

**St. Mary Magdalene Orthodox Church**  
**Monthly Meeting Minutes**  
**April 19th, 2026**

**Call to Order / Opening Prayer:** 12:52 pm

**Approval of March 2026 Minutes**

Dan moved to approve the minutes, Nate seconded, all voted in favor.

**Rector's Report**

The current number of catechumens is 49. Today's Liturgy attendance was 116, attendance of Pascha service was 155, and 60 people attended the Sunday Vespers. We have been getting a good number of visitors that belong to other faiths.

Fr. Stephen provided an update on the GSU Bible Study initiative – the Somich family has been piloting monthly student meetups at their house. Tim Teeter will be the campus advisor once this formally moves to the campus, and Benjamin will be able to provide one of the production rooms for the meeting space.

The prep work has been started for the podcast - most of the equipment is in, and the recording should start in May-beginning of June.

Fr. Stephen informed about the SCAD student short film that will be shot at our parish. Fr. has read the script, it is a story about a loss built around the figure of a hieromonk (Fr. Polycarp Strosnider). The prep will start in May and the film will be shot during 2 weekends in June. The film will then be submitted to the Byzantfest (Orthodox Film Festival).

Fr. Stephen noted that the parish is doing very well with the tithing.

He shared that the website has been very effective: most new people find us on the website. Fr. has been trying various strategies to increase traffic and media presence. Recently, our church has been showing up with Gemini, Chat GPT and Grok chatbots.

The appointment of the new adulting committee was acknowledged.

Garret raised a question about the GSU Bible Study vision, and Fr. Stephen shared that the goal is to plant the seeds for the future mission or chapel, to offer the newcoming young people a sense of ownership.

Dan moved to approve Rector's report, Ron seconded, all voted in favor.

**Warden's Report**

Dan shared the positive dynamics with maintenance/cleanup volunteers.

He updated the council on the recent septic tank maintenance: fortunately there is no major issue, the tank needed to be pumped out which has resolved all of the concerns.

The panic bar on the church door has been installed and we have 1 spare left, which is great since we are looking at expending the church/hall.

The new playground has been built and this new structure can be disassembled and moved easily.

There are plans to add a bridge to it.

No new developments with the choir loft yet.

Easter lilies have been planted.

Choir room has been cleaned out to accommodate the expanded group.

We are working on getting a wholesale permit for the book store, which has some challenging paperwork.

The council discussed the concern about the coffee chat location, Susanne suggested looking into Stir in Pooler, which may be closer for most people.

The council discussed taking on some of the responsibilities in interacting with the parish members who have non liturgical/spiritual inquiries, to help Fr. Stephen manage his workload. The council will be developing a corresponding framework and process.

Susan has raised a question about the faulty outlet in the hall. Fr. Stephen will work with Nate (the electrician) to look into this issue.

Nate moved to approve the Warden's report, Garret seconded, all voted in favor.

**Treasurer's Report**

Ron informed that we are well ahead of the budget. We closed January being 3% ahead, with 15% ahead in March and so far almost 50% ahead in April. The online giving has significantly increased. The baby shower for Matushka Lindsey which was also an appreciation event for all the sisterhood received support and donations, with the young fellows helping out with the setup and cleanup. If this level of giving can be kept up, we can start looking into expanding/new building.

As a side note, Fr. shared that there is a new OCA program being piloted for training new priests. This program incorporates the deacon training program and allows to spend one additional year to become an ordained priest (with some limitations) to serve at missions where there are no priests available.

Dan moved to approve the Treasurer's report, Nate seconded, all voted in favor.

## **Reports on Parish Activities**

Prayer Rope Making Class – there were 25 attendees, it went well and Josh will do it again.

Monthly GSU Meet Up at the Somich's - it started at their house blessing, and next week they will hold their 3rd meeting. It has been growing since their inaugural meeting, and Ron and Kristine will be checking if there is interest to continue in June-July since students might be going home for the summer. In March during the Great Lent, the meetup was focusing on theology, and last week during the Bright Week, it was more festive with fun and games.

Fish Fry Palm Sunday - Josh did a great job, it is an example of stewardship. He was looking for the ways to contribute to the church, and he was able to bring excess food supplies from the fire station.

## **New Business**

Coffee Hour – Susanne shared that the situation with overseeing the coffee hour has become toxic and she would like to step down. There is a need for a more sustainable framework (committee, sign-ups, cleanup coordination), as well as a need to have more volunteers bringing in food. People lose control and have unreasonable complaints when it comes to coffee hour.

Trailer Registration – Fr. Stephen will address with Deacon Vassily and send an update.

Mother's Day - May 10th – Dan suggested that the men of the parish do all the cooking and cleaning for that Sunday, the council supported his suggestion.

Family in need – Josh contacted the council to help a family who needed shelter for 2 nights until their new living accommodation is available. Dan moved to cover a motel room for 2 people. Nate seconded, all in favor.

## **Old Business**

Bank Account - Dan and Fr. Stephen have been added as signers. Reader Ron is still working with the bank to upgrade the account to have multiple users.

Candles - Root Candles - Reader Ron has ordered 6 boxes of the 7-day candles, and could likely order another 10 boxes (this is a replacement order for the baptismal candles which did not work out). Sasha suggested adding regular candles to kiosk for anyone who would like to buy them for their home or Easter baskets, as the only type sold at the kiosk right now is the baptismal candles.

Driveway – discussion tabled until next meeting.

Kitchen Inventory List - Suzanne has been looking into the most cost-effective options for kitchen supplies. She informed that webstaurant charges for shipping and Sam's Club is the least expensive option. We will be using smaller sized bowls and plates going forward. Garret confirmed he can order using his discount and also pick up the order. Hospitality fund was discussed for anyone who would like to contribute items to the kitchen/coffee hour. Susanne suggested placing a box to collect

donations for the food budget, so that we have a minimum to work with. In further discussing how to optimize the coffee hour situation, the council agreed that women and kids should have a priority in line and that there is a need for a larger committee for planning and cooking.

**Call for Adjournment / Closing Prayer: 2:16 pm**

**Next Meeting: May 17th, 2026**