



## St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Church

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**Fr Steven Hosking**

Rector

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Attached

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### Services Schedule

Please see our [online calendar](#) for dates and times of Feast Day services.

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Bulletin for Sunday, February 22, 2026

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### Welcome



Jesus Christ teaches us to love and serve all people, regardless of their ethnicity or nationality. To understand this, we need to look no further than to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Every time we celebrate

the Divine Liturgy, it is offered "on behalf of all, and for all." As Orthodox Christians we stand against racism and bigotry. All human beings share one common identity as children of God. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatian 3:28)

### Members of our Parish Council are:

- Marlene Melesko - President
- Sarah Senetcen - Member at Large
- Boris Doph - Treasurer
- Dierdre Cottergarfield - Vice President

- Luba Martins - Secretary

## Pastoral Care - General Information

Emergency Sick Calls can be made at any time. Please call Fr Steven at (860) 322-2906, when a family member is admitted to the hospital.

Anointing in Sickness: The Sacrament of Unction is available in Church, the hospital, or your home, for anyone who is sick and suffering, however severe.

Marriages and Baptisms require early planning, scheduling and selections of sponsors (crown bearers or godparents). See Father before booking dates and reception halls!

Funerals are celebrated for practicing Orthodox Christians. Please see Father for details. The Church opposes cremation; we cannot celebrate funerals for cremations.

## Announcements

### Confessions

With the start of great Lent, it is the expectation of all communioneing members of the Church to attend to their personal confessions. I will make myself available to receive confession at least an hour before any service, and after any services (except Liturgies). I ask you to please attend to this well before Holy Week, so that your Lenten Journey may be fulfilling.

### Lenten Schedule

The services for Lent and Holy Week have been published on the parish calendar. Any changes to the service schedule will

be announced via email and bulletin.

<https://stalexischurch.org/schedule>

### St Vladimir's Chorale

Christ the Savior(Southbury) extend an invitation to you and the faithful of your parishes to join us on **Friday, March 13th at 6:30 pm** for the **Presanctified Liturgy** sung by **St. Vladimir's Chorale**. We will have a Lenten meal afterwards.

### To Our Guests

Throughout our services, we use the more formal "*thy*" and "*thou*" or what is commonly referred to as *King Jamesean English*.

The Lord's Prayer is recited as follows:

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be  
done, as on earth as it is in heaven,  
Give us this day our daily bread, and  
forgive us our **debts**, as we forgive  
our **debtors**,  
Lead us not into temptation but deliver  
us from the Evil One.

Please join us after Liturgy for refreshments and hospitality.

### Filesharing

<https://sites.google.com/stalexischurch.net/parish/home>

If you are asked to enter a username and password, please contact Fr Steven via email.

## Prayers, Intercessions and Commemorations



Pray for: All those confined to hospitals, nursing homes, and their own homes due to illness; for all those who serve in the armed forces; widows, orphans, prisoners, victims of violence, and refugees;

All those suffering chronic illness, financial hardship, loneliness, addictions,

abuse, abandonment and despair; those who are homeless and dispossessed, those who are institutionalized, those who have no one to pray for them;

All Orthodox seminarians & families; all Orthodox monks and nuns, and all those considering monastic life; all Orthodox missionaries and their families.

All those who have perished due to hatred, intolerance, prejudice; pestilence and natural disaster; all those departed this life in the hope of the Resurrection.

*Please let Fr. Steven know via email if you have more names for which to pray.*

- Departed:
- Clergy and their families: Fr Sergei B, Fr Vladimir, Fr Vladimir, Fr John, Fr Alexander, Fr David, Fr Sergius
- Catechumen: Jordan, Christiana
- Individuals and Families: Luba, Suzanne, Rosemary, Daniel & Dayna,

- Kristen, Victor, Susan, Gregory
- Birthdays and Name's Days this Month: Christine Hoehnbarth (2/8), Gabrielle Neiss (2/8), Fr Deacon (2/12), Nadia PenkoffLidbeck (2/18), Connor Kuziak (2/23)
- Anniversaries this Month: PenkoffLidbeck (2/15)
- Expecting and Newborn: Lynn and her unborn child.
- Traveling:
- Sick and those in distress: Nancy, Boris, Glenn, John, Joan, Sharon, William, Alexander

Today's commemorated feasts and saints

**SUNDAY OF CHEESEFARE — Tone 4. The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise.** Uncovering of the Relics of the Holy Martyrs at the Gate of Eugenius at Constantinople (395-423). Martyrs Maurice and his son, Photinus, and Martyrs Theodore, Philip, and 70 soldiers, at Apamea in Syria (ca. 305). Ven. Thalassius, Linnæus and Baradates, Hermits, of Syria (5th c.). St. Athanasius the Confessor, of Constantinople (821).

Again we pray for those who have lost their lives because of the wars in Ukraine and in the Middle East: that the Lord our God may look upon them with mercy, and give them rest where there is neither sickness, or sorrow, but life everlasting.

Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, for those who are suffering, wounded, grieving, or displaced because of the wars in Ukraine and in the Middle East.

Again we pray for a cessation of the

hostilities against Ukraine and the Middle East, and that reconciliation and peace will flourish there, we pray thee, hearken and have mercy.

## Parish Calendar

### St Alexis Parish

#### February 22 to March 2, 2026

##### Sunday, February 22

Forgiveness Sunday  
9:15AM 3rd Hour  
9:30AM Divine Liturgy  
12:00PM Forgiveness Vespers  
6:00PM Akathist of Forgiveness

##### Monday, February 23

Polycarp the Holy Martyr & Bishop of Smyrna  
8:30AM Akathist for St Polycarp  
6:00PM Canon of St Andrew

##### Tuesday, February 24

First & Second Finding of the Venerable Head of John the Baptist  
Connor Kuziak  
8:30AM Akathist for St John Baptist  
11:00AM Office Hours  
6:00PM Canon of St Andrew

##### Wednesday, February 25

3:00PM Office Hours  
6:00PM Canon of St Andrew

##### Thursday, February 26

Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza  
8:30AM Akathist for St Porphyrius of Gaza  
11:00AM Office Hours

6:00PM Canon of St Andrew

##### Friday, February 27

Bishop Raphael Hawaweeny of Brooklyn  
Procopius the Confessor of Decapolis  
8:30AM Akathist for St Raphael  
6:00PM Presanctified Liturgy

##### Saturday, February 28

8:30AM Akathist for St John Cassian  
4:00PM Office Hours  
5:30PM Great Vespers

##### Sunday, March 1

Sunday of Orthodoxy  
9:15AM 3rd Hour  
9:30AM Divine Liturgy  
6:00PM CT Deanery Vespers Service

##### Monday, March 2

Hesychius the Martyr

## Saints and Feasts

### February 22

#### Forgiveness Sunday

The Holy Fathers have appointed the commemoration of Adam's exile from the Paradise of delight here, on the eve of the holy Forty-day Fast, demonstrating to us not by simple words, but by actual deeds, how beneficial fasting is for man, and how harmful and destructive are insatiety and the transgressing of the divine commandments. For the first commandment that God gave to man was that of fasting, which the first-fashioned received but did

not keep; and not only did they not become gods, as they had imagined, but they lost even that blessed life which they had, and they fell into corruption and death, and transmitted these and innumerable other evils to all of mankind. The God-bearing Fathers set these things before us today, that by bringing to mind what we have fallen from, and what we have suffered because of the insatiety and disobedience of the first-fashioned, we might be diligent to return again to that ancient bliss and glory by means of fasting and obedience to all the divine commands. Taking occasion from today's Gospel (Matt. 6:14-21) to begin the Fast unencumbered by enmity, we also ask forgiveness this day, first from God, then from one another and all creation.

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## February 23

### **Polycarp the Holy Martyr & Bishop of Smyrna**

This apostolic and prophetic man, and model of faith and truth, was a disciple of John the Evangelist, successor of Bucolus (Feb. 6), and teacher of Irenaeus (Aug. 23). He was an old man and full of days when the fifth persecution was raised against the Christians under Marcus Aurelius. When his pursuers, sent by the ruler, found Polycarp, he commanded that they be given something to eat and drink, then asked them to give him an hour to pray; he stood and prayed, full of grace, for two hours, so that his captors repented that they had come against so venerable a man. He was

brought by the Proconsul of Smyrna into the stadium and was commanded, "Swear by the fortune of Caesar; repent, and say, 'Away with the atheists.'" By atheists, the Proconsul meant the Christians. But Polycarp, gazing at the heathen in the stadium, waved his hand towards them and said, "Away with the atheists." When the Proconsul urged him to blaspheme against Christ, he said: "I have been serving Christ for eighty-six years, and He has wronged me in nothing; how can I blaspheme my King Who has saved me?" But the tyrant became enraged at these words and commanded that he be cast into the fire, and thus he gloriously expired about the year 163. As Eusebius says, "Polycarp everywhere taught what he had also learned from the Apostles, which also the Church has handed down; and this alone is true" (*Eccl. Hist.*, Book IV, ch. 14,15).

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## February 24

### **First & Second Finding of the Venerable Head of John the Baptist**

The first finding came to pass during the middle years of the fourth century, through a revelation of the holy Forerunner to two monks, who came to Jerusalem to worship our Saviour's Tomb. One of them took the venerable head in a clay jar to Emesa in Syria. After his death it went from the hands of one person to another, until it came into the possession of a certain priest-monk named Eustathius, an Arian. Because he ascribed to his own false belief the miracles

wrought through the relic of the holy Baptist, he was driven from the cave in which he dwelt, and by dispensation forsook the holy head, which was again made known through a revelation of Saint John, and was found in a water jar, about the year 430, in the days of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, when Uranius was Bishop of Emesa.

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## February 26

### **Photini the Samaritan Woman & her martyred sisters: Anatole, Phota, Photis, Praskevi, & Kyriaki**

Saint Photini lived in 1st century Palestine and was the woman that Christ met at Jacob's Well in Samaria as recorded in the Gospel according to John (4:4-26). After her encounter with Christ, she and her whole family were baptized by the Apostles and became evangelists of the early Church. Photini and her children eventually were summoned before the emperor Nero and instructed to renounce their faith in Christ. They refused to do so, accepting rather to suffer various tortures. After many efforts to force her to surrender to idolatry, the emperor ordered that she be thrown down a well. Photini gave up her life in the year 66.

St. Photini is commemorated on three occasions during the year: February 26 (Greek tradition), March 20 (Slavic tradition), and the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman on the 5th Sunday of Pascha.

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## February 27

### **Raphael of Brooklyn**

Saint Raphael Hawaweeny was born on November 8, 1860 A.D., in Damascus, Syria, to pious Christian parents. He studied Arabic grammar and mathematics at the Antiochian Patriarchate parochial school where he was tonsured a reader in 1874. His strong academics served him well throughout his life, providing for him numerous opportunities to succeed and grow. He accepted a position in 1877 as an assistant teacher of Arabic and Turkish, which became full time in 1879. In 1879 he was tonsured a monk while working with Patriarch Hierotheos at the patriarchate, traveling with him on pastoral visits and serving as his personal assistant.

Longing to continue his theological studies, Raphael petitioned the Patriarch for permission to study at Halki Theological School, which was the only option for students of the Antiochian Patriarchate as the Balamand Seminary in Lebanon had been closed since 1840. After much persistence, Raphael received the blessing of the Patriarch and enrolled in Halki Seminary where he was ordained a deacon in 1885. After completing his degree at Halki, the young Deacon Raphael studied at the Kiev Theological Academy, working as a liaison between the Moscow and Antiochian patriarchates. Deacon Raphael was ordained to the holy priesthood in 1889 while in Kiev, continuing to serve that community for many years.

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 led to the subsequent collapse of the silk industry in the Middle East, causing many Syrians and others to immigrate to the United States. These new citizens desired to have their religion present in their new homeland and sent letters to their mother churches for pastoral help. A few priests were sent, but none lasted, and so the people asked for Father Raphael Hawaweeny to come to America and serve. Both the Antiochian and Moscow Patriarchs agreed to this idea, and Father Raphael left for America where the people greeted him with great love. Father Raphael then spent many years serving the Syrians in Brooklyn, New York, but he desired to scan the continent for Syrians and other Orthodox Christians who were without spiritual leadership. He traveled by train and carriage across the nation, finding Orthodox Christians, recording their location, and performing liturgies, baptisms, and weddings. Upon his return to Brooklyn, Father Raphael worked to find clergy to send to these dispersed communities, giving them a full time pastor to minister to their needs.

In 1904, by the hands of Bishops Tikhon and Innocent of the Moscow Patriarchate, he was the first bishop consecrated in the New World. The now Bishop Raphael continued his ministry to the Christians throughout America. Bishop Raphael worked tirelessly in Brooklyn to mediate disputes between the Orthodox Christians from Syria and Maronite Catholic Christians who often fought violently with one another. Despite numerous outbursts and setbacks, Bishop

Raphael continued his ministry serving the Orthodox throughout his vast diocese. One such incident was when an influential leader of the Maronite group was killed and many people accused Bishop Raphael of ordering his murder. This led to many people attempting to harm the bishop, but he endured it all willingly. He was arrested under attempted murder charges, but was eventually cleared and let go after much time and money was spent in his defense.

Throughout his time in North America, Bishop Raphael founded 36 parishes to bring the Church to the faithful who were without a priest to guide them. Bishop Raphael truly lived out the Gospel in all aspects of his life, striving tirelessly for the people in his care, even to the point of sacrificing his own physical health in order to maintain the spiritual health of his people. Bishop Raphael died on February 27, 1915, at his home in Brooklyn. His funeral was attended by hundreds of people, including clergy from all ethnic backgrounds, illustrating his love for all of the people of God regardless of where they came from. The sacred relics of Saint Raphael, "the good shepherd of the lost sheep in North America," were first interred in a crypt beneath the holy table at his Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn on March 7, 1915, before being moved to the Syrian section of Mount Olivet Cemetery in Brooklyn on April 2, 1922. They were finally translated to the Holy Resurrection Cemetery at the Antiochian Village near Ligonier, Pennsylvania, on August 15, 1988. His sanctity was officially proclaimed by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church

in America on March 29, 2000, and his glorification was celebrated on May 29 of that year at the Monastery of Saint Tikhon in Pennsylvania.

## Hymns of the Day



### **Tone 4 Troparion (Resurrection)**

When the women disciples of the Lord learned from the angel the joyous message of Thy Resurrection, they cast away the

ancestral curse and elatedly told the apostles: "Death is overthrown! Christ God is risen, // granting the world great mercy!"

### **Tone 4 Troparion (Forerunner)**

The head of the Forerunner has shone from the earth, sending forth rays of incorruption and healings to the faithful. It gathers together a multitude of angels above and summons the human race below // to send up glory with one voice to Christ our God.

### **Tone 2 Kontakion (Forerunner)**

O Prophet of God and Forerunner of Grace, we have found thy head as a sacred rose. Therefore we always receive healings from it, //

and, as in times past, now thou preachest repentance to the world.

### **Tone 6 Kontakion (from the Lenten Triodion)**

O Master, Teacher of wisdom, Bestower of virtue, Who teachest the thoughtless and protectest the poor, strengthen and enlighten my heart! O Word of the Father, let me not restrain my mouth from crying to Thee: "Have mercy on me, a transgressor, // O merciful Lord!"

### **Communion Hymn**

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! (Ps. 148:1) The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance! He shall not fear evil tidings! (Ps. 111:6) Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

## Gospel and Epistle Readings

### Epistle Reading

#### **Prokeimenon. 8th Tone. Psalm 75.11,1.**

Make your vows to the Lord our God and perform them.

Verse: God is known in Judah; his name is great in Israel.

#### **The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4.**

Brethren, salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for God is able to make him stand.

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## Gospel Reading

### **Forgiveness Sunday** **The Reading is from Matthew 6:14-21**

The Lord said, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

"And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men.

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Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

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## Wisdom of the Fathers

Spiritual delight is not enjoyment found in things that exists outside the soul.

### **St. Isaac of Syria**

*Unknown, 7th century*

Do we forgive our neighbors their trespasses? God also forgives us in His mercy. Do we refuse to forgive? God, too, will refuse to forgive us. As we treat our neighbors, so also does God treat us. The forgiveness, then, of your sins or unforgiveness, and hence also your salvation or destruction, depend on you yourself, man. For without forgiveness of sins there is no salvation.

## St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

Unknown, 18th century

### Beyond the Sermon



Recommended Lenten Reading:

"How to Be a Sinner: Finding Yourself in the Language of Repentance" by Peter Bouteneff (published in 2018).

Despite the provocative title, the book is not a guide on how to commit "sins." Instead,

it is a compassionate work of Orthodox Christian theology that explores how identifying oneself as a "sinner" can actually lead to a healthier, more joyful life.

#### Core Summary

Bouteneff argues that in modern culture, the word "sinner" has been replaced by clinical or soft language (like "mistakes" or "addictions"). He suggests that reclaiming the "sinner identity" is not about self-loathing or shame, but about radical honesty. By admitting we are broken, we stop pretending to be perfect, which paradoxically leads to peace and a deeper capacity to love others.

#### Key Themes

The "Sinner Identity" Done Right: The author distinguishes between neurotic guilt

(which is destructive) and true compunction (which is healing). Identifying as a sinner allows you to see yourself clearly in relation to God without the need for defensive ego-masking.

The "Mirror" Metaphor: Bouteneff explains that sin is like "dirt on a mirror." The mirror itself (the human person) is beautiful and made in the image of God; the sin is simply what obscures that beauty. Repentance is the process of cleaning the mirror, not hating the mirror itself.

Self-Love vs. Narcissism: The book tackles the tension between "self-esteem" and "humility." It suggests that true self-care is rooted in acknowledging our total dependence on God's mercy, which frees us from the exhausting task of self-justification.

Non-Judgment of Others: A central takeaway is that if I am truly focused on my own "sinner identity," I have no room or right to judge anyone else. This creates a foundation for genuine compassion.

#### The Structure

The book moves from personal reflection to a "Theological Appendix," where Bouteneff dives into the Biblical definition of sin as hamartia (Greek for "missing the mark"). It draws heavily on the wisdom of the Early Church Fathers but presents it in a conversational, modern tone.

"How I identify myself is important... owning the 'sinner identity' is a key component of a healthy life; it's part of self-care; it's part of my salvation." — Peter Bouteneff

# Keep a time journal

Time yourself when doing spiritual activities (prayer, bible reading, consuming Orthodox literature, attending church services, serving others, etc.) and worldly activities (talking to friends aimlessly, watching TV, listening to music, unnecessary napping, etc). After each activity, record the time on a notetaking app or physical notepad. At the end of the day, observe how much total time you have spent doing spiritual work – working for your eternity and storing up for yourself **“treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal”** VS doing worldly things which bear 0 eternal profit and rob us of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

1st January 2020

spiritual activities: 3 hrs 45 mins

secular activities: 2 hrs

10:30 am: attended liturgy (2 hrs)

02:00 pm: playing soccer (1 hr)

04:00 pm: spiritual reading (30 mins)

06:00 pm: watching netflix (1 hr)

07:00 pm: prayer - walking (15 mins)

10:00 pm: attending youth meeting (1 hr)

*All Saints Orthodox Church*  
205 Scarborough Street  
Hartford, CT 06105

# **Lenten Retreat**

*Saturday – March 14, 2026*

**Topic:** *What Does it Mean to be a Church?*  
*The Parish Today*  
*What does it mean to be a Community*

**Speaker:** *The Very Reverend Dr. Eric Tosi, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Theology at St. Vladimir's Seminary.*

## **Schedule**

*Doors open at 9:30 a.m.*  
*Retreat starts at 10:00 a.m.*  
*Break for Lunch at 12:15 p.m.*  
*Retreat resumes at 1:00 p.m.*  
*Retreat concludes at 2:00 p.m.*

*Reservations are preferable, suggested donation of \$25 per person.*

*Please call Father Constantine to make your reservation by March 11<sup>th</sup>.*  
*(860)278-6387*