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Financial Crimes, Marriage Morality Plague Local Minister

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Financial crimes are plaguing an Elk River minister accused of taking money from his elderly mother-in-law to pay back taxes to the IRS.

William Neal Matthews, known as “Bill” to many, is no stranger to television cameras. He frequently uses them at his Solid Rock church and world outreach center to broadcast his religious messages on YouTube,

“The place that God wants us to be is debt free,” Matthews said in one of his videos.

Yet, despite his on-screen savvy, Matthews declined to go on camera to comment on the following report.

“You don’t solve financial trouble by borrowing more money,” Matthews preached in one recording. “You have to resolve the issue.”

Now, Matthews has plenty of his own issues to resolve -- among them, a felony charge of financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult.

“What my dad is doing is not (being) a good witness to win people to the Lord,” said Emily Malleonada, Matthews’ daughter.

Matthews’ family is opening up about the pastor’s money misdeeds and the conflicts surrounding this man of cloth’s new marriage.

“I’ve seen the bank statements. It’s pretty clear,” said Malleonada.

Matthews was recently in court to face charges that he stole money from his elderly mother-in-law.

“My aunt discovered it,” Malleonada said. “My grandma was actually in jeopardy.”

Malleonada said her grandmother was close to being evicted from a nursing home because the rent hadn’t been paid in months. Matthews was in charge of her finances at the time, Malleonada said.

“The money was getting used for some other thing and wasn’t getting paid to her nursing home bill,” Malleonada said.

One police were alerted, Matthews paid the \$3,500 bill, but by then, investigators had noticed something unusual in his bank records.

Investigators said that, while the nursing home rent had gone unpaid, \$1,720 had been withdrawn from Malleonada’s grandmother’s account and transferred into Matthews’.

Police said money was also taken from her account to pay the IRS on Matthews’ behalf.

Court documents show Matthews denied taking the money for his use.

Though Matthews had once preached about being debt free, he is hardly close when it comes to taxes.

Besides being a pastor, Matthews also owns an auto body repair shop; however, when FOX 9 Investigators checked Sherburne County records they found that the property taxes haven't been paid since 2008 -- tallying a past-due bill in the amount of \$22,000.

Recently, the state of Minnesota also tacked on a \$5,230 lien on the business due to unpaid withholding taxes.

"Anything to do with finances is always kept very hushed and very secret," said Andrew Matthews, the pastor's son.

There is no love lost between Andrew Matthews and his father. At one time, they worked together at the church and at the business, but they had a falling out in 2009 while Andrew's mother was dying and his marriage with then-wife Lorena was struggling.

"My wife then moved in with my dad to take care of my sick mom," Andrew Matthews recounted.

Andrew Matthews said his wife moved into his parents' home while he was out of state, training with the National Guard. Shortly after Andrew's ailing mother died, he said his father made a surprising announcement.

"God gave me a list of three people that I can marry, and Lorena is on that list," Andrew remembered. "I said, 'Are you joking?' I'm still married to her at this point. We were still legally married."

Yet, just five months after Andrew and Lorena Matthews divorced, she married her former father-in-law.

"My dad -- who performed (my) ceremony, is now married to my ex-wife," Andrew Matthews said.

He isn't the only member of the Matthews family who isn't terribly keen on the nuptials.

"She's my age," said Malleonada. "She's six months younger than me -- his youngest daughter."

Andrew Matthews said the new arrangement is especially awkward for his 3-year-old daughter.

"She said, 'Daddy, do think it's silly that I call my grandpa 'daddy?'" he said.

William Matthews had a total of six children with his late wife, and the new marriage has split the family. The siblings explained that the three oldest children have stuck behind their father -- cutting ties with the younger brother and sister.

"How do I explain to my children that this is an OK action?" asked Malleonada.

The marriage isn't the only taboo the family is trying to cope with. Despite the tax debts and charges of financial abuse, the bio for William Matthews on the church's website says he's traveled extensively to preach the gospel around the world.

"Many times he'll travel first class. He'll stay in five-star hotels," said Andrew Matthews.

If convicted, Matthews may face prison or a fine -- the latter begs the question of how a man that owes tens of thousands in back taxes can pay up.

The family said there's also a collection agency after the embattled preacher to try and collect the remainder of his first wife's funeral bill.

"(The) funeral has not been paid for," Andrew Matthews said. "His wedding was paid for in full."

A judge has ordered William Matthews to not have any contact with his mother-in-law, and the pastor has another court appearance for the felony charge scheduled to take place next month.



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