WEEKLY BULLETIN

February ~~22,~~ 2026, Vol. 43, No.8

Sunday of Cheesefare

Forgiveness Sunday

THE VOICE

SAINT ELIA ORTHODOX CHURCH

A Parish of the Orthodox Church in America

64 W. Wilbeth Rd., Akron, Ohio 44301

Church Hall: 330-724-7129

Office: 330-724-7009

www.saintelia.com

www.facebook.com/sainteliakron

His Eminence Alexander, Archbishop of Toledo, Bulgarian Diocese,
Very Rev. Mitred Archpriest Father Don Anthony Freude, Parish Rector
Rev. Protodeacon James M. Gresh, Rev. Deacon Aaron Gray

SAINT ELIA THE PROPHET PARISH

2026 Parish Council

President: Veronica Bilas
V. President: Daniel Ralich
Secretary: Subdeacon Aaron Gray
Treasurer: Reader Daniel Slife
Members: Anastasia Bohush, Anthony Dodovich, Bud Graham, Jefferson Hodge,

Choir Director: Subdeacon Terrence A. Bilas
Assistant Directors: Anastasia Bohush
Deaconisa Heidi Gresh, Reader Michael Luc

Church School:

Coordinator: Popadia Donna Freude
Staff: Natalie Slife, Eve Tavenier, Reader Nicholas Morelli, Frances Hakim, Subdeacon David Trace, Deaconisa Heidi Gresh

Sisterhood of St. Juliana:

President: Sandy Graham, V. President: Kathy Gray
Secretary: Katherine Hodge, Treasurer: Mary Magensky
Assistant Treasurer: Anastasia Bohush

Workers of St. Elizabeth the New Martyr:

Coordinators: Subdeacon Aaron Gray, Veronica Bilas

Scheduled Readers - 2026

Sunday, Feb. 22 Deaconisa Heidi Gresh
Sunday, Mar. 1 – Mary Beth Gray
Sunday, Mar. 8 -Hours: Subd. Terence Bilas
Epistle: Anastasia Bohush

SCHEDULE OF DIVINE SERVICES

4th Pre-Lenten Sunday
SUNDAY OF CHEESEFARE - FORGIVENESS SUNDAY ***The Expulsion of Adam from Paradise***
Saturday, February 21
5:00 pm Great Vespers and Confession
Matins Gospel: Luke 24:1-12
Sunday, February 22
9:10 am 3rd. and 6th Hours: Deaconisa Heidi Gresh
9:30 am Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom
Epistle Reader: Deaconisa Heidi Gresh
Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21

5:00 pm VESPERS AND MUTUAL FORGIVENESS - SERVICE – ***Great Lent Begins -Strict Fast***

GREAT LENT

The Lenten Spring has come! The light of repentance! Let us cleanse ourselves from evil, crying to the Giver of Light: Glory to Thee, O Lover of Mankind!

FIRST WEEK OF GREAT LENT

Monday, February 23 – 6:00 pm
Great Canon of Repentance of St. Andrew of Crete
Tuesday, February 24 – 6:00 pm
Great Canon of Repentance of St. Andrew of Crete
Wednesday, February 25 – 6:00 pm
Great Canon of Repentance of St. Andrew of Crete
Thursday, February 26 – 6:00 pm
Great Canon of Repentance of St. Andrew of Crete
Friday, February 27 – 6:00 pm
Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts
Blessing of Boiled Wheat – Commemoration of the Great Martyr Theodore. ***Lenten Covered Dish***

SECOND WEEK OF GREAT LENT

FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT - Tone 5
SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY
Saturday, February 28

5:00 pm Great Vespers and Confession
Matins Gospel: Luke 24:12-35

Sunday, March 1

9:10 am 3rd and 6th Hours: Mary Beth Gray
9:30 am Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great
Epistle Reader: Mary Beth Gray
Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2
Gospel: John 1:43-51

5:00 pm AKRON COMMUNITY SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY VESPERS
Saint Thomas Church

Wednesday, March 4 – (at St. Elia)
6:00 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Friday, March 6 – (at St. Elia)
6:00 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts
Lenten Covered Dish

THIRD WEEK OF GREAT LENT

SECOND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT – Tone 6
Saint Gregory Palamas
Saturday, March 7

5:00 pm Great Vespers and Confessions
Matins Gospel: Luke 24:36-53

Sunday, March 8

9:10 am 3rd and 6th Hours:Subd. Terrence Bilas
9:30 am Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great
Epistle Reader: Anastasia Bohush
Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12

5:00 pm AKRON LENTEN VESPERS
Presentation of Our Lord Church

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS
FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

Epistle: Romans 3:11-14:4

Put on Christ

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

The night is far spent; the day is at hand. Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

The Law of Liberty

Receive one who is weak in faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21 14

"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Fasting to Be Seen Only by God

"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting.

Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Lay Up Treasures in Heaven

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

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Winter/Spring Bible Study: The Epistle to the Hebrews

Join us as we study and discuss this rich and meaningful book of the New Testament that is read in the Orthodox Church throughout the year. All sessions will be from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., with locations split between the St. Elia parish hall and Artisan Coffee at 662 Canton Road in Ellet, which has a private room available for us to reserve (and excellent food and coffee!). Please note that no outside food or beverages are permitted for the sessions at Artisan

.**Please see Deacon Aaron with any questions. We look forward to learning together!**

Session 4: High Priest of A New and Better Covenant —
Hebrews 7:1 to 10:39 Monday, March 9, at St. Elia

**Session 5: A Good Testimony Through Faith **

Hebrews 11:1 to 12:13 Thursday, April 23, at Artisan Coffee

Session 6: Let Brotherly Love Continue —

Hebrews 12:14 to 13:25 • Thursday, May 14, location TB
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AKRON LENTEN SERVICES

Great Lent begins this year, 2026, begios on Monday, February 23.

Our Greater Akron Orthodox Community will come together for VESPERS each Sunday evening:

March 1 - Sunday of Orthodoxy
5:00 pm -St. Thomas Church

March 8 - St. Gregory Palamas
5:00 pm – Presentation of Our Lord Church
March 15 – Veneration of the Cross
5:00 pm - St. Elia Church
March 22 – St. John Climacus
5:00 pm – St. George Church
March 29 – St. Mary of Egypt
5:00 pm - Sacrament of Holy Unction
St. Nicholas Church

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OCW LENTEN RETREAT

Saturday, March 7, 2026

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church

Speaker: Fr. Paul Abernathy

Neighborhood Resilience Project

St. Moses the Black Orthodox Church

Pittsburgh, Pa.

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GREAT LENT

"Make me to know Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. (Psalm 25:4)

The longing expressed in this psalm speaks for each of us from the depths of our soul seeking God and it is the voice of a pilgrim entering on the road of faith. This road described in the Gospel is not a broad avenue but a narrow path leading to life:

'Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life.' (Cf. Matthew 7:13)

Great Lent is a very valuable season of the Church Year and the appointed time for our spiritual renewal. In truth, it is a ***gift from God***.

Accordingly, we pray: ***'Open to me the Gates of repentance, O Giver of life…in Thy compassion purify me by the loving-kindness of Thy mercy.'***

Indeed Great Lent is that Gate that opens into the atmosphere of repentance and to a life of repentance that places on the road and the journey to Pascha, the Feast of Feasts, to Eternal Life in Christ Jesus, our Risen Lord.

Lent re-emphasizes to all true Orthodox believers the true depth of faith. It is a time set aside for taking inventory of our personal life and self-examination. It is a time to follow the road signs pointing to decisive commitment, to deep love of God and love of others – our fellow travelers.

Prayer, fasting, alms giving, and silence pour out into our hearts the breath of faith. Conversion and renewal appear to us as rests stops for opening ourselves again and again to the urgency of love.

LENTEN WORSHIP

Great Lent consists of six weeks of forty days. It begins on Monday after Cheesefare Sunday and ends on Friday evening before Palm Sunday. The Saturday of Lazarus' resurrection, Palm Sunday and Holy Week form a special liturgical cycle.

The meaning and the spirit of Great Lent find their first and most important expression in worship. Not only individuals but the whole Church acquires a penitential spirit and he beautiful Lenten Services more than anything else help us to deepen our spiritual vision, to reconsider our life in the light of the Orthodox teaching about man.

In the First Week of Great Lent the **Great Canon of Repentance** of St. Andrew of Crete will be served in four sections Monday through Thursday, and the **Presanctified Liturgy** will be celebrated on Friday evening**. Services are at 6:00 pm.**

THE GREAT CANON OF ST. ANDREW OF CRETE

Great Lent begins with the Great Penitential Canon of St. Andrew of Crete. The Canon is served each evening, Monday through Thursday in the first week of Lent. Written in the seventh century, the Canon is the purest expression of repentance. The author, St. Andrew, contemplates the great history of salvation, recorded in the Old and New Testaments, and applies it in various images to the state of the sinful soul.

In this Great Prayer each of us places ourselves in the spirit of a lamentation of a Christian who discovers again and again how much God has loved him, how much God has done for him, and how little response comes from him.

Thus we pray:
'Where shall I begin to lament the deeds of my wretched life? What beginning shall I make, O Christ, to this lament? But since Thou art compassionate, grant me remission of my trespasses.

Like the potter gives life to the clay, Thou hast bestowed upon me flesh and bones, breath and life. Today, O my Creator, my Redeemer and my Judge, receive me a penitent.'

And to each one pf thee Troparia, we respond:
'Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me.'

THE LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS

On weekdays of Great Lent (Monday through Friday) the celebration of St. John Chrysostom or St. Basil the Great is not permitted. The only exception to this rule is for the Feast of the Annunciation of the Mother of God. The reason for this rule is that the Divine Liturgy – the Eucharist – is by its very nature a festal celebration, the joyful commemoration of Christ's Resurrection and glorification and His Presence among His disciples.

But twice a week, on Wednesday and Friday evenings, so that the faithful may receive the true nourishment of soul and body during this Fast, the Church prescribes the celebration of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. It consists of Vespers and Communion with the Holy Gifts consecrated on the previous Sunday. These days of Lent being days of strict fast are

"crowned" with the partaking of the Bread of Life, the ultimate fulfilment of our Lenten efforts…as the Liturgy prays:

'…having freed us all and all Thy faithful people from all uncleanness, sanctify our souls and bodies with the sanctification which cannot be taken away, that partaking with a clean conscience, with faces unashamed, with heart illumined, of these divine sanctified Things, and by them being given life, we may be united to Thy Christ Himself our true God, Who has said: Who so eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood abides in Me, and I in him, that by Thy Word, O Lord, dwelling within us, and sojourning among us, we may become a temple of Thine all-holy and adorable Spirit…' (Prayer of the Presanctified Gifts)

During the reading of the psalms of Vespers. The Presanctified Gifts of the Body and Blood of Christ are transferred from the Holy Altar Table where they have been reserved since the Sunday Divine Liturgy and are placed on the Table of Oblation.

After the Entrance with the incense and the evening hymn, O Gladsome Light, greeting Christ the Light of the world, the Old Testament Readings from Genesis and Proverbs are read, between which the celebrant blesses the kneeling congregation with the lighted candle while chanting: ***'The Light of Christ illumines all.'*** indicating and proclaiming that all wisdom is given by Christ in the Church through the Scriptures and the Sacraments.

After the second offering of incense, the Presanctified Gifts are brought to the Holy Altar Table in a solemn, silent procession. In adoration, the priest, carrying the Body and Blood of Christ, covers his head and face while the faithful prostrate before this Sacred Mystery. The Hymn of the Entrance calls the faithful to Holy Communion:

'Now the powers of heaven do serve invisibly with us. Lo, the King of Glory enters. Lo, the mystical sacrifice is upborne, fulfilled.

Let us draw near in faith and love, and become communicants of life eternal. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

After the litany and prayers, the Our Father is sung and the faithful receive Holy Communion to the chanting of the verse from Psalm 34:

'O taste and see that the Lord is good. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

The Hymn after Communion and the Litany of Thanksgiving are sung and the faithful depart with this prayer to God:

'O Almighty Master, Who in wisdom has fashioned all creation, Who through Thine ineffable providence and great goodness has led us to these all-revered days
for purification of souls and bodies, for the restraint of passions, and for the hope of the resurrection, Who during the forty days didst put into the hands of Thy servitor Moses the tables in letters divinely inscribed, grant unto us also, O Good One, to fight the good fight, to complete the course of the Fast, to preserve the faith undivided, to crush the heads of the invisible serpents, to be shown to be conquerors of sins, and without condemnation also to attain unto and to worship the holy Resurrection. For blessed and glorified is Thine all-honorable and majestic name, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

SAINT THEODORE AND THE BOILED WHEAT

On the First Saturday of Great Lent (February 28) we remember the miracle of St. Theodore and the Boiled Wheat.

Fifty years after the death of St. Theodore, the emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363, wanting to commit and outrage upon the Christians, commanded the city-commander of Constantinople during the first week of Great Lent to sprinkle all the food provisions in the marketplaces with the blood offered to idols.

St. Theodore appeared in a dream to Archbishop Eudoxius, informing him to inform all the Christians that no one should buy anything at the marketplaces, but rather to eat boiled wheat with honey (kolyva).

In commemoration of this occurrence, the Orthodox Church annually celebrates the memory of St. Theodore on the first Saturday of Great Lent. St. Theodore, who suffered martyrdom by fire, is also commemorated on February 17

On **Friday evening (February 27),** following the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, boiled wheat will be blessed and distributed at the Lenten Covered Dish.

OUR STEWARDSHIP - February 15 2026	
Candles:	**$ 63.00**
Tithely Offering:	**558.25**
Sunday Tray Offering:	**1,540.00**
TOTAL:	**$2,161.25**

REMEMBERING THOSE SERVING IN THE ARMED FORCES

Subdeacon Anthony Freude, son of Fr Don and Popadia Donna
Egor Cravcenco, son of Serghei and Ludmila Cravcenco
Kristopher Barnhart, son of Diego and Chanelle

REMEMBER OUR SICK AND SHUT-INS

Metropolitan Onuphry of the Ukraine
Metropolitan Theodosy of the Ukraine
Metropolitan Arseny of the Ukraine
Archbishop Benjamin
Archbishop Nathaniel
Archpriest Emil Huntyan
Matushka Laryssa Hnntyan
Mitred Archpriest Daniel Kovalak
Matushka Myra Kovalak
Priest Gabriel Bilas
Matushka Christine Zebren
Matushka Valerie Zahersky
Florence Lambo
Michele Lambo
Mary Magensky
Sarah Nigilo
Melissa Trace
Frances Hakim
Louis Hakim
Joey Gresh
Halina Woroncow
Joseph Taylor
Ellen Rees
David Elioff
Sofia Wsevolodov
Gary Thompson
Phyllis Dodovic

Journey to Pascha with the Psalms!

This year, we will continue an annual tradition at St. Elia since 2008 of praying the Psalms together as a parish community during Lent. It's an opportunity for us to draw nearer to Christ and one another during the fast, as we journey toward Holy Pascha. The Orthodox Church has traditionally divided the book of Psalms into 20 sections. In our St. Elia prayer group, we will all pray a new section each day throughout the 40 days of Lent, beginning on **February 23**, so that we will pray through the entire book of Psalms twice during As we all join in praying the Psalms, we can use this opportunity to pray for one another, for our parish, and for any special intentions that any of us may have by sharing prayer requests with one another via email. Additionally, you will receive Lenten reflections throughout the fast via email with quotes from the saints and other edifying material.

To participate, all you need is a Bible and a little bit of time to set aside each day. You can join in by going to http://saintelia.com/news/lenten-prayer-group/ and filling in the online form. Shortly before Great Lent begins on February 23, you will receive an email with a schedule of which Psalms to pray each day and the names of everyone else who is participating in the prayer group, so that we can remember one another in our daily prayers.

May the Lord bless us as we pray the Psalms together, and may He draw us nearer to Himself and to one another during this Lent. Have a blessed 40 days!