



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, December 13, 2020

Welcome



Jesus Christ taught us to love and serve all people, regardless of their ethnicity or nationality.

To understand that, 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:

Joseph Barbera - Council Member at Large
Dori Kuziak - Council Secretary
Caroline Neiss - Council Member Elect
Marlene Melesko - Council Member Elect
Kyle Hollis - Member at Large
Roderick Seurattan - Council Vice President

Pastoral Care - General Information

Emergency Sick Calls can be made at any time. Please call Fr Steven at (860) 866-5802, 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

Need a distraction?

Feeling a bit overwhelmed by politics, the pandemic or just life in general? One of our own, Anastasia Littlefield, has put together a virtual concert, which she arranged, directed and participated in. This concert also features other very talented young people who have a lot to say to us. Please take some time to view this and appreciate what Anastasia has put together.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdyuLRfeadk>

Weekly Services

During this COVID era, services dates and times are subject to change. Please read the schedule provided within the bulletin itself for the dates and times of services,

All services are streamed via Zoom (please see the invitation below). Currently only Sunday Liturgies may be attended in person, with the blessing of Fr Steven.

Topic: Services

Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4716784843?pwd=dzB0MTY1cnVIUUFWNXBCako1ekZ0ZzC>

Meeting ID: 471 678 4843

Passcode: 1994

One tap mobile

+19292056099,,4716784843#,,,,,0#,,1994#
US (New York)

+13017158592,,4716784843#,,,,,0#,,1994#
US (Washington D.C)

Dial by your location

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

Meeting ID: 471 678 4843

Passcode: 1994

Find your local number:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4716784843>

Something New

With the, soon to come, advent of the new year, I would like to try something new - called **Conversations**. On Thursdays, starting at 7pm, I will hold a Zoom conference directed towards Young Adults, Women and Men respectively. This will be an opportunity for participants to "meet

and greet", to ask questions and to share.

Conversations - Young Adults: Jan 7th @ 7pm

Conversations - Women: Jan 14th @ 7pm

Conversations - Men: Jan 21 @ 7pm

The Zoom invitation is as always.

Prayers, Intercessions and Commemorations



Archpriest Michael,
Archpriest
Dennis, Deacon
Timothy, Evelyn,
Katheryn,
Anne, Veronica, Richard,
Nancy, Susann, Carol,
Luke, Aaron, Alexander,
Gail, Vincent, Nina,
Ellen, Maureen
Elizabeth, Christopher,
Joshua, Jennifer Petra,
Olivia, Jessica , Sean,

Sarah, Justin, Arnold, Michael, Kirk, Carol-
Anne, Anthony, Natasha, Janice, Gene, John

Memory Eternal! Archbishop David of Sitka
and All Alaska

- of violence, and refugees;
- All those suffering chronic illness, financial hardship, loneliness, addictions, abuse, abandonment and despair; those who are homeless, those who are institutionalize, 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 and intolerance and all those departed this life in the hope of the Resurrection.

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Today we commemorate:

Repose of Ven. Herman of Alaska, Wonderworker of All

America (1837). Sunday of the Forefathers. Martyrs Eustratius, Auxentius, Eugene, Mardarius, and Orestes, at Sebaste (4th c.). Virgin Martyr Lucia (Lucy) of Syracuse (304). Ven. Arkády (Arcadius) of Novotorsk (11th c.). Ven. Mardárii (Mardarius), Recluse, of the Kiev Caves (Far Caves—13th c.). Ven. Arsenius of Latros (8th-9th c.). Ven. Nikodemos (Romanian).

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- 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

Parish Calendar

Services and Events

December 13 to December 21, 2020

Sunday, December 13

11th Sunday of Luke
Repose of St. Herman of Alaska
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, December 14

The Holy Martyrs Thyrsus, Leucius, and Callinicus of Asia Minor, and Philemon, Apollonius, and Arian of Alexandria
8:30AM Akathist for the Departed

Tuesday, December 15

Righteous Aaron
Eleutherios the Hieromartyr, Bishop of Illyricum, and his mother Anthia
8:30AM Daily Matins
6:30PM Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday, December 16

The Holy Prophet Aggaeus (Haggai)
4:30PM Open Doors
6:30PM Akathist Service

Thursday, December 17

Daniel the Prophet & Ananias, Azarias, & Misail, the Three Holy Youths
8:30AM Daily Matins

Friday, December 18

Sebastian the Martyr & his Companions
Fred & Sonia Geyer - A

Saturday, December 19

Martyrs Boniface, Probus, Ares, Timothy, Polyeyktos, Eutykhios and Thessaloniki

5:30PM Great Vespers

Sunday, December 20

Sunday before Nativity
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, December 21

Forefeast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ

Saints and Feasts

December 13

11th Sunday of Luke

On the Sunday that occurs on or immediately after the eleventh of this month, we commemorate Christ's forefathers according to the flesh, both those that came before the Law, and those that lived after the giving of the Law.

Special commemoration is made of the Patriarch Abraham, to whom the promise was first given, when God said to him, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18). This promise was given some two thousand years before Christ, when Abraham was seventy-five years of age. God called him and commanded him to forsake his country, parents, and kinsmen, and to depart to the land of the Canaanites. When he arrived there, God told him, "I will give this land to thy seed" (Gen. 12:7); for this cause, that land was called the "Promised Land," which later became the country of the Hebrew people, and which is also called Palestine by the historians. There, after the passage of twenty-four years, Abraham received God's

law concerning circumcision. In the one hundredth year of his life, when Sarah was in her ninetieth year, they became the parents of Isaac. Having lived 175 years altogether, he reposed in peace, a venerable elder full of days.

December 13

Herman the Wonderworker of Alaska & First Saint of America

Saint Herman (his name is a variant of Germanus) was born near Moscow in 1756. In his youth he became a monk, first at the Saint Sergius Hermitage near Saint Petersburg on the Gulf of Finland; while he dwelt there, the most holy Mother of God appeared to him, healing him of a grave malady. Afterwards he entered Valaam Monastery on Valiant Island in Lake Ladoga; he often withdrew into the wilderness to pray for days at a time. In 1794, answering a call for missionaries to preach the Gospel to the Aleuts, he came to the New World with the first Orthodox mission to Alaska. He settled on Spruce Island, which he called New Valaam, and here he persevered, even in the face of many grievous afflictions mostly at the hands of his own countrymen in the loving service of God and of his neighbour. Besides his many toils for the sake of the Aleuts, he subdued his flesh with great asceticism, wearing chains, sleeping little, fasting and praying much. He brought many people to Christ by the example of his life, his teaching, and his kindness and sanctity, and was granted the grace of working miracles and of prophetic insight. Since he was not a

priest, Angels descended at Theophany to bless the waters in the bay; Saint Herman used this holy water to heal the sick. Because of his unwearied missionary labours, which were crowned by God with the salvation of countless souls, he is called the Enlightener of the Aleuts, and has likewise been renowned as a wonderworker since his repose in 1837.

December 16

The Holy Prophet Aggaeus (Haggai)

The Prophet Aggaeus, whose name means "festive," was born in Babylon at the time of the captivity of the Jews. He began to prophesy in Jerusalem after their return thereto, and to admonish the people to rebuild the Temple, in the days of Zorobabel, the second year of the reign of Darius Hystaspes, King of Persia, about the year 520 before Christ. His prophecy, divided into two chapters, is ranked tenth among the minor Prophets.

December 16

Our Righeous Mother Blessed Empress Theophania

Saint Theophania, who was born in Constantinople, was of royal lineage. Instructed in letters, and adorned with many virtues, she was united in marriage to Emperor Leo the Wise (reigned 886-912). But counting the glory of the earthly kingdom as nought, she spent her nights and days in serving God with psalms

and hymns and prayers, working various good deeds until she surrendered her spirit to God in peace, while still in her youth, being, according to some, about twenty years of age, according to others, twenty-seven. Her holy relics are still preserved in the patriarchal church in Constantinople as a source of healing for those that draw nigh with faith and longing. She was also the builder of the Holy Patriarchal and Stavropigeal Monastery of St. Anastasia the Protector from Potions in Chalke (883).

December 17

Daniel the Prophet & Ananias, Azarias, & Misail, the Three Holy Youths

The Prophet Daniel and the Three Children were all descended from the royal tribe of Judah. In the year 599 before Christ, in the reign of Joachim, who was also called Jechonias (I Chron. 3:16, and II Chron. 36:8), while yet children, these righteous ones were led away as captives into Babylon together with the other Jews by Nabuchodonosor. He singled them out from among the other captives to serve him, and renamed them thus: Daniel was named Baltazar; Ananias, Sedrach; Misail, Misach; and Azarias, Abednago. They were reared in the royal court, and taught the wisdom of the Chaldeans; and after the passage of three years, they surpassed all the Chaldean sages (Dan. 1).

Thereafter, Daniel, being still a lad, interpreted that mysterious image seen by Nabuchodonosor in a dream, an image that was composed of different metals, but was

shattered and ground to dust by a certain stone which had been hewn out of a mountain without the hand of man. This vision clearly portrayed through the mountain the height of the Virgin's holiness and the power of the Holy Spirit which overshadowed her. Through the image of the Stone, Christ was portrayed, Who was seedlessly born of her, and Who by His coming as the Godman would shatter and destroy all the kingdoms of the world, which were portrayed through the image; and He would raise them that believe in Him into His Heavenly Kingdom, which is eternal and everlasting (ibid. 2:31-45). Thereupon, he signified in prophecy the time of His appearance in the Jordan, the beginning of His preaching of the Gospel, the time of His saving Passion, and the cessation of the worship according to the Mosaic Law, (ibid. 9:14-27). He portrayed most excellently the majestic and dread image of His second coming, presenting by means of words, as with living colours, the fiery throne which shall be set, the Eternal Judge Who shall sit thereon, the river of fire that shall flow forth before Him, the calling to account before the impartial judgment seat, the opened books of each ones deeds, the thousands upon thousands of them that minister to Him, and the ten thousands of them that stand in His presence (ibid. 7: 9-10). Daniel (whose name means "God is judge") was called "man of desires" by the Angels that appeared (ibid. 9:23), because he courageously disdained every desire of the body, even the very bread that is necessary for nourishment. Furthermore, he received this name because, in his longing for the freedom of those of his tribe, and his desire to know their future condition, he ceased

not supplicating God, fasting and bending the knee three times a day. Because of this prayer he was cast into the den of lions, after he had been accused by his enemies as a transgressor of the decree issued through the proclamation of the king, that no one should worship or ask for anything from God or from men for thirty days, but only from the king. But having stopped the mouths of the lions by divine might, and appearing among them as though he were a shepherd of sheep, Daniel showed the impious the might of godliness (ibid. 6:1-23).

As for the Three Children, Ananias ("Yah is gracious"), Misail ("Who is what God is?"), and Azarias ("Yah is keeper"), since they refused to offer adoration to Nabuchodonosor's image, they were cast into the furnace of fire. They were preserved unharmed amidst the flames - even their hair was untouched - by the descent of the Angel of the Lord, that is, the Son of God. Walking about in the furnace, as though in the midst of dew, they sang the universal hymn of praise to God, which is found in the Seventh and Eighth Odes of the Holy Psalter. And coming forth therefrom, without even the smell of the fire on their clothes (Dan. 3), they prefigured in themselves the Virgin's incorrupt giving of birth; for she, on receiving the Fire of the Godhead within her womb, was not burned, but remained virgin, even as she was before giving birth.

Therefore the Church celebrates the Three Children and Daniel on this day, on the Sunday of the Forefathers, and on the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ, since

they prefigured and proclaimed His Incarnation. Furthermore, they were of the tribe of Judah, wherefrom, Christ sprang forth according to the flesh. The holy Three Children completed their lives full of days; as for the Prophet Daniel, he lived until the reign of Cyrus, King of Persia, whom he also petitioned that his nation be allowed to return to Jerusalem and that the Temple be raised up again, and his request was granted. He reposed in Peace, having lived about eighty-eight years. His prophetic book, which is divided into twelve chapters, is ranked fourth among the greater Prophets.

December 18

Sebastian the Martyr & his Companions

This Saint, who was from the city of Milan, was a member of the Senate as well as a zealot for the Faith of Christ, and had converted many to the knowledge of God. When Diocletian and Maximian began a Persecution against the Christians, Saint Sebastian was arrested and pierced with sharp arrows, and the bones of his body were shattered with clubs; and being cut into pieces, he gave up his spirit to God in the year 288. Together with him there were others also who died while enduring various tortures. Their names are Marcellinus and Mark the brethren, Tranquillinus their father, Nicostratus and his spouse Zoe, Tiburtius, Claudius, Castulus, and Castor.

Hymns of the Day



Tone 2 Troparion (Resurrection)

When You descended to death, O Life Immortal, You slew hell with the splendor of Your Godhead.

And when from the depths You raised the dead, all the powers of heaven cried out://
"O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to You!"

Tone 2 Troparion (Forefathers)

Through faith You justified the Forefathers, betrothing through them the Church of the gentiles.
These saints exult in glory, for from their seed came forth a glorious fruit: she who bore You without seed.//
So by their prayers, O Christ God, have mercy on us!

Tone 7 Troparion (St. Herman)

O joyful North Star of the Church of Christ, guiding all men to the Heavenly Kingdom, teacher and apostle of the True Faith, intercessor and defender of the oppressed, adornment of the Orthodox Church in America:
Blessed Father Herman of Alaska, pray to our Lord Jesus Christ// for the salvation of our souls!

Tone 2 Kontakion (Resurrection)

Hell became afraid, O almighty Savior, seeing the miracle of Your Resurrection from the tomb!
The dead arose! Creation, with Adam, beheld this and rejoiced with You,//
and the world, my Savior, praises You forever.

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

Tone 3 Kontakion. (St. Herman)

The eternal light of Christ our Savior guided you, O blessed father Herman, on your evangelical journey to America to proclaim the Gospel of peace.
Now you stand before the throne of glory: intercede for your land and its people,// asking peace for the world and salvation for our souls.

now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Tone 6 Kontakion (Forefathers)

You did not worship the graven image, O thrice-blessed ones, but armed with the immaterial Essence of God, you were glorified in a trial by fire.
From the midst of unbearable flames you called on God, crying:
"Hasten, O compassionate One! Speedily come to our aid,// for You are merciful and able to do as You will!"

Gospel and Epistle Readings

Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon. 4th Tone. Daniel 3.26,27.

Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers.

Verse: For you are just in all you have done.

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians 3:4-11.

Brethren, when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.

Gospel Reading

11th Sunday of Luke

The Reading is from Luke 14:16-24

The Lord said this parable: "A man once

gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time of the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I must go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and there is still room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. For many are called, but few are chosen.'"

Wisdom of the Fathers

This parable ... proclaims beforehand both the casting out of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles; and it indicates together with this also the strictness of the life required, and how great the punishment appointed for the careless

St. John Chrysostom

Homily 69 on Matthew 22, 4th Century

And when were they bidden? By all the prophets; by John again; for unto Christ he would pass all on, saying, "He must increase, I must decrease;" by the Son Himself again, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you;" and again, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

St. John Chrysostom

Homily 69 on Matthew 22, 4th Century

What was the nature of the invitation? God the Father has prepared in Christ for the inhabitants of earth those gifts which are bestowed upon the world through Him, even the forgiveness of sins, the cleansing away of all defilement, the communion of the Holy Spirit, the glorious adoption of sons, and the kingdom of the heavens.

St. Cyril of Alexandria

Translation courtesy of "The Orthodox New Testament" Volume 1, 4th Century

Beyond the Sermon



Metropolitan Anthony of
Sourozh
READING THE SIGNS
OF THE TIMES
(John 5:4-42)
May 1974

In the name of the
Father, of the Son and of
the Holy Ghost.

In today's Gospel, Christ advises His disciples to learn to read the signs of the times. Can we read the signs of the times? Have we received this message, this calling compelling us to look at what the times say to us?

Our times say something which is very worrying: while centuries back the Christian Church proclaimed its message in a credible, acceptable way, while people who heard the message did receive it and believed it, it seems that our message reaches only the few. It is not because the truth has changed, or because we must preach another Gospel than the integrity of the Gospel of Christ. Saint John of the Ladder says that the word of God is like a straight and pointed arrow, it can fly straight to its goal, it can hit the target, it can pierce any thickness and any resistance. But Saint John tells us also that the arrow will remain useless and dormant unless there is an arm, a bow, a string, an eye, unless there is an eye to aim the shaft, unless there is a vigorous arm to send it flying.

The arrow straight and pointed is God's message which we are to deliver to the

whole world that it may be saved, as straight as the integrity of the Gospel - but have we got all God needs from us for this arrow to fly and hit the target? Is it not that the word of God remains unconvincing because looking at us people see no evidence that it has any power to transform life?

And here, we must read the signs of the times. The times, the people around us, the world is standing in judgement over us. Why is it that words of truth do not sound true? Why is it that words of life do not convey and impart life? Because we have not been hit in such a way as to possess life, as to be able to proclaim truth.

I would like to leave this thought with you, and each of us can ask himself what is the message he received from the Gospel, what is the life he had derived from it? What is the truth that has become the truth of his life? And only then can our message convey to men what God had imparted to us and commanded us to carry. Amen.

Diocese of New England

Strategic Plan Call for Volunteers



Mission: to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to assist parishes and individuals to live the fullness of the Orthodox faith, and to reach out and care for others in God's love.

Vision Statement

Develop and staff a Diocesan Office
Increase outreach, evangelization and missions
Optimize communication
Create a vocational program
Expand education
Support our Bishop and Clergy more fully
Encourage a Christ-centered life for all



We welcome all the faithful of our Diocese to join us on this holy journey of faith!

Volunteer to work with or lead one of three task forces in these areas:

Lay and Clergy Leadership



Research, develop and implement an effective Leadership Training program in at least 75% of the Diocese parishes within 24 months.

Parish and Liturgical Life



Research, develop and implement an effective Parish Ministry and Liturgical Life Engagement Program in at least 14 of the Diocese parishes within 24 months.

Parish Health Assessment



Research, develop and complete an effective parish health assessment process in at least 33% of the Diocese parishes within 24 months.