

Report to Congregation Council
March 19, 2024

Lent!!! Need I say more? We kicked off the Season of Lent here at St. Matthew by hosting St. Paul's Episcopal and Medina UCC congregations for an Ecumenical Lenten Study on Amy Jill-Levine's *Short Stories by Jesus: The Parables of Jesus*. I am glad to report that this has been a blessing for all who have been attending, as all 5 rostered leaders involved have heard feedback about how people appreciate "getting together" with other congregations, with the request to do more. The Wednesdays have all been well attended and stayed strong, with a decent representation from all three congregations. As a congregation with 2 leaders, we hosted 2 of the 5 Wednesdays.

This past month we also experienced what I would describe as a milestone moment: as a congregation, we *ratified* our new Constitution and Bylaws, making it our new governing document and bringing our congregation into alignment with the recommendations of the ELCA. It had been over two decades since anything related to the Constitution and Bylaws had "legally" been altered (I say this as there were Continuing Resolutions created and applied, but never shared with the Synod nor with the congregation). I'm pleased that we, as a congregation, made this happen!

I was active and engaged with the youth activities that Deacon Lindsay had planned for this past month, attending another one of the Gathering Preparation evenings, attending both Middles and Luther League Sunday School classes, spending most of a weekend at Hopewood Pines (formerly LMC) with the Luther Middles for their Winter Retreat, as well as attending the Comprehensive Youth Committee meeting. It was great to have so many opportunities in which to interact with the youth of the congregation.

Speaking of committee meetings, many of the committees had a meeting this past month which I attended all or part of: Worship Team (re: the organ); Northwest Conference of Clergy monthly meeting; Medina Clergy meeting; Evangelism/Communication; Personnel; Finance; LGL Samaritan Fund; and Mutual Ministry. If you didn't already know this, we are an evening meeting heavy congregation! Additionally, I met and visited with individuals in their homes, at restaurants, and here in my office, as well as with a first-year pastor who wanted to pick my brain about ministry in her context. Finally, a new "Fellowship" committee is actively forming, which will function much like the former Small Group did. The hope is to have representation on the committee that will plan a wide variety of fellowship activities, from young-families events to events more appealing to the elderly of the congregation. If you'd like to serve on this committee, contact either Joyce Davis or Helen Graf.

The Evangelism/Communication committee held a drive-thru food drive on March 9th. It was well supported by the members of St. Matthew. However, even with the excellent advertising within the community, it wasn't well supported by the surrounding community. We believe the many other food drives, as well as community activities that were happening that day, impacted the support from the community. The committee remains committed to holding another drive in 6 months.

Bible and Brews continues to go strong, as we've welcomed some new members to the study of Proverbs. I'm pleased with how committed many people are to growing in their

knowledge of Scripture ... and the engagement in the deep and oftentimes profound discussions that result.

The Holy Spirit continues to blow in and through St. Matthew, as I am preparing yet another New Member class. Some wonderful and new ministries happened this past month (intergenerational blanket tying and supplies for Akron Children's; Drive Thru Food Drive) thanks in part to a more flexible and permission-giving congregational structure found within our Bylaws. There's a "lightness" and "joy" that many have commented has returned to the church, and a sense of excitement for what lays ahead. Many new people are volunteering to serve and engage in God's mission. It's exciting!!

May God continue to bless us, bless our congregation, and use us to bless our community as we walk and serve together within God's mission.

In Christ, with Christ, for Christ!

Pastor Steve Mahaffey

**** My Mutual Ministry Team members are: Julie Shrader, June Trenty, Joe Obermeier, Brad Gierhart, Barb Woodard, and Tom Kotick