



Summer 2016

Die Gute Nachricht
Die Evangelisch-Lutherische St. Matthäusgemeinde

The Good News
St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

Dear Members and Friends,

“God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.” 1. John 4:16b-18, NRSV

As I am writing this, I am still rattled and dumbfounded by the horrible mass shooting at the ‘Pulse’ nightclub in Orlando, Florida. It was the deadliest mass shooting in recent U.S. history: 50 people died, and 53 were seriously injured. Many more were traumatized by the attack and will carry emotional wounds for the rest of their lives. These are fellow children of God, created in love, meant to live their purpose here on earth. These are our brothers and sisters, victims of a despicable act of terror. In their name, we cry out – Kyrie eleison – Lord, have mercy on us.

Since the attack, there have been numerous analyses and commentaries, which touched on the issues of gun control, emotional illness and how we as a society deal with it, Muslim extremism, the ‘lone wolf’ phenomenon, ongoing homophobia in the U.S., and national security. Many of these issues had been dealt with before, there were barely any words we had not heard before – and it is quite disheartening that we’ve heard so many words, but have seen no actions to make an attack like this less likely. We’ve grown used to news of violence and

killings, we expect them to happen. And this makes me angry and sad. Death is not something we stand for as people of faith, and we should do anything in our power to prevent the senseless killings that happen in our nation and in our neighborhoods.

Now I understand that this is daunting and maybe even seems impossible; what could we do to prevent violence? We don’t have much political power beyond our mandate to elect officials and representatives and vote for or against certain measures on our ballots. However, every act of faith should begin with prayer, and praying is something we all can do: pray for forgiveness, pray for perpetrators of crime and their victims, pray for those in positions of responsibility, pray for guidance for our own lives. That much we can do, and we should never underestimate the power of prayer.

Beyond prayer, we have the mandate of love: Love God. Love your neighbor. Love your enemy. Now faith, hope and love remain, but love is the greatest among them. God is love. Perfect love casts out all fear.

Love is the answer to many, if not all, issues in this world. Each and every one of us has the super power of love, given to us by God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And love is not only an abstract concept or a romantic feeling, love is a verb – something we do. Jesus Christ has commanded us to make love the foundation of all our interactions with God and with our fellow human beings.

Now some wise person once said, the opposite of love is not so much hatred, but rather fear. Fear keeps us from truly loving and embracing others: fear of the ‘other’, fear of losing one’s status or privileges, fear of seeing our morals or values threatened, fear of facing our own demons. The fear of becoming victims of random violence ourselves. A terrorist attack like the one on Orlando is meant to spread fear – that’s what terror is all about, to make us so afraid that we miss out on living – and loving – to the fullest. But as people of faith, we can’t let fear get the better of us. Because fear keeps us from loving, and we see what happens, when love isn’t lived and practiced. We experience each other as adversaries. We develop the idea that someone is our enemy. We tolerate discrimination and violence and death, even in the name of God. We don’t live as people God intended and created us to be.

How often do we hear heavenly messengers or Jesus himself say to the people, and say to us, Do not be afraid? God is with you.

This promise sustains us through all that frightens and threatens us. God’s love for us is perfect, and, as we read in 1. John, ‘Perfect love casts out all fear.’

We have to trust that God’s amazing love and power will sustain us – even and especially through changes and transformations and challenges. God’s intention is to heal us and transform the world as is into the kingdom of God, where there will be no more pain and sorrow and crying and hate and death. We must never lose this vision, God’s vision. We must never let the fear mongers have the last word, whose fear casts out all love, but speak up for God, whose love casts out all fear. And we must never let our fears get in the way of God’s loving will for all.

In this sense, it is not only necessary that we keep the Orlando victims and their families in our prayers – it is necessary that we face and overcome our fears and prejudices. It is necessary that we speak up and act against a culture that promotes fear and hate – against LGBTQ people, against people of other faiths, against strangers. It is necessary for us to entrust ourselves to the love and grace of God, even when we are afraid and don’t know where the way is leading, and even though we may not know what changes might be asked of us. After all: we are God’s people; a people of love – and a people of life. Do not be afraid.

Pastor Kerstin



July

- 4 Elke Kupfer
- 5 Pr. Kerstin Weidmann
- 8 Rev. Dr. Hing Siem
- 10 Manfred Bohndorf
- 11 Verena Tent-Braucher
- 17 Peter Berner
- 18 Tom Wynn
- 19 Kathy Michael



August

- 1 Margarete Jesch
- 6 Dr. Helmut Rolfes
- 7 Richard Blanz
- 8 Robert Hodges
- 13 Ray Manning
- 22 Ingrid Rudolph-Angelich
- 28 Frieda Schönach
- 28 Gerd Kupfer

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.

Highlights from the Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly

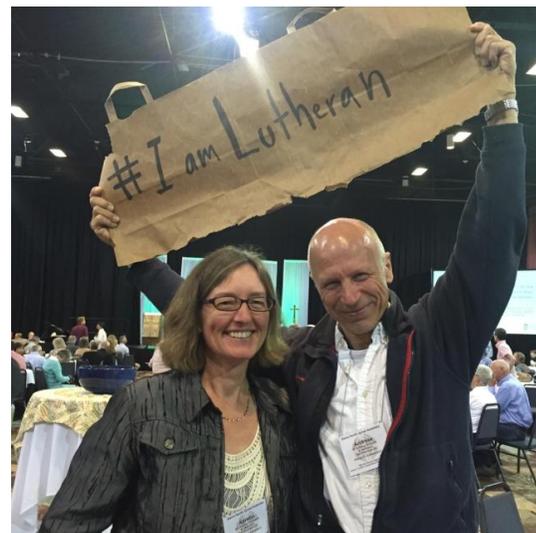
June 3-5, 2016 in Reno, Nevada

This year, St. Matthew's was represented at the Synod Assembly by Pr. Kerstin Weidmann and church council member Dr. Andreas Ginsbach. The assembly is a three day gathering that includes worship, Bible studies, keynotes, presentations, and business sessions.

The theme of this year's assembly was '**We are Church Together**'.

More than 600 participants from congregations all over the Sierra Pacific Synod attended this meeting. The overall spirit was joyful, gracious, and hopeful – there was a sense in the room that we are truly 'Church Together', doing God's work in our congregations, through the expressions of the Sierra Pacific Synod and its mission partners (like Lutheran Social Services of California, the San Francisco Night Ministry, and many more organizations), and

through national and global projects of the ELCA. It was good to be reminded that we don't exist by and for ourselves – but that we are part of the much larger body of Christ, and that, together, we can do great things.



The assembly was blessed with the presence of **ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton**. She spoke many words of encouragement and challenge, coaxing us to imagine the future of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She emphasized how important it is, that, even though our congregations may be small, we are outposts of Christ's love and grace in the communities we serve. Bp. Eaton led us in an interactive discussion about the new national process: ***Forward Together in Christ. A process of communal spiritual discernment on the direction of the ELCA.*** We answered the questions, "What kind of church do we believe God is calling us to become?" and "How do we become an inclusive, diverse church that is inspiring and relevant in different communities?" As you can imagine, the answers differed around each table, but we agreed that Christ's grace is for all, no matter what their background, and that we ought to reflect this openness of Christ in our communities of faith.

Bp Holmerud & Bp Eaton



The Synod Council had previously approved a restructuring of the Sierra Pacific Synod in order to comply with requirements found in the constitution of the ELCA regarding the number of congregations within a conference; whereas the Sierra Pacific Synod formerly consisted of 5 districts and 18 conferences, now there are 9 larger conferences. The former San Francisco Conference (of which San Matthew's was a part) is now part of a larger conference that stretches down to Palo Alto (this new conference has no name yet). John Kuehner, Pastor of Unity Lutheran Church in South SF and Millbrae, was elected the new dean of our conference.

The business sessions included the report of the Synod Vice President, the election of new Synod Council members, the report of the Bishop, the report of the Treasurer, consideration of the budget, and resolutions. All of the following resolutions passed:

2016-01 Regarding ELCA World Hunger: In summary, it was resolved that individuals and congregations in the Sierra Pacific Synod be encouraged to support the ELCA World Hunger Program more strongly, through donations and educational programs.

2016-02 Regarding SPS Compensation Guidelines: It was resolved to raise the base compensation for clergy by an increase of 2.37%, from \$50,700 to \$51,900.

2016-03 Regarding Growth in Mission Support: It was resolved that all congregations of the SPS be encouraged to increase their mission support incrementally with the goal of giving 10% or more of their congregational offerings to the Synod and Churchwide.

2016-04 Regarding US Aid to the State of Israel: in summary, it was resolved that the ELCA as a churchwide body and its individual members urge their U.S. representatives to make U.S. aid to Israel dependent on Israel's halt to all 31 settlement building in the West Bank.

2016-05 Regarding Corporate Social Responsibility: it was resolved that that the Sierra Pacific Synod meeting in Assembly memorialize the 2016 Churchwide 24 Assembly of the ELCA to direct the Church Council to develop an investment screen addressing companies whose products and services have significantly exacerbated the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

2016-06 Regarding the Racial Ethnic Ministries Strategies Discipling Team: in summary, it was resolved to reinstate the Racial Ethnic Ministries Strategies Discipling Team and seek to combat racist structures on all levels of church life; as a means to accomplish this, church leaders will be mandated to receive anti-racist training as part of their continuing education.

An amended budget was passed with anticipated receipts of \$1,915,000.

If you have any questions about the Synod Assembly, please don't hesitate to contact Pr. Weidmann or Dr. Ginsbach.

Dear Members and Friends of St. Matthew's,

As some of you might already know, I am Anja Hiller, the (new) intern at St. Matthew's. I grew up near Uelzen, a small town in the Lüneburger Heide, which is "famous" for its sugar production and its Hundertwasser Bahnhof. After my Abitur, I studied Theology and English at the Leibniz University of Hanover to become a teacher at a German Gymnasium. Since I have spent most of my life in Uelzen and Hanover, it was quite a big step for me to move to San Francisco, one of the most vibrant and colorful cities of the US. Fortunately, I am not alone here. I live with my boyfriend, Fred, in Noe Valley and we like to spend our weekends exploring the many sights of beautiful San Francisco. In my first 2 1/2 months at St. Matthew's, I observed both Elizabeth Karp's and Pastor Kerstin's work in the congregation, conducted my first worship service with the help of Gerda Beisel and Bill Bremer, did translations for St. Matthew's webpage and helped to prepare the monthly bible study.



I am very thankful in the way I have been welcomed by the congregation and I am looking forward to spending the next 3 1/2 months with you at your congregation.

Anja

Council President's Message

Dear Members and Friends of St. Matthew's,

As summer has now officially begun and we are anticipating warmer weather (hopefully not too hot), it is time for another update from your Council. The major event of the past few months has been the restoration by the Schoenstein Organ Co. of our historic 1923 Hinner's pipe organ. This work has now been successfully completed with a noticeable improvement in its sound and action. It now performs like new! A rededication was done during a church service on May 22. A more formal dedication and concert with acknowledgment of the donors who made this possible will be done on Wednesday, September 7. This event will be co-hosted by the German Consulate of SF with Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, the Secretary General of the EKD in Germany and Bishop of Bavaria, as a special guest of honor. Details will be announced at a later date. Also, on Sunday, October 16 at 2:00 PM, an organ concert will be given by Roland Voit of Essen, Germany. He is an accomplished organist, teacher, and composer who has performed throughout the world. So please mark your calendar for these upcoming very special events

Other happenings: Our hard working Pastor enjoyed some well-deserved vacation time on the east coast from May 5th to the 22nd. David DeAngelis, our organist, will be spending the next six weeks at the Eastman School of Music in New York continuing work toward a master's degree. Nicole Fahlman and Matthew Phinney will be substituting during his absence. The church fire escape was repaired and serviced in April. New lighting was installed inside the organ case and the window over the altar was illuminated once again. Since April 21 a newly formed *a cappella* choral group, Tactus, directed by Tanmoy Laskar, has been practicing in our sanctuary on Thursday evenings and on Sunday June 26 performed excerpts from a new mass which he composed and dedicated to St. Matthew's. Other musical events were: a piano/organ concert by Sam Post and David DeAngelis; an excellent vocal concert of Norwegian music by Cappella SF led by Ragnar Bohlin, the director of the SF Symphony Chorus; and two recitals for young piano, voice and violin students.

In closing I wish you all a wonderful summer and safe travels.

God's blessings,

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

Members and friends of St. Matthew's donated very generously to the Organ Restoration Fund. However, contributions for the day-to-day operation of the church fall behind expenses. We are now running a deficit of \$40,000 for the first half of 2016. We ask you to consider donating towards the ongoing services of the church so that the beautiful building and the German language and culture will be preserved for future generations in San Francisco

Mark Your Calendar

August 7, 11:00 a.m. - The '**Deutscher Musikverein**' will play Schubert's "German Mass".

Wednesday, September 7: A **concert and reception** celebrating the rededication of our organ with guest of honor **Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Bishop of the Evangelical Church in Bavaria and Secretary General of the EKD** (Evangelical Church in Germany). Co-hosted with the German Consulate of SF



Sunday, September 18, 11:00 a.m. - **Annual open air worship service and picnic** at the 'Naturfreunde Oakland'

Saturday, October 8 (tentative) - '**Cooking in Katie's Kitchen**' - A cooking class honoring our foremother of the Reformation, Katherine Luther: What was her kitchen like? What ingredients did she have available? Instructor: Lorraine Witte; suggested donation: \$30 per person (includes lunch).

Sunday, October 16, 2 p.m. - **Organ concert** with renowned German organist **Roland Voit**.

Sunday, October 30, 11 a.m. - **Reformation Sunday** with the '**Damenchor Liederkrantz**' and Martin and Katherine Luther as guests.



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