



St. Catherine's Anglican Chaplaincy
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**Our Voyage Together:
Faith, Fellowship, and Finances at St. Catherine's
Chaplaincy Workshop 2**
St. Catherine's Anglican Chaplaincy – Stuttgart
20 September 2025

Introduction - "The Boat is Sinking"

Do you remember that childhood game, "The boat is sinking, group yourselves into..."? When the boat is sinking, everyone scrambles to find their place.

Today, let us think of our church, St. Catherine's, as a boat. Not sinking yet, but like in the game, it makes us ask: where do I belong on this boat?

So, let me ask you three questions, answer only in your heart or by raising your hand if you wish: - Who among us here feels that St. Catherine's is *my church*, that I belong to St. Catherine's? - Who among us may not say "this is my church," but you enjoy and love to be here, for worship, for fellowship, for different reasons? - Who among us is not yet sure whether you belong or not, but you are here, and you are part of this gathering?

Thank you for your honesty. Whether you feel fully at home, love being here as a guest, or are still deciding, you are on board the MV St. Catherine's today. And because you are on board, you are part of the story we are telling and the future we are shaping.

The Church as a Boat - Sailing Toward God's Kingdom

From the earliest days of Christianity, the Church has often been imagined as a boat. The Latin word *navis* (ship) gives us the word *nave*, the central space of the church building. Just as Noah's ark carried life through the flood (Genesis 7–8), so the Church carries God's people through the storms of this world.

But a boat is not meant to drift endlessly. It has a destination. The Church is a boat sailing toward the horizon of *shalom*, the Kingdom of God.

- In **Mark 4:35–41**, Jesus is with his disciples in the boat during a storm, calming the waves. Christ journeys with us even when the seas are rough.
- In **Luke 5:1–11**, Jesus calls fishermen from their boats, telling them, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." The boat becomes the place of mission, gathering others into God's community.
- In **Revelation 21:1–4**, we see the final shore: "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more." That is the Kingdom, the true harbor we sail toward.

So, when we think of St. Catherine's as a boat, it is not just floating in circles. We are sailing with purpose: toward God's Kingdom of peace, justice, and life in fullness.

The Survey - A Glimpse of Who We Are

In the third quarter of this year, we conducted a Chaplaincy Survey. Twenty-one people responded, about half of our average weekly attendance. The responses came mostly from our **core** members, giving us valuable insight into our strengths and challenges.

People affirmed the worship life of St. Catherine's: "We've had several really good sermons, a big thank you to those who preached."

They celebrated the music: "The music is always good. Many thanks to our organists and singers."

They named the value of community: "Our community lives from the people and for the people."

Newcomers said they found the church "welcoming, friendly, and a place where they belonged."

Our call as a chaplaincy was framed in three words: **Pray - Engage - Give**. But the survey shows uneven engagement:

- **71%** pray regularly for the chaplaincy.
- **67%** contribute financially.
- **57%** volunteer time.
- **47% do all three.**

When we account for overlap, this means that **19 people (90%)** explicitly identified engagement in at least one of these areas. The remaining **10% (2 people)** did not indicate engagement in these categories. Since the survey primarily reached those most involved in our chaplaincy, this does **not necessarily mean they are disengaged**. Many may be active in other ministries, such as music or pastoral care, or may have chosen not to respond to these questions. What it does show is that the trinity of prayer, fellowship, and stewardship are not yet consistently engaged in across our community. This reminds us that the MV St. Catherine's is a good, living community, but our strength depends on how deeply we live out these three areas together.

1. Faith - Why We Are on the Ship

Almost half of respondents (71%) said they pray regularly for St. Catherine's. That is encouraging, prayer is our strongest area. It is like saying we have a solid anchor of faith holding us steady.

But faith is more than an anchor. Faith is also the sail that catches the wind of the Spirit and carries us forward. Without prayer, without trust, the ship does not move.

Scripture reminds us: - When the disciples panicked in the storm, Jesus said, "*Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?*" (**Mark 4:40**). Faith in Christ turns fear into courage. -

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith gives us confidence to journey into the unknown. - Paul prays in **Ephesians 3:16–17** that we may be *“strengthened in our inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, as we are being rooted and grounded in love.”*

Faith at St. Catherine’s shows itself when we gather in worship, pray for one another, and trust God to provide even when resources are few. The voyage toward God’s Kingdom cannot be made with finances or fellowship alone. It must begin with faith, faith that God has called us, that Christ sails with us, and that the Spirit fills our sails.

2. Fellowship – Who Is on the Ship

The survey tells us that fellowship is a gift here. People value worship, music, sermons, and diversity. They enjoy being together.

Our Pastoral Groups scheme is slowly doing well and has become an important vehicle for building fellowship. The survey shows that **67% (14 people)** have joined a group meeting, **14% (3 people)** wanted to but timing didn’t work, **14% (3 people)** are not interested, and **5% (1 person)** didn’t even know they were in a group. Most agreed that organizing service roles through these groups was an improvement. This means the structure is sound, but we must strengthen communication and timing.

On board our ship, fellowship means encouraging and cheering each other on. A ship cannot sail if some row while others sit silently. Words of encouragement, acts of kindness, and shared joy give strength for the journey.

And like the fishermen in Luke 5, we are called not only to care for those already in the boat, but also to invite new passengers on board. The voyage becomes richer when others join us.

As James reminds us: *“Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.” (James 2:17).* True fellowship is not only in words but in action - rowing, sharing, cheering, and helping one another.

3. Finances – Keeping the Ship Afloat

Why do we need to keep this ship afloat? Not just to survive another Sunday, but because we have a destination: God’s Kingdom. The MV St. Catherine’s is on a voyage, but every voyage needs fuel and provisions.

At present, much of our fuel comes from outside supporters like the Landeskirche and other friends. Their help is a blessing, but it is not guaranteed forever. If we depend only on that, our voyage will always feel uncertain. To sail with confidence, we must learn to be more self-reliant - owners and passengers together taking responsibility for the journey.

The survey shows that finances are where most people engage - but not enough to address our negative budget. Stewardship was described as “stronger in minds than in the treasurer’s inbox.” This is a challenge we must face honestly.

As Paul wrote: “The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully... God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough, you may share abundantly in every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:6–8).

If each one on board sows generously, then our ship will have enough fuel for the voyage - and even more, enough to welcome additional passengers and to share with others along the way.

So, What Shall We Do?

If the MV St. Catherine’s is in danger of sinking, how shall we respond? - **Shall we pray harder**, trusting God to calm the waters? - **Shall we strengthen** our fellowship, so that everyone finds a way to contribute? - **Shall we step up** in stewardship, so that fuel and provisions are supplied not by the same few, but by all who sail on this ship? - **Shall we encourage** one another, cheer each other on, and make space for more passengers to come aboard?

And above all, shall we sail with vision? Scripture reminds us: “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” (Proverbs 29:18). Without vision, a ship drifts. With vision, it sails toward its destination. Our vision is clear: to sail together toward the Kingdom of God, a horizon of peace, justice, and joy.

Closing Thought

The survey reminds us that there are many ways people serve and belong in this chaplaincy. Some roles are visible, others quiet and unseen. Whatever part each of us plays, our challenge is to make prayer, fellowship, and stewardship the heartbeat of our shared life. When these are strong, our ship sails with strength and purpose.

If we truly see St. Catherine’s as our ship, then we are not just passengers. Whether we are owners, co-owners, or fellow travelers - all of us on board can help keep this ship afloat. Some will row, some will steer, some will repair sails, some will encourage, some will pray, some will provide provisions.

And together, we keep sailing - not just to survive, but because our destination is God’s Kingdom. With vision, with faith, with fellowship, and with resources, the MV St. Catherine’s will not drift or sink, but will sail with purpose toward the horizon of shalom, carrying us and many others into God’s future.

+Antonio Ablon

The Chaplain