

SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church

Volume 15, Issue 10

October 2015

September Council Highlights

- ✘ August's Operating Income was \$15,035.13 while Operating Expenses were \$14,885.61, resulting in a net positive income of \$149.52 for the month, and \$134.72 year-to-date.
- ✘ Storm damage included 3 downed trees, broken concrete fence, and water leaking from center dome.
- ✘ Book Club will meet the first and third Tuesdays of the month, beginning in October.



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Count Others as Better Than Yourself

October 28 is the feast day of one of the great saints of the Church in Russia: Dimitri of Rostov. He was born in Kiev in 1651, the son of a regimental lieutenant.

Named Daniel at birth, the young boy showed a gift for languages, and great intellectual ability. He studied hard, and loved to spend time in quiet prayer or talking with others about God. So at the age of 17 he entered a monastery, and as time went on he was asked to preach at various churches and monasteries because of the excellence of his sermons. These were especially important because many less-educated Orthodox were not strong in their faith. Dimitri was able to present Orthodoxy in clear, understandable terms.

The Metropolitan of Kiev decided that a good way to strengthen Orthodox believers in their faith was to provide an inspiring life story of a saint for each day of the year. The saints' lives needed to be col-



lected, assembled in their proper daily order, and put into simple language. For this huge task the Metropolitan chose Dimitri, who was then abbot of the Baturin Monastery

in northern Ukraine. Dimitri would work on the Lives of the Saints for the next twenty years.

Some years later, Dimitri was appointed Metropolitan of Siberia by the Emperor Peter. But because his health was delicate, he knew he could not live in Siberia's harsher climate. So he was assigned instead to succeed the aging Metropolitan of Rostov.

Saint Dimitri continued to explain the teachings of the Orthodox Church in writing and in sermons. He used his own money to build a school in Rostov, visited and cared for the sick and needy, and counseled those who sought his guidance.

But he never stopped trying to come closer to God, and he was aware of the effort it takes. In one prayer he wrote:

"Open, O doors and bolts of my heart, that Christ the King of Glory may enter!" Saint Dimitri recognized the "doors and bolts" on his heart that we all have. He knew they can keep Christ out if we do not struggle to undo them and let Him in.

During this week (November 1) we read Saint Paul's admonition to the Philippians: "... in humility count others better than yourselves" (2:3). When Saint Dimitri knew he was near death (though others thought him perfectly healthy) he invited a monk who had been helpful to him to sit and talk. The monk was astonished when Dimitri bowed low before him and thanked him for his assistance. He asked Dimitri, "Why do you bow to me, the least of servants?" But Dimitri merely thanked him again with a humble bow.

The next day the saint was found dead, still kneeling in prayer. When the monks went to gather his things, they found only a few simple items of clothing and some books. Saint Dimitri had given away everything else. As always, he had counted others as greater than himself.

Message from Our Rector

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Looking through my files, I see that my monthly message for October 2014 highlighted the fact that we were preparing to host the annual Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of the West. In that message, I noted that, particularly special to the 2014 Assembly, we were pleased to welcome not only our own Archpastor, Archbishop BENJAMIN, but also the Primate of The Orthodox Church in America, His Beatitude Metropolitan TIKHON. In addition to these hierarchs, we also welcomed over one hundred lay and clergy delegates and observers from throughout the Diocese of the West—clergy and faithful from our own corner of the Diocese here in the Desert Southwest, to the Pacific Northwest and even from Hawaii.



In remembering and reflecting upon that special week, we must acknowledge what a blessing it was for our parish! From the Divine Liturgy celebrated in a full church with a clergy choir, to the business sessions, to the meals, to the fellowship time spent meeting new people and reacquainting ourselves with those we have known throughout the years—those days were filled with many moments that created wonderful memories.

Most of you will recall the several meetings and the behind-the-scenes activities that went on in the preceding weeks to make the 2014 Diocesan Assembly the memorable and successful event that it was. A lot of hard

work went into welcoming our guests—but that hard work and time were more than rewarded. And those rewards and blessings came to us because what we did was not merely about hard work or enthusiasm. Indeed, everything the members of our parish community did to welcome our guests was inspired by the loving care and hospitality that we offer all our guests

at all times, week after week, month after month, throughout the year. Just as during the Diocesan Assembly, we always welcome each and every guest into our parish home with love and with open arms—we welcome them as we welcome the Lord Himself.

Over the summer months and in recent weeks, we have welcomed new members as well as returning members to our parish family. In speaking with several of them, I know that the loving and enthusiastic hospitality you have shown has made them feel welcomed and, indeed, valued and appreciated as members of our parish. My prayer is that the spirit of hospitality, that spirit of welcoming guests and new members as we would the Lord Himself, will always remain at the forefront of our effort to share the Gospel Message as we live and celebrate it here at Saints Peter and Paul Church.

With love in the Lord,

+ Bishop Daniel

From the Fathers . . .

"Merely to hear the word of God saves no one and is instead a condemnation.

After hearing, one must do."

—Blessed Theophylact



"You should always say your prayers with tireless diligence, as the Apostle directs, saying: 'Continue in prayer and watch in the same' (Col. 4:2). For humble patience, tirelessness and persistence in prayer conquer the unconquerable God and incline Him to mercy."

—Lorenzo Scupoli
Unseen Warfare



"If a man really sets his heart upon the will of God, God will enlighten a little child to tell that man what is His will. But if a man does not truly desire the will of God, even if he goes in search of a prophet, God will put into the heart of the prophet a reply like the deception in his own heart."

—St. Dorotheos of Gaza



"I have often repented of having spoken, but never of having been silent."

—Abba Arsenius

“Hard Sayings” Indeed!

Fr. Steven Kostoff

“If ninety-nine of us are good and saintly but one of our brothers or sisters is far from our solace and support, in sin and darkness, be sure that God is not among us ninety-nine, but He has gone to find our brother whom we have lost and forgotten.”—Saint Nikolai Velimirovic (+1956)

These deeply Gospel-inspired words are clearly based on Christ’s short parable, that of the Lost Sheep, found in Luke 15:3-7. This is the first of three parables that the Lord directs against the pharisees who objected to Christ sharing table fellowship with “tax collectors and sinners.” This parable is followed by that of the Lost Coin (15:8-10) and the incomparable parable of the Prodigal Son (15:11-32). These three parables all share a single theme: God will seek out the lost at all costs. And that, in turn, is the Gospel. From God’s perspective, “no one is left behind.” From our human perspective, to live among the “righteous” and to avoid sinners is not only easy, but something to be sought after. Yet, that is not how life is ordered—now or at any time in the past. Although loved by God, that one brother or sister lost in sin and darkness may today be described as one of our (many?) enemies. And these “enemies” come in various forms and represent various things that are unlikeable or even distasteful to us today—a member of a political party that we do not trust or with whom we hardly ever agree any given issue; a proponent of an ideology we consider warped and danger-

ous; an adherent of a religion with beliefs and practices that we cannot comprehend and which “on the inside” we fear and detest. The sin and darkness we find in the other person can be real or it can be imaginary, simply the result of our perspective, if not prejudice. Then again, there are many human beings who are clearly lost in “sin and darkness.” Such human beings do things that

“Being a Christian is about striving toward that high calling of the Gospel. Keeping in mind that God will always seek the lost sheep may prove to lead us along that same path.”

are both horrible and harmful. They must be avoided and they must be stopped from their evil activities. Such is life in a world in which good and evil co-exist.

Yet, if Saint Nikolai is properly interpreting Christ’s parable, then we must understand that according to the Lord, such persons are still loved by God “Who desires that all men be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). And they are still loved even if they do not come to this “knowledge of the truth,” tragic as that may prove to be. And further, if Saint Nikolai is correct, then what he says is not sentimental, but an expression of the boundless love of God that knows no

limits: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave His only-begotten Son so that those who believe in Him should not perish, but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). There is no sentimentality in the Cross, so when the Father “gave” His Son to the world that He loved, that meant that Christ had to embrace the Cross to fully reveal God’s love for us. “You were bought with a price,” the Apostle Paul reminds us (1 Corinthians 6:20).

The words of Saint Nikolai are closely related to a passage from the new book of Frederica Mathewes-Green, *Welcome to the Orthodox Church*. In fact, I discovered the above passage from Saint Nikolai in her book, immediately following what she wrote on the subject of God’s love: “The idea is to love the world, even though it hates you. That is what Christ did, and what He can do in you. Progress in the spiritual life is literally growth in communion and union with Christ, and He has loved every human being in the whole history of the world” (p. 81). This teaching was beautifully confirmed by Saint Silouan of Mount Athos, a rather recently glorified/canonized saint of the Church who died in 1938. Living a life of silence and prayer on Mount Athos—the holy mountain—Saint Silouan, in his teaching, said, “The soul cannot know peace unless she prays for her enemies.... The Lord taught me to love my enemies. Without the grace of God we cannot love our enemies. Only the Holy Spirit teaches love, and then even devils arouse our pity because they have fallen from good, and lost humility in God.... If you will pray for your

(Continued on page 6)

Two Confessors of Romania

On October 21 the Church commemorates two men who lived in 18th-century Romania. Saint Sophronius and Saint Bessarion Sarai are called "confessors" for the faith.

"Confessor" refers to someone who witnesses to the faith but is not directly killed, or martyred, for doing so. Many confessors, like Sophronius and Bessarion Sarai, still suffered greatly. Both men, by example, encouraged other Orthodox to resist powerful efforts to make them deny their ancestral faith and become Roman Catholics.



Saint Bessarion Sarai, Serbian by birth, was born in 1714. After traveling to the Holy Land and being tonsured a monk in his mid-twenties, he returned to his homeland and lived in a remote cave. His prayer was so deep and sincere that he was granted the grace to work miracles.

But like others who hoped to spend their lives in solitary prayer, his gifts were needed for the larger Church. The Romanian regions of Transylvania and Banat had seen the forcible union of numerous Orthodox to the Roman Catholic Church. Hearing of Bessarion's holy life, the regional Patriarch summoned him, ordained him, and sent him to teach and defend the faith in the troubled area.

Bessarion obediently set out for Banat, where the Orthodox gladly gathered around this solitary monk who turned out to be an exceptional preacher, effectively reminding them that their Orthodox faith was a gift

handed down to them through generations. He was able to bring large numbers of people back to the Church.

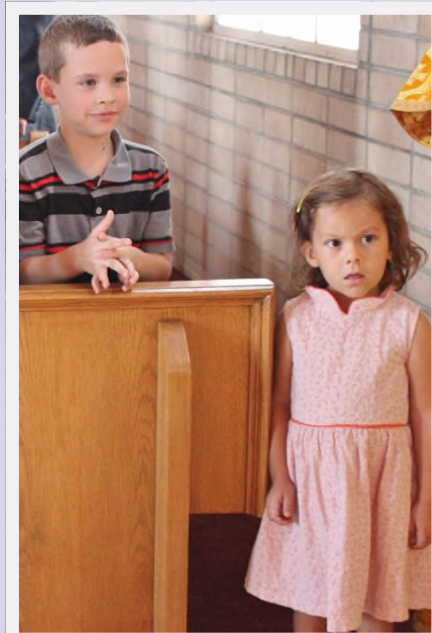
But Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, a staunch Catholic (and, incidentally, mother of Marie Antoinette), was keenly interested in Banat. She had colonized it with German farmers who profited from its mineral wealth, and didn't want the local Orthodox stirring up trouble. So while Bessarion was traveling to visit his flock in 1774, he was arrested by the Austrian army and imprisoned in Vienna on her orders. Some months later he died in a dank cell.

Saint Sophronius, a contemporary of Bessarion but Romanian by birth, also loved the quiet life of prayer. He too was tonsured a monk, and established a small hermitage in the Romanian forest. As his monastery grew in size and reputation, other men joined him.

Sophronius shared Bessarion's concern that the Orthodox in Ardeal (the Romanian name for Transylvania) were being persecuted and pulled,

sometimes by force, into the Roman Catholic Church. Like Bessarion, Sophronius traveled to villages to encourage people to stand firm against Roman Catholic pressure. Unfazed by imprisonment and torture, he decided to deal with the problem in a more political way, calling the Orthodox together to demand that an Orthodox bishop be appointed and that Romanians receive equal treatment under the law. Sophronius' methods were effective, and once the demands had been met he was content to enter a monastery and spend the rest of his life there.

In today's reading from Ephesians 4: 25, Saint Paul urges each of us to "speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another." Finding themselves among Orthodox who were tempted and coerced to give up their faith, Saints Bessarion and So-



A Look Back at September



Bishop Daniel addresses students and teachers to mark the beginning of the school year.



“Hard Sayings” Indeed! (cont’d)

(Continued from page 3)

enemies, peace will come to you; but when you can love your enemies— know that a great measure of the grace of God dwells in you, though I do not say perfect grace as yet, but sufficient for salvation. Whereas if you revile your enemies, it means there is an evil spirit living in you and bringing evil thoughts into your heart for, in the words of the Lord, ‘Out of your heart proceed evil thoughts or good thoughts.... If you cannot love, then at least do not revile or curse your enemies, and things will already be better, but if a man curses



and abuses his enemies, it is plain that an evil spirit lives in him, and if he does not repent, when he dies he will go to the place where evil spirits dwell. May the Lord preserve every soul from such adversity.... Thus our thought must be that all should be saved. The soul sorrows for her enemies and prays for them because they have strayed from the truth and their faces are set towards hell. That is love for our enemies. When Judas bethought him to betray the Lord, the Lord was stirred to pity and showed him what he was doing. Thus must we, too, be gentle

with those who err and stray, and we shall be saved by God’s mercy” [*Saint Silouan the Athonite* by Archimandrite Sophrony, pp. 376-378].

These are “hard sayings,” indeed. In fact, such teaching may seem unrealistic within the chaotic and dangerous world in which we live. Yet the Gospel is always leading us toward a “higher way,” one experienced by the saints— flesh and blood human beings such as we are—and thus “possible” even though it may seem to be “impossible.” Being a Christian is about striving toward that high calling of the Gospel. Keeping in mind that God will always seek the lost sheep may prove to lead us along that same path.

Reprinted from the Orthodox Church in America we site, <http://oca.org/reflections/fr.-steven-kostoff/hard-sayings-indeed>✠

Around SS Peter & Paul

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

October 2 Walter and Vera Moschowsky
 3 Dusanka Marceti
 4 Christi Sourk
 10 Rose Koval
 13 Alexander Gala
 15 Eugenia (Gina) Mudrenko
 17 Rosemarie Osolinsky
 21 Svetlana & Arthur Fleenor
 23 Harold Homyak

**Many Years!
 Mnogaya Leta!**



PRAYER LIST

“I was sick and you visited me.”

Matt 25:36

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

Protodeacon Alexis
 Ann Garza
 Rose Koval
 Rose Kurowski
 Tillie (Tatiana) Kulek
 Larry Gardner
 Ted Demos
 Ann Carroll
 Vickie Mendez

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

Bits and Pieces

BOOK CLUB

The first of the biweekly (first and third Tuesday of each month) meetings of our new Book Club will be this Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. We will start with a group discussion led by Vladyka Daniel.

In the following meeting we will be using the bestselling (at least in the limited sphere of Orthodox literature) collection of tales from modern Russian Orthodoxy, "Everyday Saints and Other Stories." "Everyday Saints" relates a most enjoyable grouping of stories from contemporary Russia tied together by insights into God's everyday providence, sprinkled with humor worthy of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn. Please let Vladyka know if you desire to purchase a copy, it is also available as e-book from Amazon.



ROLL BAKE

One of the ways the MBAS pays for the work we do around the church and the items we purchase is through our roll bake. At our Sept meeting we voted to have the bake this year. The days we will be baking are as follows:

Tuesday, October 20
 Saturday, October 24
 Tuesday, November 3
 Tuesday, November 10
 Saturday, November 14
 Saturday, November 28

We rely on people outside of the MBAS to help us with making our rolls. If you are interested in helping us please see either Elizabeth Michel or Barbara Peterson. Your order can be given to Elena Kerr. The cut off for ordering rolls is Nov 8th.

BOOK STORE

If anyone would like Katrina to order Christmas cards please let her know. The bookstore carries a very limited supply on hand each year.

TEEN/YOUNG ADULT LEAGUE

A truly wonderful time was had as the teen and young adult league sponsored a volunteer opportunity at St. Vincent DePaul soup kitchen. This soup kitchen service anywhere from 600 to 800 meals daily to the homeless and in need near downtown Phoenix. The teen and young adult league felt fortunate to be a part of something that truly provides such support to our community!

In the next few weeks there will be a informational meeting for anyone interested in doing Project Mexico during summer 2016. The potential dates range from end of May through July. We can see what dates work best for everybody and decide from there.



There is no limit to the number of people that can come on this trip, so everyone is welcome and encouraged to come to this informational meeting. We will need adult chaperones as well as our wonderful youth!

A flyer will be handed out in the next week or so with the information for this initial informational Project Mexico meeting.

COFFEE HOUR

Coffee hour provides an opportunity for fellowship; a chance to catch up with old friends and make new friends. Please help support coffee hour. How? Consider making a cash donation to cover supplies, donating staples for coffee hour (we can always use peanut butter and jelly), or helping to clean up! For more ideas, check with Barbara Peterson. Let's all pitch in and help!



SHARING THE LOAD

Week after week, month after month, year after year, very dedicated parishioners have seen to the upkeep and maintenance of our parish property and facilities. Over the past year, we have started to share the load. A list of specific tasks, chores, jobs, and assignments has been prepared. Contact David Bieber and take a look and see the broad scope of the various tasks, consider your own talents, and sign up to help. We all share in the work of our parish... our commitment and responsibility to care for the blessings we have received in this parish is common to all of us. Also—as the saying goes: "Many hands make light work."

WELCOME

We 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

MYRRH BEARERS ALTAR SOCIETY

The Myrrh Bearers held their first meeting following the summer break on September 20th. Fourteen members were in attendance. We would like to extend an invitation to women of all ages to join us. Our meetings are usually on the second Sunday of the month. Our next meeting is October 11th.

FOCA

The Fellowship of Orthodox Christians will meet in the Cultural Center on Sunday, October 18 following Divine Liturgy. All are invited to attend.

CHOIR WORKSHOP

Matushka Mary will host a choir workshop on Saturday, October 10, 2015, time TBD. All are invited to attend. Please RSVP to Matushka Mary at maryabalmer@yahoo.com.

October 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>We welcome all of our guests and visitors. Please join us in the Cultural Center for Fellowship Hour following Divine Liturgy each Sunday.</p>				1 Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos	2	3 9:00am Baptism Sophia Seto 5:00pm Vespers
4 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School		6 St. Innocent, Metr. Of Moscow 7:00pm Book Club	7 Icon "Our Lady of Tenderness" at Pechersk	8	9 St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow	10 Akathist Icon at Zographou CHOIR WORKSHOP 5:00pm Vespers
11 Fathers of the 7 th Ecumenical Council 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School MBAS Meeting	12 Jerusalem and Kaluga Icons	13 6:00pm Council Meeting	14 	15	16	17 Icon 'Our Deliverance' 9:00am Baptism Maximus Lauro 5:00pm Vespers
18 Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School FOCA Meeting	19	20 ROLL BAKE 7:00pm Book Club	21	22 Kazan Icon	23	24 "Joy of All Who Sorrow" ROLL BAKE 5:00pm Vespers
25 8:30am Hours 9:00am Divine Liturgy Church School	26 Greatmartyr and Myrrhgusher Demetrius	27	28	29	30 Ozerianskaya Icon	31 5:00pm Vespers
<p>Holy Synod Meeting • October 19-23 • Detroit</p>						