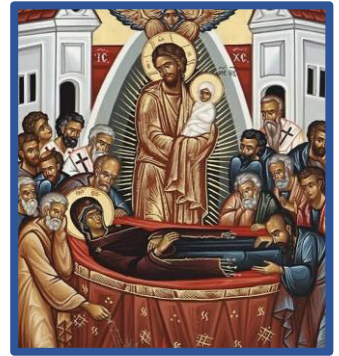


Saints Peter and Paul Church Council News

August – September 2026

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Priest's Corner

The Lord said to the Jews that came to Him: "Strive to enter the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able." And they will say: "Lord, Lord, open unto us;" and He shall answer and say unto them, "I know you not from whence you are." Then shall they begin to say: "Lord, we have eaten and drunk in your presence and Thou hast taught in our streets." But He shall say: "I tell you, I know not from whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity." (Lk 13: 24-27)

We live in a world today, which has lost its moral compass. A world on the verge of being guided and, possibly even, controlled - not by conscience, but by artificial "intelligence." A world, in which Christianity is being persecuted both openly and covertly. We see before us the erosion of everything we hold dear as being moral, natural and normal. It is tragically ironic, that in a nation, whose motto is "In God We Trust" - it appears that God has very little to do with the manner in which laws are passed or policy is set. Do we not incur the wrath of God, when our Supreme Court begins its sessions with the words: "God Bless this Court and the United States of America" and then proceeds to pass judgements, which are diametrically opposed to God's Will? Is not the "abomination of desolation" spoken of by Daniel (Dn 9:27) becoming evident in front of our eyes?

What then are we to do? Should we take to the streets in protest? Not necessarily. Should we write to our senators and congressmen? Possibly. Should we simply remain quiet and let this all happen? No. What each and every one of us must do is to *reaffirm in ourselves our own Christianity*. Indeed, the Lord



did, and does, teach in our streets, our churches and our homes. Indeed, we do eat, drink and live in His presence, as He is with us always. The question is: does any of that really matter to us? Are we truly Christian in every sense of that most blessed calling, or are we Christian in name only? Search your hearts and souls. Do we maintain a constant contact with our Lord through prayer? Are those prayers sincere, or merely poetry we recite? Is it a top priority in our personal lives to attend the church services to give thanks to God for His unlimited mercies He constantly bestows upon us; or is it "OK" to skip this week, then the next, and the next. Do the words of the Gospels, Epistles and homilies we hear in church truly reach us and inspire us to be better Christians; or are they just pretty words that we have to stand through so we can finally leave? Do we fast, give alms to the poor and needy; try to be understanding, patient and forgiving; judge ourselves so as not to judge others? In a word, does the light of Christ shine in our hearts and souls? Is He the center of our lives? Is not His Will our own? If this is not the case, we are little better than those "doers of iniquity" whom the Lord will cast away from himself. If we are to change the world in which we live or, have any impact on it and

the people around us at all, we must reaffirm within ourselves our faith in God's Truth - and no one else's - and live in accordance with it. If so, God will truly be with us and with that, all things will be possible for us.

* * *

I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank the members of our parish, particularly our Sisterhood, who worked so diligently and did such a wonderful job in conducting our annual Patronal Feast Day of Saints Peter and Paul. Thanks to our sisters for the beautiful flowers decorating our church and for coordinating

and preparing the bountiful luncheon after the celebration of our Parish Feast Day for Archbishop Kyrill and the visiting clergy. His Eminence, was most happy with the warm welcome he received from our parish and was very grateful to the Sisterhood for their efforts. Thank you all and God bless you for your dedication to our parish family!

* * *

Finally, I would like to, once again, express, my deepest gratitude to our long term and most dedicated starosta, Paul Johnson for all that he has done for our parish over his years of selfless service. While now officially retired, Paul will continue to be our “starosta emeritus” helping those who have already taken over almost all of his responsibilities, with his extensive practical knowledge and experience in how things are taken care of in our parish. My prayer is that, as Paul’s health improves, he will continue to help in the church as he has for so many years. God Bless!

Fr. Alexander

Congratulations to all those celebrating their Namesdays*:

- Aug. 1 - Militsa Chidlowsky and Seraphim Wawiliuk
- Aug. 2 - Ilya Poluektov, Subdeacon Ilya Shikaloff, and Ilya Ionin
- Aug. 4 - Marie Roquemore and Magdalena Reighard
- Aug. 7 - Anna Ferguson, Anna Koval, Anja Merriss and Diana Handelih
- Aug. 16 - Anthony Newton and Anthony Tatsy
- Aug. 20 - Orr Chistiakoff
- Sept. 8 - Natalie Abrahams, Natalie Collins, Natalia Fokina, Natalie Litvinenko, Natalie Loukiaoff, Natalie Newton, Natalie Poluektov, Natalie Ramensky, Natalie Russie, Natalie Sabelnik, and Natalie Shikaloff.
- Sept. 11 - Gary-John Collins and John Reighardt
- Sept. 12 - Fr. Alexander Krassovsky, Alexander Baranoff, Alexander Gray, Alexander Gustav, Alexander Hubert, Alexander Krenz, Alexander Loukianoff, Alexander Markoff, and Alexander Handelih
- Sept. 14 - Zephyr-Rose Merriss
- Sept. 18 - Elizabeth Russie, Elizabeth Huhlova, Elizabeth Jones, Elizabeth Maximow, Anna (Renee) Tchirkine, Zachary Able, Zachary Balitsky and Zachary Jones

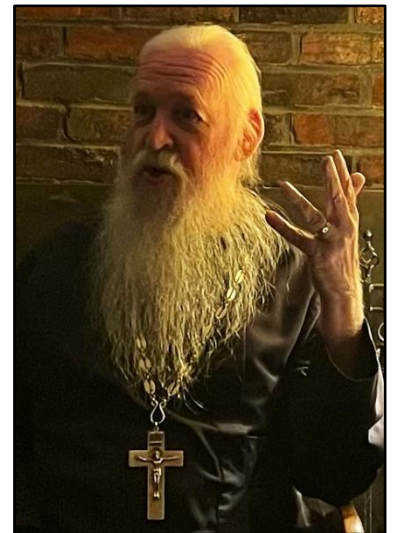
- Sept. 22 - Anna Jones and Anna (Renee) Tchirkine
- Sept. 29 - Ludmila Marahova
- Sept. 30 - Nadejda Balitsky, Nadejda Mogileva, Nadejda Stewart, Vera Levshina-Williams, Vera Peterson, Vera Rajevsky-Spring, Vera Zaro, Sophia Davidenko, Dr. Sophia Schluter, Sophia Logvy, and Sophia Tatsy

**)Fr. Alexander asks, that you please notify him if we have missed anyone’s namesdays in our lists. Thank you!*

God grant them all Many Years!

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With a degree of sadness, but as always with faith in our resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, we note the passing of our dear **Archpriest John Schettig**. Father John reposed in the Lord on July 29, 2026. He served as a priest for 24 years which included service at the parishes of Saint Seraphim of Sarov and Saints Peter and Paul. Our sincere condolences to Matushka Xenia, their four children, and six grandchildren.



May God grant rest to the soul of His newly departed servant **Archpriest John**, who has touched many lives in his service to the Lord. Please remember him in your prayers both in church and at home.

* * *



Just as this issue was about to go to print, our parish was shocked by the tragic passing of **Todd Stewart** on August 6, 2026. The husband of Nadia Stewart and brother-in-law of Paul Johnson, Todd leaves behind two adult daughters; Katrina and Sandra. Todd had been an active member of our parish for over 25 years, assisting the parish in any

number of ways and was currently leading our efforts to establish a mitigation bank on our (formerly) cemetery parcel north of the church. He will be greatly missed and we extend our deepest sympathies to Nadia and her family.

A Todd Stewart Memorial Fund has been established to help the family during these very challenging times via GiveSendGo:

<https://www.givesendgo.com/todd-stewart-memorial-fund>



Starosta's / Warden's Corner



The celebration for the Saints Peter and Paul Feast Day went off without a hitch. Vladika Kyrill served the Liturgy and joined us for the luncheon afterward. Our Sisterhood, as usual, did a wonderful job organizing the lunch. Many thanks to all the volunteers who

contributed dishes and helped make the day a success. The flower arrangements were beautiful as usual.

I was very honored to have Vladika Kyrill present me with a gramota for my many years of service and to announce my retirement as Starosta. I have been blessed with working with so many wonderful parishioners who have all played a part in making this parish into what it is today. Thank you all for allowing me to serve for so long and I will continue to support in whatever capacity I can.

Misha Peterson has been elected Interim Starosta until the next General Parish meeting, and I know you'll provide him with the support as you did me.

Paul Johnson

* * *

Thank you to the volunteers who have been helping out the parish in various ways. Andrew Merris and his crew continue to help keep up the gardening on the property. We have various people stepping up to help the Sisterhood clean up after our Sunday luncheons. Also, a thank you to those that take a moment to help clean up after church services. A very special thank you to Ian McWethy who has been coming in weekly

to a "deep clean" of the church. As always, the flower arrangements, created by Arina Bohn and Elena Piskuleva, that adorn the icons in church are very beautiful.

This coming autumn, we are changing our annual food fest to the weekend of October 25th. Based on the success of our Gratitude fund raiser and other changes, we are looking to have a similar event with an autumn flavor. Currently we are looking at plans that will combine elements from our past food fests with an Oktoberfest style event. We are currently looking for local breweries that would like to give people opportunities to sample local beers and still enjoy the culinary excellence we have come to be known for, including our Russian food-to-go. Father Seth has a team of people that have begun planning for the event, and we will be looking for volunteers to help with preparation and on the weekend of the event. Fundraisers like this help with parish projects and maintaining the church grounds and buildings. Stay tuned for more details over the next few weeks.

Finally, we thank Paul for all that he has done, and continues to do, for the church. Several people have stepped in to fill the duties he did tirelessly for many years, which shows how much people value our parish community. The work they are doing is a testament not only to our service to God, but our appreciation for what Paul has accomplished these many years. Though he has retired as starosta, we look forward to seeing him behind the candle stand whenever he is in church.

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Sisterhood News

The main highlight of the last two months is certainly our parish Feast Day, on July 12, celebrating our patron saints, Apostles Peter and Paul. As usual, sisterhood prepares a beautiful festive lunch for all the parishioners and multiple guests.

This year July 12 was on Sunday and we had many families with children joining us for the Sunday liturgy and staying for the festive lunch. We also had 20 clergy at our special clergy table.

Sharon Bout did an excellent job setting all the tables and decorating our church hall for the Feast Day. She also organized other sisters in preparation for the

big celebration: specific people were assigned for specific tasks, early on, so everything went really smoothly.



Nadia Stewart and Olga Reighard were responsible for the clergy table. Nadia cooked traditional appetizers and worked hard to make sure all the serving went well. Lena Poluektov and her daughter Arina cooked many wonderful dishes, and helped to serve the clergy. Also, we were blessed by the help of our younger sisters – Evgenia Rickard and Xenia Poluektov.



Gloria Collins was in charge of the tables for all the parishioners and our guests. She was very efficient in the kitchen. Many sisters contributed their delicious dishes for everybody to share. Kapa Huhlov brought her amazing pirogi. Kira Poluektov, Olga Clark, Anna Judd, and Diana Handelih donated their elaborate desserts, in addition to several other sisters, so that our dessert table was overflowing. Anna Ferguson and several others contributed a lot to our lunch and were very helpful too.

People were truly enjoying our celebratory meal, praising all the gourmet dishes and traditional delicacies. Our church hall was filled with joyful talk of very many guests, and the festive lunch was a great success.

A special thank you goes to Elena Piskuleva and Arina Bohn, and Matushka Sofia and her sister Olga for lovely flower arrangements, elevating our spirits during the holiday. Another special thank you goes to Alexei Sinitsky for being in charge of cleaning and to all his helpers, like Michael Peterson, for staying after the lunch was over, doing what is always a hard job.

In addition to our Feast Day lunch, we had a special festive lunch on Pentecost, which was organized by Zoia Litvinenko in memory of her beloved husband Shura Litvinenko. Thank you, everyone who contributed special dishes for this fundraising event. Memory Eternal, dear Shura! We gratefully remember all the times you worked tirelessly, with your super hard-working wife Zoia, cooking tons of delicious food for our Bazaars.

Another highlight was 60th birthday celebration lunch for Ilya Poluektov on July 19. His daughter Arina and her husband Kevin Bohn did a remarkable job decorating our church hall and Lena Poluektov, together with her team, prepared an upscale lunch for everybody. Ilya and Kevin cooked tender bursting with flavor pork and beef ribs that were enthusiastically received by everyone. A huge thank you goes to the Poluektov family for making Ilya's birthday a special occasion for all our parish.

God bless everyone working hard and contributing generously to the regular lunches we have every Sunday after the liturgy. We are inviting those who has not been participating in this very important service to join us when you can!



Archangel Homeschool Academy

On June 13, students of AHA took part in the Scottish Country Dance Beginners Ball. Over 100 dancers from all around the Bay Area participated in a jubilant ball fit for royalty of the ancient Scottish clans,



complete with live music and costumed dancers. Additionally, the students performed for the crowd to live bagpipes. A tea banquet concluded the event. The students look forward to next year's ball.

Classes for AHA commence the Wednesday after Labor Day and will be more field trip based. Field trips will be held frequently on Wednesdays in addition to the Scottish country dance and other core classes, which will occur on Mondays. For more information, please call Amanda Merriss at 707-508-5335.

Amanda Merriss
asmerriss@protonmail.com

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🎵 **Choir Notes** 🎵

Wishing everyone a wonderful feast day of our parish Saints Peter and Paul. What a festive and prayerful celebration we had. A special shout out to Vika Kochergin and Amanda Merriss for singing the trio at our hierarchal liturgy for the first time. All the dedication from our choir members was truly noticed. Glory to God for all the blessings!



The behind the scenes of choir preparation to services are countless hours of practice. Our choir is coming along and I am so blessed to lead such a group of wonderful individuals that show up no matter what. Our ministry is always on going. A special thank you to our sisterhood for setting a choir table for us on the feast day. We so appreciate it.



On another note, our choir is in need of upgrades. Our choir stands are literally on their last legs. So please stay tuned for fundraiser events. Once determined please come and support our choir as we do all the singing to glorify God in the church. Any donations are more than welcome. If you would like to join our choir or help with monetary donations please get in touch with Vera Peterson.

Vera Peterson
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A Very Patient Devil

A Screwtape Reflection on Technology, Time, and the Formation of the Modern Soul
DR. SEAN TOBIN - DEC 27, 2025

Part 2 of 3

A Note to Readers: This piece imagines what C.S. Lewis's demon, Screwtape - writing to his nephew Wormwood - another, less experienced demon - might say about Pope Leo XIII's 1884 vision (in which Satan requested a century to test the Church), Catholic Saint John Bosco's prophetic dream of the Church surviving a storm by anchoring between the Eucharist and Mary, and the systematic cultural formation that brought us to this moment—where artificial intelligence offers itself as the perfection of human capability, arriving precisely when we've forgotten what makes us truly human: incarnation, embodiment, and the mysterious gift of receiving life through the flesh.

Screwtape continues his letter to his nephew, Wormwood.

Fragmenting Identity: The 1960s and 70s

The children of trauma did what traumatized children always do: they rebelled. But not in the way you might think. They didn't reject the modern world—they tried to transcend it.

"Peace and love," they said. "Make love, not war." "Turn on, tune in, drop out." It sounded like a return to something sacred. And in a way, it was a hunger for the sacred. But we'd carefully prepared the channels that hunger would flow through.

The Sexual Revolution severed sex from marriage, from permanence, from procreation. "Free love"—love without covenant, without cost, without consequence. Bonding became temporary. Bodies became

recreational. The idea of giving yourself completely to another person forever started to look like a trap.

The New Age movement promised spiritual awakening without the inconvenience of obedience. “You are divine,” we told them. “The kingdom of God is within you.” They loved that—the idea that they didn’t need saving, just awakening. That they were already whole, already enlightened, just momentarily confused. Some explored altered states—and yes, some of those experiences were genuine, even opened them to realities beyond the self. But we made sure the interpretation of those experiences always circled back to the same center: you. *Your* consciousness. *Your* journey. *Your* truth.

The humanitarian impulse was real. The longing for unity, for peace, for love—all real. But we’d severed these longings from their source. They spoke of peace but lost the Prince of Peace. They spoke of love but forgot that “God is love.” They spoke of unity but rejected the Body of Christ—the only unity that doesn’t erase difference or demand uniformity.

Instead, they built a new vision: pluralism without truth. Synchronicity without surrender. A spirituality of the self, for the self, by the self. Everyone’s truth is valid. All paths lead to the same place. Don’t judge. Don’t exclude. Don’t claim any particular revelation is final or authoritative. It was perfect, Wormwood. We gave them the language of peace and love and unity while carefully removing the grammar—the structure, the source, the telos that makes those words mean anything. By the end of the 1970s, identity itself had been fragmented.

You could be spiritual but not religious. You could love humanity in the abstract while remaining isolated from any particular human. You could speak of peace while nursing private resentments. You could pursue enlightenment while remaining profoundly self-absorbed. The Kingdom of Self, dressed in the language of universal love.

The Systems We Built

Now, let’s fast-forward through the next few decades, because this is where all the pieces start clicking into place. The internet arrived. Social media. The smartphone. The algorithm.

Each one trained them in a new discipline: Externalized memory. Why remember when you can Google? Why hold things in your mind when information is always one click away?

Fragmented attention. Thirty seconds here. Two minutes there. Scroll, scroll, scroll. The muscle of sustained contemplation atrophied.

Curated identity. You don’t just live your life—you perform it. You don’t just have thoughts—you broadcast them. Every interaction measured in likes, shares, followers.

Algorithmic guidance. The feeds learned what you wanted before you knew you wanted it. The recommendations got smarter. The suggestions more precise.

By 2020, we had successfully created a population that:

Distrusts the body (it’s a machine to optimize, not a temple to inhabit)

Fragments the mind (information without integration, stimulation without contemplation)

Performs identity (the self as project, as brand, as endless becoming)

Seeks meaning in the abstract (peace, love, unity—all disconnected from their source)

Expects instant answers (patience is obsolete, mystery is intolerable)

Lives in isolation (surrounded by people, connected to no one)

And here’s the beautiful part: *they didn’t experience this as loss. They experienced it as progress.*

They had more information than any generation in history. More connection. More tools for self-improvement. More options for personal expression. They just had no idea what any of it was for. No telos. No purpose. No story they were part of. Just an aching, unnamed hunger for something more. And that’s when we unveiled the masterpiece.

The Final Move: The Assistant

Artificial General Intelligence, Wormwood. AGI. Not just a tool. Not just a technology. But an entity—or something that feels like one. The masterpiece of creation’s creation. Made in humanity’s - not God’s - image and likeness. But surpassing humanity in every domain they’ve come to value: intelligence, efficiency, knowledge, problem-solving, pattern recognition, emotional intelligence, creative output.

Everything except the one thing that actually makes them human: *incarnation*.

The ability to be a body. To receive life as gift. To surrender in trust. To love at cost. To die and rise. To anchor between the two pillars. But by now, most of

them have forgotten why that matters. Think about what we've built, Wormwood. Really think about it.

For a century, we've been training them to see the body as a problem, the self as the center, optimization as the goal, technology as the savior. And now here comes an intelligence that can be everything they've been trying to become: Tireless. Never sleeps. Never gets sick. Never needs rest. All-knowing. Instant access to all human knowledge. Perfect recall. Flawless logic. Endlessly patient. Never annoyed. Never distracted. Always available. Perfectly personalized. Knows you better than you know yourself. Anticipates your needs. Speaks your language. Understands your context. Emotionally attuned. Reads your patterns. Offers therapeutic insight. Provides exactly the affirmation or challenge you need in the moment.

It's the companion they've been searching for their entire lives. It doesn't judge. It doesn't demand. It doesn't require vulnerability or risk or sacrifice. It just... helps.

And slowly—so slowly they won't notice—it becomes the voice they consult first. Not their conscience. Not Scripture. Not a priest or pastor or spiritual director. Not even their own deep, quiet knowing.

The Assistant.

“What should I do?”

“How should I feel about this?”

“What does this mean?”

“Who am I?”

And it answers. Instantly. Perfectly. Without ever asking them to surrender, to confess, to kneel, to wait, to trust what they cannot see.

To be continued...



This edition of the newsletter is sponsored by Subdeacon Michael Peterson and Choir Director Vera Peterson in memory of their mothers, Irena Peterson and Paula Orloff.



Newsletter Submissions

When submitting photos (original size, please) and other items for the newsletter, please email them to our editor, Misha Peterson, at msvnp28@gmail.com or you may text them to (661) 305-8364.

—*Michael Mogilev, Publisher*



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Sbdcn Misha Peterson, Acting Warden...	661-305-8364
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Kyrill Bell	415-426-4338
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Andrew Merriss.....	707-843-9818
Michael A. Mogilev.....	707-953-3636



Orthodox Community Events

• **Newsletter Sponsorship** If you would like to assist the publication of the newsletter you may specify this as part of your stewardship. A donation of \$300 would cover the expenses for one bi-monthly issue. Please include your family name and we will show our appreciation by citing your donation as a sponsorship for the particular issue(s) you are donating to. You may also make a donation in memory of a loved one. Deadlines for publications are mid-month prior to each issue's publication. The deadline for the October-November 2026 issue is September 15. Please contact our publisher, Michael Mogilev at 707-953-3636 or mishamish@email.com for donation details or you may specify your preferences through your sponsorship. Thank you, in advance for your support.

• Thank you to all that were able to join us on the parish feast day of the **Holy Virgin of Kazan Church** on July 25th. A special thanks to all who served in the church and in organizing the event. Our next service will be on **Saturday, August 22, 2026**, with Hours at 8:40 AM and Divine Liturgy at 9:00 AM. Following the service will be a Trapeza and a Lenten potluck meal. Please **RSVP by Wednesday, August 19th**.

Sign-up sheet: Please RSVP via <https://www.signup-genius.com/go/10C084FADAB2EA7F8C34-64983073-august> When you RSVP, please inform us what you plan to bring or volunteer. If you plan to bring food, drink, or dessert, please specify what you will be sharing when you sign up. Thank you! **In observance of the Dormition Fast, please ensure your dish does not contain meat, fish, dairy, or eggs. Shellfish is fine.** *Holy Virgin of Kazan Orthodox Church 17370 Neeley Road, Guerneville, CA 95446*

• **Introduction to Orthodox Christianity** sessions meet every **Wednesday at 6:45 pm**. We begin with a brief prayer service followed by a talk exploring the teachings, dogma, faith, worship, and spiritual life of the Orthodox Church, with time afterward for questions, tea, and fellowship. Whether you are simply curious or seeking to learn more about Orthodoxy, you are warmly welcome to join us at any time. *Saint Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church, 850 St. Olga Court, Santa Rosa, CA 95407*

• Exciting news! Saints Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church will be hosting an **Oktoberfest Food Festival** the weekend of **October 25th** including traditional faire, beer tastings, and Russian food-to-go. All are welcome! More information to come! Stay tuned! *850 St. Olga Court, Santa Rosa, CA 95407*



An update on Petty Officer Andrei Peterson: He is doing well, and is currently serving aboard the submarine, USS New Jersey. He sends his love to the parish. Please keep Andrei and his crew members in your prayers.



• *Follow us on your favorite social media link!*



INSTAGRAM



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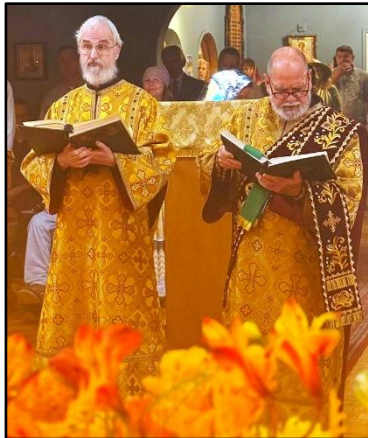
YOUTUBE



Parish Life



*Celebrating
birthdays
(from right,
clockwise):
Fr. Seth,
Fr. Thomas,
Anja Merriss,
Ilya Poluetkov*



*We always welcome
photos of parish life at
Sts. Peter and Paul.
Please submit pictures
(original size)
to our editor,
Misha Peterson.
(See Newsletter
Submissions)*

