



St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Church

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Services Schedule

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

Bulletin for Sunday, March 22, 2026

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

Jim McGaffin

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

Time is running out brothers and sisters. Please schedule your confessions *before* Holy Week.

Strategic Planning

As we (the parish) begin the process of assessment, I have been meeting with a small group of parishioners who will be "Core Team". They are:

Dn Timothy and Maureen Skuby
Deirdre CotterGarfield
Demetra Tolis
Boris Dolf
Natalie Kurcharski

Sarah Senetcen

Thus far we've had two meetings, the minutes of which will be posted soon. The Parish Council has also been updated and will continue to be updated on a regular basis.

I have also designed a web site that will serve as a "clearinghouse" for all related and published materials.

<https://sites.google.com/stalexischurch.net/parish/strategic-planning>

Our first full parish meeting will be following liturgy on June 14th. This will provide ample time for the CT to become familiar with the process, and for the Strategic Planning Team (SPT) to be formed. More details will be forth coming.

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/prish/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: Michael & Zachary Neiss (3/3), Matthew Kuziak (3/18)
- Anniversaries this Month:
- 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

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT — Tone 8. St. John Climacus (of *The Ladder*).

Hieromartyr Basil of Ancyra (362-363). Martyr Drosís, daughter of Emperor Trajan (1st-2nd c.). Ven. Isaac, the Confessor Founder of the Dalmatian Monastery at Constantinople (4th c.). Monastic Martyr Euthymius of Prodromou (Mt. Athos—1814).

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

March 22 to March 30, 2026

Sunday, March 22

9:15AM 3rd Hour
9:30AM Divine Liturgy
4:00PM CT Deanery Vespers
4:00PM Lenten Vespers

Monday, March 23

The Holy Righteous Martyr Nicon and His 199 Disciples

Tuesday, March 24

Forefeast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos
8:30AM Matins
11:00AM Office Hours

Wednesday, March 25

Annunciation of the Theotokos
3:00PM Office Hours
6:00PM Vespereal Divine Liturgy

Thursday, March 26

5th Thursday of Lent: The Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete
8:30AM Matins

11:00AM Office Hours

Saturday, March 28

5th Saturday of Lent: The Akathist Hymn
4:00PM Office Hours
5:30PM Great Vespers

Sunday, March 29

Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt
9:15AM 3rd Hour
9:30AM Divine Liturgy
4:00PM Service of Unction

Monday, March 30

John Climacus the Righteous, author of The Divine Ladder of Ascent
Alla Hamisevich

Saints and Feasts

March 22

Sunday of St. John Climacus

The memory of this Saint is celebrated on March 30, where his biography may be found. He is celebrated today because his book, The Ladder of Divine Ascent, is a sure guide to the ascetic life, written by a great man of prayer experienced in all forms of the monastic polity; it teaches the seeker after salvation how to lay a sound foundation for his struggles, how to detect and war against each of the passions, how to avoid the snares laid by the demons, and how to rise from the rudimental virtues to the heights of Godlike love and humility. It is held in such high esteem that it is universally read in its entirety

in monasteries during the Great Fast.

March 22

Basil the Holy Martyr of Ancyra

Saint Basil strove in martyrdom during the short reign of Julian the Apostate, from 361-363. The Saint was denounced as a Christian to Saturninus, Governor of Ancyra, who, when Basil would not deny Christ, had him hanged from a post and scraped on his sides, then beaten, and cast into prison. A few days later, when Julian himself came through Ancyra, the Saint was brought before him and was asked to deny Christ, Whom he rather confessed the more. Julian then had strips cut in his flesh, so that they were left hanging from his body in front and in back. The valiant Martyr tore one of these strips off of his body and cast it into Julian's face. At this Julian commanded that iron spits be heated fiery hot; Saint Basil's belly, his back, and all his joints were pierced with them, and he received the crown of martyrdom.

March 23

Nikon the Holy Martyr & his 200 Companion Martyrs

Saint Nikon was from Neapolis (Naples) in Italy. His father was an idolater and his mother a Christian. At first he was a soldier, but later he went to the East, where he was

baptized and in time became a bishop. After some years, he returned to the West and came to Sicily, where he and many of his disciples were put to death by beheading because they would not worship the idols.

March 25

Annunciation of the Theotokos

Six months after John the Forerunner's conception, the Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth, a town of Galilee, unto Mary the Virgin, who had come forth from the Temple a mature maiden (see Nov. 21). According to the tradition handed down by the Fathers, she had been betrothed to Joseph four months. On coming to Joseph's house, the Archangel declared: "Rejoice, thou Full of Grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." After some consideration, and turmoil of soul, and fear because of this greeting, the Virgin, when she had finally obtained full assurance concerning God's unsearchable condescension and the ineffable dispensation that was to take place through her, and believing that all things are possible to the Most High, answered in humility: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." And at this, the Holy Spirit came upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her all-blameless womb, and the Son and Word of God, Who existed before the ages, was conceived past speech and understanding, and became flesh in her immaculate body (Luke 1:26-38).

Bearing in her womb the Uncontainable One, the blessed Virgin went with haste from Nazareth to the hill country of Judea, where Zacharias had his dwelling; for she desired to find Elizabeth her kinswoman and rejoice together with her, because, as she had learned from the Archangel, Elizabeth had conceived in her old age. Furthermore, she wished to tell her of the great things that the Mighty One had been well-pleased to bring to pass in her, and she greeted Elizabeth and drew nigh to her. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, she felt her six-month-old babe, Saint John the Baptist, prophesied of the dawning of the spiritual Sun.

Immediately, the aged Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and recognized her as the Mother of her Lord, and with a great voice blessed her and the Fruit that she held within herself. The Virgin also, moved by a supernatural rejoicing in the spirit, glorified her God and Savior, saying: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," and the rest, as the divine Luke hath recorded (1:39-55)

March 26

Synaxis in honor of the Archangel Gabriel

This festive Synaxis is celebrated to the glory of the Archangel Gabriel, since he ministered to the marvelous mystery of God's incarnate dispensation.

March 27

Martyr Matrona of Thessaloniki

This martyr was the servant of a certain Jewish woman named Pantilla, the wife of the Governor of Thessalonica. When Matrona refused to follow her mistress into the synagogue Pantilla beat her so severely that she died in a few days, and thus received the crown of her confession.

March 28

5th Saturday of Lent: The Akathist Hymn

About the year 626, the Persians, Avars, and Slavs came with a great host and besieged the imperial city of Constantinople while the Emperor Heraclius and the main body of the Byzantine army were absent in the East. Enemy ships filled the sea, especially the Golden Horn, and on land the adversaries were ready for attack with foot-soldiers, horses, and engines of war. Though the citizens courageously withstood them, yet they were few in number and would be unable to repulse the attack of such a great host. Hence, they could not count on any other means of salvation, except the protection of the Theotokos. And truly, suddenly a violent tempest broke up all the ships and submerged them, and the bodies of the invaders were cast out near the Blachernae quarter of the city where

the famous Church of the Theotokos stood. Taking courage from this, the people went forth from the city and repulsed the remaining forces, who fled out of fear. In 673, the city was miraculously delivered yet again, this time from an invasion of the Arabs. Then in 717-718, led by the Saracen general Maslamah, the Arab fleet laid siege once more to the city. The numerical superiority of the enemy was so overwhelming that the fall of the Imperial City seemed imminent. But then the Mother of God, together with a multitude of the angelic hosts, appeared suddenly over the city walls. The enemy forces, struck with terror and thrown into a panic at this apparition, fled in disarray. Soon after this, the Arab fleet was utterly destroyed by a terrible storm in the Aegean Sea on the eve of the Annunciation, March 24, 718. Thenceforth, a special "feast of victory and of thanksgiving" was dedicated to celebrate and commemorate these benefactions. In this magnificent service, the Akathist Hymn is prominent and holds the place of honour. It appears that even before the occasion of the enemy assaults mentioned above, the Akathist Hymn was already in use as the prescribed Service for the Feast of the Annunciation, together with the kontakion, "When the bodiless one learned the secret command," which has the Annunciation as its theme. It was only on the occasion of the great miracle wrought for the Christian populace of the Imperial City on the eve of the Annunciation in 718 that the hymn "To thee, the Champion Leader" was composed, most likely by Saint Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople.

Historians have ascribed the Akathist Hymn to Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople (638), to Saint George the Confessor, Bishop of Pisidia (818), or even to Saint Photius the Great (891), all of whom lived either at the time of or after the above-mentioned sieges. However, it appears most likely from its language, content, and style that the true composer of the Akathist Hymn is Saint Romanus the Melodist (6th century).

Hymns of the Day



Tone 8 Troparion (Resurrection)

Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One!
Thou didst accept the three day burial to free us from our sufferings!//

O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee!

Tone 4 Troparion (St. Alexis)

O righteous Father Alexis, our heavenly intercessor and teacher, ☐divine adornment of the Church of Christ! ☐Entreat the Master of All to strengthen the Orthodox Faith in America, ☐to grant peace to the world and to our souls great mercy.

Tone 1 Troparion (St. John Climacus)

O dweller of the wilderness and angel in the body,
thou wast a wonderworker, O our God-bearing Father John.

Thou didst receive heavenly gifts through
fasting, vigil, and prayer,
healing the sick and the souls of those drawn
to thee by faith.

Glory to Him Who gave thee strength!
Glory to Him Who granted thee a crown!//
Glory to Him Who grants healing to all!

Tone 5 Kontakion (St. Alexis)

Let us, the faithful praise the Priest Alexis,
a bright beacon of Orthodoxy in America, a
model of patience and humility,
a worthy shepherd of the Flock of Christ.
He called back the sheep who had been led
astray
and brought them by his preaching to the
Heavenly Kingdom.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to
the Holy Spirit*

Tone 4 Kontakion (St. John Climacus)

The Lord truly set thee on the heights of
abstinence,
to be a guiding star, showing the way to the
universe,//
O our father and teacher John.

Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen

Tone 6 Kontakion (Steadfast Protectress)

Steadfast Protectress of Christians,
□Constant Advocate before the Creator;
despise not the entreating cries of us
sinners, □but in your goodness come speedily
to help us who call on you in faith. □Hasten
to hear our petition and to intercede for us,
□O Theotokos, for you always protect those
who honor you!

Hymn to the Theotokos

All of creation rejoices in thee, O Full of
Grace:
the assembly of angels and the race of men.
O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise,
the glory of virgins, from whom God was
incarnate and became a Child:
our God before the ages. He made thy body
into a throne,
and thy womb He made more spacious than
the heavens.
All of creation rejoices in thee, O Full of
Grace.//
Glory to thee!

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him
in the highest!
The righteous shall be in everlasting
remembrance! He shall not fear evil
tidings! 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 Hebrews 6:13-20.

BRETHREN, when God made a promise to
Abraham, since he had no one greater by
whom to swear, he swore to himself, saying,
"Surely I will bless you and multiply you."

And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Gospel Reading

Sunday of St. John Climacus The Reading is from Mark 9:17-31

At that time, a man came to Jesus kneeling and saying: "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; and wherever it seizes him it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to him; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled

about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has he had this?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting." They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he would not have any one know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise."

Wisdom of the Fathers

Seest thou how He now proceeds to lay beforehand in them the foundation of His doctrine about fasting? ... See, at any rate, how many blessings spring from them both. For he that is praying as he ought,

and fasting, hath not many wants, and he that hath not many wants, cannot be covetous; ...

St. John Chrysostom

Homily 57 on Matthew 17,4,5. B#54, pp.355,356., 4th Century

... he that is not covetous, will be also more disposed for almsgiving. He that fasts is light, and winged, and prays with wakefulness, and quenches his wicked lusts, and propitiates God, and humbles his soul when lifted up. Therefore even the apostles were almost always fasting.

St. John Chrysostom

Homily 57 on Matthew 17,4,5. B#54, pp.355,356., 4th Century

Beyond the Sermon



Parish assessment is an empirical, diagnostic tool designed to evaluate the **operational health and effectiveness** of a Christian community. Much like a medical professional assesses vital signs to diagnose physical illness, a parish assessment identifies **root cause issues**—referred to as "pandemics" or "comorbidities"—that lead to spiritual and operational decline.

The Necessity of Assessment

The sources emphasize that assessment is critical because many parishes are operating by "default" rather than by "design," leading to a state of crisis. Verified data indicates significant challenges facing the modern Church:

- **47% of cradle Orthodox** Christians have left the faith.
- **64% of young adults** drop out of church during their 20s.
- Only **26% of parishioners** attend services regularly.
- **99% of parishes** are financially dependent on fundraisers and festivals rather than stewardship.

According to the sources, when a majority of people behave in a particular way (such as disengaging), the "**people are not the problem; the problem is inherent in the system**". Assessment allows leaders to stop reacting to the "**tyranny of the urgent**" and focus on the systematic issues that impede growth.

The Effective Parish Assessment (EPA) Model

The primary tool for this evaluation is the **Effective Parish Assessment (EPA)**, which is built upon **6 Operational Pillars** and **30 Building Blocks** of excellence. These pillars include:

1. **Vision & Planning:** Moving intentionally toward a destination.
2. **Leadership & Teams:** The "engine" that drives all other pillars.
3. **Stewardship & Generosity:** Fostering a culture of percentage giving.
4. **Parishioner Engagement:** Creating and growing active disciples.
5. **Ministries:** Listening to and meeting the needs of parishioners.
6. **Operational Effectiveness:** Managing the "property owned by God" with professional excellence.

The Assessment Process

The assessment is typically conducted via a **free online survey** completed by parishioners and stakeholders. Participants evaluate various statements using a 5-point Likert scale. A unique feature of this assessment is the **"I Don't Know" option**, which is tabulated separately to help leaders identify **communication gaps** regarding existing programs and initiatives.

Outcomes: The Preliminary Parish Improvement Plan (PPIP)

The data gathered is synthesized into a **Preliminary Parish Improvement Plan (PPIP)**, a roadmap that uses a **"red, yellow, green"** format for immediate clarity:

- **Green:** Indicates the area is in **good shape**.
- **Yellow:** Signals **cautionary** areas needing attention.
- **Red:** Highlights **"red alert"** areas requiring **significant and urgent attention**.

Ultimately, the goal of parish assessment is to transform a community into a **"force multiplier of Christianity,"** ensuring that the parish is not merely "attending church" but is an active, engaged body of believers equipped to change the world.



The Parish Roadmap

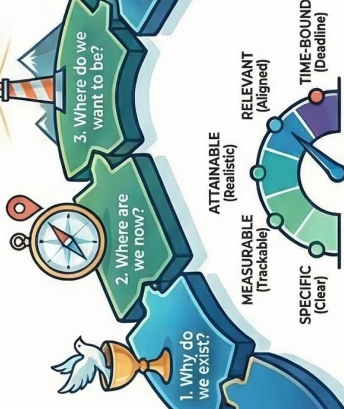
A Biblical Path to Strategic Transformation

Context:
Shifting from Default to Design



Strategic Planning (SP) for churches is a Christ-centered discipline designed to manage a parish's "business" without turning it into a "business."

The Strategic Roadmap: 4 Critical Questions



SMART Goals & Action Plans

Strategies must be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound to ensure success.



A Biblical Mandate:
SP is not a business invention; it is modeled by Jesus and scriptural leaders.



Consensus Over Majority:
Decisions seek a "consensus mind" where every member can support the final outcome.

90% IMPLEMENTATION FAILURE RATE

Most plans fail during the performance phases without disciplined accountability and team structure.

Strategic Transformation

10 Essential Deliverables From the Stewardship Calling SP process

1-4:
SWOT Analysis, Core Values, WHY Statement, Vision Statement

5-7:
SMART Goals, Vision Statement, Timelines

8-10:
"Low Hanging Fruit", SMART GAP, Accountability, Final Strategic Plan



Success requires the right People, Process, Plan, and Performance.

The Foundation of Success (The 4 Ps)