



## **St Matthew Orthodox Church 2025 Annual Parish Meeting**

Meeting: February 1, 2026

**Opening prayer was given by Father John at 11:54.**

Council members in attendance: Father John Thetford, rector; Paul Novak, president; Matt Tomac, vice president; Tom Julian, treasurer; Vera Limberopoulos, recording secretary; Noah Becker, corresponding secretary.

A quorum was met with 65 members in attendance.

Paul made a motion to accept the minutes from the annual parish meeting held on February 2, 2025. Approved by all.

### **Priest's report – Father John**

Fr Paul thanked all that work singing, serving, fixing things, behind the scenes, and the parish council for their continued work. Also, a thank you goes out to Tom Julian who is going off the council this year.

We continue to have many new people coming to our church. We continue to welcome all the new people who are coming and remember what it was like for us to come for the first time and be new.

This year we are on tract to receive at least 40 new people into our church in the first 6 months, formally as Orthodox Christians. Last year we received 25 new people over twelve months.

What do we do regarding all this new growth? One year ago, we made improvements to the upstairs hall (Founder's Hall). We did expansion in our worship space in 2025, and we've done other smaller projects including the painting that will be going on tomorrow. All these ways help to accommodate the growth that we've seen. Long term, Father's hope is to have a second church, probably in the southern Fox Valley, which isn't unrealistic with all this growth. It's a great goal to have practically and evangelistically, making sure that we have churches for people to come to. It's a realistic goal. We should all continue to think about this and pray about it. Currently we can't do anything about it except continue to pay off our mortgage and use small projects to improve our building here.

With this growth, it enables us to do more, especially with our ministry team, locally. We do the shelter meals which have been going very well. In March, we'll have a speaker come from Saint John's ministry to speak to us about the work that is going on there which we have been supporting for many years. In 2026, we will be amping up the giving that we give to ministries, both international Orthodox ministries and local humanitarian ministries in our area. Our fall festival supports all these ministries. We are hoping to ramp up the festival a little bit this year. We will be having a meeting in May to discuss this and plan a little earlier including what else we can do. Is it possible to have live music? We have people who can do that. We've been raising a few thousand dollars a



year but would like to see if we can double that without being a huge stress. That's a goal for this year, to raise \$6,000.

**Vice-president's report: Matt**

As vice-president, I need to focus on cleaning of the church. If anybody is willing or would like to be on the cleaning list, please let him know. "What does it entail?" (Sarah). Cleaning the church: If there's salt on the floors, mop the floors, vacuum the floors, clean the bathrooms, take out the garbage, clean the front entry way windows. If one person does it, it takes a couple hours. If a family does it, it takes about a half hour or so. The rotation for cleaning is about once every two or three months. It can be done during the week, but needs to be completed before vespers on Saturday.

This year's picnic is set for Sunday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>. It will once again be at Green Isle Park. Last year we got a lot of positive feedback. There's more parking including a few parking spots next to the building for individuals with mobility issues. We want to encourage everyone that might not have attended in the past due to parking, to please come this year. It is more accommodating, it's a nice facility, and the picnic gives everyone a chance to get to know other members that you might not normally talk to.

We need to do some painting on the back side of this building. (The back side color does not match the front and sides.) We are looking for able bodies for this project in spring. If anyone would like to head it or participate contact Matt.

**President's report: Paul**

The church mortgage is up for refinancing. We've had preliminary discussions with the bank. Our current required mortgage payment is \$1,187. We try to pay extra on principle which can be up to \$1,000 a month. We are looking to refinance the mortgage at roughly the same (monthly) amount.

**Paul made a motion for the parish council president and treasurer to refinance the mortgage for the church. Approved by all, unanimously by voice.**

We have a church directory online. The information for it is on our bulletin board under special activities. With all the new people that we have, keeping the church directory up to date is all of our responsibilities. If your name is not in the directory, please send an email to Paul or to Jennifer Kribbs to make sure that you get added.

With all the growth that we've had, we put together a "time and talent survey" in an attempt to know our members better. Handouts we distributed for members to fill out. We are trying to understand all the talents that we have in the church. Some items on the list include church school, St John's prep, cleaning schedule, gardening projects, etc. It has boxes stating "I can lead, I can educate, I want to learn, I want to donate to projects in this area". Take the number above and fill in the slots. (see attachment)



It's time to remodel the kitchen. It hasn't been touched since 1962, other than a few adds. The ministry team made a request for a kitchen that contains two refrigerators and two stoves. A rendering was shown with a mockup. It has new cabinets, an attached peninsula with a flip up arm, two stoves and two refrigerators. (See attachment)

Paul is asking for approval of not spending more than \$32,000 on this project. The parish council has looked at it and approved this amount. We have a contractor that we're working with who has given us a quote on that rendering, not to exceed \$28,000. \$32,000 gives us a little room to buy a new refrigerator and a new stove. They will take one week to complete the work. If we can get it approved we would like to get it done by Pascha. We have approximately half of the funds already collected. (We have squirreled away \$16,000 since last November.) We have \$5,000 already committed. We would still need to raise about \$12,000. Paul would like to meet with those that have a vested interest in the kitchen, those that work in the kitchen. This way they can sit down and go through all the nuances of what would work and agree on them.

Interested vested individuals: Dorothy O, Jay J, Katherine W, Kaine, Melissa A, Melissa M, Chuck B, Paul N, Father John.

Q & A. – Where is the second refrigerator? – It is up to the door.

-Can the peninsula have access doors on both sides? – Yes

-Is it possible to have a larger commercial gas stove with 6 burners? – We only have electrical service in the kitchen and no gas.

-Can the peninsula be moveable? It would give us more flexibility when there are multiple people in there, since the space is tight. – There is an option of having electrical outlets on the peninsula, but then it would not be moveable. If we chose to make it moveable, we could put castors on it and put electrical on the wall.

- Will there be treatment to the wall covering? – No

-Will the contractor address the fire codes? – Yes, and we have extinguishers there.

- Are there any electrical updates that need to be done? – We have electrical that will need to be moved. Our in-house electricians will tackle that, thus saving us \$2,500.

- Would we be able to run a gas line there? – We only have gas in the other half of the building. We don't know what it would cost to run a gas line. (Member's feedback: It would cost a couple of thousand dollars.)

- When do we need to have all the money raised? What happens if we don't raise all the money? – To start the project we need 25% down, which we already have. We will get it done. If we raise it within the next 90 to 120 days, we're fine.



Father John stated that we will not be using tithe money to complete this project. It will all be funds raised by direct donations. This is important to say because it isn't 100% necessary.

A group of vested individuals will meet Tuesday at 4:00, to be confirmed by email, to further address the nuances of the future kitchen.

**Paul made a motion to agree to remodel the kitchen, at not more than \$32,000, meeting with the vested crew, with the intent of getting it completed before Pascha. Melissa F seconds the motion. Approved by all unanimously by voice.**

### **Treasure report: Tom Julian**

The 2026 SMOC Annual Meeting Treasurer Report with budget was distributed for viewing by members.

-Tom reiterated that he is leaving the council. Thank you to everyone who has been generous in your giving, It has made my tenure quite nice. As parish council we continually look to balance "equipping the saints (you)" which is the goal of the church versus our infrastructure. That is ministry to others versus projects.

-In 2026 we will be increasing our ministry budget by 25%. We are having real local impact through our shelter meals, giving to local pantries, support of the schools, giving to the Red Cross, AA Alexandria Pregnancy Center, St John's Shelter, and House of Hope. When a parish can give money away you know the church is healthy. Our goal has been to give away 10% which we have exceeded through our ministries.

- St Macrina Chapel has moved to a rented site, which will require some rent support as need. Everything that the attendees gave to St Macrina Chapel last year has been placed into savings, approximately \$6,000.

-Growing the Fall Festival will provide income for ministry operations. If each person invites one person to come, we could double our income.

- We are trying to pay down our mortgage. We will be refinancing approximately \$135,000.

- In 2014 we moved from our old parish site in Redwood and came here. At that time, we borrowed \$258,000 with our goal to pay the mortgage off in 15 years. At that time, we also started "project 42" where families could give \$42 a month to help pay it off in 15 years. We borrowed \$30,000 against it to do the parking lot and paid that off, then \$65,000 to do the roof. We paid that off also. As of this point, with improvements including iconography, we've put in approximately \$300,000 into the property. We should be able to pay this \$135,000 in the next 3 – 4 years. We have been paying \$2187 a month. We want to increase it to \$2500 a month.



-2025 income = \$257,499. Expenses \$237,033 (without 1/25 iconography outlay). Expenses exceeded budget by \$32,800. Projects that were completed: sealed the parking lot, resized the closet, \$4,000 for new chairs, worked on Founders Hall, new vestibule flooring, cabinets replaced in women's bathroom, and painting.

-Refinance of mortgage in March 2026. A 7-year ARM could give us a lower interest rate, to be debt free by 2030.

- The new treasurer and PC need the same support and commitment that you have given me. There are multiple ways to give. A mix of monthly, weekly, bi-weekly or annual.

- We are receiving a lot more RMD (required minimum distributions) gifts. These are from individuals over 72 years old. This is when they are required to take funds out of their IRAs, and make direct donations, not having to pay taxes on it, resulting in savings of 25 -30% to them. Also, if someone is selling stock and does not want to pay capital gains, and they choose to donate, they can transfer it into our brokerage account, and there will be no capital gains paid. So, your gift gets bigger by giving it directly to us.

- Income from 2026 budget projected \$274,000 which includes \$32,000 for the kitchen. Without the kitchen budget it is \$242,000. We raised \$257,000 last year. 2026 proposed out of pocket expenses \$264,100. Which would give us a surplus of \$9900. Without Iconography, 2025 expenses were \$237,000. We expect our income to increase \$17,000, and our expenses to increase \$5,000.

-Our expense for our seminarian will go down this year since he will complete it in May. The bishop has requested that all parishes support the seminary fund for the OCA with the goal OCA paying 100% of the tuition for the seminarians. We have budgeted a \$2400 payment for seminarians, with hopes of exceeding that. We will send the diocese one check in September.

-Question- For those that donate to ZELL, do we change the email for giving? Answer-The email will be changed at the bank tomorrow. Tom gets emails saying money is in and out. Please put in the memo who the money is from.

**-Paul made a motion to accept the budget that Tom has presented. Melissa A seconds the motion, approved by all by voice.**

**-Election of parish council.** A document was sent in an email in October, it has been posted and sent in the Saturday emails, outlining the roles and responsibilities of parish council members.

Paul N read from parish council bylaws; "The term of office for members of parish council shall be two years. No member of the parish council may serve more than three consecutive terms. The parish council may vote to make an exception to the term limits by passing a motion to do so with 2/3 voting of the voting members at an annual special meeting. Notwithstanding any provisions, all officers and members of the parish council shall hold office until their successors are dually elected, qualified, confirmed and installed. Any vacancy which



occurs shall be filled by the parish council by electing a successor, therefore with confirmation by the rector for the remainder of the vacated term.”

-First member of the council is Father so he will be on it as long as he's here.

-President: This calendar year is Paul Novak's last year. He is up to six years. Next year at the annual meeting we will be electing a new president.

\*Vice president: Matt Tomac is ending his second year. He said that he would be willing to continue into a third year, unless there was a nomination for a different candidate.

\*Recording Secretary: Vera Limberopoulos is ending her first two-year term. She is also willing to continue for another term.

\*Treasurer: Tom was due to complete his term at the end of 2026 which would have coincided with the president's term ending. Father asked Tom if he would step down this year, so we could stagger his term.

Father and council approached Danny Panella a few months ago and he has agreed to be our new treasurer if we vote him in. Danny has been attending council meetings off and on for the last six months, to assist in a transition and bring him up to speed.

\*Corresponding secretary: Noah Becker is ending a vacated term and is also willing to stay on for another two years.

Paul asked if there are any floor nominations for any of the positions that are open. There were no floor nominations.

**Paul made a motion to accept the nominations for those positions that were up, including Danny Panella for treasurer. Chuck seconded the motion, agreed by all unanimously by voice vote.**

The Diocesan Assembly nomination: Paul Novak, Tom J and Chuck B will not be available to attend this year. Vera Limberopoulos offered to represent our parish. Paul made a motion for Vera Limberopoulos to be our delegate and Matt Tomac to be our alternate at The Diocesan Assembly in Cleveland this year. Melissa A seconds the motion. Noah Becker voted nay. The remaining members verbally voted to pass the motion. The motion passed with a majority vote of 64 to one.

### **New business:**

Jeff Z asked about the colors on the borders of the Iconostasis to coordinate and have a bigger border.

Paul N gave great description of the details that were put into the Iconostasis. This includes more detailed work, more careful proportions, strong use of bright blues and greens, finer lines, extensive gold representing heavenly light being radiant and shining upon you.



Noah said that he will be pushing for Sunday in person council meetings. He suggested that we also still use a computer so people can still ZOOM if needed. There was mixed feedback about changing the meeting day to Sunday. We had one in-person council meeting this past summer with only council members attending. Paul confirmed that we will discuss this at our next parish council meeting.

Noah made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Matt, approved by all.

Father John gave the closing prayer.

The meeting adjourned at 1:07.

St. Matthew Orthodox Church



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