

+ God became Man that Man might become God - St Athanasius the Great +

# Orthodox Parish of St Helen of Colchester

Antiochian Orthodox Deanery of the UK & Ireland  
NEWSLETTER 171 DECEMBER 2010



ST NICHOLAS  
THE WONDERWORKER,  
ARCHBISHOP OF MYRA IN LYCIA  
\* MONDAY 6 DECEMBER \*  
HOLY LITURGY 9.30 AM

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★  
★ **A merry Christmas** ★  
★ **and a happy New Year** ★  
★ **to all our dear friends !** ★  
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This year I am not sending out a Parish Christmas card, but this *Newsletter* comes to all our readers - some by email - with greetings and good wishes to you all. Khouria HILARY and I pray you have a good and happy time, with your family or alone, and that the peace which Christ alone can give may dwell in your home and heart.

May you look and indeed dwell upon the icon of the Holy Nativity which shows not just a human birth but the birth amongst us of God himself, bringing light in darkness, joy in sorrow, peace in trouble.

For the message of the Nativity is not just a warming human scene but the ultimate answer to the problems of this world - of me and my troubles, of you and your troubles.

It anticipates for us the joy of the Cross, which has its base in the manger, in the womb of the Holy Mother. May you have all the joys of eternity, for you and your salvation.

Father Alexander



**Christmas at St Helen's**  
Friday 24 December  
EVE OF NATIVITY  
9.30 am Royal Hours  
4.30 pm Vigil (Great Compline & Mattins)

Saturday 25 December  
NATIVITY OF CHRIST  
10.15 am Hours  
10.30 am Divine Liturgy and Carols

Sunday 26 December  
SYNAXIS OF THE THEOTOKOS  
10.15 am Hours  
10.30 am Divine Liturgy

**Confessions**  
Saturday 18 December: 5.00 pm  
Thursday 23 December: 3.00 pm, 7.00 pm  
Friday 24 December: after any service  
Or at other times by appointment

**FELLOWSHIP OF ST ALBAN & ST SERGIUS**  
North Essex Branch meeting open to all  
Tuesday 7 December 7.30 pm at St Helen's:  
Fr Alexander, *An Orthodox on the Isis*  
An account of the recent session of the  
Anglican-Orthodox International Dialogue at Oxford

**The humility which God displayed in being born of a woman and in being sent so ignominiously by mortal men to his death, is the sovereign medicine for healing our swollen pride.**  
St Augustine of Hippo (350-430)

## Saints in Hexham

When in the North recently we were able to make a pilgrimage to Hexham, between Newcastle and Carlisle. I had visited there many years ago, but Khouria HILARY had not been there before. We went with the family, a new member aged eleven days.

It is a lovely town with fine buildings, particularly the magnificent mediaeval church, a monastery church until the Reformation. Now it is the parish church, but still called the Abbey.

For the Christian it is the Saints associated with the monastery that is important. It was founded in 674 by St Wilfrid (+709), and there is a lovely little crypt from his time originally enshrining relics of St Andrew - it was kindly opened especially for us.

St Acca (+740), St Alcmund (+781), St Cuthbert (+687), St Eata (+686), St Frithebert (+766), St John of Beverley (+721), and St Tilbert (+789) were all monks, abbots or bishops there.

Of these, Cuthbert, Wilfred, and John are particularly widely venerated.

There is a good piece of a large stone cross from St Acca's grave, a little Saxon portable chalice, and much else of interest.

Of course none of their holy relics remain, for they were destroyed at the Reformation (a notable exception being St Cuthbert, still prominently buried in Durham Cathedral, close to St Bede).

It was a privilege to be there. It would have been good if the Anglicans made more of these Saints, for they also revere them. But I prayed for you all to them anyway, and rejoiced to be in fellowship with so many English Saints from the time when this country was an Orthodox land.

May their prayers strengthen the Orthodox Faith of us their sons, and restore and strengthen faith in this often sad and faithless country.

If you visit the ancient and historic Northumbrian land, or pass through it on your way to Scotland, turn aside and visit a holy place from genuinely Orthodox times.

You will be strengthened in your faith as we were.



**HOLY LITURGY**  
CLACTON  
Saturday  
18 December  
10.00 am  
NONE IN  
BASILDON

## 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. Nunns 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 Street, Colchester CO1 1UB  
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The Parish of St Helen is Registered Charity No. 1134418  
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



## Crowds flock to St Spyridon

The Church of St Spyridon dominates a narrow street in old Corfu Town. It has a high bell-tower, and its sound reverberates all over the district. That Sunday we had to struggle to get it. There must have been about 1000 worshippers.

It is the only Church in Greece which has an organ. When I heard the Choir singing I shivered, thinking it was indeed heaven on earth. It was not strictly byzantine; more leaning to the Russian style. I have never heard such singing, with the organ softly giving its background accompaniment. Not even the most famous choirs could compare.

A large part of the congregation appeared to be from Russia or other countries, and this was confirmed by our taxi-driver. He said that these visitors fill the Church every week. Something like half of those present pressed forward to receive Holy Communion.

A large area in front of the iconostasis was walled off and on the low balustrade were notepads, six on either side, with pens for writing petitions for prayer at the Saint's Shrine. People

were queuing up to write names, as I did. I noticed about 30 names on a neighbour's paper, and she continued on a second page.

The Shrine of St Spyridon was open for about two hours after the end of the Liturgy, as a solid queue filed in to venerate his miraculous Body. The casket lid was lifted when the Priest put on his stole and started reading the names. There were two boxes of lists: how many names must have been brought before God with the prayers of the Saint?

St Spyridon's Body is said to be still soft to the touch after about 1660 years, and when his clothing is changed his slippers show signs of wear. These are then cut up into tiny pieces and put into little envelopes to be given to pilgrims and the faithful.

Among the Saint's numerous miracles was that of 11 August 1716 when a vast enemy fleet was about to attack, on a clear sunny day. The Corfiots asked their Saint for help; and suddenly a violent storm struck the fleet – but not the Town or the Island – sinking the ships and saving Corfu.

Alexia Zangli Lansley

St Spyridon was a Bishop on Cyprus, at the time of the first Ecumenical Council in 325. At heart a simple shepherd, he loved God and his people.

Later his body was moved to Corfu and enshrined there.

His feast is 12 December.

## The People Column

**JOSHUA ALEXANDER** has been born to CAROLINE and CHRIS LANE, and his brother THOMAS, a gift of God. His grandparents, Khouria HILARY and I, were delighted to meet him a few days afterwards in New-castle. He was born safely and happily.

**AINE (ANNIE) FORD** has been received into the Church with the name THEODORA. We congratulate and welcome our new Sister-in-Christ.

**ELEFThERIA CHILD**, daughter of ADAM, and IOANNA ZACHARIADOU of Dovercourt, was baptised in St Helen's on 14 November: Many years, little one!

## Ten years in St Helen's Chapel

**Praise God that we have been allowed the use of St Helen's since 2000, and Orthodox worship has now been offered here again for a full ten years.**

On 13 November 2000 we took over this lovely place, one of Colchester's most ancient and significant buildings. We have worshipped here happily ever since, and count it a privilege.

Ever since the Reformation (1539) it had not been used as a church, though for a hundred of those years it was used by the Quakers for weekday worship. The rest of the time it had been anything but a church - a house, school, library, workshop, church hall, museum store-room.

Yet throughout its history the people of Colchester clung to the tradition that it had been built by St Helen herself, the Maiden in her Maiden-burgh, born in the Castle.

We are so blessed to have it, but our sub-lease ends in 2012, and the town's lease from the Anglican authorities in Chelmsford ends in 2016.

We wait to see what happens, though it is unlikely that anyone would want it to be lost to worship again.

It may partly depend on whether we are allowed to take on nearby St Martin's, which we so need for more space. At the time of writing we are waiting for any response to a meeting held back in May - we were recently promised one "very soon".



Of course the wonderful St Martin's also has a great history, probably dating back to Roman-British times, and continuing through Saxon and mediaeval times to the present day. It has a history we would value very highly, and pass on at every opportunity.

But it can hardly compare with the romantic story and extraordinary history of St Helen's Chapel.

**God has been good to us in allowing us its use. And so, let it be said, have both the Borough Council and the local Anglican Diocese.**

*The interesting photo probably dates from 1886, just before the building was restored (but not as a place of worship). Note the big door in the east wall, the partially-filled east window, the big window in the middle of the north wall, and the cottages on the right.*

## Here and There

**SCHOOLS:** About this time of year both St Benedict's College and Stanway School are now bringing a whole year of their students to visit our church (in small groups). They hear a little about the history of St Helen's Chapel and its traditions, and also receive a very brief introduction to the Holy Orthodox Faith. Of course, students at St Benedict's are mostly Roman Catholic, and Stanway's may be from any belief background. So it is very valuable for both sets of children.

**EPISCOPAL ASSEMBLY:** The Bishops of Great Britain and Ireland will have their second meeting in December. Meanwhile, we hear that the first meeting of the Pastoral Committee has taken place under the chairmanship of Russian Archbishop ELISEY. We have not heard that the other two committees have yet been convened, but hope that they all get going soon. Priests and lay people can serve on the committees, though it is not clear who appoints these members.

## Icon of the Saints of Barking

The Orthodox Saints of Barking are the those centred on the Holy Monastery established at Barking (now in East London) in the eighth century.

As announced in the last *Newsletter*, an icon of this important group of Saints is being prepared.

**The cost will be considerable, £900 or so, and I invite gifts towards this.**

It will form the centre-piece of the Pilgrimage we hope to set up as a yearly focus for Orthodox from all jurisdictions.

We had one early this year from our own Parish, with a number of people from other places, and it was a very happy occasion.

The iconographer will be DIMITRIOS HAKIM from St George's in London.

**I do hope you will wish to contribute and ask you to give the money now (cheques to St Helen's Orthodox Parish) or to tell me of your intention to give it later.**

## DECEMBER DAYS

Fri 3	S Birinus, Bp of Dorchester, Apostle of Wessex
Sat 4	Great Martyr Barbara, S John of Damascus
Sun 5	<b>Pentecost 28, S Saba the Sanctified</b>
Mon 6	<b>S Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra</b>
Tue 7	S Ambrose, Bishop of Milan
Thu 9	<b>Conception of the Theotokos by Righteous Anna</b>
Sun 12	<b>Sunday of the Forefathers, S Spyridon the Wonderworker, Bp of Tremithus</b>
Mon 13	Virgin-Martyr Lucy of Syracuse
Tue 14	S Venantius Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers
Wed 15	Hieromartyr Eleutherius, Bishop of Illyria
Fri 17	Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Children, S Dionysius the Wonderworker, Bishop of Aegina
Sun 19	<b>Sunday before Nativity, Martyr Boniface of Tarsus</b>
Mon 20	Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer, Bp of Antioch
Fri 24	<b>Eve of the Nativity of Christ</b>
Sat 25	<b>Nativity according to the Flesh of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ</b>
Sun 26	<b>Sunday after Nativity, Second Day of Nativity: Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos</b>
Mon 27	<b>Third Day of Nativity, Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen</b>
Tue 28	20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia
Wed 29	<b>Holy Innocents, slain by Herod at Bethlehem</b>
Thu 30	S Theodora of Caesaria

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