Dear Members and Friends,

‘Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.’ Romans 12:12, NRSV

On my recent trip to Oregon and Washington, I saw many natural wonders that took my breath away. Among them were ancient giant Spruce, Pine and Fir trees in the rain forest of Olympic National Park, and the majestic Redwoods of Northern California. However, the tree that impressed me most on this trip is a conifer (maybe a Spruce?) of rather ordinary size. Have a look at the picture, and maybe you can see why.

The tree is perched on the edge of a gorge – Annie Creek Gorge in Oregon, to be precise. Over time, weather and erosion washed away the earth its roots once were grounded in. More than half of its (massive) roots are now exposed with nothing to hold on to. Yet this tree is literally hanging in there, standing proud and tall, full of life. The word ‘defiant’ came to my mind when I looked at it, as did the word ‘hope’. Life persists against all odds. I think we all know what it means to ‘hang in there’. There are plenty of situations in life when we are exhausted, burnt out, overwhelmed.
There are times we seem to be losing ground – we are diagnosed with a severe illness, we lose a beloved person, something bad happens to us. There are times when it seems there is nothing to hold on to. All we can do in such situations is to hang in there – and to just survive, another hour, another day, another week – and to hang on.

Some are so traumatized by things that happen to them that they can’t manage to hang on and hang in there without the help of alcohol, recreational or prescription drugs, or some other habit that brings relief and satisfaction for a moment (like ‘retail therapy’) but is destructive in the long term. For some (even people of faith), it’s really tough to hang in there, and we shouldn’t judge them, but rather seek to help them as much as we can to get back on a healthy and life-fostering track.

But as people of faith, we have hope that things eventually will get better, because God promises us life to the fullest that transcends life here on earth. God showed his yearning for this kind of life when Christ rose on Easter morn, for the sake of humanity and the sake of the world.

We have something to hold on to, for we are grounded in God – and even as we die (as the tree in the picture above eventually will not be able to hang in there anymore and will have to surrender to gravity), we are confident that God is there to catch us and give us life beyond death. God gives us confidence that life persists against all odds.

We also can find hold in community – the picture doesn’t show it, but there are other trees nearby whose roots intertwine with the roots of the tree on the edge, offering stability. My prayer is that we all have community we can turn to when we just ‘hang in there’, sometimes for dear life: spouses, children, parents, friends, a church community, or groups that organize themselves with the goal of helping each other make it through tough times. Nobody needs to be alone in times of trouble.

On the other hand, my hope and prayer is that we all recognize that we are community to someone else and can offer something to hold on to when someone is in need.

The Apostle Paul knew something about hanging in there. His mission of spreading the good news of the crucified and risen Christ did not always go according to plan. He had to contend with adversity from outside and within the Christian community. He was derided, driven out of town more than once, stoned and left for dead, imprisoned several times, and eventually martyred for his faith.

But he had hope: hope in God, and also hope in Christian community, the ‘body of Christ’. With this defiant hope in his heart, he could write to the struggling congregation in Rome, that in all hardship, ‘Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold on fast to what is good; love another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints (which is, the members of the Christian congregation); extend hospitality to strangers…Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.’ (Romans 12:9-13, 15, NRSV)

May these words remind us of the loving and gracious and life-giving power of God and the power of community in all those times we have to hang in there.

Pr. Kerstin Weidmann
Council President’s Message

Dear Members and Friends of St. Matthew’s,

The calendar shows less than three weeks of official summer remaining, although for those living in San Francisco, we are still waiting for our delayed ‘Indian’ summer to begin, which it normally does and hopefully will again this September and October. June through August has brought to California many hot, dry and windy days along with some very serious wildfires except for the immediate coast. Summer travel is now largely over and school is resuming. I hope your summer, whether traveling, doing home projects or just relaxing in your home or own backyard, was enjoyable and relaxing and your batteries are again recharged.

Activity at the church however was not slow or relaxed. We took advantage of our user group’s rather prolonged summer breaks to accomplish some building upgrades in order to improve the beauty, functionality and accessibility and also to make needed repairs to our historical church structure. On June 18 after a successful fundraising effort, a stairlift was installed to aid those with mobility issues gain access to our second floor sanctuary. To those who made monetary donations or gave of their time to make this project possible, we offer our very grateful thanks. Hopefully, this will also increase attendance at our services and events! The stairlift was blessed and dedicated on July 28.

On July 16 we had our electrician come in and install new, brighter and much longer-lasting and energy efficient LED light bulbs in the sanctuary. He also installed new LED motion sensor lights on the side of the building adjacent to the parking lot to improve safety and night visibility. New LED lighting was also added to the display case on the front of the church as well as a new outlet behind the organ so that we can illuminate the large round window on the church front.

Then on July 31 to August 3 the social hall floor, which was showing some serious wear, was refinished with three coats of an oil-based polyurethane. It now looks shiny and great and hopefully will stay that way for quite a while since the floor cannot be re-sanded again.

As for events occurring over the summer, on July 28 St. Matthew’s hosted an excellent return organ concert by Roland Voit from Germany; the theme was ‘Five Centuries of English Organ Music’. The following day we again hosted ‘concerto fisarmonica’ playing a concert of more popular music genres; this group consisted of about 20 young accordion players and musicians who also were from Germany. Other events were a 40th anniversary Chanticleer reception on June 27, a Tactus concert on August 18 and a two-day Underearners Anonymous workshop on August 25th and 26th.

A serious issue with which the Council is now dealing, concerns the renegotiation of our lease for the parking lot owned by Mission Dolores and the San Francisco Archdiocese. They are asking for substantially increased rental fees with multiple leases depending on time and days of usage. This is obviously a major concern as the parking lot rent is already our biggest expense other than salaries.

Our dedicated, enthusiastic, inspiring and wonderful Pastor is now also back from her vacation, so please show your support for her efforts and the church’s future by attending and participating in our services and activities whenever possible. Wishing you all the best and God’s abundant blessings!

Wishing you all peace and God’s blessings.

Respectfully submitted,

William H. Bremer, M.D., Council President
Fall and Winter Worship Schedule

As summer has come to a close, we are now back to our regular worship schedule:
1st Sunday of the month: 11 a.m. Bilingual (German/English) worship service, followed by an ‘enhanced’ coffee hour with finger foods of the sweet and savory kind; please bring some food items to share.
All other Sundays:
9:30 a.m. English Worship Service
11 a.m. German Worship Service

September 9th

English Service: 9:30 a.m., German Service: 11 a.m.

As in previous years, we will be joining an initiative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) on Sunday, September 9th: ‘God’s Work, Our Hands’. On this Sunday, congregations all over the country participate in community service projects. In the past, St. Matthew’s has supported Lutheran Social Services of Northern California and the San Francisco Night Ministry.

This year, Pr. Lyle Beckman, freshly retired director of the San Francisco Night Ministry, will be leading us in worship on 9/9. He will also collect new socks for men and women (sports socks preferred) to be distributed to our brothers and sisters in the streets of San Francisco. Monetary gifts for the San Francisco Night Ministry will also be gratefully accepted. Please give generously!
Annual Outdoor Worship Service and Potluck Picnic at ‘Naturfreunde Oakland’

Sunday, September 16th, 11 a.m.

‘Naturfreunde Oakland’, 3115 Butters Drive, Oakland

The whole family is invited to attend this traditional end-of-summer outdoor service and picnic on the beautiful premises of the ‘Naturfreunde Oakland’. Please bring a picnic item to share! Please note that there will be NO WORSHIP SERVICE at St. Matthew’s that day. People who want to carpool meet in the parking lot next to the church at 10 a.m.
‘Erntedank’ Worship Service (German Tradition of Thanksgiving for the Harvest)

Sunday, October 7th, 11 a.m.

Please join us for a special bilingual service honoring the German tradition of giving thanks for the harvest. You are invited to bring fruits and vegetables that will be used to adorn the altar. Non-perishable food items will also be collected. All food items will benefit local food programs.

Kaffeeklatsch with Rabbi Mychal Copeland (Sha'ar Zahav)

Thursday, October 25th
11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

During our last study about the apostles Peter and Paul, the participants had a lot of questions about Judaism. Rabbi Mychal Copeland from Synagogue Sha'ar Zahav graciously accepted an invitation to talk about ‘Judaism 101’ and answer questions you might have. So please come - all are invited.

Festive Worship Services Commemorating the Reformation

Sunday, October 28th

9:30 a.m. in English
11 am in German

The mixed choir of the ‘Oakland Turnverein’ will join us for the German service that day. Martin and Katie Luther may also make an appearance.
May I Introduce: Tia Pelz, Our Vikarin for the Year 2019

St. Matthew’s will be blessed with the presence and work of Tia Pelz, a theologian trained in Germany. Tia Pelz has concluded her training in Germany and will actually will be ordained before she and her family move to California at the beginning of 2019; however, technically, her time at St. Matthew’s will be counted as part of her training. She will be with us for a year.

Tia is married and has two young children (4 and 5). Her husband will be participating in the physics post-doc program at UC Berkeley. We are excited to welcome Tia and our family in our midst! For those of you who speak German, please read what Tia writes about her family and their upcoming adventure:


Dedication and Blessing of New Stair Lift

Thanks to many generous donations and a special grant by the Excelsior German Center, St. Matthew’s was able to purchase and install a stair lift that helps people with mobility issues get up to the sanctuary.

On Saturday, July 28th, the lift was officially dedicated and blessed. Marie Hoffmann, former president of the Excelsior German Center, did the honor of cutting the ribbon. She also took the first official ride up to the second floor.

During the ceremony, donors and people engaged in the realization of the plan to install the lift were honored. We hope that those who haven’t been able to come to services or events at St. Matthew’s because of the inaccessibility of the sanctuary will take advantage of this new upgrade to help those mobility issues.

Some of the donors to the stairlift fund at the dedication
‘5 Centuries of English Organ Compositions’

On Saturday, July 28th, renowned German organist Roland Voit gave a concert at St. Matthew’s. He played pieces by English composers, and led us on an interesting (and very enjoyable) musical journey from the 16th through the 20th century. Voit displayed his impressive skills by tackling quite different styles of music for the organ. From surprisingly fresh and modern sounding pieces by 16th century composers William Byrd and Orlando Gibbons, to the much more structured concerts, including many fugues, of 17th and 18th century composers like Charles Avison, Charles John Stanley and Frederick (Friedrich) Haendel, romantic compositions by 19th century composers Samuel Wesley and Elizabeth Sterling to the well-known ‘Pomp and Circumstance’ by Edward Elgar – Voit knew how to let the small, but fine historic instrument at St. Matthew’s shine.

The audience was very appreciative and thanked Mr. Voit with a standing ovation. It’s not every day that we are blessed with such talent.
‘Concerto Fisarmonica’ in Concert at St. Matthew’s

On Sunday, July 29th, we were blessed to be able to welcome the German youth accordion group ‘Concerto Fisarmonica’ under the direction of Tobias Mehner once more. ‘Concerto Fisarmonica’ delighted the audience with a broad repertoire that included folk and classical music, Broadway tunes, rock and pop.

A special treat was a segment of organ compositions, played by Mehner’s brother, Christoph, an accomplished and award-winning organist who used to be the resident concert organist at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig.

After the 2 hour program, the audience gave the musicians a standing ovation. During the reception that followed, audience and young musicians had a chance to mingle and connect. We sure hope that this group of enthusiastic young musicians will visit us again in the future.
Tactus members rehearsing prior to church service on 8/12/18.

Social Hall floor refinished last month.

**Birthdays**

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*We apologize for any birthdays missed in September and October. Please inform the Office of any omissions.*
Mark your Calendars

September 9 - Sixteenth Sunday of Pentecost
9:30 a.m. - English Service with Holy Communion
11:00 a.m. – German Service with Holy Communion

September 16 - Seventeenth Sunday of Pentecost
Annual Outdoor Worship Service in Oakland
11:00 a.m. – Worship service and pot luck church picnic
‘Naturfreunde Oakland’, 3115 Butters Drive, Oakland

September 23 - Eighteenth Sunday of Pentecost
9:30 a.m. - English Service with Holy Communion
11:00 a.m. – German Service with Holy Communion

September 30 - Nineteenth Sunday of Pentecost
9:30 a.m. - English Service
11:00 a.m. – German Service

October 7 - Twentieth Sunday of Pentecost
11:00 a.m.—Bilingual Service
Coffee Hour

Mark your calendar:
Advent Bible Study - 11:00 am - 12:30 pm
‘Fling Wide the Door - Macht Hoch die Tuer’
Thursdays, November 29th - December 13th
Thursday, December 20th: Christmas Party

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