St Matthew Orthodox Church Parish Council Meeting

Meeting: August 16, 2026

Meeting called order at 12:07

Opening prayer was given by Father John

Council members attending: Father John Thetford - rector

Paul Novak – president (excused absent)

Matt Tomac - vice president

Tom Julian – treasurer

Vera Limberopoulos - recording secretary

Noah Becker – corresponding secretary

guests: Tom Julian, Chuck Bayerl, Kaine Bernarde, Sarah Tomac, Natalya Tomac, Rose Arias, Michael Raymond

Minutes from the June 14th had typos (spelling Alessandra Rolffs) and double listing for Diocesan program. Corrections will be made. Minutes from the submitted July 7th meeting appear correct

Matt made a motion to approve the June 14th council meeting minutes with corrections. Approved by all. Matt made a motion to approve the July7th council meeting minutes. Approved by all.

Priest's report – Father John

-We continue to get plenty of newcomers. A reminder for us to continue to greet new people. The door keeper ministry encompasses greeting new people and security. We had a recent individual that came a few times and appeared troubled when he spoke to Father. The door keepers will continue to keep an eye out for any potential issues.

-We have a good number of volunteer servers and bakers. We added a new prosphora baker in July and will be adding an additional baker in September.

-We scheduled one more bagged lunch at St John's Shelter on September 18th. We will be taking October off due to our fall festival. Shelter meals will commence again in November.

- The September liturgical schedule is set. We will be having regular typica services on Washington Island. We did get a grant for $1,600 to purchase basic liturgical supplies. This was through an OCA affiliated foundation

based in PA. There are about 15 Orthodox Christians that live on Washington Island. They are blessed to have use of a Lutheran church on Sunday mornings.

- The September 19th baptism that was scheduled will be moved to October 10th. It will be for Eugene, son of Peter Parry.

-Fr Tom Muller will serve at St Macrina Chapel on September 26th. Father John will not be available that day due to him being away. Father John will be a guest speaker for a women's retreat in Milwaukee September 25th and 26th.

-Our current catechism classes have had 15 plus people. Of this group, only at the most 7 will be ready to be received into the church in November.

President's report: No report. President absent.

Vice-president's report: Matt

-We are looking to fill cleaning teams and team captain positions. If we know of anyone willing and able to let Matt know.

-Matt will baby proof the outlets.

-Tom J brought up that the three windows in the hallway on the south side take on a lot of heat in the summer. If we could put blinds on them, it would keep the heat down on hot days. Also, if we lowered the blinds all the way on hot days in Founder's Hall and Herrick Hall, it would assist in keeping the room cool. The AC wouldn't have to work so hard. Additionally, if the fans are on medium, it makes a significant difference in keeping the room cool.

Matt found out from the HVAC guys that our AC unit downstairs is undersized. Even when the AC is running its' coldest it can't keep up with candles and the warmth of 140 people. We could start the colling earlier, before services. We should run the dehumidifier during services to make it more comfortable. Father requested that he obtain a second dehumidifier. It could have a hose run from it into the sump.

Father John made a motion to purchase a second dehumidifier. The motion was passed by all present. Father will purchase the dehumidifier from Home Depot.

-Chuck B relayed that he and Paul N will go forward with removing the water fountain off of the wall this winter. This topic was previously discussed and agreed upon by council.

Treasure report: Danny

-The updated treasure's report was sent out to council members for review. All funds are in good standing.

-We received a couple of bids for pest control. One bid was with Suamico Trap. To come out, it would be $542. After, it would be about $75 a month, for the next few months. This fee covers checking the bait locations once a month and replenishing bait if needed. This would come to $300 - $400 per year. We are currently not under a contract. The company pointed out to Danny there are a lot of spots outside where pests could be coming in. We currently have 8 exterior bait stations around the building, plus bait inside. These stations handle mice and rats. It was discovered that there are a lot of access points near the bushes.

-St Macrina Chapel has an account balance of $10,500. We are expecting their rent to be due soon. Father relayed that he had recently settled two months of rent for the Ramada.

- Fall festival is coming soon so there will be expenses for supplies.

- St Lawrence Chapel fund: Paul and Danny set up a checking account for them to be able to track those.

new business:

-**Sound system changes**: Father reported that multiple people have come to him expressing that they want to be able to take their kids out (during the service) and hear Father's sermon. Multiple parents have asked for a way to be able to do that. Father relayed the potential options: just a speaker in the hall, a tv screen (closed circuit), or live streaming online. These options were open for discussion.

Tom expressed that he felt live streaming sends the wrong message. He has seen video screens of services elsewhere viewed casually and without reverence for the service. He feels it sends the wrong message to new comers and the youth of our church that they could have the option of not participating in the liturgy. It would give them license not to be in the nave and not to participate in the preparation for the eucharist. He feels that he could support a speaker in the narthex. Father John agrees with Tom that a speaker in the narthex is the best option. Father relayed that within eighteen months we might have to explore other options as our congregation grows. Paul previously shared with Father that at St Mary's Cathedral in Minneapolis that they have to live stream in their basement because they have so many people in attendance. (Theirs is a separate designated worship space.) Noah relayed that there could be parishioner's concerns using a camera to stream live or online. Chuck feels like it gives people an out to not be here (live streaming). Everyone should be here, using their senses to partake in the liturgy.

Father's idea would be to set up a speaker in the narthex. It could be on the small table or discreetly in the ceiling tiles. Father would go to David N to see if this is possible with our existing system. This speaker would be used for all of matins and the full liturgy. The microphone would be kept where the readers stand is, to the side. Father added that having a speaker on in the narthex dissuades people from talking there (while the speaker is on). It was noted with a speaker; there is the option to record audio only (if this gets decided on later).

It was brought up of possibly having a welcome video of a service (not livestreamed) for our website to help newcomers know what to expect in an orthodox church. Some individuals liked the idea of orientation to the

space before coming. It was also expressed that the video did not need a full tour of the building. Newcomers can see the space as we meet and greet them. Tom feels having a video sends a message that we're like other groups/religions and that we're trying to keep up with the church growth mindset. Our church has been growing exponentially without videos. Partially due to converts looking for something different. Members had mixed feedback regarding livestreaming of service, with the majority not in favor of it. Father also noted that most of the most popular priests live stream their services. Father will look to see what other churches do for their welcome videos as a reference point.

Noah made a motion to research installing a speaker in the narthex. The motion was passed 5 yes / one absent.

Father made a motion to look into making a welcome video (with Michael, for our website). This would be preliminary work which would later need final approval. The motion was passed 5 yes / 1 absent.

Sponsoring catechumens: Tom brought up that we have 16 or so new catechumens. Only one couple currently has sponsors. Ideally, we want the catechumens to find their own sponsors. Father stated that we need to do a better job of getting to know people. During coffee hour we should sit with someone we don't know and get to know them. We need to be intentional about getting to know our catechumens. This would assist them so they can approach people to sponsor them. Having a good sponsor could help them in assimilating to the orthodox mindset and practices. This sponsorship is forever. The communication should continue after their Christmation. At the recent Parish Development forum they talked about pairing up individuals with similar backgrounds to get conversations started. It was also suggested asking the catechumens if they want to be added to the directory (after the third or fourth class). The men's and women's group meetings are another good source to get conversations started. It was brought up of the possibility of training for sponsors.

Old business:

-The north entry is still under construction. It is close to being completed.

-Keith Jorgenson should be coming this week with an estimate for the stair replacement. We have a donor who committed to paying for half of the project.

-It was suggested that if we are going to be voting for new council positions, we should have clear expectations for the next meeting. What the positions and roles are.

-Father confirmed that the next parish council meeting will be Sunday September 20th.

Matt made a motion to adjourn, approved by all.

Father John gave the closing prayer.

The meeting adjourned at 1:06.

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