



THE Veil

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
ST. MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

SEPTEMBER 2026
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A Field of Honor Forever

FR. DAVID S. | PARISH PRIEST

This summer, I took my annual visit to the Antiochian Village to visit our parish kids and volunteers at the summer camp, but this time I budgeted some extra time on the way there to stop at a very special place enroute. That place is the Flight 93 Memorial in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. I was not prepared for how powerful an experience this would be, and I encourage any and all of you to make the three hour drive out there sometime.

25 years ago, this month, I was still a very newly ordained priest, just over a year in the parish of Holy Cross in Hermitage, PA, and a father of my first child for less than a year. Tuesday mornings were quiet days and that September 11th was, as all of us who were old enough to remember, a clear and sunny day in the Eastern US. We had no idea that morning of the events that would unfold and how they would change our lives and our nation. But I'll get back to that day in a moment.

On the day I visited the memorial, it was a cool and cloudy day, promising rain by afternoon. As I pulled off US-30, the Lincoln Highway, to enter the memorial, I found a winding two-mile drive through beautiful wildflower meadows before reaching the crash site and interpretive center—providing a necessary sense of distancing from the business of everyday life. Many buses were also arriving at the same time and as I got out of my vehicle, I saw that the bus occupants were primarily teenagers—those for whom these events were part of that murky space of history years before they were born—a time that can seem as far away as any of the events of the 20th century to them. How would they understand and experience this place? What could it mean to them?

I have been to the Pentagon memorial and at Ground Zero in Manhattan. These were profound experiences but, if I am to be honest, fall short of the experience one can have in Pennsylvania. Not only is there the sense of the scale of the tragedy of that day but also the recognition that that field is a “field of honor, forever.” On that day, at that place, regular people fought back. Everyday passengers did the unthinkable and gave the ultimate sacrifice to prevent United 93 from being used as a weapon against any more targets.

In the interpretive center, the story of that day and the events on that flight unfold before you. I was incredibly sobered as I saw a map showing the flight path and timeline of Flight 93 and realized that the hijacking began just as the plane was flying over where I was, lazily getting up that morning, dressing and feeding my firstborn, oblivious to what was transpiring above me. Had I been outside, I might have seen it fly overhead just like so many others had before without a second thought. Only a few minutes later, my wife would rush into tell me that a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center...

I could see the teenagers taking it all in—the horror of realizing what that day was like for those on board that plane becoming very real for them. There are earphones on which you can listen to the recordings of the calls the passengers made to loved ones or to emergency responders—I could see the young people hearing these and trying to process what they were hearing. I could not listen, and though I had heard them before, it was already taking me everything I had to not break down sobbing as the memories of that day flooded back. There are signs there that request no photograph be taken.

...Cont'd on Pg. 6



Saint Mary
ORTHODOX CHURCH

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God Grant You Many Years!

Don't see your name? Join us on Realm and fill out your profile. If you include your birthday and nameday, you'll see them here.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Alexandra B.
Jordan C.
Ben C.
Lauren C.
Stephanie C.
Jesse D.
Joshua E.
Eva F.
Natalie F.
Margareta G.
Matt H.
Olivia H.
Steve H.
Inna .
Phil K.
Saly M.
Julia M.
Maksym M.
Luca M.
Katherine M.
Vittorio S.

Steve S.
Fr. David
George Z.

NAMESDAYS

Sept. 3 — St. Phoebe
Sept. 6 — St. David of Egypt
Sept. 7 — St. Kassiani the Hymnographer
Sept. 8 — The Nativity of the Theotokos
Sept. 9 — St. Anna
Sept. 17 — St. Sophia of Rome, St. Charity

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Adrian & Mihaela B.
Dn. Nicholas & Cathy D.
Nicholas & Melanie K.
Dn. Ken & Irene L.
Joe & Alyssa M.
Steve S. & Fotina N.
Matt & Melanie T.
Robert & Paula Y.



ST. MARY'S 2026 ANNUAL

DINNER DANCE

THROW ON YOUR BEST RANCH GLAM FIT— DENIM, DIAMONDS, SEQUINS, VELVET & YOUR FAVORITE COWBOY BOOTS!

SATURDAY, OCT 3
ST. LUKE'S IN MCLEAN

6:00-10:00PM
-COCKTAIL HOUR
-CANDLELIT DINNER
-SILENT AUCTION
-DESSERT AUCTION

SCAN TO REGISTER:

DOXA CON PRIME 2026

Becoming Saints
in a Brave New World

November 6-7, 2026
@ Catholic University of America

Faith. Fandom. Imagination. Holiness.

Keynotes by
Christopher Rucchio
and Fr. Anthony Cook

Featuring an exciting line-up of breakout sessions,
panels, games,
fan art, and fellowship.

Register Today!

On Behalf of All Parish Family Retreat

Join us on Saturday, September 26 from 8:30 AM–2:30 PM for St. Mary's On Behalf of All (OBOA) Parish Family Retreat, a day dedicated to strengthening our parish community through greater understanding, hospitality, accessibility, and belonging.

As Orthodox Christians, we are called to receive one another as members of the Body of Christ and to recognize the unique dignity and gifts of every person. This retreat will invite our parish family to reflect on how we can more intentionally welcome, support, and include children and adults with disabilities, as well as their families, in the worship, education, fellowship, and everyday life of our parish.

Throughout the day, we will explore practical and pastoral ways to build a

parish culture in which everyone can participate more fully. Topics will include creating welcoming and accessible environments, supporting children with differing needs in faith formation, accompanying individuals and families with compassion, and recognizing the gifts that each person brings to the life of the Church.

This retreat is intended for the entire parish community—parents, grandparents, ministry leaders, Church School teachers, volunteers, young adults, and anyone who wants to help St. Mary's continue growing as a place of genuine Christian hospitality and belonging. You do not need prior experience with disability ministry to participate.

Our goal is not simply to learn more about accessibility, but to deepen our

understanding of one another and consider how we can put that understanding into practice as a parish family.

Childcare and meals will be provided, making this a wonderful opportunity for families to participate together.

Saturday, September 26

8:30 AM–2:30 PM

@ St. Mary Orthodox Church

Scan below to register!



All are welcome. We hope you will join us for this important day of learning, fellowship, and growing together as the Body of Christ. ✕

A Home for Generations: The Work Begins St. Mary's Vision 2030

FR. DAVID S. | PARISH PRIEST

If you joined us at the Ministry Fair this weekend, you saw the beginning of an important new chapter for our parish: A Home for Generations: St. Mary's Vision 2030.

For years, we have talked about the blessing of St. Mary's growth—and the very real limitations that growth has placed on our current facilities. We have explored expansion, parking solutions, renovations, and other possibilities. That work has increasingly led us to believe that pursuing a new parish home is the most realistic and financially responsible way to provide the worship, fellowship, education, accessibility, and ministry space our growing parish needs. Now, we are moving from planning toward

preparation.

Vision 2030 gives us a tangible horizon for that preparation. Between now and 2030, we are asking St. Mary to enter a focused season of prayer, planning, and sustained generosity so that we can position our parish to acquire and establish a new home capable of serving generations to come. Our hope is that, by

the end of this period, St. Mary will have secured the right property, completed or substantially advanced the repairs and renovations necessary to make it truly ours, and entered the next decade with a parish home equipped for the worship

and ministries God continues to grow here.

That is why this effort should be understood as a season of sustained stewardship rather than a single fundraising moment. Something of this magnitude will not be accomplished through one event, one appeal, or one extraordinary Sunday collection. As a parish, we will need to align budgeting and financial decisions with the long-term needs of our community. As individuals and households, we invite you to begin prayerfully considering how support for this effort might fit into your own financial planning over the next several years.

For some, that may mean a significant gift from existing savings. For others, it may mean setting aside an amount monthly or annually. Some may dedicate a bonus or other unexpected income. Others will participate through the many events, appeals, and giving opportunities that will unfold throughout the campaign. **Cont'd on Pg. 6**



Becoming Blessed: VCS 2026 Brings the Beatitudes to Life

LACIE F. & NICOLE F. | PARISHIONERS

This year's Vacation Church School theme was "Becoming Blessed: Living the Beatitudes." Throughout the week, our children reflected on Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount and explored what it means to live with humility, mercy, purity of heart, peace-making, and love for the Kingdom of God.

We were blessed to welcome 27 children and youth to VCS over the course of the week, with an average of about 22 children each day. These children came from several different parishes, filling our classrooms, nave, fellowship spaces, and outdoor areas with energy, prayer, questions, laughter, and joyful work.

Each day began with prayer and a short lesson on the Beatitudes or Beatitudes of the day, with



the children actively participating in response to Fr. David's direction. From there, the children moved into crafts, service projects, outdoor activities, and time together in fellowship, learning not only through instruction but through the work of their hands and the life of the Church.

Their service projects throughout the week included making prayer cards and bookmarks for parishioners, writing thank you notes to the clergy and choir, and helping Eccl. Katherine transition the nave into the colors for the Dormition, complete with flower

arrangements. We are proud of the respectful efforts the children made in designing and completing their work, and thankful for the friendships and community built throughout the week.

One beautiful fruit of the week can now be seen in our CGS Atrium garden play area. The stepping stone craft, designed by Dea Matty and thoughtfully procured by Eccl. Katherine, now adorn the CGS atrium garden and will soon be further appointed with an icon of the Good Shepherd. These stones are a lasting reminder of the children's work and prayer, and they help transform the garden into a more intentional space of beauty, play, and quiet encounter with Christ.

For one of our volunteers, Nicole Fernandez, one of the most meaningful service projects of the week was the making of prosphora, under the guidance of Fr. David. She notes, "As a child, one of my most distinct memories is seeing my Syrian grandmother make the Sign of the Cross in dough. She was a gifted baker, and the task of baking Prosphora has often been on my mind as a Sunday School activity. God gave us the perfect opportunity this year at VCS to join together and offer our efforts to the Lord."

During the activity, each student added a cup of flour to the mixing bowls. Warm water was prepared, and the children added yeast, reminding us of the Lord's words: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened." (Matthew 13:33).

Then, under the supervision of Fr. David, VCS students added the water to the flour and took turns mixing the dough. Nicole further observed that the children's joy and care were evident throughout the process, with smiles, diligent work, and plenty of handwashing both before and after. The theme was simple and beautiful: God gives us the wheat and the water, and we give Him our effort. We seek to live "Blessed are the merciful" as we prepare an



offering not just for ourselves, but "on behalf of all and for all."

The children helped press the Seal into the dough, and the beautiful bread was baked and offered to Our Lord on Divine Liturgies on both Saturday and Sunday of that week. In His immense kindness, the Lord offered Himself back to us in the Eucharist.



Many families joined us on Saturday morning for Divine Liturgy and the Cross Procession, making it a fitting and prayerful conclusion to the week. The children were able to see that their work was not just a craft or activity, but part of the life of the Church: an offering prepared with love, prayer, and many small hands.

Thank you to all the children who participated and to all of the adults and teens who gave their time and energy to make the week possible. ✠

Beautiful Weeds in the Garden of God

PAISIOS, THE SINNER | PARISHIONER

One day, driving along a rural road on my way to service a client, I found this wonderful little patch of flowers on the side of the road. Being that there was no traffic, I paused my truck for a moment to take them in. Such marvelous beauty, yet I knew that in a few days, the gang mower would come along and cut them down in a swath of carnage. Later on, I pondered for a bit, wondering if anyone who drove down that quiet road even bothered to notice them. After all, they were not roses or lilies, just some weeds that happened to have blooms on them. They would be cut down with the rest of the grass as part of county maintenance and that would be that. No one would lament their loss. They were nothing special.

On reflecting further, I found myself wondering how many of our fellow human beings we treat in a similar manner? People who are unattractive, who talk too much and too loudly at parties, so that you can hardly wait to excuse yourself. The homeless man at the street corner looking for a handout. Those of another religion or race who make us uncomfortable with their cultural mannerisms. The list is endless. There are people out there of whom it is all too easy to deliberately not notice, who make us uneasy because we don't know what to do or say around them. And I am equally guilty of this. How often do I find myself being judgmental as I observe someone. If there is any sense of lecturing in this piece, know that I am lecturing myself first. May God forgive me for all the times I have looked at someone as a weed.

Margaret Sanger, eugenicist and founder of Planned Parenthood, made this statement in 1924. "How are we to breed a race of human thoroughbreds unless we follow the same plan? We must make this country into a garden of children instead of a disorderly back lot overrun with human weeds." This was her view of anyone who did not meet certain standards which would qualify them as roses in her garden of humanity. Sanger used the metaphor in her 1921 book *The Pivot of Civilization*, stating that society must stop acting like a disorderly lot overrun with "human weeds" and

instead cultivate a "garden of children" by preventing reproduction among the "unfit," the severely disabled, and the destitute. This is nothing less than the sin of pride in full-blown display, the act of judging others by a standard that she felt that she and others like her kept. You know the kind - those who are handsome, the rich, who have good manners, and are pleasant conversationalists. They are easy to be with, and others seek their company. We see this in the adulation given to rock stars, actors and actresses, the rich and powerful whose favor perhaps may in some way benefit us.

Whenever I look at another human being and mentally make a negative judgment on them because of their race, a handicap, their appearance, or their state of life, I am relegating them to the status of a weed. I am failing to see the image of God which is the beautiful flower of His grace in each of us.

What does God see in those who are the disabled, the misfits of society, and those who are just darn difficult to be around? I think He sees beautiful flowers that just need the fertilizer of our love to become all that He intends them to be. I love this quote from C.S. Lewis regarding how we view our fellow man:

Lewis wrote: "It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship . . ." Lewis is saying that every human being has an eternal destiny, and a seemingly insignificant person could become an astonishingly glorious being.

Herein lies a challenge for me and our parish. The next time someone enters, a seeker who perhaps has never been in an Orthodox parish, will he or she be warmly welcomed? Will they feel the love of Christ coming from

us as we say hello, show them a seat, and help them follow the Divine Liturgy, answering any questions they have? Will we make them feel welcome to Coffee Hour? Will they so feel loved that they will be eager to return? How about at the street corner when the homeless man approaches our car? Have you ever not only given alms to that one, but if the light is red, taken the time to hold his hand and ask him about his life? I will never forget a young lady with whom I was speaking after she approached me in a parking lot in Manassas. It turned out that she had been very sick, lost her job, and as a consequence, was homeless. At that moment, a car drove by and the occupant yelled out, "Get a job!" The look of pain in her eyes broke my heart. She was treated like a weed, but she is a flower in the garden of God.

May God give me, and all of us, the grace to see every person as a valuable flower in His garden of life. There are no weeds in God's sight, just flowers waiting to bloom forth in yet unseen beauty. Let us be the ones to fertilize them with the love of God! ✕



(Cont'd from front) I appreciated that, as it allowed me the privacy to allow my tears to flow freely.

Outside the building, you can take a trail or drive down to the crash site itself. The walk is restorative and meditative. There is a commemorative wall with the names of the 40 passengers and crew who were murdered, but not without a fight. I appreciate that we do not know who among them was brave, and who cowered—who led the charge and who hung back or were killed before being able to respond at all. They are all remembered equally there. They are all honored as martyrs.

Indeed, the Flight 93 memorial site is a holy place. Just like the places where early Christian martyrs were killed and their remains enshrined as a testimony to their heroism, this place carries the same weight of glory. There are many days of the year on which the Church remembers mass martyrdoms where hundreds or even thousands of souls perished at the hand of ancient tyrants and terrorists. The Church remembers them all together as saints—even though we don't know which ones were brave, and which ones showed fear, which were piously faithful and which were just in the wrong place at the wrong time. All we know is that they died for Christ and they died together. And they are all honored the same.

“ Few of us will ever be known for what role we played by the young people to come, if we were brave and faithful, or if we barely held on. But we do hang on, and keep the faith, and stay on the flight, there awaits for us a field of honor forever. ”

Here is the reality check for all of us. In this journey of life, the Church is our vessel, our plane, and we are on a flight together off which none of us will make it alive. There are enemies trying to crash the plane, and some of them are already on board with us. Few of us will ever be known for what role we played by the young people to come, if we were brave and faithful, or if we barely held on. But if we do hang on, and keep the faith, and stay on the flight, there awaits for us a field of honor forever. “Let's Roll!” was heard from one of those brave passengers—an eternal witness to bravery. May it be for us a call to do the same, and bear a brave witness for Christ for the generations to come. ✕

(Cont'd from Pg. 3) Not every household will participate in the same way or at the same level, and that is neither expected nor necessary.

Part of the reason early giving matters is that seriously evaluating commercial church property requires resources well before a purchase is certain. Appraisals, inspections, surveys, professional consultations, legal work, deposits, financing expenses, and county processes may all be necessary simply to determine whether a property is right for us.

We will not announce the final capital campaign goal until St. Mary is under contract on a property and we can responsibly calculate what will actually be required for acquisition, financing, transition, repairs, and renovations.

We continue to fervently ask that God's will be made known throughout this process. Please pray for Fr. David, our Parish Council, the Property Search Committee, and the many parishioners and professionals lending their time and expertise to property evaluation, financing, county requirements, negotiations, and the countless details involved in an undertaking of this magnitude. Pray for clarity when the answer is not obvious, patience when the process moves more slowly than we would like, and discernment when difficult decisions arise. Pray that doors close when they should close—and that, when the right door opens, God gives us the wisdom, courage, and generosity to walk through it together.

Our first major fundraising event for Vision 2030 will be the October 3 Dinner Dance-- proceeds from this year's Dinner Dance will go directly to St. Mary's Capital Campaign Fund. Your ticket, your participation in the auction and raffles, and your generosity throughout the evening will directly support our effort to prepare for a future parish home. This makes the Dinner Dance more than a wonderful night together; it is our first opportunity to demonstrate, as a parish community, that we are ready to begin this work.

In the coming weeks, we will share our updated Case Statement, more information about the property currently under consideration, the anticipated commercial evaluation and approval timeline, and additional ways parishioners can participate. There will be seasons of visible progress and seasons when much of the work happens quietly. There may be a property that works—and properties from which prudence requires us to walk away. There will be opportunities to give, gather, celebrate, ask questions, and learn.

The generations before us sacrificed to establish St. Mary and entrusted us with an extraordinary parish. Vision 2030 is our opportunity to carry that inheritance forward—and eventually hand the work of St. Mary to another generation stronger than we received it. A Home for Generations has begun. ✕

Unique Opportunity to Get Coached!

JENNI S. | PARISHIONER

St. Mary parishioner, Jenni S., is currently training to acquire professional coach certification and her certification organization requires 500 hours of coaching experience and stipulates that 450 of those hours must be “paid”, but it defines “paid” very liberally. Basically, Jenni can accept absolutely anything in return for her coaching services, including a meal, a cup of coffee, any services you provide, a LinkedIn testimonial about her coaching, money (of course), or anything else you have to give.

That means that, for a limited time, parishioners can receive a service that usually costs \$150–\$250 an hour for a feed appropriate to your means. If you’re not familiar with coaching, you can learn more from the answers to common questions below. If you are familiar with coaching and are interested in this opportunity, skip to the last question to get in touch with Jenni!

WHAT IS COACHING?

Coaching is a collaborative, exploratory, objective-focused process in which one person helps another to reflect on a problem, discover possibilities, and develop solutions. Good coaching takes place within a relationship of trust that (1) permits the coach to ask thought-provoking—and sometimes challenging—questions, and (2) enables the coachee to answer honestly, struggle openly, and surface new insights about themselves and their situation in a safe, supportive environment.

WHEN IS COACHING HELPFUL?

Coaching is often helpful to people who:

- Are facing a challenge that they’re not sure how to tackle
- Have set a goal but are struggling to achieve it (or want to set a goal, but can’t even get that far!)
- Feel stuck, trapped, or unable to make progress on something that matters to them

WHEN IS COACHING NOT THE RIGHT CHOICE?

Coaching is not therapy, mentoring, or consulting. If you need help to overcome anxiety, depression, trauma, or other

mental health issues, seek out a trained medical professional, not a coach. When you want someone more experienced to guide you through your situation, you need a mentor, not a coach. If you’re looking for an expert to advise you on something, engage a consultant, not a coach.

Coaches mostly ask questions to help coachees explore the answers and develop the potential that already lie within them. They don’t give advice, offer guidance, or solve problems for their clients. Rather, they help empower their clients to solve their own problems.

WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DO PEOPLE ENGAGE COACHES FOR?

Most things! But most commonly, coaches help people achieve goals related to:

- Work (e.g., career transitions/advancement, working more effectively with a team, building a business)
- Health and wellness (e.g., losing weight, eating better, establishing healthier sleep habits)
- Relationships (e.g., dating, marriage, family)
- Finances (e.g., developing discipline in spending, eliminating debt, planning for retirement)
- Mindset (e.g., deepening faith, gaining confidence, changing unproductive thought patterns)

*Jenni plans to specialize in workplace-related coaching, but her training will equip her with the skills to coach on any topic.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF COACHING?

Research has found that coaching helps people:

- Achieve their goals
- Improve performance
- Gain confidence in their ability to solve problems
- Become more self-aware, resilient, optimistic, and hopeful
- Achieve a greater sense of well-being

Additionally, many people find coaching cathartic because it provides an opportunity to discuss in depth issues they can’t talk about with family, friends, or

colleagues, either because those parties won’t understand or because they won’t be able to listen without personal bias.

IS WHAT I SAY IN COACHING PRIVATE?

Absolutely. Professional coaches are bound by a strict code of ethics that governs confidentiality, transparency, and psychological safety for clients. A coach should never (and Jenni certainly would never) tell any other person that you’re receiving coaching, much less the specific things you’ve said in coaching sessions.

I’M INTERESTED. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Scan the QR code and select “Coaching Inquiry” to book a 30-minute meeting with Jenni. She’ll help you determine whether coaching is right for you and your situation and, if it is, discuss how you could work together. An inquiry meeting is not a commitment to be coached and you don’t have to pay anything (even a cup of coffee) to have one! ✖



NEW IN SEPTEMBER! UPDATED FELLOWSHIP HOUR GROUPS

Week 1: A-Dua

(Team Leaders: Jon C. & Matt C.)

Week 2: Dub-Ki

(Team Leaders: Allison J. & Vacancy)

Week 3: Kn-Robe

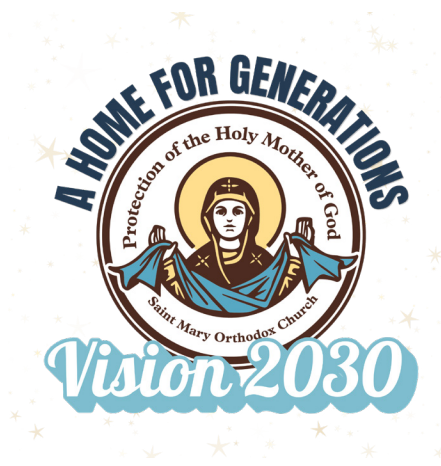
(Team Leaders: Melanie K. & Vacancy)

Week 4: Robi-Z

(Team Leaders: Nathan & Charity W. & Dylan S.)

Week 5: Entire Parish

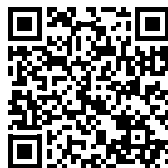
(Team Leaders: Dsa. Irene L. & Alyssa M.)



**GIVE
TODAY:**



**FUTURE
PLEDGE:**



*From the
Pastor's Desk*

Need to chat? Whether you're seeking a home blessing, pastoral guidance and care, exploring Orthodoxy, or simply need a place to share what's on your heart, let's talk.

Scan, visit <https://calendly.com/frdavid-p308/> or email frdavid@stmaryorthodox.org to get on Fr. David's calendar!



THE Veil

The Official Newsletter of the Protection of the Holy Mother of God Orthodox Church
Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, Orthodox Church in America (OCA)

Hierarchy: Archbishop NATHANIEL of Detroit | Parish Priest: V. Rev. Dr. Fr. David G. Subu
Deacons: Protodn. Peter Danilchick, Dn. Kenneth Liu | Choir Director & Head Chanter: Sdn. Nicholas Jones
Subdeacons: Eugene Huang, Nicholas Jones, Bogdan Maxim | Parish Council President: David Dill
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