

# SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church Newsletter

Volume 21, Issue 8

August 2021

## July Council Highlights

- ✘ June's Operating Income was \$16,097.76 and Operating Expenses were \$13,825.57 resulting in a positive operating income of \$2,272.19 for the month.
- ✘ Annual Blessing of Students and Teachers will take place on Sunday, August 29<sup>th</sup>.
- ✘ The Parish Council will not be meeting in August.



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## Samuel the Prophet

**The prophet Samuel is introduced to us in Scripture in a unique way. He is not yet a prophet the first time we read about him.**

Jeremiah is given a prophecy to deliver in the first chapter of the book named for him. Hosea receives a prophetic message in the second verse of his book. Isaiah's prophetic vision is described in the very first verse of the Book of Isaiah. We are told little about the childhoods or families of any of these prophets.

Samuel, by contrast, is introduced not with prophecy but as a child who serves the priest Eli. We are told a lot about him. We know the names of his parents, Hannah and Elkanah, and that Elkanah was a loving husband. We know that the long-childless Hannah endured scorn from Elkanah's other wife, who did have children. We are given details of Hannah's devoted motherhood after the joyously welcomed birth of her son. She dedicates him to the Temple.

Samuel's closeness to Eli at



such an impressionable age, and his subservient position, make it difficult for him to do one of the things God asks of him. The Lord reveals to Samuel His plans to punish Eli for "the iniquity which he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them" (I Samuel/I Kingdoms 3: 13). Though he is afraid to do so, Samuel must reveal this plan to Eli.

In adulthood, Samuel bears other difficult responsibilities. He must console and encourage the Israelites as they fight the Philistines and are defeated time and again. When God instructs him to anoint Saul as king, Samuel obeys but then must stand by and watch Saul fall ever deeper into jealous rage against the young, charismatic and very able David.

This terrible jealousy leads Saul to try to kill David, and the young man flees to Samuel for refuge. The two go together to Naioth in Ramah, but someone betrays their whereabouts to Saul and he sends messengers to hunt David

down. But the atmosphere around Samuel is so holy that the messengers "prophesy" or, in other words, are overwhelmed by the presence of God. Saul sends two more groups of messengers, and the same thing happens to them.

Finally Saul goes himself to kill David. But like the messengers he is overwhelmed and "prophesies." Saul is too far gone in his hatred to be redeemed by this experience. But it shows how close Samuel has become to God and how strongly other people are affected by being in the divine presence that surrounds him.

Samuel's influence is so great that even after he dies, Saul can't do without him. The Philistines are once again gathering their troops to make war on Israel, and the terrified Saul asks a medium to call Samuel from the dead so the prophet can advise him.

This weird episode shows Saul's mad desperation. But it also shows the lasting power of a godly prophet like Samuel, who was "lent to the Lord" by his mother as a tiny child.

# Message from Our Rector

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The month of August is always a month of transitions: summer travel and vacations are coming to an end, students are returning to school, and our work and the organizations in which we are involved are taking up their routine, more active schedules, rush hour traffic is becoming heavier, etc. This is true of parish life as well. In a sense, of course, parish life never changes. Month in and month out, we continually observe our regular cycle of life and worship. However, as we enter the month of August, we do so with the sense that parish programs are about to restart, the attendance at the Divine Services are about to return to the normal level of attendance, and the calendar will once again be filled with various types of parish activities. And it is appropriate that we look to returning to the regular rhythm and routine of our community life in the month in which we celebrate some significant feasts.

We begin the month of August by observing the Dormition Fast, the two-week period (August 1-15) leading up to the celebration of the Dormition of the Theotokos on August 15<sup>th</sup>. This fast offers us the opportunity for a spiritual focus as we prepare to honor the Holy Theotokos who, at the end of her earthly life, entered the glories of the Kingdom which was proclaimed by her Divine Son. We ask her continued intercession and protection as we prayerfully prepare for her special feast.



About halfway into the Dormition Fast we celebrate the Great Feast of the Lord's Transfiguration. In this feast we proclaim the Gospel which relates the story of the Lord being transfigured, revealing His glory, on Mount Tabor in the presence of the Holy Apostles Peter, James, and John. This year, August 6 falls on a Sunday, allowing even those who might not be able to participate in a weekday Divine Liturgy to share in the spiritual blessings which this special feast of the Lord brings.

On the feast of the Transfiguration the Church blesses the first-fruits of the harvest both as a giving back to the Lord what is His and has come from Him (1 Chronicles 29:14) and as a celebration of the promise of the final transfiguration of all things in Christ. The Divine Light glimpsed by the Apostles on Mount Tabor will transform all creation to its most perfect flowering and fruitfulness.

In Constantinople and throughout the Greek world grapes were placed on a table in the center of the temple and offered and blessed at the end of the Divine Liturgy and then partaken of by the faithful. In Russia, it became popular to bless apples on this feast. Over time this blessing was extended as other first-fruits were brought to be offered and blessed. The *Trebnik* (*Euchologion* or *Book of Needs*) offers several different prayers, one of which is offered here:

### Prayer for the Blessing of First-Fruits

*O Lord God Jesus Christ, You said to Your disciples: "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it*

*will be yours." We now humbly beseech You, bless + and sanctify these first-fruits which Your faithful servants have brought into Your temple today. Preserve the life and health of all those who partake of them, those who are present here and those who absent. Grant that these blessed first-fruits be an effective medicine for those who are sick and ailing, and a protection against the assaults of the enemy for those who keep them in their homes. May all those who partake of them enjoy the fullness of Your goodness and blessing. For You, O Christ God, are our true nourishment and the Giver of all that is good, and we send up glory to You, together with Your Father, Who is without beginning, and with Your all-holy, good, and live-giving Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.*

Also, each year on August 9<sup>th</sup>, we commemorate Saint Herman, our own "American saint," who, although born in Russia, achieved holiness as he worked out his salvation in Russian Alaska. The first of the saints to be glorified in North America, Saint Herman's life and example provides us with a deep insight into how we live our Orthodox faith as Christians in a multi-cultural society. Our temple is blessed with a beautiful icon of Saint Herman as a reminder of his intercession for the Church in this land as well as to reminder of the missionary efforts which brought the Orthodox Faith to North America. May we, as Orthodox Christians in America and heirs to this missionary legacy, continue to share the work of proclaiming the Gospel in this land.

With love in the Lord,

*+Bishop Daniel*

# Ordination of Subdeacon Rodion to the Diaconate



# A Floating Axe-head

Fr. Lawrence Farley

It is very easy to miss the story of the floating axe-head. Indeed, a book containing stories in 2 Kings that I found in a theological library which should have included that story in 2 Kings 6:1-7 completely omits it. The book comments on the story immediately before the story of the floating axe-head, and the story which immediately follows it, but entirely omits the story of the floating axe-head itself. The author of the commentary evidently considered the story of the floating axe-head too weird or too insignificant to be included in his commentary. An iron axe-head flew off its handle

while the followers of Elisha were cutting trees near the Jordan River to build a place for themselves to live, and the axe-head sunk into the depth of the Jordan River. When the owner of the axe complained to Elisha, "Alas, my master! It was borrowed!", Elisha cut a stick of wood, cast it into the Jordan, and the iron axe-head floated to the surface where it was recovered. Whatever. The prophet did a miracle. What else is new?

It never seemed to occur to the author of the commentary to ask what the story meant in its day, or why it was included in the extended narrative of 2 Kings, much less what it might mean in our day. The author seems to have assumed that it was only written down for its "wow" factor—the prophet Elisha made an iron axe-head float. Wow. Cool. Largely meaningless, but cool.

In this story, as in most of the Old Testa-

ment stories, cultural context is everything. Elisha and his band of prophets lived in a day when their message of pure Yahwism and the necessity of rejecting the syncretistic worship of Baal and other gods, was unpopular. The king said that the worship of Baal and other gods was part of a generous, large-hearted, ecumenism, but Elisha and his prophetic commune knew otherwise. Combining the worship of Baal with the worship of Yahweh, they said, was not generous large-hearted ecumenism, but simply apostasy, a betrayal of Yahweh who insisted that He alone be worshipped by His people. Turning to Baal or to other gods was not spiritual generosity, but idolatry, an adulterous defection from the God who led Israel out of Egypt and entered into a covenant with them on Mount Sinai. Elisha and his band of prophets were therefore profoundly unpopular in Israel, and were under constant threat.

They lived together in a kind of commune or monastic skete. As their numbers grew, they needed to build so that they could survive. They decided therefore to go to the banks of the Jordan River (then heavily forested) to cut logs to build a place where they could find stability and peace. As one of their number lifted up his axe to cut the logs, the axe-head flew from the handle and vanished into the depths of the Jordan River.

This was no small catastrophe. In those days, Israel was technologically inferior to the surrounding nations, and an iron implement such as an axe-head was in-

valuable. Losing it then was not like losing an axe-head now, when we can simply go to the hardware store and buy another axe. In Elisha's day, it was less like losing a replaceable tool, and more like totalling a friend's borrowed Lamborghini: the cost of replacing it was prohibitive, and in Elisha's day would have involved the borrower possibly selling himself into slavery to pay for the loss. As well as causing an immediate work stoppage and a failure to build the required place for the prophets, the borrower would have also forfeited his future. No wonder the one who lost the axe-head cried out, "Alas, my master! For it was borrowed!" For all intents and purposes, his life was now over.

Elisha remained serene, trusting in Yahweh. He cut a piece of wood and threw it into the Jordan River, and at once the iron axe-head floated to the top of the river where it was recovered. The man's life was saved, and the building could continue.

What did this miracle mean? In its original context, this miracle revealed that if Israel would hearken to the word of Elisha and the prophets, Israel could remain at peace, safe from the threat of invasion, disaster, and captivity. Elisha and the prophets proclaimed that Israel must reject the worship of Baal and the other gods, and cling to Yahweh alone. If Israel would hearken to Elisha when he told them to shun idolatry as the man hearkened to Elisha when he told them

*(Continued on page 5)*

*"Come, Elisha the prophet, and tell us plainly: What was the wood that you threw into the water? 'It was the Cross of Christ, which draws us up the depths of corruption and we venerate it with faith forever!'"*

*"Fathers and mothers: Go and lead your child by the hand into the church."*

*— St. John Chrysostom*

# A Floating Axe-head (cont'd)

(Continued from page 4)

to cast a stick of wood into the Jordan River, all would be well. If Israel hearkened to the prophetic word and shunned idolatry, they could avoid invasion from foreign armies and national disaster, but if they continued along the path of idolatry, foreign nations would invade and destroy them, and they would be taken away as slaves and into foreign captivity (as eventually happened, when they ignored the words of the prophets). If they obeyed the word of Elisha, they could continue to build a home for themselves and grow and remain secure—even as the followers of Elisha did after building with the logs they took from the banks of the Jordan. This was the original message of the floating axe-head. The story was not simply about what it took for Elisha to build a place for his community, but what it would take for Israel to build a place for their future.

Christians continued to read this passage in the light of their experience of Christ. In particular, Christian exegetes asked the question, “Why did Elisha throw a stick of *wood* into the Jordan? Why did he not just throw another rock into it? Or dirt? Or why did he not just say, ‘Let the iron axe-head float?’ Why did he throw *anything* into the river?” The answer, of course, was the wood of the Cross. The wooden stick prefigured the Cross of Christ. This was not hard to figure out, and the writer of the canon for the Third Sunday in Great Lent, writing about the Cross of Christ, figured it out pretty quickly. One of the stichs on the eighth ode of that canon says, “Come, Elisha the prophet, and tell us plainly: What was the wood that you threw into the water? ‘It was the Cross of Christ, which draws us up the depths of corruption and we venerate it with faith forever!’”

Just as the iron axe-head floated into defiance of the laws of nature and arose from the depths of the Jordan River, so we also, in defiance of the laws of nature, shall arise from the depths of the grave at resurrection of the dead. After the depths of the Jordan swallowed up the axe-head, it should have remained in those watery depths forever. In the same way, the abyss of death will one day swallow us all up, and there can no escape from its depths. But since the wood of the cross has been cast into the depths of death, the laws of nature will work backward, and we will arise from the depths of corruption. The wood makes all the difference: it makes un-floatable iron to float, and it makes mortal bodies to arise immortal.

This story of seven brief verses, buried in the long narrative of 2 Kings, has immense significance for all of us who face the certainty of death. Death will one day swallow us up, and the grave will close over us, even as the waters of the Jordan closed over the sinking axe-head in the days of Elisha. Well may we cry, “Alas!” as did the owner of the axe! But the wood of the Cross makes all the difference. It made the iron axe-head to float, in defiance of nature’s laws, and the Church has never forgotten it. The Lord Himself promised the same thing: “He who believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live” (John 11:25). And His Church has never ceased to proclaim the same miracle of us rising from the depths of corruption: every year the Church exults and sings, “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!”

Reprinted from the Orthodox Church in America web site, <https://www.oca.org/reflections/fr.-lawrence-farley/a-floating-axe-head>✠

## BLESSING OF VEHICLES

It is our parish custom to bless vehicles on the Sunday nearest to the Feast of the Holy Prophet Elijah. He was taken up into Heaven in a fiery chariot! Therefore, we bless our modes of transportation on his feast-day with the hope of safe travels.



## Bits . . .

**THE SCHOOL SUPPLIES OUTREACH** was a big success. Thirty-three parishioner families donated a total of \$2,410. Total expenditures for the supplies were \$1,742, leaving an unspent surplus of \$668 which will be held in the church account for use in the Nativity outreach program. The excess funds were driven by fewer 3<sup>rd</sup> graders than anticipated, and our purchase of wholesale backpacks at \$7 each rather than our traditional Costco pack at \$20. Forty-two backpacks loaded with supplies were donated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders at Whittier Elementary school on 16<sup>th</sup> street, along with several large boxes of extra supplies for the school to distribute



to the neediest students in any grade. The school Principal and teachers were highly appreciative, and the Principal asked for our prayers for her (Amy) and the whole student body. Thanks and blessings to all who donated.

**CHRISTMAS OUTREACH** We had been planning to adopt the entire 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at Whittier Elementary for this outreach. However, the Principal suggested that she have the school's social worker identify the neediest students, regardless of grade level. The total student population is about 450, with 72% (about 325) considered "economically disadvantaged". We are hopeful to adopt 20% of these (65 students). You will know the age & grade level of students for whom you buy gifts, but not their name (per state regulations). We will ask students to complete a form expressing their wishes for a gift.

We will begin the call for donations and adoptions early (November), so we can gauge how many students we can adopt. Please open your hearts for this needy cause, as you have in the past.

**THE BOOKSTORE** is fully restocked with many new titles! And, if we don't have what you are looking for, make sure to visit our parish library located in the conference room.



**COFFEE HOUR CLEANUP** We still need individuals to volunteer for this important function. Signup sheets are on a front table in the hall. Please do your part.

### FROM THE FATHERS

*"In children we have a great charge committed to us. Let us bestow great care upon them, and do everything that the Evil One may not rob us of them. But now our practice is the reverse of this. We take all care indeed to have our farm in good order, and to commit it to faithful manager, we look out for it an ass-driver, and muleteer, and bailiff, and a clever accompant. But we do not look out for what is much more important, for a person to whom we may commit our son as the guardian of his morals, though this is a possession much more valuable than all others. It is for him indeed that we take such care of our estate. We take care of our possessions for our children, but of the children themselves we take no care at all. Form the soul of thy son aright, and all the rest will be added hereafter."*

— St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Timothy*, Homily 9.

## Around SS Peter & Paul

### AUGUST BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

August 1	Peter Radjenovich Barbara Peterson Joe & Jane Matthews
7	Thomas Sims
8	Yana Molodova
13	Boris & Carrie Niegoda
15	William Osolinsky
19	Dan & Trish Sieckman
20	Elias Taliaferro
25	Juliana Delsante

### CONGRATULATIONS AND MANY YEARS

It is with great excitement that we announce the ordination of Subdeacon Rodion Pfeiffer to the Holy Diaconate on Sunday, July 11, 2021. May the Lord bless him as he begins this new life of ordained ministry and grant him and Matushka Elizabeth (Heather) wisdom, strength, health, and many blessings! Axios!



### PRAYER LIST

We offer prayers to all of our parishioners who are ill or unable to attend services:

+Metropolitan Herman  
Stephen Bock  
Jamie Arango  
Antonia Adams-Clement  
Rose Kurowski  
Tammy Horton  
Frank (Kirill) Bolton

*May Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Physician of our souls and bodies, reach out his healing hand and bless these, His servants.*

If you know anyone else in need of our prayers, please contact Bishop Daniel.

**Mnogaya Leta! Many Years!**

# . . . and Pieces

## CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD (CGS)

We are happy to announce that our Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program for 3-6 year old children (preschool- kindergarten) will be resuming this fall. CGS is a Montessori-based, senatorial approach to religious education. Because it's so different from most traditional Sunday school programs, we have found that it's helpful for both parents and students to participate in orientation. If you plan to have your child participate in this weekly program, please see Lesley Zaremba to schedule an orientation for both you and your child(ren) during coffee hour in the coming weeks. We look forward to seeing you!

## THE BLESSING OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

will be held on Sunday, August 29<sup>th</sup> at the end of Divine Liturgy. The annual blessing marks the beginning of the Church School Year. It will be followed by an Ice Cream Social and Scavenger Hunt for students. We encourage all students and teachers to be there.

## PUNCTUALITY AND THE DIVINE SERVICES

"Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." These words mark the beginning of the Divine Liturgy and invite us to enter into the Kingdom of God as we celebrate the Divine Mysteries. Please make an effort to be present at the beginning of the Liturgy so that you may have time for quiet prayer before the Liturgy begins and are present for the entire celebration of the Liturgy. People very rarely arrive late for business meetings, for movies, for dinner parties, etc. Prompt arrival for the Liturgy even more important, for when we come to Church our "appointment" is with none other than the Lord Himself.

## SUMMER AIR CONDITIONING REMINDER

When running the Hall's A/C remember to keep all doors closed and return thermostats to their original setting after use. Run away A/Cs costs SS Peter and Paul . . . and you!

**FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION** This feast commemorates our Lord's transfiguration before his disciples on Mt. Tabor. In His Transfiguration He reveals His glory to the disciples. In Him they (and we) now see for themselves the glory of God present in the person of Christ. Vespers for the feast will be Thursday evening, August 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm and then Friday, August 6<sup>th</sup>, Divine Liturgy at 9:00am. followed by the blessing of fruit.

## FRY'S COMMUNITY REWARDS

Did you know you can support SS Peter & Paul E Orthodox Church just by shopping at Fry's? It's easy when you enroll in Fry's Community Rewards!

You may already be a Fry's "loyalty" customer with an online account, and you probably use your card, key tag, telephone number, or Fry's app every time you shop. Great! Now go to [www.frysfood.com](http://www.frysfood.com) ... and don't worry, if you don't have a Fry's online account, you can create one in no time.

Here's what to do:

1. Go to [www.frysfood.com](http://www.frysfood.com).
2. Click on SIGN IN.
3. Enter your email and password, click on SIGN IN.
4. Click on your name (top right corner), then under ACCOUNT DASHBOARD, scroll down to COMMUNITY REWARDS.
5. Click on CHANGE ORGANIZATION or ENROLL under COMMUNITY REWARDS.
6. Under FIND YOUR ORGANIZATION enter our NPO number MS646 OR SS PETER & PAUL E ORTHODOX CHURCH and then select SEARCH.
7. Under SELECT YOUR ORGANIZATION click on the circle next to your organization.
8. Click on ENROLL.

Now SS PETER & PAUL E ORTHODOX CHURCH is attached to your account as your Community Rewards charity of choice! Every time you shop you'll be earning rebates for our church!

**THE FOCA** is in the process of trying to obtain tickets for the Phoenix Rising Soccer team's game on Saturday, October 23. Once we obtain details we will be letting everyone know. This is open to all members of the congregation.

Also, mark your calendars for the 2nd Annual Tailgate Party on Sunday, October 31<sup>st</sup>. Vladyka has given the ok to wear team shirts to church again. Further details will be forthcoming.



The FOCA is also selling Nativity night lights (\$5) and cross votive holders with LED candle (\$5).



**WELCOME** all visitors to SS Peter & Paul. We hope your visit was enriching and enlightening. Please join us in the Cultural Center, behind the church, for our Fellowship Hour. It's a chance to meet some of our members, other visitors, and enjoy some coffee and fellowship.

**GUESTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!** You are always encouraged to bring guests to our services, whether Orthodox, Christians of the various denominations, non-Christians, as well as those who hold no particular belief. Indeed, bringing guests, especially those who are not part of any other Christian community, is a part of our ongoing outreach and evangelization. However, it is also encouraged to prepare them for their visit by letting them know what to expect. You can help them feel comfortable by explaining to them the Orthodox practice concerning the reception of Holy Communion. It's very simple: The reception of Holy Communion is reserved to those who are baptized and chrismated members of the Orthodox Church who have prepared themselves by fasting, prayer, participation in the divine services, and a timely Confession.

# August 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1 Procession of the Lifegiving Cross Beginning of Dormition Fast 9:00am Divine Liturgy</p> <p><b>FOCA Meeting</b></p>	2	3	4	5 Forefeast Transfiguration  6:00pm Vespers	6 <b>Transfiguration of Our Lord</b> 9:00am Divine Liturgy <i>Blessing of Fruit</i>	7  5:00pm Vespers
8 9:00am Divine Liturgy <b>MBAS Meeting</b>	9 Apostle Matthias Ven. Herman of Alaska, Wonderworker & Equal-to-the-Apostles	10  <b>NO COUNCIL MEETING</b>	11	12	13 Leavetaking Transfiguration St. Tikhon of Zadonsk	14 Forefeast Dormition  5:00pm Vespers
15 <b>Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos</b> 9:00am Divine Liturgy <i>Blessing of Flowers</i>	16 "Image of Christ Not-made-by-hands"	17	18	19	20 Hieromartyr Alexander Holovitsky	21  5:00pm Vespers
<p><b>We welcome all of our guests and visitors. Please join us in the Cultural Center for Fellowship Hour following Divine Liturgy each Sunday.</b></p>						
22 9:00am Divine Liturgy	23 Leavetaking Dormition	24	25	26 Vladimir Icon	27	28 Ven. Job of Pochaev  5:00pm Vespers
<p><b>Blessing of Students and Teachers Sunday, August 29, 2021</b> <i>Followed by Ice Cream Social and Scavenger Hunt for students.</i></p> 						
29 Beheading of St. John the Baptist 9:00am Divine Liturgy <b>BLESSING OF STUDENTS &amp; TEACHERS</b> <b>ICE CREAM SOCIAL &amp; SCAVENGER HUNT</b>	30 Afterfeast Beheading of the Forerunner St. Alexander Nevsky	31	1 Church New Year Ven. Simeon the Stylite	2	3	4  5:00pm Vespers
<p><b>FOCA Meeting Sunday, September 5, 2021</b> <b>Following Divine Liturgy</b> <b>All are welcome!</b></p>						

