



Pentecost 2017

Die Gute Nachricht
Die Evangelisch-Lutherische St. Matthäusgemeinde

The Good News
St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

Dear Members and Friends,

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?" *Acts of the Apostles 2, 1-8, NRSV*

This is the year churches around the world celebrate and commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. On October 31st 1517, Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses against indulgences on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg (which also functioned as a University bulletin board). This attack against the practice of basically selling salvation to the people and against the authority of the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope was meant to be a basis for an academic discourse; alas, this publication caused a firestorm throughout Germany and Europe. Many understood the theses as a rallying cry of the little man (and woman) against absolute church power.

One of the reasons 'the Church' had absolute power was that the Holy Scriptures and liturgies were written and spoken in Latin – this language was only spoken among the members of academia and in politics, as a common language, just as English is a common language in science and international relations today. The common man or woman did not understand Latin (or very little at best, just enough to pray the Pater Noster or the Rosary), had no access to the Bible themselves, and the mass spoken in church was a great mystery to them, since they could not understand what was said. By keeping all things related to God a mystery, members of the church hierarchy held immense power; their interpretation was necessary for regular folks to have knowledge of and any relationship with God. Needless to say, that way common folks could easily be manipulated.

Martin Luther in his long years as a monk and doctor of theology saw a great discrepancy between what the church taught in his day and what he actually found written in the Holy Scriptures. His great epiphany was that our relationship with God is all about grace, which we see in Christ's life, death and



resurrection. Salvation is not for sale, nor can it be achieved through our doing.

When Martin Luther translated the New Testament into German in the years 1521/1522 (and later the Hebrew Scriptures, which we know as the Old Testament, as well), it was considered an act of treason against the Roman Church. By using the language of the people in a way ‘a mother speaks to her child’ (M. Luther), Luther opened a whole new world to the common people; they could discover and understand the Word of God for themselves; the church hierarchy lost much of its power of interpretation and mediation.

Of course Luther was also aware that most people in his day were illiterate. So he also pushed for a public education system for boys and girls, men and women, so that everyone may have an opportunity to read the Holy Scriptures for themselves. The mass was eventually held in German. German Hymnody took off – people were able to listen to core stories and concepts of faith while they sang. Worship became much more participatory for the common believer. One could argue that faith developed a new dimension for the common believer and required more engagement of the head and the heart through the use of the language of the people in worship and spirituality.

On that Pentecost Day when Christ’s disciples were overcome by the Holy Spirit, they started to preach in the languages of all those different peoples who happened to be gathered in Jerusalem for the Jewish festival of Shavuot (‘The Weeks’ – Greek: Pentecost). Be this a miracle or not, but this story shows the importance of language for connecting with people. If we don’t listen to them and don’t speak their language, all proclamation of the good news of new life and forgiveness in Christ is for naught. Martin Luther obviously came to the same conclusion about 500 year ago.

We may think we have a common language in this country if we speak English. But if we are honest, we have to admit that, even though we share a language, we often seem to speak in different tongues. Take the

plethora of abbreviations the younger generation uses today as they send text messages on their phone, for example (omg, lol, brb...). Each group that comes to the U.S. brings their own cultural tinge to the common English language, like folks from Central America or from Germany. As we deal with people who suffer from dementia or Alzheimer, we have to find a language to engage them, since reasoning doesn’t work anymore. Life in the streets hardens the homeless and seems to give them a different context for language than those who live a sheltered life have. How do we find the right languages today as we bring the good news in word and deed to the people?

These are the questions a delegation of Bay Area clergy and laypeople will ask in the context of the commemoration of the Reformation in Wittenberg later this summer – this group has been invited by the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (Evangelical Church in Germany) to participate in a world exhibition that runs from the end of May through September 10. I will be representing St. Matthew’s and talk about the importance of German language and culture ministry in San Francisco, whereas my colleagues will talk about Hispanic ministries, homeless and social justice ministries and ministries among those suffering from memory loss. I have to say that I am very excited to be part of this group!

The biblical Pentecost story still invites us to think about language and how we reach and touch people today. And though we speak different languages or use language in different contexts, one thing is for sure: we must speak the language of the heart. Without love and compassion, all we say is but meaningless noise. Or, as the Apostle Paul says in 2. Corinthians 13, ‘If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.’

I invite you to celebrate Pentecost at St. Matthew’s on June 4th at 11 a.m. (bilingual English/German) and hear more about the power of the Holy Spirit – and the power of language.

Pr. Kerstin Weidmann

Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly in Fresno May 4-6: ‘We are Church Together – Telling Our Stories’

The 30th annual Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly was called into session by Bishop Mark Holmerud at 1 pm on Thursday, May 4 at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Fresno, CA. The Rev. Dr. David Vasquez-Levy joined us as the keynote speaker. The Rev. Dr. Wyvetta Bullock joined us as the ELCA Churchwide Representative and preacher. Dr. Ryan Cumming was our Bible Study Leader.

Of the approximately 700 Voting Members, Visitors, and guests present during the course of the 3 days of the Assembly, 417 were voting members. Of the voting members, 257 or 61.63% were lay and 160 or 38.37% were clergy. Twenty-five were persons of color and 16 had a primary language other than English.

Resolution 2017-1 *Regarding Sierra Pacific Compensation Guidelines*, Resolution 2017-2 *Regarding Sanctuary Synod*, and Resolution 2017-3 *Regarding Creation of a Department of Peacebuilding in the U.S. Government* all passed with amendments. For the full text of the amended resolutions, please see the Synod website: www.spselca.org.

The Assembly adopted a 2018 -19 Budget which showed anticipated total revenue of \$2,090,590 and expected expenses totaling \$2,423,192.

The theme of this year’s assembly was ‘We are church together – telling our stories’. As became clear very quickly through the keynotes, Bible study sessions and sermons, the story of the Lutheran Church is changing. Yes, we are deeply rooted in our history and traditions, yet more and more people of non-European backgrounds call the Lutheran Church their home these days, and not so much because of the tradition, but because of the liberating gospel message of grace and forgiveness. Our theology also has practical implications: how do we as the liberated people of God help others who struggle in this world today? Migration and immigration were key themes during the assembly. Overall, this assembly challenged and encouraged its participants to embrace changes and seek for ways to continue to be reformed.

Caption for picture of Pr. Kerstin and Rachel on photo page:

Pr. Kerstin Weidmann and Parish Teaching Student Rachel Swenson deliver the donations graciously made by the people of St. Matthew’s for a Women’s and Children’s Center in Fresno. The center asked especially for diapers and personal hygiene items for women. Thanks to all donors!

Easter Sunday at St. Matthew’s

On April 16th, we celebrated a beautiful bilingual Easter service for the whole family at St. Matthew’s. Close to 200 people attended worship that day, among them many young families. We shared the joy of Easter with many ‘Alleluias’, song and play. The impromptu St. Matthew’s choral group sang a joyful anthem and clarinetist Kathy Emery and pianist David DeAngelis performed the beautiful Mozart Church Sonata. Our parish teaching student, Rachel Swenson, interacted with the young ones and discovered with them many ‘Alleluias’ in our worship and the Bible. In keeping with the Easter gospel from Matthew, when the women went to the tomb before the sun was up, the theme of the Easter message was ‘Hope Begins in the Dark’.

Afterwards, we had a time of fellowship and an Easter egg hunt for the young ones in the fellowship hall. Thanks to everybody who helped to make this Easter celebration special!

Upcoming Events:

Ordination Anniversary of Pastor Kerstin Weidmann

Some of you may not know this, but Pastor Kerstin did her internship 2001/2002 at St. Matthew's (then still under the name Kerstin Barnes). Shortly after she finished her internship, she was approved for ordination. She was ordained on July 13th, 2002, at St. Matthew's. David Mullen was the bishop of the Sierra Pacific Synod back then and presided over the ordination service. Pr. Kerstin then took her first call as pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in San Jose.

This year Pr. Kerstin will celebrate her 15th ordination anniversary, and she is delighted that this event will be celebrated in the same place where she was ordained. You are invited to attend a reception in honor of the anniversary on Sunday, July 9th, at 12 noon (after the German service). We hope you can attend!

Saturday, July 22nd, 4:30 – 7:30 p.m.: A Wurst Wedding – Celebrating with the Luthers; in June 1525, Martin Luther and Katharina von Bora were married in Wittenberg. The official ceremony was private, but two weeks later, the entire town was invited to celebrate this occasion. In honor of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we will celebrate the Luthers' wedding with lots of 'wurst' (we don't know if any sausage was served during their wedding, but it's very likely) and other delicacies of the period, plus beer and wine. There will be a reenactment of the wedding as well as games, songs and of the Renaissance period. Come in costume – or as a 21st century time traveler! Please make your reservation by July 15th – space is limited! Cost: \$30 pp, \$10 for children 5-17, children under 5 free. All proceeds will go to the Reformation celebration fund.

Council President's Message

Dear Members and Friends of St. Matthew's,

As the church season is now approaching Pentecost and we are enjoying the wonderful weather of late spring in the Bay Area after a much needed and appreciated rainy winter and early spring and before the foggy, cool days of a San Francisco summer and the hot days away from the coast arrive, it is again time for me to bring you up to date on the happenings at St. Matthew's since our last newsletter at the end of February.

Things have actually been progressing quite nicely without major problems. On February 25th the Council held a retreat at St. Mark's concerning the 'vision' for our church's future; this is an ongoing process which we discuss at the beginning of our monthly meetings. In reciprocity, St. Mark's held their retreat at our church on March 15. The Lenten season began on Ash Wednesday, March 1, with a combined service with St. Francis and Pastor Bea Chun. Pastor Kerstin then held weekly Bible study sessions working through Martin Luther's 95 theses on Thursday afternoons. On Good Friday combined services were held at St. Matthew's at noon and at St. Francis at 7:00 PM. Our Easter worship service on April 16 was very well attended with a near full house, which of course we would like to see repeated more frequently throughout the year. From May 4th to 6th Pastor Kerstin and our PLTS parish teaching student, Rachel Swenson, attended the ELCA Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly held in Fresno this year.

As regards non-religious church activity, the building sees almost continual daily use with our usual and new choruses rehearsing and the 12-step meetings taking place in addition to several concerts being held. In fact, we have recently had to decline several requests for meetings, rehearsals, and concerts due to time, date and space availability. *Freundschaft Liederkrantz* held their spring concert on March 18 with guest choruses *Damenchor Liederkrantz*, the *Oakland Turnverein*, and the *Deutscher Musikverein* (in which our Henry Sass has played clarinet for over 70 years) participating. On the afternoon of May 13, Jill Brenner had a recital for her young piano and voice students, and that evening the *International Orange Chorale* held a well attended concert.

The church has made two technical upgrades to aid its operation. In February we entered into a new lease agreement for our main printer/copier; it will do more and cost somewhat less... always a nice outcome. In May, with the help and experienced knowledge of Robert Hodges, the church purchased two new computers, a Dell desktop for the office and an Asus laptop for the Pastor. Our old ones were giving us problems and were no longer supported by Microsoft. Our relatively new office secretary, Angie Holt, appreciates these improvements as she continues to familiarize herself and become comfortable in her important and often unseen position. Several acknowledgments are also in order. We wish to thank Alois Scholz for painting the front and side entry stairs along with some trim on the front and also for cleaning out all of the weeds at the rear of the church. Juergen Fehr also hosed down the front of the church to remove the accumulated grime. Frieda Schönach and her able helpers also deserve a special thank you for keeping us supplied with coffee and treats after our Sunday services and organizing our monthly potluck luncheon.

One other item of which you may or may not be aware: our talented and faithful organist, David DeAngelis, is the only music teacher and the boys' baseball coach in his weekday job. He leads the various bands and vocal groups at KIPP San Francisco College Prep School, a public charter school serving predominantly low income students, and was just chosen as 'teacher of the year' from among the 11 KIPP Bay Area Schools, quite an honor and I'm sure it was well-deserved. Congratulations Dave!!

Lastly, please note and mark your calendars for the upcoming 'Wurst Fest' on July 22. The council has decided to add another fun event for your enjoyment due to the success of our annual 'Crab Feeds'. It will have a Reformation theme as our Pastor continues to find ways to celebrate its 500 year anniversary.

As we all try to navigate our own way through these current turbulent and contentious political and world difficulties with its seemingly intractable problems, may you all find some respite and comfort by attending our worship services under the comforting and skillful guidance of our inspiring Pastor, Kerstin Weidmann. We remain grateful for her continuing leadership and dedication.

Wishing you all God's blessings and a wonderful and safe summer.

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

Birthdays

June

- 19 Annika Braucher
- 20 Andreas Pielhoop



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

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



Palm Sunday



Easter Sunday



Freundschaft Liederkrantz at their Spring Concert 3/18/17



Reception after concert



Rachel's 1st Sermon



Pastor & Rachel deliver donations at SP Synod Assembly



Reformation 500

A Wurst Wedding

Celebrating the Marriage of Martin and Katharina Luther

Saturday, July 22nd, 2017

4:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, San Francisco, 3281 16th Street
(Corner of 16th Street and Dolores)

Cost: \$30 pp; children 5-17: \$10; under 5: free

The entire family is invited to come for German food (made with stuff available in 16th century Saxony) and drink, period games and music, and maybe even a dance or two as we reenact the wedding of Martin

Luther and Katharina von Bora.

Renaissance costumes encouraged, but not required.

For more information, contact St. Matthew's at 415-863-6371 or

office@stmatthews-sf.org

Space is limited – please make your reservation by July 15.



Mark your Calendars

June 4 – Pentecost “The Power of Language”

11:00 a.m. – Bilingual service
Potluck and Birthday celebration

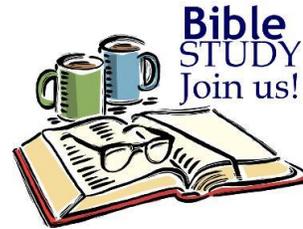
June 7, 14, 21, 28, July 5 and 12 (Wednesday)

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

A Different Look at the Reformation-Study Series

By Katharina von Bora

Bring a brown bag lunch! Everybody is welcome.



June 11 – Holy Trinity/First Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 a.m. – English service with Holy Communion
11:00 a.m. – German service with Holy Communion

June 18– Second Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 a.m. – English service
11:00 a.m. – German service

July 9- Worship Services with German Vocal Ensemble ‘Kammerchor Elikuren’

9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.; 12 noon: Reception in the fellowship hall celebrating
Pr. Weidmann’s 15th ordination anniversary (which happened at St. Matthew’s).

St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church

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