

Lent- 2015

**Die Gute Nachricht**  
Die Evangelisch-Lutherische St. Matthäusgemeinde

**The Good News**  
St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

Dear Members and Friends,

Jesus says, "*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.*" Matthew 8:20, NRSV

Recently I re-read a book by the German entertainer Hape Kerkeling, called "*I'm off then: Losing and finding myself on the Camino de Santiago*" (German title: "*Ich bin dann mal weg*"). In this book, Kerkeling describes how he leaves the craziness of his life as a popular TV entertainer behind and spends 6 weeks on the ancient 500 mile pilgrimage from a town in Southern France to Santiago de Compostella in northwestern Spain. For a man who, in Germany, is mainly known as a sometimes crude comedian, Kerkeling provides some amazing and deep insights.

At some point he reflects that he doesn't mind leaving one picturesque village after the other on this journey, moving on to the next destination. The villages and towns are usually just pretty enough to enjoy for a few hours, but not pretty enough to feel a sense of loss once he has to leave them again. But, as he asks, isn't that what a pilgrimage is all about? That we enjoy what we encounter on the way, but don't become too attached to any one place, because it is the nature of a pilgrimage to be on the move? Could it be that attachment is one of the things that keep us from finding God?

It is fascinating to think of these questions in the context of our Christian existence. Though pilgrimages are not a common part of our Protestant and/or Lutheran tradition, we still use the language

of journeying; we talk about 'our pilgrimage here on earth', and especially during Lent hear about the 'journey through the wilderness'. It even says in the Great Commission, Matthew chapter 28, '*GO, make disciples.*' We get the sense that it is in our Christian nature to be on the move. Chances are, we will encounter God on the way, in the many different ways God chooses to reveal God-self.

In other words, it is in our Christian nature to be open to the call of the Holy Spirit, and to be open to go where we are led. It is in our Christian nature to be open to change – not just for the sake of change, but because God is found in many different places and moments of our lives. Attachment to any one place, or tradition, or form of spirituality may keep us from truly seeing how God is active in our midst and in our community. Attachment may be the one factor which keeps us protective of what we hold dear, and which keeps us from growing in mind, body, and Spirit (and, if you think about it, growth can only happen if there are changes; any living organism has to go through cell division and transformation in order to grow).

If we get too attached, we stay put. The journey ends. We may become lazy. We may think that God better come to us in the places where we are, instead of us going out to find God. As a church, we may think that our neighbors in the community better come to us in the place where we are, instead of us

going out to find those neighbors in the place where they are at.

A lot has changed over the last few decades. ‘The world’ has moved on in so many ways, yet the traditional mainline denominational churches, like the Lutheran church, have often stayed put. Changes are often experienced as a threat rather than an opportunity. It shouldn’t come as a surprise that many churches have been on the decline. Growth only can happen if we allow change to happen.



*Pastor Kerstin*

We were contacted by a German regarding a potential connection with people at St. Matthew’s. Her name is Brigitte Sittauer, and she writes:

Ich bin Brigitte Sittauer, 64 Jahre jung, alleinstehend, bin Dipl.-Verw.-Wirtin und seit Mai in der passiven Phase der Altersteilzeit. Bis Mai habe ich im Bremer Senatsbereich für Umwelt, Bau und Verkehr gearbeitet. Ich war früher im Gemeinderat in Stuhr, war Personalrätin und ehrenamtliche Richterin am Sozialgericht Bremen. Ich lebe in einem Einfamilienhaus in Stuhr-Gr. Mackenstedt, bin mobil und habe vielerlei Interessen.

Meine Reisen brachten mich auch nach San Francisco und ich würde gern Kontakt zu deutsch und englisch sprechenden Menschen, die in etwa meinen Interessen entsprechen, aufnehmen, vielleicht zu einer alleinstehenden Frau oder auch zu einer Familie zunächst als EMailkontakt und später möglicherweise zum persönlichen Kennenlernen.

Herzliche Grüße  
Brigitte Sittauer, Stuhr  
[SittauerBrigitte@aol.com](mailto:SittauerBrigitte@aol.com)  
Tel. 0421 – 562919

**Room Wanted!**

We will be welcoming Carola Scherf, a pastor from Lübeck, Germany, later this year, who would like to intern at St. Matthew’s. As it looks now, she will be here from August 1 through August 26, 2015. Please let Pastor Kerstin know if you could provide a guest room for her, or if only for a part of this period. Thank you very much!

As we continue on our pilgrimage through Lent, and our pilgrimage as God’s church here on earth, I invite you to think and pray about the following: what would it mean for us, the people of St. Matthew’s, to truly be on the way? To be on the move? To be open to change so that God can be found? What are our attachments (and the fears that come with them)? In what ways do we hinder growth and life?

The Lenten journey doesn’t end with the cross, but with the empty tomb and the resurrection on Easter morning. May we always remember that the ultimate goal of our pilgrimage here on earth is the abundant and eternal life God offers, in this world and beyond.

## President's Message

February 11, 2015

Dear Members and Friends of St. Matthew's,

Since our previous full newsletter was sent out last October and as I just wrote a rather detailed summary of the events of 2014 for the annual congregational report and meeting, I am including that report in this newsletter along with the following update covering the first few weeks of 2015, since many of you have not seen it.

On January 10 the two plane trees in front of the church were pruned so as to keep them under control and free of the utility lines near them. Our 5th annual 'crab feed' for the benefit of our preservation fund was held on January 24 and was a big success with a capacity crowd. Thanks are due again to Ulrike Hodges, Ingrid Rudolph-Angelich, Verena Tent-Braucher, and their helpers for making this a fun event a successful fundraiser. On February 6 a new wooden display case was installed on the front of the church to replace the badly deteriorated original one. It was constructed of redwood in the same style as the old one so as to preserve the church's historical integrity. This was generously provided to us as a gift from Juergen and Barbara Fehr... thank you very much!

The annual congregational meeting was held on February 8 and the proposed budget for 2015 was presented and approved. Of note, we continue to spend more than we take in, thereby continuing to deplete our savings and reserves. There are no new major capital expenditures planned for the coming year except for the remodeling of the social hall, which will be paid for by KinderHaus preschool. The other major decision was the acceptance of Dorly Carnes as our new church treasurer after the resignation of Annett Wagner. We thank Annett for her work in transitioning our financial system from a manual one to a computerized one and automating many of our routine bill payments. Additionally, the payment of our employees has been outsourced due to increasingly complex requirements to a payroll service specializing in churches.

Now as we enter the Lenten season, let us remember its true meaning and live our daily lives accordingly.

The year 2014 was a significant, exciting and busy one in the continuing long history of our special congregation. By far the most significant event of this past year was the hiring of our new spiritual leader, Pastor Kerstin Weidmann, who assumed her role on July 1. We feel most fortunate in her acceptance as Shepherdess of our flock. She immediately went to work, both in expertly taking care of routine weekly services and reaching out and engaging the German community in the greater Bay Area. Her warm and friendly personality has already begun to make a difference, as the weekly attendance at Sunday services has stabilized and even begun to grow. She has successfully made home visits to many of our shut-ins who can no longer attend. Needless to say, her competent command of both the English and German languages has been a huge benefit and asset. Much work remains to be done in assuring the future of our congregation, but we are confident we have the right person to help us in securing this goal. We look forward to a long and successful relationship with her.

Our previous pastor, Robin Ressler, resigned effective January 31 and a farewell luncheon was held for her on February 9. Beginning in February, single bilingual Sunday services were conducted by a series of supply pastors, but primarily we utilized Rev. Monique Ortiz, who did a great job and who the congregation came to like a lot with her non-traditional preaching style. The then reconstituted Call Committee's initial meeting with Pastor Kerstin occurred on March 8 and a "meet and greet" with the congregation was held on March 29. Negotiations continued, followed by a call vote on May 4 resulting in a favorable outcome. The wonderful formal installation service, led by Pr. Susan Strouse, was held on September 14. Our traditional weekly English and German services were resumed again in November. The church also was privileged to have Miriam Schmidle with us for six weeks in the fall as an informal visiting theological student from Germany and Erika Spaet as a parish teaching student from our seminary in

Berkeley for her fall semester.

The other significant undertaking of the year involved some much needed upkeep and remodeling of our old church building. The first of these projects was the completion of the kitchen renovation in January, which resulted in new countertops, flooring, lighting, some cabinetry, a dishwasher and the repair of the walls and ceiling followed by several fresh coats of paint in March. This was largely made possible by the generosity of Dorothy Praeger. The other main project was the repair and painting of the front facade of the church exterior. The badly deteriorated plastic panels covering the stained glass windows on the front of the church were also replaced. Additionally, new paint was applied and wall and ceiling repairs were done to the pastor's office, the conference room, the sacristy, the hallway behind the altar, and the women's restroom. This was all accomplished under the budgeted amount.

The church hosted several special events during the year. On January 14 our successful 4th annual "Crab Feed" was held as a fundraiser for our Preservation Fund. As usual, this was organized and orchestrated by Ulrike Hodges and Ingrid Rudolph-Angelich. On November 14 a very large memorial service was held in conjunction with our neighbor Mennonite church for Daniel Ha. On December 3 the Augsburgers performed a wonderful holiday concert to an over-capacity crowd. And on December 21 a Christmas carol sing-a-long and party was held for the congregation.

The weekly church calendar continued to be full with the meetings and rehearsals of our regular tenants. Also, many special musical concerts and recitals were held by outside groups, which I won't itemize here.

KinderHaus, the pre-school which meets daily in our social hall, approached us early in the year about a proposal to increase their enrollment, necessitating some significant alterations to our social hall, which would be performed at their expense. We formed a working committee to meet with their board representatives to discuss the issues involved. It was agreed that any changes made would also have to be of some benefit to the church. Several meetings, beginning in April, were held with them. Two

additional restrooms would be added and their classroom space would be enclosed. Tentative architectural drawings were provided. These proposed changes were presented to the voting members of the congregation at a special meeting on November 2 and approved "in concept".

We continue to be grateful to and blessed by the continued hard work of our paid church support staff: Elizabeth Karp, our hard-working and efficient church secretary, who keeps the church running smoothly and maintains our new website and which I strongly urge you to utilize for the calendar of events and to view the Pastor's sermons; David DeAngelis, who makes beautiful music on our historic organ; Nicole Fahlman, our substitute organist who fills in when Dave can't be with us; Sam Palmer, our talented cantor in the German service; and George Cardiel, who is unseen by most but keeps our building clean and often uncomplainingly works at very odd hours. Also, Mrs. Brigitte Pfau continues to come in to the office, usually once a week, to proofread the bulletins (and to keep all of us on our toes!).

I also wish to thank our long-serving Council members: Walter Elliott (Vice President), Ingrid Rudolph-Angelich (Secretary), Ulrike Hodges, Annett Wagner (Treasurer), and Michelle Berner, all of whom continued to give up one Sunday afternoon each month in order to oversee the workings of our church and the needs of the congregation. The work of the Finance Committee, capably led by Juergen Fehr (who also oversees the church's investments, tax issues and insurance needs) requires another thank you for preparing our annual budget. Lastly, let me thank Frieda Schönach for managing our kitchen and looking after our coffee and refreshments after Sunday services.

As we are now starting yet another new chapter in our church's long history and nearing the completion of the renovation of its physical structure to make it more visually appealing and structurally sound, we must face the reality of its increasing cost to maintain and staff. In addition, financial resources must also be devoted to secure its future as a viable entity to carry out God's work and our stated mission. At present, member giving

does not even cover the Pastor's salary. Consequently we are heavily dependent on supplemental income provided by rental groups, our investment income, and unfortunately, from the continued depletion of our endowment and savings. This is not sustainable over time. If the church has been and still is important to your spiritual life, please do try and increase your regular giving and consider leaving a portion of your estate to the church when making your estate plans. The church truly does need your time, talent, energy, and financial commitment. Everyone has something to offer. Our energetic and dedicated new Pastor cannot

do this alone without your help. Give her the tools and means to keep St. Matthew's a viable and visible beacon in our neighborhood, city, synod and in the German community of the greater Bay Area. We do not know where the future will lead us, but let us make sure, that with God's guidance, St. Matthew's will be present as a vital part of it.

With God's continued blessings to you all.

Respectfully submitted,

William H. Bremer, M.D., Council President

**February**

- 14 Dorothea Ilg
- 16 Saskia Braucher



**March**

- 2 Anita Bairogh
- 4 Arnold Steeg
- 10 Juergen Fehr
- 17 Michael Callahan
- 22 Maria Blanz
- 23 Erich Craciun
- 28 Richard Braucher
- 31 Niels Nielsen

*We apologize to any members and friends whose birthdays have been omitted. Please contact the Office if you wish to have your birthday included in future bulletins and newsletters. Thank you.*

**St. Matthew's was the scene of another enjoyable and successful Crab Feed on January 24**



## Mark your Calendars

### February 18 – Ash Wednesday

12 noon: Bilingual Service  
Potluck Meal

### February 22 – First Sunday in Lent

9:30 a.m. – English Service  
11:00 a.m. – German Service  
**2:00 p.m. – Open Cathedral**  
**@ Civic Center**

*Presentation of Kits for the Homeless*

### March 21 – Jennifer Hunt flute concert

7:00 p.m. @ St. Matthew's

### April 3 – Good Friday

11:00 a.m. – Bilingual Service

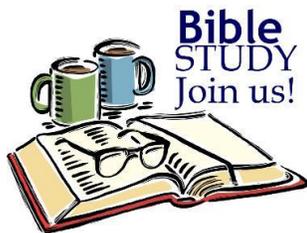


### April 5 – Easter Sunday

11:00 a.m. – Bilingual Service with Holy  
Communion

### February 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25

12 noon – Bible Study – Bring your own bag lunch!



### St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

3281 - 16th Street,  
San Francisco, CA 94103-3323  
Tel.: 415 863 6371  
[office@stmatthews-sf.org](mailto:office@stmatthews-sf.org)  
[www.stmatthews-sf.org](http://www.stmatthews-sf.org)

