Dear Members and Friends,

‘And the Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness 40 days, tempted by Satan.’ Mark 1, 12 f.

My husband Fred and I took a trip to Maui this past month. It had been a dream of mine for a long time to visit this Hawaiian island during whale watching season (and we saw plenty of whales!). Before the trip, I thought I’d spend a lot of time on the beach, being lazy, swimming, snorkeling. However, we ended up being much more active than we had anticipated – Maui just has too many amazing places to explore.

One of those places is Maui’s sacred mountain, Haleakala. The highest peak of this dormant volcano stands just over 10,000 feet tall. But Haleakala’s peaks are not its most interesting feature – the most astounding place is a plateau beneath the peaks, often referred to as the ‘crater’. This plateau is larger than the island of Manhattan – and looks like a place from another world (see picture). This plateau is rocky and barren. Volcanic cinder cones in different hues dot the landscape. What just blew my mind was the sound of sheer silence as we hiked to an overlook and took in the scene. This place feels devoid of life. This place is a wilderness.

Right now, we are in the season of Lent. Lent is the time we especially remember the suffering and death of Jesus Christ before we celebrate his resurrection and new life on Easter morning. The time of Lent is often called a ‘journey through the wilderness’ – the rough places in life in the shadow of death. As Jesus Christ spent 40 days in the wilderness to prepare for his ministry, so we are called to be in the wilderness and let all wilderness experiences shape and mold us.

As I think back to the wilderness of Haleakala, I remember how removed I felt from the hustle and bustle of the world. How strange and how wonderful the silence felt. How, without the sounds that usually surround me every day, I actually was able to listen within – and listen for the voice of God. There was something sobering and at the same time transforming about spending some time in this barrenness. Without any distraction of sight or sound, I was able to truly connect with the place I was in – and to reflect on all the places of my life I find myself in.

There are folks, even Christians, who don’t want to journey through the wilderness – who see no benefit in reflecting on sin and mortality. There are folks who think that the wilderness is a dead place, an empty place, and that they can’t take anything away from it.
There are folks who think that the wilderness is depressing and life-draining rather than life-giving. But how can we truly appreciate the lush places and good times, if we refuse to journey through the wilderness times and places of our lives? How can we truly and fully feel the joy of Easter and the gift of new life, if we don’t walk with Christ through the wilderness to the cross?

The wilderness of Haleakala taught me one thing: not everything is as it seems. What seems barren and dead actually contains amazing life. There is one plant that can only be found on the slopes and in the plateau of Haleakala: it is called the ‘Silver Sword’ (see picture). This rugged plant goes through three stages: first it looks like a spiky ball. At some point, it sprouts a long stem (thus the name ‘Silver Sword’), which contains the seeds for a new generation. But as this plant shares new life, it dies.

No place is ever as barren and lifeless as it seems. God is a God of life, and provides for life to find a way even in the most desolate places. There is always hope.

So I invite you to take that journey through the wilderness of Lent. To focus on the voice within and the voice of God. To let yourself be transformed and renewed by reflection. To look for the (often amazing) signs of life as it springs forth in the midst of desolation and death.

This is the blessing of our Lenten journey, which leads to the cross – but beyond that to the empty tomb on Easter morn.

Pr. Kerstin Weidmann
Council President’s Message

February 21, 2018

Dear Members and Friends of St. Matthew’s,

Time seems to pass so quickly and ever more so as we grow older. Was Christmas just last week? The calendar says otherwise as we have now entered the Lenten season with Easter on the horizon. With this new church season another newsletter is coming to your mailbox, whether virtual or real, to bring you up to date on the recent state of affairs at St. Matthew’s. Happily the church is doing relatively well, even though the world and country remains in an uncertain and dangerous condition. Even the weather has seen extremes from record heat to record cold in the space of a week or so.

Since the last newsletter at the end of November, the church has been quite busy. On December 1 the holiday concert season began with the choral group ‘Clerestory’. This was followed by a ‘Tactus’ concert on December 9, a ‘Damenchor’ concert on December 10, and five ‘Golden Gate Men’s Chorus’ concerts from December 12-19. The sanctuary was again beautifully decorated by the GGMC for which we thank them. A large ‘Underearners Anonymous’ workshop was held on December 2. The Christmas Eve German service found the church filled as usual and the Christmas Day service was enhanced with Freundschaft Liederkranz providing choral accompaniment.

Welcome and Farewell: Two memorial services were held for previous members from years ago, the first on December 3 for Blanka Hirschler of Anchorage, Alaska and the second on January 12 for Barbara Cumming of Henderson, Nevada. On December 10 we also bid Rachel Swenson farewell. She had been with us for the prior year and a half as a seminary student from the PLTS in Berkeley; we wish her well and will miss her cheerful and friendly presence on Sunday mornings. On February 11 a joint baptism was performed for Theodor Rose von Unger and Nikolaus Harro von Unger; we welcome them to our congregation.

On January 20th our 8th annual ‘Crab Feed’ fundraiser was held and a good time was had by all. We thank Ingrid Rudolph-Angelich, Ulrike Hodges, Annett Wagner and Verena Tent-Braucher for their hard work in making this event its usual success. To better accommodate these large meals, a new kitchen stove was donated to the church by ‘Freundschaft Liederkranz’ and an anonymous donor; thank you!

The annual congregational business meeting took place on February 11. The church’s financial situation in 2017 remained fairly similar to the prior year thanks to a good return on our investments and several generous large donations. However, we cannot always rely on this good fortune occurring, so please consider increasing your giving to the church if at all possible. Also, kindly remember the church in your estate planning. We thank Juergen Fehr for all the work he did preparing all of the financial data for the annual report and the work he does keeping our financial affairs in good order. The Council welcomes Dorothy Praeger as a new member and thanks Ursula Younger for her service after she asked to resign.

Upon the recommendation of the Council and the approval by the congregation, the church is now beginning a new fundraising campaign to install a stairlift to the sanctuary with a goal of reaching $35,000. This will greatly aid those with mobility problems and hopefully increase church attendance. Let’s face it, none of us
A Visit from St. Nicholas
On Sunday, December 3\textsuperscript{rd}, St. Nicholas once more visited St. Matthew’s and brought blessings and gifts for all the little ones and those young at heart. We thank Dr. Andreas Ginsbach for sharing his gifts of impersonating the beloved saint.

Farewell to Parish Teaching Student Rachel Swenson
On Sunday, December 10\textsuperscript{th}, we said goodbye to our parish teaching student, Rachel Swenson. Rachel is a student at Pacific Lutheran Seminary in Berkeley and was part of St. Matthew’s for one and a half years. The teaching student experience gives students and opportunity to ‘learn the ropes’ in a congregational setting and start developing their pastoral gifts. We will miss Rachel!

are getting any younger and this could help all of us some day as life’s infirmities befall us. So please give generously to this campaign as you did for the very successful funding of the recent organ restoration project, now completed. More information will soon be forthcoming.

To begin the Lenten season, Ash Wednesday services were jointly held at St. Mary and Martha Church and conducted by our Pr. Kerstin and Pr. Monique Ortiz. The hospitality extended by our sister and neighbor church was exceptional and we thank them.

In closing let us keep the church in our prayers and remember it as a place of refuge and comfort in these uncertain times as we experience the contemplation and time of reflection Lent provides as we approach the most significant day of our Christian faith - Easter. We look forward to seeing you occupying our pews whenever possible; our future depends on it! Wishing you all the best and God’s blessings…

Respectfully submitted,

William H. Bremer, M.D., Council President
Christmas Eve and Christmas Day
Several hundred people attended the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services at St. Matthew’s. Young and old loves to celebrate the story of the birth of Christ and his coming among us.

Damenchor Liederkranz Holiday Concert
On Sunday, December 10th, the ‘Damenchor Liederkranz’ with special guests ‘Freundschaft Liederkranz’ performed their annual holiday concert at St. Matthew’s. The audience enjoyed a nostalgic trip back to the ‘Old Country’ as the choirs sang German Christmas and holiday favorites. Thank you for a beautiful performance.
Crab Feed in 2018
On Saturday, January 20th, St. Matthew’s held its annual crab feed. Around 70 people enjoyed good food, drink, and fellowship. Thanks to our crab feed crew: Ingrid Rudolph-Angelich and Steven, Eli and Ilse Angelich, Ulrike, Robert and Christina Hodges, Verena Tent-Braucher and Annett Wagner. Thanks also to all other volunteers who made this event possible!

Ash Wednesday with and at St. Mary’s and St. Martha’s
On February 14th, we commemorated Ash Wednesday. This year, St. Matthew’s joined forces and spirits with the saints of St. Mary’s and St. Martha’s, the Spanish speaking Lutheran congregation in the Mission. Pr. Monique Ortiz and Pr. Kerstin Weidmann co-chaired. We had a meaningful service under the theme: ‘We all are made from dust – and to dust we shall return’, reflecting on our commonalities as children of God who are all wonderfully made. Several people shared their (immigration) stories, among them Barbara Fehr and Frieda Schoenach. St. Mary’s and St. Martha’s then treated us to a wonderful luncheon with many German specialties.
Upcoming Events

March 1, 8, 15 and 22 - Lenten Study Group
  Thursdays, 11:00 a.m - 12:30 p.m.
  Subject: Living Waters

March 30 – Good Friday
  11:00 a.m. - Coffee Hour
  12:00 Noon - Bilingual Service
  This year, the saints of St. Mary’s and St. Martha’s and their pastor, Monique Ortiz, will join us for a Good Friday service reflecting on the death of Jesus Christ. The service starts at 12 noon, and we will leave in silence afterward. However, we will offer a coffee hour before the service, starting at 11 a.m. All are invited!

April 1 – Easter Sunday
  11:00 a.m. - Bilingual Service for the Entire Family
  12:15 p.m. - Easter Egg Hunt and Potluck
  Celebrate the Lord’s resurrection with us! Our bilingual German-English service will be for the entire family. After the service, we gather for a potluck luncheon and an Easter egg hunt. All are invited!

April 14 - Freundschaft Liederkranz Spring Concert
  2:00 p.m.
  Freundschaft Liederkranz will hold its annual spring concert at St. Matthew’s. All are invited to enjoy German tunes evoking springtime.

April 29 - Damenchor Liederkranz
  11:00 a.m.
  On Sunday, April 29th, Damenchor Liederkranz under the direction of Dr. Dieter Erbelding will sing during the German service at 11 a.m.
Mark your Calendar

February 22 – March 22 - Lenten Study Group
  Thursdays, 11:00 a.m - 12:30 p.m.
  Subject: Living Waters

March 4 - Third Sunday in Lent
  11:00 a.m. - Bilingual Service
  Potluck Meal and Birthday Celebration
  Bridegroom Shower for David DeAngelis

March 11 - Fourth Sunday in Lent
  9:30 a.m. – English service with Communion
  11:00 a.m. – German service with Communion
  Daylight Saving Time

March 18 - Fifth Sunday in Lent
  9:30 a.m. – English service with Communion
  11:00 a.m. – German service with Communion
  Council Meeting

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