

St. Mary Magdalene Orthodox Church Monthly Meeting

January 25, 2026

Call to order / Opening Prayer: 12:20 pm

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

Approval of December 2025 minutes

Council approved the minutes – Ron moved to accept and Dan seconded.

Rector's Report

Fr. Stephen reported that Bishop Gerasim and his office, as well as the office of the Archbishop provided excellent feedback about the Bishop's visit. Bishop was very impressed with our parish, the Liturgy attendance, and the warm welcome. We have extended an invitation for the Bishop to visit us in July for the parish Feast Day, hoping it could become an annual tradition. The visit has put our parish on the radar, bringing us one step closer to the goal of growing the church, and expanding the number of people exercising the faith.

There were 140 people in attendance during the Bishop's visit, with average attendance of about 120 during recent Sundays.

The current number of catechumens is 57, with a group that is getting ready for baptism during the Lazarus' Saturday.

Fr. Stephen extended Axios to our newly blessed readers Ron and Tahir (Marcus) and his congratulations to Deacon on his 20th anniversary of ordination.

Regarding the new Bible study, Fr. Stephen is still working on that will keep people posted.

Looking ahead, Fr. Stephen informed that for Sunday of Orthodoxy we will go to St. James' for the vespers, as last year their parish joined us, and we are to alternate each year. He will talk to Fr. Thomas of St. Paul's about joining as well.

Our website is growing, the 'keyword hunting' has been delivering good results with people finding us on Google when they are searching for churches in their area.

Warden's report:

Mark informed that the remaining work on the bathrooms is being postponed till after Pascha, as we do not have sufficient resources to finish before Pascha.

The council discussed nominees for the new warden, since Mark's two years of service will end this month. The job of the warden was explained to the council, including duties like helping to run meetings, signing checks, being like a 'vice president' of the council. The warden should have initiative and leadership experience.

Fr. Stephen informed that the name of Dan has been put forward for the position of the warden, and Dan accepted the nomination. Fr. Stephen also suggested that Garret and Nate Hall are approached to become council members with a perspective for the warden position, as well as Jamie Collins. He proposed that Tahir and eventually Chastity sit in during the meetings so that later on they are ready to serve on the council as well.

Treasurer's report:

The council discussed the draft of the 2026 Budget.

Ron included the numbers for the years 2023-25 as well, so that the previous budgets can be referenced.

Since historically the total revenue has been growing by about 20%, the total revenue for 2026 is also projected to be 20% higher. Ron noted that the December pledge forms were not used for this projection as the submission rate was low.

The council discussed the honorary stipend for the Bishop (\$400) and budgeting that for July, the lower rate for the insurance, and expenses for the parish ministries and hospitality.

Mark brought up salary increase for Fr. Stephen – a 4-5% cost of living increase. Council discussed the increase, which would amount roughly to \$4000, including the pension plan payment. During the discussion it was noted that Fr. Michael's stipend is not increasing per se, though there is a higher number budgeted for this year, so that it can cover 4 Sundays that Fr. Stephen is entitled to take off during the year.

Susanne motioned to increase Fr. Stephen's salary, Dan seconded; the council voted in favor, and Fr. Stephen abstained.

Since last year we had to borrow \$6200 from our savings, the goal for this year is to return that amount back into the bank.

Fr. Stephen mentioned that during the Lenten weekend of March 7-8 Fr. John Dresko will be visiting with us and he will be talking about the stewardship and importance of growing and supporting the church, which should both improve the tithing and help us filling the church, with the aim of building another one.

Mark motioned to accept the updated 2026 budget, Susan seconded, all voted in favor.

Parish activities:

- Tuesday Fire Pit –Fr. Stephen shared that the 1st one went well, people brought good questions to discussion;
- Saturday Night Dinners – are looking more like Saturday Fire Pit nights. Deacon suggested doing readings about Saints. Fr. Stephen commented that it would be overwhelming after vespers and other Saturday activities for those attending.
- Bishop's Visit – the council commented on how beautiful the service was. Susanne mentioned that there was a good amount of leftovers from the catering still available in the freezer.

New business:

- Pastoral Conference (Feb 4th-6th, 2026) - Ron and Fr Stephen will be attending, they will drive out on Tuesday and come back on Friday, with no interruption to weekly services.
- Saturday of Orthodoxy (February 28th, 2026) at St. James, as mentioned above;
- Fish Fry Fundraiser – suggested by Fr. Stephen and discussed by the council and would tentatively be planned for the Friday after Annunciation (March 27th). Dan will look into the local fish distributors and report back.
- DVP - Reader Ron Somich - part of the cost is already budgeted for as a Vocations expense. Fr. Stephen recommended that the parish covers the rest of the cost as well. Mark motioned that the \$1600 cost of the DVP program is covered by the parish, Susanne seconded, all voted in favor, Ron abstained.
- Church School - there is a great need to have a separate class for the teens, and the council discussed potential teachers. This person should come to church regularly, be knowledgeable about the faith and be relatable to teens. Fr. Stephen suggested asking Tom, and Deacon offered to fill in the position as a backup in case Tom doesn't accept. Ron and Tahir as new readers were recommended to help out as needed as well.
- Candles - at this time, we are using the candles loaned to us by St. Paul, as there has been a communication hiccup with the nunnery that is usually providing candles. Council discussed best options to move forward. Mark suggested to order larger quantities. Ron offered ordering regular taper candles from the company whose baptism candles had to be returned and we have a credit of \$2000 with them. Everyone agreed, and Fr. Stephen will also proceed to order 3

cases of taper candles from Holy Archangel Candles who have great turnaround and pricing.

- Play area – now that the old play area is gone, and we are having fire pit events, Josh offered to build a firepit and a new play area, covering all the expenses. Ron moved to proceed with this plan, Susanne seconded, all voted in favor.
- Driveway - Deacon Vassily brought to attention that we need a stone backing for the driveway, as the grading from the road to the driveway has a sharp drop and floods the area. Dan offered to get a quote from the company he knows.

Old business:

- New Hall- will table until next month while Tom is putting together a plan.
- Altar Robes – will table until next month.
- Expanding Building / New Church – will table for now.
- Kitchen Inventory List – Susanne confirmed everything is under control.
- Land For Sale (Property Attorney) - will table for now.
- Security Measures / Protect His House - Dan has the details about installing the doors with push bars, and Bob confirmed he can install. Susanne motioned to install the new security doors for the church, Mark seconded, all voted in favor.

Call for Adjournment / Closing Prayer - Meeting adjourned at 1:33 pm. Ron moved and Susanne seconded.

Next Meeting: February 22nd, 2026 (potentially moving to next week as February 22nd is the Forgiveness Sunday and the service will run longer than usual).