

St. Mary Magdalene Orthodox Church Monthly Meeting

October 12, 2025

Call to order / Opening Prayer: 12:28

Fr. Stephen opened with prayer, Mark called to order.

Approval of September 2025 minutes

Council approved the minutes - Dan moved to accept and Paul seconded.

Rector's Report

Fr. Stephen updated the council on parish growth. There are currently 44 catechumens.

Sunday liturgy attendance is great, Saturday vespers - less so, but about 30 people have been attending the vespers, which shows a positive dynamic. Saturday Night Questing helps bring younger people. Fr. Stephen shared with the council how D&D scenario has been adopted to be a truly Christian learning environment for the participants. It was noted that there is a lack of young women in attendance.

The new Fellowship group for the Bible study is still in the talks. Fr. Stephen will discuss with Fr. Thomas of St. Paul's when they meet about the joint liturgy. There is a momentum to do more activities together with neighboring orthodox parishes.

Parishioners have been diligent with the tithing. Since the last few months, we did not have to borrow funds. It was mentioned that expectations around the tithing will be better explained in the newcomer classes.

The new web landing pages have been created and launched, Fr. Stephen has been monitoring the traffic and noticing trends. Acting on these trends (creating new targeted landing pages and FAQs) will help attract new visitors.

The church has been more active on social media: posts are scheduled for every day except Sunday, memes are created for Instagram and Facebook. There is a new project in the making – a podcast interviewing orthodox Christians who have converted from other faiths.

Fr. Stephen shared with the council that Bishop Gerasim will be coming for a visit and to serve a Hierarchical Liturgy. In discussing the best time, end of January 2026 seemed most suitable for getting the visit properly coordinated and for the choir and the parish to be well prepared. Fr. Stephen will petition to have Ron Somich and Tahir Savansir ordained to the the minor order of reader. The council accepted this.

Mark raised a question of timing baptisms in a way that a larger group of catechumens is baptized at the same time, and also about celebrating these events as a parish. Fr. Stephen provided the insights into how the process works, and that the key for that is the attendance of the liturgy, which is ‘the best kind of catechism’. Service attendance is directly correlated to the readiness of the catechumens for baptism.

Dan raised a question about ensuring all inquirers and catechumens are informed of the basics in the church. Why do we cross ourselves at certain moments, why do we kiss the hand of the priest, simple questions that newcomers may be perplexed with. Fr. Stephen shared that all new catechumens are provided with a catechism guide which lays out the basics. This is available on the website. And there is a printed 2-sheet guide made available for all newcomers in the narthex, it also helps with basic questions.

Warden’s Report

Mark informed the council that the work on the ceiling in the narthex and above a couple of icons has been finished. Mark shared that if we were to contemplate fixing the entire ceiling in the church, it would require purchasing equipment (about \$3000) which could potentially then be resold, and it would take about a week and a team of volunteers. Father Stephen proposed to hold off until next year when we have a better understanding how quickly the parish is growing, and if there is a need to re-configure the church – so that the work on the ceiling does not precede that.

Mark updated that the work on the tiles in the bathrooms will begin as soon as he is able to purchase the tiles for the best price.

The unsafe playground will be deconstructed in about 2 weeks.

Treasurer’s Report

In the absence of Ron, Fr. Stephen recommended that the report is distributed this week via email, it can be voted on remotely or if there is a need, in person next Sunday.

Reports on Parish Activities

Chilli cook-off / Fall Fest is scheduled for November 2.

Fr. Stephen mentioned that Fr. Thomas and St. Paul’s parish were extremely grateful for our volunteers’ participation and help at the Greek Festival. Besides being helpful, this allowed us to meet other orthodox Christians and share information about our parish. This is valuable as most people are still not very familiar with us. In general, we will try to have more joint parish activities to help our parish and the orthodox faith grow.

New Business

Council discussed the upcoming Bishop's visit. Fr. Stephen explained how a hierarchical liturgy is different from a regular liturgy.

Old Business

Discussion about the new parish hall is very important but needs to be postponed.

Kitchen inventory – there were plates and napkins dropped off this week, we need to make sure Susanne is informed of any drop-offs.

Dan informed about the progress regarding the property on sale next to the church. His contact, the real estate attorney, has shifted her business into mediations and cannot be used, but she was helpful in forwarding the request to her recommended real estate attorney and we should have the details about the ownership situation soon.

Fr. Stephen shared that Ron took the psych exam as a part of his application to become a deacon, next step is the interview.

Council discussed the security measures in the church. There is a need for a security team. Fr. Stephen will add a call for volunteers into the bulletin. Volunteers need to be able to legally carry a handgun and have experience with it to be trained.

Fr. Stephen confirmed that the youth group meeting has been moved to the end of the month.

Dan shared the Celtic history of pumpkin carving with the council, explaining how its origins grew out of fear. The council brainstormed how to use this tradition with a purpose of connecting with Christ and making sure that kids do not get sidetracked.

Deacon will have a conversation about iconography in the church. This event is catered to young adults, but all parishioners are welcome to attend.

Deacon also shared his observation that parishioners tend to use the chairs towards the back of the church, with the chairs in the front of the church being empty, and some people having to stand in the narthex. Given that the chairs in orthodox churches are usually reserved for the parishioners unable to stand for longer periods of time, it was decided that next Saturday the folding chairs will be removed, and people will be encouraged to take the chairs in the front.

Since some adult parishioners have been socializing during the liturgy, Fr. Stephen will remind everyone that anyone who needs to discuss anything must step outside the church during the liturgy or any service to do so.

Brainstorming

Most pressing issues have been discussed.

Call for Adjournment / Closing Prayer - Meeting adjourned at 1:50 pm. Dan moved and Mark seconded.

Next Meeting: November 9, 2025