

St. Matthew Lutheran
CCC with Bishop Barbins and Pastor Mitch Phillips
September 19, 2023 5:00PM

President	Bill Heck	P
President-Elect	Jen Knaggs	P
Secretary	Mary Dunham	P
Treasurer	Teri Uttech	P
Personnel Director	Barb Woodard	P
Finance Director	Bruce Reed	P
Property Director	Troy Gerspacher	P
Deacon	Lindsay Stertzbach	P
Pastor	Steve Mahaffey	P

Five Star Ministry Team Leaders

Communication / Evangelism	Beth Johnson P
	Jill Heck P

Comprehensive Youth	Jen Hogan P
	Julie Shrader P
Congregational Life	Melody Costello P
Small Groups	Heather Haycook
	Corey Neururer

Social Concerns

Bishop Laura Barbins and Pastor Mitch Phillips

Sandy Andrews, Scott Johnson, Helen Graf, Carla and Bob Maas, Carol Elkins, Todd Costello and Austin Stertzbach.

Pastor Steve shared that Bishop Barbins will be addressing CC and for those that are present feel free to participate in our conversation.

Bishop Barbins appreciated our interest in attending. After reading our Systems Team Report she wanted to share her concerns, and find out what our plan of action was in addressing those concerns moving forward. She will have questions, and after we introduce ourselves, we will have a prayer and then see where our conversation goes.

In introducing ourselves we were asked to include how we have seen God active in the life of our congregation over the past few months.

The first thing Bishop Barbins asked us was, did you find the report valid, your biggest takeaway, and how do you think it was received by others in the congregations?

Beth felt we are doing a good job with communication. In reality Beth feels communication is spot on. Bishop shared Woody Allen says, "Perception is 9 10ths of reality. Pastor Mitch's quote is we under communicate by a factor of 10. So when we think we are communicating well we can do it 10 times more. "

Teri mentioned maybe some things may be under communicated but our methods of communicating were great.

Bill felt report wasn't valid at first and then came to realize it was. The Bishops takeaway from reading the report was that a small group was a stumbling block. A small group is resisting leadership.

Carla spoke as did Julie Schrader, about "the stuff." And no matter if it's one bad "thing" or two, it is breaking and tearing caring members hearts apart. Barb felt the systems report has informed members and prompted questions.

Jen shared that this has been going on for 7 years, and this "STUFF" has got to stop.

Bob said that Deacon Lindsay has a call, and her role should not be defined by goals, and questioned. Let her **LEAD. Trust** her!

Helen shared that Deacon Lindsay was treated horribly. Secret conversations need to STOP. Pastor Steve should not have to be dealing with this. Both Deacon and Pastor are educated and trained to lead our congregation. **LET THEM LEAD!** Bishop recognized the trauma that Helen and Carla expressed.

Bishop Barbins recap shared that yes St. Matthew is thriving. We have 50 potential youth that are eligible to attend the Youth Gathering and have received 50 new members. Some congregations in our synod don't even have 50 members. The problem is our rostered leaders are not thriving. The word that keeps coming up is **lack of trust**. They question every stinking thing they do. Makes them not want to be here. That is not thriving. They are beaten down.

Worried about salaries? Bishop Barbins, "If we stop picking on them (Pastor and Deacon) and unleash them to ministry, monies follow vision. " Pastor Mitch asked that we **trust** the synod as they have studied compensation guidelines. Why do our rostered leaders have to constantly defend their compensation?

The only way this can be fixed is for CC to put these "trouble makers" in their place.

Pastor Steve asked to let them **LEAD**. He is fed up. We can't minimize what is happening.

Deacon Lindsay has found her voice and has about three months of energy left in her, due to the life being sucked out of her.

Carol asked when can we get those people that are causing the unhealthiness out of here.

Bishop asked everyone to take a few minutes to go to their "happy place."

Bishop Barbins said if steps are not taken by the end of October, with a plan to move in a healthy direction, and if our leaders are not feeling a clear sense of healing momentum, the bishop will encourage our rostered leaders to interview in other places. She is looking out for their well being.

Bishop Barbins summarized our constitution and lifted three points.

1. CC To maintain supportive relationships with the rostered leaders and staff.
2. To be examples individually and corporately of the style of life and ministry expected of all baptized people.
3. To promote a congregational climate of peace and goodwill and as differences and conflicts arise to endeavor to foster mutual understanding.

If there is anyone on council that feels they cannot do these three things than stepping down would be appropriate.

When installed CC members were called to be faithful in specific area of serving. They promised to be examples of faith, active in love, fostering peace, harmony and understanding.

If leaders cannot do these things than stepping down would be appropriate.

There is a part in our constitution that allows us to discipline those constant troublemakers. Generally that person would be addressed by the pastor and another person. If that doesn't work you go to a larger group and if that doesn't work you can take to the congregation, and if that doesn't work you can take to the synod.

If it's a leader, they can be asked to step down. If it's a staff member that is insubordinate they can be dismissed.

Churches don't like conflict and we tend to avoid it. So much so that they pretend it doesn't exist. But we are all sinful. If that small group is unhappy, they are not growing

in their relationship with Christ in our church. Perhaps they would grow with Christ in another church.

God wants abundant love for all of us. And if those “trouble makers” aren’t in the right place, they need to find that right place.

We were reminded that we are leaders and have an opportunity to **lead**. **Lead** for the sake of the gospel for this place, and **lead for the sake of these leaders** (Deacon and Pastor) who can’t spit into the wind anymore.

Bishop Barbins is pretty damn sure they are called to be here because no one is this stubborn. These people are meant to lead St. Matthew.

The enemy **always doubles down** when there is really some explosive work that might happen for the sake of the kingdom. The enemy will chirp in our ears and whittle away at **trust**, and erode relationships. And that’s what the Bishop sees happening here. The enemy is having a field day.

Bishop said, “You have the opportunity to **lead**. Bill, you have the opportunity to **lead** here, and if you cannot, than you have the obligation to step down. And you CC members, and 5 star leaders, you too, have the opportunity to **lead** and to make it so these leaders are not.....exhausted but can thrive with our congregation.”

Need to figure out how to move forward with the persistent troublemakers.

How can we move forward in mission and vision when the leaders are dealing with the trouble makers and constantly defending themselves?

Pastor Mitch shared that When Gods calls you to do something, God provides resources.

The Bishop will be happy to walk through this with us. If we need help with compensation guidelines or anything else please contact the synod. (Or maybe our rostered leaders are the first step.) Our immediate task is to deal with climate and conduct and need to address immediately.

The Pastor and Deacon have tried to have some pastoral conversations to no avail.

Jill shared that she hoped reconciliation would be an option. Bishop shared it is a two way street, and taking responsibility. Sometime that will not happen.

Pastor Steve shared that the first step in reconciliation is genuinely asking for forgiveness and not just to save face.

Bishop closed with a prayer encouraging us to have **courage** in the coming days, **courage** to lift their voice and the courage to have those hard conversations. Blessed Pastor Steve and Deacon Lindsay and asked them to be strengthened. Grant us Hope.

Respectfully submitted, Mary Dunham 7:20 ish