



Summer 2013

## Die Gute Nachricht

Evangelisch-Lutherische St. Matthäusgemeinde

## The Good News

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church



Dearly Beloved,

If there is one thing we can count on, it is change.

Change comes to all of us, whether we are ready or not. We grow up and leave home, often marrying and having children ourselves. And what happens? Our children grow up and move out, as well, and the cycle continues, as we all grow older.

If there is one person we can count on – well, actually, three – it is God: our creator and divine parent, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit, a.k.a. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: one God, now and forever.

Contemporary theologians question and even discard the long-held position that God is unchanging. After all, how can we say that the God of all (including novelty) -- the God, who, as scripture says, “Makes all things new” -- can indeed be static rather than dynamic?

No one, however, claims that God's *nature* is unchanging. Christians believe, as Jesus taught and demonstrated, that God is faithful, loving, and forgiving. This is good news for us, especially when we are challenged by the changes that the years bring to us as individuals and as a congregation. It is good news because we know that there is someone to whom we can turn when change leaves us confused, challenged, or just plain tired. We can – and should – turn to God in prayer.

On July 20<sup>th</sup> the leadership of St. Matthew's will hold a mini-retreat here at the church, when we again will consider the question of church renewal.

What it is important for all of us to realize, is that the church is a spiritual community whose head is Jesus Christ. It is not a business, and there is no one model, or way, to “do church”, neither is there a manual to follow that will guarantee growth or success.

There are some things, however, that we can do that will guarantee that the church will fail. These include, first and foremost, cutting back on formal ministry (worship; study; and service), but also substituting our own “leadership” for that of God; not welcoming everyone whom God sends to us, whether neighbor, tenant, business associate, or Sunday morning worshipper; not praying for our church, or taking for granted that it will always be there; living in the past; and not listening to each other.

While there is no one formula for success, turning these negatives to positives is necessary, at a minimum.

*God calls us to the future, and I believe that God will provide what we need and, especially, whom we need to journey there with us. God may send us new members and new partners in ministry. God may call some old friends to new roles in our community.*

But even if others hear the call, they will take their gifts elsewhere, if we do not open our doors, both literally and figuratively, and open our hearts and minds as well. *As the church of Jesus Christ, we don't get to pick and choose our membership – that is up to the call of the Holy Spirit.*

While Sunday morning is often a time to meet old friends, won't you please consider that it may be the time to meet some new ones as well – perhaps someone whom God is sending for reasons known only to God, but that will be known by us later?

And when someone contacts the church to ask to use our space or for some other favor, instead of asking right away what they can do for us, won't you consider that God might be putting this person into the life of our community for a reason (other than to put a few dollars in the coffer) and think about what we can do for them?

And if you are reading this, and you feel moved to share your time and energy, your gifts and/or ideas with the church, won't you please give me a call?

Finally, let me take this opportunity to thank our hard-working church council and all who help St. Matthew's in any way. We all have many things in our lives competing for our attention, our time, and our resources. Thank you for giving to your church, as you are called and you are able.

I give thanks to God for all of you.

Yours in Christ's service,  
Pastorin Ressler

### June

9 Siegrun Gottschald  
19 Annika Braucher  
23 Julius Beisel

### July

1 Gisela Reinhold  
8 Rev. Dr. Hing Siem  
10 Manfred Bohndorf  
11 Verena Tent-Braucher  
18 Tom Wynn  
21 Lisa Praeger-Weller



### August

1 Margarete Jesch  
John Pressler  
6 Dr. Helmut Rolfes  
7 Richard Blanz  
8 Robert Hodges  
22 Ingrid Rudolph-Angelich  
28 Frieda Schönach

*As we update our membership lists we will add birthdays to the calendar. We apologize for any birthdays we missed in June, July or August.*

*Mrs. Reinhold will celebrate her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on July 1<sup>st</sup> and sends her greetings to all members of St. Matthew's.*

## Message from Your Council President

Dear Members and Friends of St. Matthew's:

As we are now entering the quieter and lazier days of summer and anticipating trips, vacations and family gatherings, the work of the church continues, although the Council will not have its regular monthly meeting in July.

Since our last newsletter in March we are continuing the process of making needed improvements to the church structure itself. We are currently obtaining bids for the painting and repair of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street (front) façade of the church, which is our window to the neighborhood and city. The extent of the repair is not yet known, as it is not certain how many shingles will need to be replaced. Funds for this project were allocated at the annual congregational meeting in February. Also, a committee chaired by Michelle Berner has been selected to recommend what items need to be done to modernize to a limited degree our outdated and not very functional kitchen. This will not be an elaborate or extensive remodel. Once the desired improvements are decided upon, bids for the project will be obtained. Designated donations to this project will be greatly appreciated! Hopefully these two projects can be accomplished in the next few months.

The Council is also finalizing a format for a job performance review process for our employed staff. This is pretty much a standard and recommended business practice. It is anticipated that these reviews will be done on a regular annual basis and will be conducted by our personnel committee currently consisting of Dorothy Praeger, Juergen Fehr and Ulrike Hodges.

Our new church treasurer, Annett Wagner, has implemented online banking whereby bills are being paid electronically when possible and practical and our employees' pay is being directly deposited into their respective bank accounts. This process is working fairly well to date.

Regarding outside groups who use our church, KinderHaus is on a reduced summer schedule and this year will only have one week off during the first week of July. Also the International Orange Chorale, which has been rehearsing on Sunday evenings, will be taking the summer off and return to us in September. Freundschaft Liederkranz and the Golden Gate Men's Chorus continue

their weekly rehearsals on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. Our vocal leader, Sam Palmer, uses the church at various times for his private vocal lessons in exchange for participating in our Sunday services.

Our own music program continues to be a work in progress. It is felt that the church cannot maintain a weekly choir at the current time, but that a choir of members could be used on special occasions. Under the present conditions Sam can likely be best utilized as a leader of congregational hymn singing and for special presentations. Nicole Fahlman has been filling in on the Sundays when Dave DeAngelis, our regular organist/pianist, is not able to be with us. This has been working quite well. The generous gift from Mrs. Pfau to support the regular monthly salary of Gary Hunt, our longtime previous organist, has now been exhausted. How Gary and Sam can best be utilized in our music program, while considering the church's budgetary reality, will be worked out by the personnel committee, Pastor Ressler and the Council.

Over the past several months several high quality musical events including recitals and concerts have been held in our sanctuary. These have all been excellent and I hope more of you will take advantage of them in the future.

Another item the Council has been working on is the implementation of an intensified home visitation program for those members who are no longer able to attend our regular Sunday services. This is to be coordinated by our church office secretary, Mrs. Elizabeth Karp. If you would like an in-home visit by the Pastor or know of someone who would, please contact the church office so that it can be scheduled.

On April 20 a retreat under Pastor Ressler's direction was held at St. Mark's Church for Council members and selected representative congregational leaders to start the planning process for our church's future. A second meeting will be held at our own Church on July 20.

Lastly, I would like to wish you all a safe, enjoyable and blessed summer.

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

## Baptisms at St. Matthew's

Spring and early summer brought four new members into God's church and ours, as we celebrated the baptism of three little boys and one little girl.

On April 7<sup>th</sup> **Lukas Alessandro Torres**, son of **Bryant** and **Elisabeth Torres** of Stockton was baptized during our first-Sunday-of-the-month bilingual service. As Elizabeth's family background is German, it was particularly meaningful for the family to make the trip to San Francisco, where the words of the actual baptism were spoken in the German language, as was the baptismal verse, read by Anna-Lena Raatz.

**Aubrey Lynne Blackburn**, daughter of **Matthew Horst Blackburn** and **Robyn Anne Selva** of Orinda was baptized on May 19<sup>th</sup> at the 9:30 a.m. English-language service. Matthew worshipped here when, as a youngster, he attended church at St. Matthew's with his father, Frank, who read the baptismal verse for his granddaughter.

On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, **Maximillian Otto** and **Theodore Oden Beisel**, twin brothers and sons of **Linda** and **Marcus Beisel** of Tiburon were baptized using a bilingual baptismal liturgy during the German-language service at 11 a.m. The boys, who slept through a great deal of the baptism heard two baptismal verses read to them, one by each of their parents. Bursting with pride were grandparents **Gerda and Julius Beisel**, active members of our congregation. To complete their joy, we celebrated **Julius's eightieth birthday**, which was the same day. We received this lovely thank-you from Gerda Beisel:

The **Beisel Family** would like to thank **Pastor Ressler** for a lovely Sermon at the Baptism of our Grandchildren last Sunday - and also the Congregation for Celebrating this Happy Occasion with us.



### Sierra Pacific Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Twenty-Sixth Annual Assembly May 2-4, 2013

Dorothy Praeger, lay delegate from St. Matthew's, and Pastor Ressler attended the Synod Assembly in Fresno, May 2-4. Mrs. Praeger wrote the following article.

I found the synod meeting informative and stimulating. My goal was to find information that would enhance the ministry of St. Matthew's Church. Since we are a congregation of the seniors, the keynote speaker's address highlighting why the 20 and 30 year olds do not attend worship was excellent. His message was that this group of persons felt that they were "spiritual" but not "religious". This means that they want a church that is involved with the problems of the day. This involvement brings them to worship.

I attended a session led by the campus minister of Fresno State and Fresno UC. Their group gathers food and feed families on a weekly basis. From this effort they have developed a group of young people who are committed to Bible study and worship.

One of the more active delegates spoke at the last session. His words had meaning for me. He said "Be satisfied with your smallness and be deep in your belief." It makes me think about how we look for crowds and are not really working to deepen the spiritual life of the people we have.

I was impressed with the work of the church at large. Our money supports the development of new churches, foreign missionaries, seminaries, colleges and Lutheran World Relief. All of the agencies could not function without our gifts and I am proud that we send our yearly apportionment.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dorothy Praeger, Lay delegate

## Worship News

Recently, we have made some changes in worship here at St. Matthew's.

First, we have changed the way we administer and receive Holy Communion. The key word here is *receive*.

Formerly, those who communed received the host (the wafer representing the body of Jesus) from the pastor, and then took a small glass of wine (representing the blood of Christ) from the communion assistant.

While many churches celebrate communion this way, your pastor is a bit of a theology nerd (for lack of a better term), who likes our liturgical practices to reflect our Lutheran theological heritage. The cornerstone of the edifice of Lutheran theology is that we receive salvation by the grace of God through (the gift of) faith in Jesus Christ. Again the key word is *receive* – not *take*.

Therefore, we are now using a pouring chalice rather than pre-filled glasses of wine. When you come up to the altar for communion, you are invited to take a small glass and carry it to the altar with you. You will receive the host from the pastor, and then she will return with the wine and pour it into your glass.

If you prefer to drink from the chalice of wine or the cup of grape juice OR dip your wafer in the wine or juice, you may do so. The communion assistant will carry these. Please do not dip the wafer in the pouring chalice.

Speaking of receiving, you may know that in some traditions the celebrant places the wafer directly in the communicant's mouth. While this is not our usual practice in the Lutheran Church, if someone indicates that he or she chooses to receive this way, your pastor obliges.

While I have your attention, let me add that when the pastor or communion assistant says, "The body of Christ given for you," "the blood of Christ shed for you" or similar words, it is appropriate for you to respond, "Amen."

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Our nine –thirty service is usually attended by a small number of people, not many of whom are strong singers. In an attempt to keep worship meaningful and not unpleasant, we are experimenting with changes in the liturgical music. At the suggestion of one faithful attendant, your pastor is considering other changes that might make this early service a bit less formal, "user friendly," and up-to-date.

In the Lutheran tradition, this is all well and good. As long as the Gospel is preached and the sacraments are celebrated as Jesus has told us to do, the form and content of the rest of the worship service is entirely up to the community that is worshipping.

Some of you may be aware that this year (since the first Sunday in Advent) we have been following the lectionary (schedule of readings from the Bible) of the German church, which differs a bit from that of the ELCA. We have also been using prayers from the German church (which your pastor translates for the English language and bilingual services) as well as suggestions for song as part of the *Fürbittengebete*.

Where I depart from the German lectionary is by retaining the tradition of reading one lesson from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament, in addition to the Gospel reading and the psalm every week. Occasionally, the German lectionary may have, for example, two Gospel readings and nothing from the Old Testament on a given week.

Otherwise, we retain a very traditional format for the German –l language *Gottesdienst*, with, perhaps, the exception of our Musical Meditation, a lovely and often moving St. Matthew's tradition.

## Pastoral Visits

Pastorin Ressler has begun to visit those members who seldom or no longer worship with us, due to poor health and/or limited mobility. Parish Secretary Elizabeth Karp has been scheduling these visits, which *die Frau Pastorin* recognizes to be important.

Generally, these visits are being made on the Thursday before the first, third, and fifth Sundays of the month. Please call the office to request a visit if you would like to schedule a visit (415-863-6371). If not, we will call you!

Please know that Pastorin Ressler is delighted to visit any and all parishioners, including those of you who worship here regularly.

## Intern

We are pleased to announce that we will have a pastoral intern from Germany with us for approximately six weeks in September and October. Johannes van Oorschot, an advanced student at Ruprecht Karls University, Heidelberg will be working with Pastorin Ressler with worship leadership, preaching and, possibly, visitation. He will also have an opportunity to meet some of the other San Francisco clergy and Lutheran service organizations, such as Welcome and the Night Ministry so that he might take home a well-rounded

picture of the diversity of ministries that comprise the San Francisco Conference of Lutheran Ministries of the ELCA.

His English is very good and, of course, his German is excellent, as he is a native speaker.

As housing in San Francisco is expensive and Johannes's stipendium is limited, if you have an extra room in your home, we invite you to consider hosting him for one or more of the weeks that he will be with us. Please speak to Pastorin Ressler (you may call me at 415 -335- 0884 or at the church).

## Sacristan Needed

We need someone to help us set up communion for the 9:30 services on the second and fourth Sundays of the month, due to the well-deserved retirement from this position of Mrs. Brigitte Pfau, who has served faithfully for years.

Thank you, Mrs. Pfau, for all your service to St. Matthew's Lutheran Church.



Please pray for friends and members of St. Matthew's.

**Isolde Bamberger, Inge Fellguth, Robert Gill, Siegrun Gottschald, Lotte Haferkamp, Marie Hoffmann, Gary Hunt, Ursula Neumann, Sigrid Raub, Gisela Reinhold, Michael Rombs, Helen White and Karoline Zollinger.**

Elizabeth A. Smith was hired in March 2013 to be the Office Professional to assist Christopher W. Benson, Financial Consultant, in the Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Southwest Regional Office.

## Junges Vokalensemble Hannover

**July 23 – GGMC/ Junges Vokalensemble Hannover Concert**  
8:00 p.m. – St. Matthew's Lutheran Church



The *Junges Vokalensemble Hannover* was founded in 1981 by its artistic director Prof. Klaus-Jürgen Etzold. The choir consists of about 60 female and male singers. Many of the members are active and former students of the University of Music, Drama and Media Hannover, but other professions are represented as well, and all singers are united in their wide choral experience and their joy in singing challenging works together. The performance of a wide range of a cappella works, some of them quite unknown, forms an important emphasis of the choir. In addition to sacred and secular a cappella music of the 15th century until today, the choir performs cantatas, masses, oratorios, and passions.

Many compositions were broadcast for radio stations or published on CD. The choir has recorded ten CDs and performed several world premieres of contemporary compositions, e.g. by Büsing, Dinescu, Fuchs and Wangenheim. In 2010 the choir received the ECHO KLASSIK award for the CD "Glaubenslieder", the highest prize for CD recordings in Germany.

The choir has been on a large number of concert tours, which led the singers to many European countries, but also to Egypt, Mexico, Russia, Israel, China and Venezuela. The choir successfully participated in several international choir competitions and won various prizes, e. g. 1989 Middlesbrough/ England, 1994 Riva del Garda/ Italy, 1995 Llangollen/ Wales, 1997 Budapest/ Hungary, 1997 Marktobendorf/ Germany, 2001 Spittal/ Austria, 2006 Torrevieja/ Spain, 2010 Panyu/ China. In 2007 the choir was awarded 3rd prize in LET THE PEOPLES SING by the European Broadcasting Union. For 2011 the Junges Vokalensemble received invitations from Estonia, Turkey and Belgium. The participation in festivals and competitions gives the singers the great chance of becoming acquainted with new works and other choral traditions.

The voice trainers of the choir are Katharina Sahlfeld and Annika Völlering.



## KinderHaus

It's hard to believe that it already summer! We have had a great year at KinderHaus and are thankful that we can be a part of the bigger community at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church. During the summer we have a smaller program and you will most likely not see many of us, because this is the time of field trips. Children are exploring their home town, San Francisco, going to the beach and visiting museums, the Botanical gardens or taking a ride on the historic I-Line. KinderHaus will be back on regular schedule, Monday-Friday, from 8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. starting August 19, 2013.

Have a great summer.

Jana Houweling, Program Director

## Note from Secretary

With this newsletter I am using a new database to print address labels. If you have requested newsletters by email and received a hard copy please let me know. If you have not sent me your email address please do so as it will save postage for future newsletters. If you wish to be removed from the mailing list of St. Matthew's please contact the Office at 415-863-6371 or [office@stmatthews-sf.org](mailto:office@stmatthews-sf.org)

## Church Picnic September 8

### St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

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