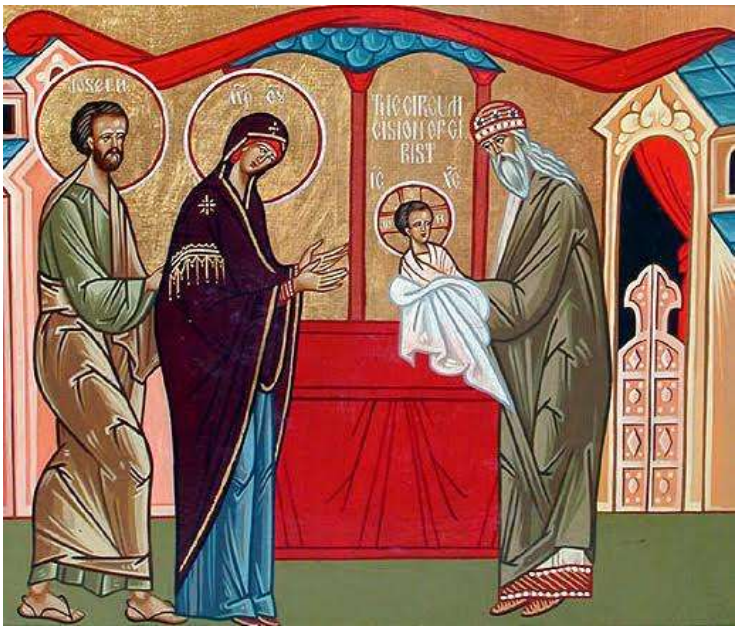
Prophet Elias - Quarterly

Orthodox Church of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
News and Views

January – February – March 2026

The Circumcision of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ



Troparion of the Feast
Thou Who art by nature God, didst without change take human form, O most compassionate Lord, and in fulfilling the Law of Thine own will didst receive circumcision in the flesh, to banish Hades and roll away the veil of our passions.
Glory to Thy goodness; glory to Thy compassion; glory to Thy condescension, O Word.

Falling between the major celebrations of Christmas and Theophany, the feast we celebrate on the first day of January may easily be overlooked. Occurring on the eighth day after Christmas, it commemorates the circumcision of the new-born Christ:

After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb (Luke 2.21).

This single-verse account may also be easily overlooked, sandwiched as it is between the fuller and more memorable stories of the visit of the shepherds and the meeting with Simeon and Anna in the Temple. Perhaps because it is too short to stand on its own the Gospel reading continues with the account of Mary and Joseph "mislaying" the twelve-year-old Jesus on their visit to Jerusalem (Luke 2.41-52) – the only recorded incident in His life between early infancy and adult ministry.

These two events point to the real humanity of the incarnate Son of God, content to submit both to the ceremonial Law of the Jews and to His earthly parents – but also like many another boy of his age "going his own way" when overtaken by an overwhelming enthusiasm!

According to St Matthew (1.21) He was named Jesus because He would "*save his people from their sins*". This is the name as adapted to western languages: in fact it would have been "Yeshua" or "Joshua", deliberately echoing that of two significant Old Testament figures – the one appointed by Moses to lead the Chosen People from their forty-year wilderness wanderings into the Promised Land, and the other the high priest associated with the return of Israel from exile in Babylon.

These were just foreshadowings of the "real" Saviour and Deliverer, who lived and died as one of us to rescue us from "exile" in this world, and to bring us to true and eternal life in and with Him.

Statement of his Eminence Archbishop Nikitas

High – level Meeting with Religious Leaders – 17 November 2025

It is my honour to represent the Conference of European Churches, more commonly referred to as CEC, and share a few thoughts with you.

The tone of public conversation has become more divisive and harsher in recent years, as evidenced in so many ways. Respectful dialogue, which was once central to community life has been replaced by quick judgments, emotional reactions, verbal attacks, and a type of "mudslinging", if I might use that term. We find that people are increasingly speaking at each other rather than speaking with one another. This has placed "walls" of sorts between people, communities, and various groups. Along with the barriers that have developed, there seems to be a loss of empathy and patience, especially on sensitive, moral, political and social issues. While this may be true on one hand, Churches, religious communities and faith-based institutions must encourage a return to dialogue grounded in love, truth, honesty, humility, and genuine acceptance, not just an arena of tolerance. CEC stresses these values.

In our world of progress, growth and development, one can see that social media have amplified both good and harmful speech. While they can connect people, they can also spread anger, hate and misinformation on such a rapid level that it is almost beyond our comprehension. Fake news and other means of misinformation are feeding the flames of division. In some cases, we are either too late or unable to stop the intended results. It is, therefore, the responsibility of faith leaders to guide people to use technology both ethically and responsibly. Along with this principle, it is critical that in the use of technology one must know how to discern truth from manipulation and any and all falsehoods. Digital literacy is a moral and educational challenge.

Artificial Intelligence holds great promise in relation to all of the above, as it can be a tool for education, healthcare and communication, if used in the right and proper manner. It can, though, bring to light some serious ethical questions. How is AI used - what is the purpose - what is the goal? We must ensure that AI preserves human dignity and the common good and not allow the manipulation of this tool.

Current Artificial Intelligence systems are relatively effective at detecting explicit forms of hate speech, such as direct insults, slurs, or openly hostile language. Yet, they often struggle with more subtle or complex expressions of hatred: those conveyed through irony, sarcasm, language-image pairing, or coded language. Even in English, where AI research is most advanced, these forms of hate speech are difficult for machines to recognize. The challenge becomes even greater for languages that are underrepresented in AI research, such as Greek, Romanian, Spanish, and so many others, where there are little or no expert-annotated data sets to train reliable models. This imbalance risks creating new forms of digital inequality, where certain voices and communities remain unseen or unheard in the development of global technologies. The universal Church, then, must remind society that technology must remain human-centred, guided by compassion, moral responsibility and the sacredness of life.

In the communities that comprise CEC, we reject all forms of hate speech and violence, whether based on religion, race, ethnicity or any other difference. The universal Church and all true religious institutions remind us that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and, therefore, worthy of respect and compassion. These basic lessons are found in Scripture and so many religious texts. While we know that words can heal and build bridges, they can also wound and cause serious damage, especially in relationships - damage which may never be repaired. When language is used to divide or to dehumanize, it harms not only individuals but also the moral fabric of our society.

Of course, we must preserve the space for honest and respectful dialogue – the freedom of expression, though, comes with the responsibility to use our words and expressions wisely and, if I might add, carefully. It is for these reasons that we encourage education, empathy and bridge-building within and beyond our own communities. Religious leaders, educators, parents, and all public voices share a duty to promote understanding, rather than hostility and hatred. Overcoming hate is not only a legal or technological challenge; it is a moral and spiritual one, calling each of us to repentance, renewal of conscience, and a return to our true humanity in God's image.

Like other communities, Christians have experienced moments and the results of hate speech and we have been the victims of violent attacks - churches have been vandalized, symbols defaced, clergy and lay people have been mocked or insulted for our faith. These incidents are certainly painful but are not limited to Christians, our churches and houses of worship; people of all backgrounds and beliefs have been targeted in similar ways. These actions and practices reveal a wider loss of empathy and respect, fuelled by fanaticism and ignorance. Our response must never be one of anger or retribution, but dialogue, education and prayer, helping people understand that hatred toward one group is, in truth, a threat to everyone.

Prejudice and hatred are not inborn traits - they are taught and many times what is learned cannot be unlearned. With faith, education, and genuine friendship, we can nurture hearts capable of love and build a better future for all. This is the hope and dream of CEC.

Book Review:

Against the Machine: On the Unmaking of Humanity by Paul Kingsnorth

Paul Kingsnorth is an Oxford educated, ex-Pagan, ex-environmentalist, now Romanian Orthodox convert and writer living in Ireland. His work exposes the spiritual alienation of modernity. "You are living in a metastasising machine which is closing in around you," he asserts, "polluting your skies and your woods and your past and your imagination". The end-game is the replacement of nature with technology. The Machine is the culture itself closing in around us.

A force that's hard to name is reshaping what it means to be human. It is happening through the technological-cultural matrix enveloping us all in our mobiles, the internet and media.

And also through illusory technological solutions to environmental degradation such as wind farms, solar energy and electric transport. And through unnecessary, oppressive, global, climate change legislation and planning, eg Net Zero Goals and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. They are undermining our local freedoms, political power and agency.

In the name of progress techno-capitalism has choked Western civilization and is destroying the Earth and reshaping us in its image. From the First Industrial Revolution to the rise of Artificial Intelligence the soul of humanity has been hollowed out and is in jeopardy. We have replaced God's Creation story with a Machine paradigm and in the process abandoned the past, people, place, and prayer. Secular elites have replaced them with science, the self, sex, and the screen; our Machine-age catechism. When Christendom died in the West (1500s) our culture lost its sacred order. This loss has created a planet of rootless orphans without a sense of belonging.

'When the foundations are being destroyed what can the righteous do?' said the Psalmist (Psalm 11:3). How can we restore our past, people, place and prayer? It will take a focussed and determined effort to swim against these global tides to remain truly human, including a healthy suspicion of hubristic entrenched political power and re-connections to land, nature and our heritage. It will also require deep attention to the emerging spiritual landscape and co-operation with the re-emergence of the sacred in the Wild in all its forms. First: become indigenous, re-establish our roots in nature. Second: build an anti-machine counter-culture rooted in the Eternal Earth. Third: build monasteries to provide a foundation and preserve culture. Fourth: re-learn and re-establish self-governance-a zone of cultural refusal. Fifth: practice technological asceticism. Sixth: enter into the cycles of cultural death and resurrection. Change your heart (perception).

'Learn to live on the edge of this totalitarian culture...When communities of a different style of life of this kind have been established possibly the first signs of a new civilisation may begin to appear.' Jaques Ellul.

Francis Rothery

St Aristobulus (1st Century) First Bishop of Britain

Feast Day - March 16 / October 31



In our April-June 2025 Newsletter we included an article on the Glastonbury Icon of the Mother of God. The original Icon can be found in the Church of Saints Symeon and Anna in Combe Martin with a copy in St Anne's in Exeter. An image of St Aristobulus can be seen on the top left corner of the icon. Other Saints shown in this icon will be featured in later issues

St Aristobulus was one of the Seventy Holy Apostles, sent out by Christ himself in Luke 10:3.



A Levite by birth and born in Cyprus, he was the brother of the Apostle Barnabas and cousin to the Apostle John Mark.

He assisted St Andrew and also accompanied St Paul on his missionary journeys, St Paul referring to him in his Epistle to the Romans (Rom 16:10). Ordained by St Paul as Bishop, he was sent to Britain to spread the Gospel of Christ, although another account says he was ordained by Barnabas his brother. Preaching the Gospel to the Celts of Northern Spain on his way to Britain.

Like his teacher St Paul, St Aristobulus endured much suffering for the faith of Christ, being beaten, ridiculed and mocked, dragged through the streets and tortured by the pagans of Britain, a warlike and fierce people. Nevertheless, he endured until the end and founded churches, ordained priests and deacons, enlightening and baptising the people. There are varying accounts on his death, some that he reposed peacefully in the Lord among those he had come to serve, others that he died as a martyr, either in Wales where a region was named after him, or in Glastonbury in the year AD99.

The First Bishop of Britain, St Aristobulus sowed the first seeds of the Orthodox Christian faith in this nation.

Elizabeth Axon

Please find the initial information about the 2026 Deanery Conference and Festival event below.
22nd to 25th May 2026
at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon

Theme: 'My peace I give unto you'

'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' (Jn 14,27)

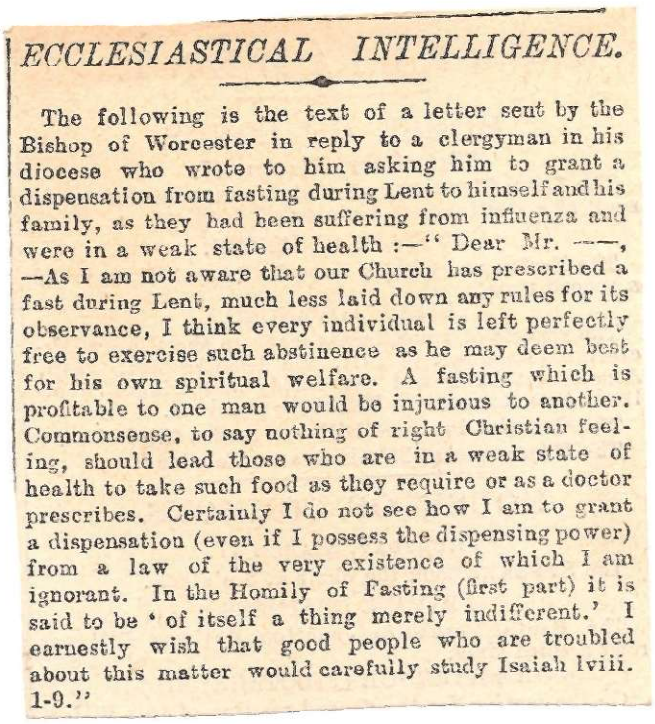


Deanery Conference & Festival

Please mark the dates in your calendar!
A new Deanery website as well as Conference web-page and bank account is currently under development. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

On Fasting!

Shortly after Fr. Brandon's sermon on fasting at the beginning of last Great Lent, I found this cutting in my great-great-grandmother's bible. From the notice on the reverse I think it's from a newspaper of the late 1800s.



ECCLESIASTICAL INTELLIGENCE.

The following is the text of a letter sent by the Bishop of Worcester in reply to a clergyman in his diocese who wrote to him asking him to grant a dispensation from fasting during Lent to himself and his family, as they had been suffering from influenza and were in a weak state of health :—" Dear Mr. ——, —As I am not aware that our Church has prescribed a fast during Lent, much less laid down any rules for its observance, I think every individual is left perfectly free to exercise such abstinence as he may deem best for his own spiritual welfare. A fasting which is profitable to one man would be injurious to another. Commonsense, to say nothing of right Christian feeling, should lead those who are in a weak state of health to take such food as they require or as a doctor prescribes. Certainly I do not see how I am to grant a dispensation (even if I possess the dispensing power) from a law of the very existence of which I am ignorant. In the Homily of Fasting (first part) it is said to be 'of itself a thing merely indifferent.' I earnestly wish that good people who are troubled about this matter would carefully study Isaiah lviii. 1-9."

Although it refers to correspondence between Church of England clergy, the gist of it (i.e. the common sense about fasting) seemed to reiterate Fr. Brandon's advice. It struck me that over a century later whoever we are, wherever we find ourselves, we still agonise over the 'rules' of fasting and are in need of sensible reminders about the essence of fasting. Perhaps we should take ourselves back to the time of the Gospels and what Christ would have said. He is full of compassion and common sense.

Celia Olsson

The Tradition of the Small Prosphora and the Commemoration of Names

In some traditions of the Orthodox Church, small prosphora are used as part of the preparation for the Divine Liturgy. In our parish, this was a regular practice until the pandemic of 2020.

We have recently resumed this practice so it might be useful for those who have started attending more recently to have an explanation.

These loaves are baked by members of the parish (we are always happy for more volunteers) and placed on the candle stand at the beginning of the service. Anyone who wishes may take one, write down the names of the living and departed to be remembered, and one of the altar servers will collect the bread and lists and take them to the altar preferably at the start of the service.

The priest removes small particles from the prosphora and places them on the diskos around the Lamb. Each particle corresponds to a person listed for commemoration. This is the Church's way of including the prayers of the faithful—both for the living and for those who have fallen asleep—in the Liturgy.

The blessed prosphora are then returned to the candle desk at the end of the Liturgy with the lists for parishioners to take home.

ORTHODOX PARISH OF THE HOLY PROPHET ELIAS IN DEVON

SERVICES IN JANUARY 2026

Thursday	1	**THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST**	NO SERVICE
Saturday	3	NO SERVICE	
Sunday	4	NO SERVICE	
Monday	5	Vespers	6.00 pm
Tuesday	6	**THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST**	
		Divine Liturgy followed by Blessing of Waters	10.30 am
Saturday	10	Vespers	6.00 pm
Sunday	**11**	Divine Liturgy	10.30 am
Saturday	17	Vespers	6.00 pm
Sunday	**18**	Typika	11.00 am
Saturday	24	Vespers	6.00 pm
Sunday	**25**	Sunday of Zaccheus	
		Divine Liturgy	10.30 am
Saturday	31	Divine Liturgy in Combe Martin TBC	10.30 am
		Vespers (Exeter) TBC	6.00 pm

SERVICES IN FEBRUARY 2026

Sunday	**1**	Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee Forefeast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple Divine Liturgy followed by Blessing of candles Lenten Triodion begins	10.30 am
Monday	2	**THE MEETING OF THE LORD IN THE TEMPLE CANDLEMAS**	NO SERVICE
Tuesday	3	Righteous Symeon and Prophetess Anna Patronal Feast Combe Martin	NO SERVICE
Saturday	7	Vespers	6.00 pm
Sunday	**8**	Sunday of the Prodigal Son	
		Divine Liturgy	10.30 am

Saturday	14	Vespers	6.00 pm
Sunday	**15**	Sunday of the Last Judgement – Meatfare	
		Typika	11.00 am
Saturday	21	Vespers	6.00 pm
Sunday	**22**	Forgiveness Sunday - Cheesefare	
		Divine Liturgy	10.30 am
		Followed by Vespers and Rite of Forgiveness	
		BEGINNING OF LENT	
Monday	23	Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete	6.30 pm
Tuesday	24	Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete	6.30 pm
Wednesday	25	Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete	6.30 pm
Thursday	26	Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete	6.30 pm
Saturday	28	Vespers	6.00 pm

SERVICES IN MARCH 2026

Sunday	**1**	1st Sunday of Lent: Triumph of Orthodoxy	
		Divine Liturgy of St Basil followed by Lenten Vespers	10.30 am
Saturday	7	Vespers	6.00 pm
Sunday	**8**	2nd Sunday of Lent: St Gregory Palamas	
		Divine Liturgy of St Basil followed by Lenten Vespers	10.30 am
Saturday	14	Vespers	6.00 pm
Sunday	**15**	3rd Sunday of Lent: Veneration of the Cross	
		Divine Liturgy of St Basil followed by Lenten Vespers	10.30 am
Saturday	21	Vespers	6.00 pm
Sunday	**22**	4th Sunday of Lent: St John Climacus (of the Ladder)	
		Divine Liturgy of St Basil followed by Lenten Vespers	10.30 am
Tuesday	24	Forefeast of the Annunciation	
		Vespers	6.00 pm
Wednesday	25	**THE ANNUNCIATION**	
		Divine Liturgy	10.30 am
Friday	27	Akathist	6.00 pm
Saturday	28	Vespers	6.00 pm
Sunday	**29**	5th Sunday of Lent: St Mary of Egypt	
		Divine Liturgy of St Basil followed by Lenten Vespers	10.30 am

NB: All services are in St Anne's Chapel, Exeter unless otherwise indicated.
The Liturgy is of St John Chrysostom except where that of St Basil is indicated.
Please note the start time for Typika is 11am rather than 10.30am
All services will be followed by coffee in St James Church Hall or by a Bring & Share Meal.

January

1 January	The Circumcision of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Saint Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (379) **We wish Vassilis D a Happy Feast and Many Years.**
2 January	Saint Seraphim Wonderworker of Sarov (1833) **We wish Seraphim A H a Happy Feast and Many Years.**
6 January	**THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST**
7 January	Synaxis of the Holy, Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John **We wish John P and John T a Happy Feast and Many Years.**
13 January	Saint Kentigern (Mungo), first bishop of Glasgow and Strathclyde (c612) **We wish All in the Parish of Saint Bega, Saint Mungo and Saint Herbert in Keswick.** **We remember Fr John M. May his Memory be Eternal.**
15 January	Saint Ita of Killeedy, Ireland (c570) **We wish Ita G a Happy Feast and Many Years.**
17January	Saint Anthony the Great (356) **We wish Eddie B and Tony R a Happy Feast and Many Years.** **We remember Christa Antonina S - May her Memory be Eternal.**
21 January	Virgin Martyr Agnes of Rome (c304) **We wish Agnes O a Happy Feast and Many Years.**
24 January	Saint Ksenia of St Petersburg (1803) **We wish Shusha S.** **We remember Xenia C – May her Memory be Eternal.**
28 January	Saint Isaacof Nineveh (7th C) **We wish Isaac O a Happy Feast and Many Years.**

February

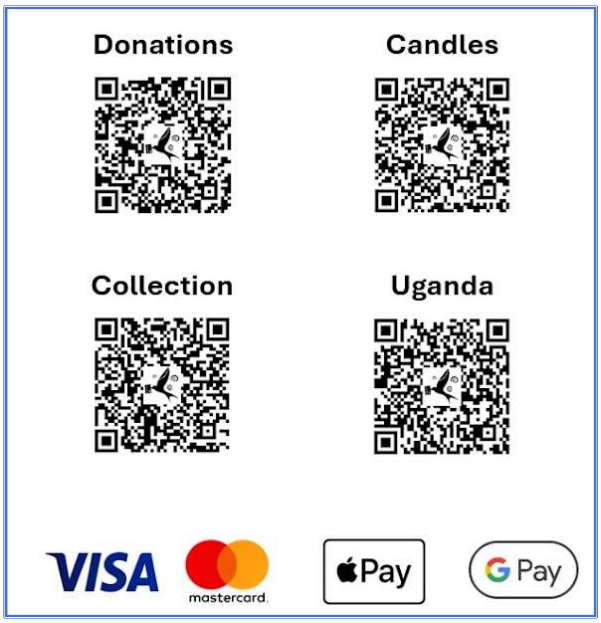
1 February	Holy Martyr Tryphon of Campsada in Syria (250) **We wish Father Trayan a Happy Feast and Many Years.** Saint Bridget of Kildare (c525) **We wish Poppy O a Happy Feast and Many Years.**
2 February	**THE MEETING OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE**
3 February	Righteous Symeon the God-Receiver and Prophetess Anna **We wish Father John and Dawn and all parish members in North Devon, Symeon L, Anya K and Felicia F a Happy Feast and Many Years.**
28 February	First Saturday of Lent - Commemoration of Saint Theodore the Recruit **We wish Bojidar P a Happy Feast and Many Years.**

March

1 March	Saint David of Wales (6thC) **We wish Fr David G, Fr David D and David W a Happy Feast and Many Years.**
4 March	Saint Owen of Lichfield (680) **We wish Owain O a Happy Feast and Many Years.**
8 March	2nd Sunday of Lent: St Gregory Palamas **We wish Fr Gregory Palamas a Happy Feast and Many Years.**
18 March	Saint Edward the Passionbearer, King of England (c978) **We wish Edward E a Happy Feast and Many Years.**
23 March	Lydia the Martyr (2nd C) **We wish Lydia L a Happy Feast and Many Years!**
25 March	**THE ANNUNCIATION TO OUR MOST HOLY LADY, MOTHER OF GOD AND EVER-VIRGIN MARY** **We wish all Marias who celebrate their Namedays today a Happy Feast and Many Years.**
26 March	Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel **We wish Sofia Gabrielle a Happy Feast and Many Years.**
31 March	Saint Maria of Paris, New Martyr (1945) **We wish Maria G a Happy Feast and Many Years.**

We try to include names days for all parishioners, but the list is not complete! If your Saints Day is not listed and you would like it added please email the parish secretary on hpeliasdevon@gmail.com

Please remember that we also take payment by mobile phone! The QR codes are all easy to find in the church on the candle desk and collection basket.



If you would like to contribute something to the next newsletter, please either send it to **Hugh Allen** by email to hughallen188@gmail.com or give it to him in person.

The Newsletter is published **quarterly**.

Contributions for the next edition (April – May - June 2026) must reach Hugh by **28th February 2026**.

Prophet Elias - Quarterly is the newsletter of the Parish of the Holy Prophet Elias, Devon, Deanery of Great Britain, Archdiocese of Thyateira (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
Archbishop: His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas (Lioulias)

Rector: Fr Patrick Hodson – hodson44@btinternet.com
Retired Archpriest: Fr John Marks
Serving priest: Fr Brandon Gallaher: fr.brandon.gallaher@gmail.com Tel: 07837 983433
Deacon Philip Scorer: philip.scorer@gmail.com Tel: 07812 170139
Parish Secretary: Edward Skidelsky: hpeliasdevon@gmail.com
Parish Warden: Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi: Contact Deacon Philip (see details above)
Safeguarding Officers: Elizabeth Axon and Francis Rothery

To arrange a confession, you can contact Fr Trayan Goranov either at otrayan@gmail.com or telephone 07800 644 599

For services in the Torquay parish either visit https://www.facebook.com/standrewtorquay/?locale=en_GB or telephone Father Trayan on the number above.

For services in Plymouth visit https://plymchurch.com/

Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are entirely those of the named authors or identified sources and should not be taken as representing the views of the parish as a whole.

This newsletter and all past newsletters can be downloaded here:
Parish Newsletter – Orthodox Parish of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon