - the expression of the whole truth about God - is far beyond our comprehension. No creature can ever fully understand his creator.

But the Word, the Son of God, put on a humble, human form, so that infinite truth could be seen in finite terms.

He humbled himself, coming down to the lowest human level. Those who will join him there - denying themselves, taking the low place - will be raised up



St Stephen was the Church's first Martyr, Protomartyr. One of the Seven Deacons, ordained in the very early days, he was stoned to death outside the walls of Jerusalem. His feast is two days after Christmas, 27 December.

## The People Column

**Patriarch Pavle of Serbia** sadly died on 15 November, aged 95. Receiving the news at the end of the Sunday Liturgy, we immediately offered a Trisagion. He had been cared for in hospital for two years, but earlier was a **real spiritual leader of his people** - sometimes being willing to confront the politicians. He had an air of genuine holiness about him, and will be much missed. Memory eternal!

**ANTONY BARDSLEY** and his wife DELIA have been Orthodox for many years. He runs two second-hand bookshops, one in Walsingham, Norfolk, and one in Bungay, Suffolk (where he lives). He has seven children, mostly grown up. A Reader under Bishop BASIL of Amphipolis, he has now **asked to be attached to this Parish, and has offered himself for ordination to the Priesthood** in our Archdiocese. The Church Council enthusiastically accepted this recently, and the process will now begin. Antony, as a former Anglican Priest, is well-experienced as a pastor, and is already getting known to a number of you. He will be interviewed by the quaintly-named *Axios Committee* of the Deanery in January. If accepted by the Committee, he will of course have to be accepted by the Archbishop. He will be a great help at St Helen's. It could be a while before he is actually ordained, but 'welcome aboard', Antony!

**PETER ACTON** was an early member of our Parish - when we were still at Bourne Court (i.e. before 2000) - and had been Orthodox for years before that. He would come along with young SIMON and little EMILY. A few years ago he moved from Witham to that little bit of Eire, County Donegal, that sticks up west of Northern Ireland, to look after his uncle's affairs. His wife ANNIE will join him in Ireland shortly. It was a pleasure to see him when **he looked in one day recently**. Simon now lives in Woodford Green, and Emily in Braintree, hoping to go to University soon.

**MARGARET HAIG** has made her mark on the history of this country, by the final passing into law of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 - but her part in it will affect you only if you ever dig up something like a gold Anglo-Saxon brooch in your back garden, i.e. **treasure trove!** It was passed just before the Queen reopened Parliament: apparently getting the Bill through in time involved a lot of running between the Lords and the Commons! - But she has already moved on to pastures new and is now dealing with land registry problems.

**NADIA GHEBEA**, new daughter of BOGDAN and ELENA of Cambridge Road, has been **baptised**. We welcome her into Christ's Holy Church. Many years, little one!

**ANASTASIA MICHAEL**, daughter to NICK and LEONORA, is in her second year studying **medicine at Bristol**. Nice place, good subject!

**DAVID DAVIES**, our Treasurer, has been with the Ipswich **Citizens Advice Bureau** for a while now. Recently he was appointed Advice Session Supervisor.



## DECEMBER DAYS

Thu	3	S Birinus, Bp of Dorchester, Apostle of Wessex
Fri	4	Great Martyr Barbara, S John of Damascus
Sat	5	S Sabas the Sanctified
Sun	6	<b>Pentecost 26, S Nicholas the Wonderworker</b>
Mon	7	S Ambrose, Bishop of Milan
Tue	8	S Patapios of Thebes
Wed	9	<b>Conception of Theotokos by S Anne</b>
Fri	11	S Daniel the Stylite of Constantinople
Sat	12	S Spyridon the Wonderworker of Tremithus
Sun	13	<b>Sunday of the Forefathers, S Herman of Alaska, Virgin Martyr Lucy of Syracuse</b>
Mon	14	S Venantius Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers
Tue	15	Hieromartyr Eleutherius, Bishop of Illyria
Thu	17	Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Children
Fri	18	Martyr Sebastian at Rome and his Companions
Sat	19	Martyr Boniface at Tarsus in Cilicia
Sun	20	<b>Sunday before Nativity, Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer, Bishop of Antioch</b>
Thu	24	Eve of Nativity
Fri	25	<b>NATIVITY ACCORDING TO THE FLESH OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST</b>
Sat	26	Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos
Sun	27	<b>Sunday after Nativity</b>
Tue	29	Infants Slain by Herod at Bethlehem (Holy Innocents)

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

*Blessed Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430)*