



Lent 2017

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

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

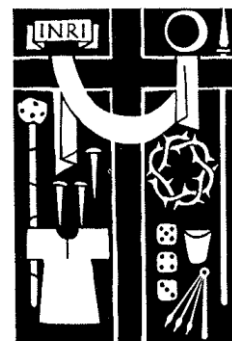
Dear Members and Friends,

'As we work together with Christ, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you." See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!' 2 Corinthians 6: 1-2

A couple of years ago, I talked to my confirmation students about the church year and its different seasons, and so we ended up talking about Lent - and Ash Wednesday. And as we talked about the ashen cross many receive on their foreheads, and how we traditionally use the words, 'Remember, that you are dust, and to dust you shall return', one of the kids blurted out, "That's pretty morbid." Morbid. I don't know about you, but when I hear that word, I think of the Goth movement, you know, all those young people dressing in black, listening to dark music. Morbid in my mind means that people are taking death lightly, making macabre comments about it, or maybe even paying reverence to darkness, gloom, and death.

So is Ash Wednesday and thus the Lenten season morbid? Well, the words traditionally spoken when the ashes are imposed, 'Thou art dust, and to dust thou shalt return', sound quite gloomy and dark. This is the day to reflect on our sin and our own mortality. For about 7 weeks after Ash Wednesday, we will focus on Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. We will even sing hymns like 'In the cross of Christ I glory'. Is this something

obsolete, something that may have had its place in the dark medieval ages, but not today, in a society where we try to cheat death as much as we can and glorify vitality? Is what we do here today relevant? Are we maybe scaring people away with the morbidity of Ash Wednesday and the whole season of Lent?



Now the original meaning of morbid actually is 'diseased', or ill. And, in the olden days, when cures for illnesses were limited, being ill automatically meant being closer to death. That's why morbid sounds so much like mortuary or mortal. So the word morbid in itself is rather neutral. And I think it's mainly our fear of being closer to death which gives the word a negative or spooky reputation. In that sense, yes, Ash Wednesday and Lent have a morbid tinge. Because this is the time when we, very purposely, reflect on all that is ill in us, all that is not well in our lives – a time we reflect on sin, our own and the destructive powers we see at work around us. Because all is not well – just look at the news headlines: This country is deeply divided over the new administration. Syria continues to be a place of unspeakable violence and suffering. About 65 million people on this

planet are refugees because of war, violence or natural disasters. We can feel the effects of climate change everywhere in this country. The gap between rich and poor is getting bigger and bigger. And then look at the issues and problems you have to deal with each and every day. All is not well, and today is the day we are honest with ourselves about it and confess it. We hurt, we grieve, we are angry, we feel struggle, we feel helpless. We are looking for answers we don't always get.

We are not well – we are morbid in that sense. And, yes, this is scary. So scary that many, even Christians, don't want to think about it. However, this is not where the buck stops. The words, 'remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return' may sound depressing, hopeless. But – think about the dust. In the beginning of the world, God created Adam from the dust. Adam, or A'dam in Hebrew actually means 'dust', or 'earth' in the sense of soil. Dust, soil, is necessary for growth and life. God takes the dust and creates life with it. This is where we are coming from. God was there. And to dust you shall return. Yes, we are mortal. Yes, during Lent we purposely remember what we try to ignore for the most part. But God was there in the beginning, creating life – and we believe that God will be there in the end, as we return to dust; we have the and faith that God, once more, will

create, that God will make new, and make us new. After all, this is what we celebrate on Easter morning – new life for all creation.

Ash Wednesday is not only a day to reflect on how morbid we are. Ash Wednesday is not only a day to look toward the grave, to look at what we all inevitably and eventually have to face; Ash Wednesday (and the entire season of Lent, for that matter) is also a time of remembrance – a time to remember where we are coming from. And, knowing that we are coming from God, we also remember what our destination is – God. We are embraced by God's presence, God's love and care. That's what Jesus died for. To break the morbidity of our sin, to break the morbidity of our existence. Our past and our future are with God – and our present as well. In the beginning of this reflection, I mentioned the words from the Apostle Paul, words that are often read as we begin the Lenten season on Ash Wednesday, '**Now** is the acceptable time' for God to listen to us, '**now** is the time of salvation'. Not all is well. We are morbid. But, embraced by God, yesterday, today, forever, NOW, we can be confident that all will be made well.

Pastor Kerstin Weidmann



P.S.: You are invited to participate in St. Matthew's special worship services during Lent. We will commemorate Ash Wednesday jointly with St. Francis Lutheran Church at their location at 152 Church Street in San Francisco on Wednesday, March 1, at 1:15 p.m.

We will also have a joint Good Friday Service with St. Francis, this time at St. Matthew's, on Friday, April 14, at 12 noon.

On Thursdays during Lent (3/9, 3/16, 3/23, 3/30 and 4/6) at 2:30 p.m., we will gather at St. Matthew's for a study series on Martin Luther and the Reformation.



## Birthdays

### March

2 Anita Bairogh  
4 Arnold Steeg  
Henry Sass  
10 Juergen Fehr  
22 Maria Blanz  
23 Erich Craciun  
28 Richard Braucher  
31 Niels Nielsen



### April

3 Margrit Buchmann  
5 Brigitte Pfau  
7 Werner Dehnbostel  
8 Betty Kleinlein  
24 Stefanie Pressler  
27 Thea Scholz  
Alois Scholz

*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*



**Farewell to Elizabeth Karp**



**Welcome Angie Holt**

## Council President's Message

Dear Members and Friends of St. Matthew's,

As we are now well into the year 2017, which is a major one for Lutherans and really all Christians, and the joyous, celebratory Christmas season is over, the church is now entering the more somber and reflective Lenten season in anticipation of Easter and all that it means and entails. It is also time again for me to bring you up to date with the events and news since our last newsletter of November 2016.

December as usual was a busy month at St. Matthew's. St. Nicholas Day was celebrated at the service on Dec. 4 with Andreas Ginsbach capably assuming the role of the well known Saint in red to entertain the children (and the adults) at our monthly potluck. This was followed by the annual *Damenchor* Christmas concert. Then on Dec. 12 *Freundschaft Liederkrantz* held their annual Christmas

party. Between Dec. 8th and 13th the *Golden Gate Men's Chorus* held five well attended Christmas concerts after yet again beautifully decorating our sanctuary for the holidays. On Dec. 17 the vocal group, *Musaic*, also performed a seasonal concert.

Christmas Eve found the church packed to capacity for the 4:00 PM candlelight German family service and a smaller crowd attending the Bilingual 6:00 PM service. We may need to rethink these services next year to better accommodate all those desiring to attend. The Christmas Day service was also well attended with *Freundschaft Liederkrantz* yet again providing their enjoyable choral supplement.

January 25th found the *Schoenstein Organ Co.* removing two ranks of pipes for further work to complete the restorative process started last May. The pipes were reinstalled two weeks later and the organ was then fine-tuned. It sounds great! Our 7th annual 'Crab Feed' fundraiser was held on Jan. 28 and was a big success with a near capacity turnout. For this event we must again thank Ingrid Rudolph-Angelich, Ulrike Hodges, and Verena Tent-Braucher and members of their families for their hard work; they have managed this production since the very first one!

A normally quiet February was quite busy this year beginning with the *German International School* holding their annual Fasching party on the 4th. The month also saw the *Swiss Turnverein* having their annual dinner in our social hall and the renaissance choral group, *Tactus*, holding a concert on Feb. 18.

Also, the Annual Congregational Meeting was held on Feb. 12 and the budget for the year 2017 was approved. It was prepared by the finance committee under the leadership of Juergen Fehr, who can't be thanked enough for all of the quiet, behind the scene work he does for our church. Several capital projects were also approved. If you did not receive a copy of the annual report, copies are available in the church office. Two new members were added to the council: Annett Wagner agreed to rejoin and Juergen Fehr also agreed to serve, as he is now the acting treasurer. Welcome and thank you both!

Lastly and with very mixed emotions we have bid farewell to our long-serving and dedicated church secretary/office administrator/treasurer, Elizabeth Karp, who has retired along with her Pastor husband. They will be moving away from the Bay Area for their well deserved retirement. We thank Elizabeth for her years of service and will miss her as we wish her all the best in the future. On a positive note we have found an experienced and personable replacement, Angie Holt, who also works for West Portal Lutheran Church. She is learning the many intricacies of the job as well as meeting all of the people and groups associated with St. Matthew's, if only by telephone or e-mails. You may find her in the office during our new office hours on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 AM until 4:00 PM. Please welcome her to our church family.

In closing, please note in Pastor Kerstin's message the details regarding her weekly Lenten Bible studies and the joint Ash Wednesday and Good Friday services with our neighbor, St. Francis Lutheran Church.

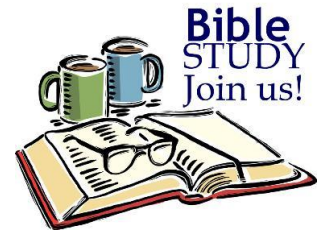
Thank you and I wish you all a blessed Lenten season.

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

## Mark your Calendars

### Weekly Bible Study

During Lent a Study Group will meet every Thursday at 2:30 p.m. on  
**3/9, 3/16, 3/23, 3/30, and 4/6.** Subject: Martin Luther and the Reformation



#### March 1<sup>st</sup> - Ash Wednesday Service

1:15 p.m.

Held jointly with and at St. Francis Lutheran Church

152 Church Street, San Francisco

Everyone is also invited to attend a community meal just before the service at St. Francis, starting at 12 noon.

Suggested donation: \$3

#### April 14 – Good Friday

12 noon - at St. Matthew's (in collaboration with St. Francis Lutheran Church)

7 p.m. Tenebrae Service with musical group 'Tactus' held jointly with and at

St. Francis Lutheran Church

152 Church Street, San Francisco

#### April 16 - Easter Sunday

11:00 a.m. – Bilingual service

Followed by a Coffee Hour and Easter Egg Hunt

#### St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

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