Dear Members and Friends,

In May, my husband and I went on a road trip that took us from Highway 395 the Eastern side of the Sierra Nevada to Utah. Along the way, we saw some of the oldest living trees on earth (at the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest; the oldest tree here is about 4,700 years old), visited several National Parks (Death Valley, Zion, Bryce, Capitol Reef, Arches and Canyonlands) plus a few state parks. If you asked me what my favorite part of this trip was, I couldn’t tell you. I was just blown away by the beauty of God’s creation in all those different places.

However, I was especially impressed by the Colorado River, which we encountered again and again (and crossed numerous times) on our journey. Now the river itself is not too impressive; in fact, for most of its length, it is a moderately sized river – there is no comparison between the Colorado and rivers like the Columbia, the Mississippi or the Missouri. But, boy, the landscapes that the Colorado River has carved out over millions of years! There are picturesque bends, like the very popular Horseshoe Bend, and steep gorges – and then of course there is the Grand Canyon, the arguably most dramatic and famous canyon in the world. The waters of the relatively humble Colorado River have had the persistent power of cutting through numerous layers of rock and stone over time.

“Seeing (and hiking) the Grand Canyon was just awe-inspiring. I had the feeling that I was getting a glimpse of eternity, and I felt quite small. ‘When I see… the work of your fingers…, what is man, that you are mindful of him?’ (Psalm 8, 3 and 4)
However, I also was reminded that nothing created will last forever. Millions of years ago, the landscape that today is the Grand Canyon looked much different. The Colorado River was flowing through a high plateau. The twists and turns the river took over millions of years were different, as well. Earthquakes and obstacles, like fallen trees or rocks, caused the waters to be directed into new channels. Human beings also contributed to the changes: reservoirs like Lake Mead and Lake Powell were created when the Hoover and Glen Canyon dams were built; consequently, the flow of the Colorado was restricted as its power was harnessed to be used for electricity. In the future, the landscape will look much different from what is looks like today. There will be erosion, droughts, floods, and seismic events to alter the way the Colorado River flows. There are even changes happening in our lifetime already. All this is hard to believe when one looks at the majestic landscape today. How can something that looks as if it was eternal come to an end and change into something else? And so we may try to capture the moment and make it last that way – as Fred and I tried through taking countless photographs.

‘The days of our lives are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong’ (Psalm 90:10) – our human life span on earth is limited, a nanosecond compared to the age of the earth. Often, it is hard for us to comprehend that change is something that is constant. We want to hold on to what is familiar and what is dear to us. We think with longing of the ‘good old days’, like our childhood, the times when churches were filled with families, or the days before advanced technology – times that seemed less complicated and harrowing. And we may become nostalgic for that which is no more. Now it is one thing to be nostalgic (I am!) – and another to be stuck in some idealized idea of the past, which leads to an active rejection of changes as they are happening. In many parts of the world, there has been a rise of political leaders who want to stem new immigration – never mind the fact that there has always been migration of people for various reasons (if you don’t believe me, just take one of those ancestry tests – you might be surprised what ethnic background you have). People have always been on the move, and populations have always changed. The last drastic shift of populations happened as recently as 75 years ago, during and after World War II – and many among you experienced this shift first-hand. Why are we so resistant or even afraid of changes in society around us? Why do we forget about Christ’s command to love our neighbor when it comes to those whom we perceive as ‘other’ and ‘alien’?

The Colorado River has carved its impressive bed slowly, but relentlessly, and changed an entire landscape. Populations will come and go. Changes will happen, whether we like it or not. God says, ‘I am about to do a new thing – now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?’ (Isaiah 43:19). It is our choice whether we actively and lovingly take part in the change, or let the changes happen to us. God is a God of change – as much as God is from everlasting and everlasting and promises to never forsake us, in all the turmoil and changes of the world.
Council President’s Message

Dear Members and Friends of St. Matthew’s,

The somewhat lazy, quiet days of summer are approaching conclusion, summer travel is being completed and kids and young adults are beginning to return to school and college. Here in San Francisco we are anticipating what is typically our nicest weather of the year…late summer and early fall. Beginning September 1st, our church services will again revert to our regular non-summer schedule with English services at 9:30 AM and German services at 11:00 AM except for the first Sunday of each month when there is just one bilingual service at 11:00 AM.

As is usually the case, weekly church attendance decreased during the summer as was member giving. Please remember that the monthly expenses of operating the church continue about the same throughout the year whether you are in a pew or not. Fortunately the stock market has been performing overall quite well so far this year, so our investment portfolio through Thrivent Financial has helped us during this slack period.

Although the Council’s work was less during the summer with no meeting in July, Pr. Kerstin was quite busy. After her vacation in Utah ended on May 30th, she as its president had to finish coordinating the DELKINA bi-annual conference, which was held here in the Bay Area this year from June 29 to July 3. The delegates worshipped with us at St. Matthew’s on June 30 and the church hosted a luncheon for them following the service. Pr. Kerstin has also been working hard planning the upcoming ZDF (a national German television station) taping of our worship service on September 22nd. This service will then be broadcast the following Sunday throughout Germany. Please try your best to attend this service as we would like to show a full church for this very unique honor. Special guests in attendance include Consul General Hans-Ulrich Suedbeck representing the German Consulate in San Francisco and Bishop Mark W. Holmerud representing our ELCA Sierra Pacific Synod.

Other special church-related events included a luncheon on July 7 celebrating Pr. Kerstin’s five year anniversary with us while also marking a milestone birthday for her. On June 2nd we bid farewell and Godspeed to the Ginsbach family…Andreas had accepted a teaching position at the German school in Moscow, Russia after his contract in Silicon Valley expired; he was also a member of the church council. On July 6th Anna Hodges, daughter of Robert and Ulrike Hodges, was married in our sanctuary to Nicholas Stathopoulos in a reportedly beautiful and joyous wedding ceremony. The baptism of Lucas Bauer was held on August 11th.

After the tragic murder on May 4 in Albuquerque, NM of Jackson L. Weller of Keller, TX, his grandmother, Dorothy Praeger, established a fund in Jackson’s memory to support St. Matthew’s children’s and family ministries. We thank those who have so generously contributed to this special fund. Jackson was baptized at St. Matthew’s and was the son of Patrick and Lisa Praeger Weller and the great-great-grandson of Hermann Gehrcke, St. Matthew’s founding pastor. Jackson was 23 years old, a student at the University of New Mexico and a member of their baseball team.

Other events occurring at the church were as follows: a Tactus concert on May 11, a concert by the Rainbow Chamber Players on May 18, and an assembly of the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference on May 31 and June 1. Our regular groups continued their weekly rehearsals and meetings although most took some vacation time off.

Lastly the council would like to give its thanks and appreciation to Andrew Birling, our relatively new organist, for his wonderful organ playing in our services and the smooth transition he has made and also to Pr. Tia Pelz, our ‘Vikarin’ from the EKD in Germany for the warmth of her personality and the inspiration given us in her heartfelt sermons. Wishing you all God’s blessings!

Respectfully submitted,

William H. Bremer, M.D.
President, St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church Council
Looking for wealth, security, freedom and future – Germans in San Francisco

Who are the people of St. Matthew’s? In 2020 St. Matthew’s will be celebrating its 125th anniversary: 125 years of people sharing lives with God and each other and 125 years of immigration and settlement and building homes and a future.

In preparation for 2020 we will continuously in our newsletter tell the story of Germans in San Francisco and St. Matthew’s. Follow us on an adventurous trip through more than 125 years of German-American dreams and reality.

Part II: An Earthquake is not the end of the world!

By 1905, Germans had many churches to choose from in San Francisco: Lutherans worshiped at St. Mark’s, St. Paulus, St. Matthew’s, St. John’s, St. Andrew’s, and Zion Lutheran churches. Roman Catholics attended St. Boniface and St. Anthony’s. There were three Methodist and three Evangelical German speaking congregations plus a German-speaking Baptist congregation. At least two synagogues, Emanu-El and Ohabei Shalome, also served German-speaking immigrants.

26 year-old Hermann Gehrcke came to California in 1891 with his theology degree from the University of Göttingen, Germany. In 1893, he was ordained a minister in the synod of the United Lutheran Church of America. Prior to his ordination, he was assistant pastor at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, which is the oldest Lutheran congregation in San Francisco. In 1895 he organized and founded St. Matthew's Lutheran Church together with 28 families. In need of a building, they rented an unused little church on 11th Street. Pr. Gehrcke served as the first pastor for 41 years. “To a minister and his wife who can maintain themselves in the good grace of a congregation in a fickle city of this age for a period of forty years, we take off our hats,” wrote William E. Crouser in 1935 for “The Lutheran”.

Pr. Gehrcke married Albrecht Küner’s daughter, Martha, on Sept 24th 1896. It must have been a lavish celebration with the menu being printed on silk bookmarks for the guests to take home as a souvenir. Küner definitely went all out: The guests were treated with oysters, shrimp, Spanish olives and carefully selected wines.

Life was flourishing in San Francisco. Cable cars brought people to work and for leisure. The first public pool and world’s largest indoor swimming pool was opened in 1894 by Adolph Sutro. It could hold 10,000 people and was decorated with marble, palms and padded animals. Because the baths were too far away to reach for the working population and train tickets were too expensive, Sutro built a rail line from the inner City to the Pacific Ocean and offered a free shuttle. Sutro came as a 20 year-old from Aachen, Germany and became the richest man in San Francisco. In 1894 he was elected as the mayor of San Francisco. To him, living the “American Dream” meant to give back to society. He donated a huge library and gave money to help the poor. Back then the gap between the poor and the rich was just as big as it is today.
And then the Great Earthquake and Fire of 1906 destroyed 80% of San Francisco’s buildings. Over 3,000 people died and three out of four San Franciscans were homeless. The fire also burned the first little church called St. Matthew on 11th Street. News about this spread quickly; even the Duke of Cumberland sent a telegram asking Pr. Gehrcke if he, his family and congregation were well. Pr. Hermann Gehrcke’s brother, Fritz, worked for the Duke at that time. Many members of the church left the city. Most of them had lost everything including their homes.

Luckily, in the previous year a lot had been purchased at 16th and Dolores St. because the little church had become too small for the growing congregation. In 1907, even though the future was uncertain, the congregation decided to build a new church. It’s hard to imagine how the people of St. Matthew’s managed to afford $35,000 for a church while hardly being able to sustain themselves. Looking back, in 1920 Pr. Gehrcke wrote: “But despite hardship and serious personal losses endured by many of us, we rallied with indomitable courage, beginning the work anew, with confidence in God.”

Members of the church helped each other and quickly distributed food and clothes sent in by different Lutheran congregations from outside the City. Pr. Gehrcke knew that if you want to survive and regain hope, you have to help others in their survival and needs. He therefore served his needy and weary congregation by giving them a task and a vision: To help others and to build a church amongst the ashes of San Francisco for the glory of God. After only four months of work, the first floor was finished and Sunday school and services were held in the building. The church was finished and dedicated after a year of construction on May 29, 1908.

In 1931 the “History of San Francisco” wrote about our church: “It is a most attractive structure, being fifty by one hundred and ten feet in ground dimensions. Fifteen beautiful memorial windows adorn the church, all donated by the families of prominent deceased members of the congregation. The interior of the church is tastefully decorated, and compares favorably in this respect to any church in the city.”

Around the year 1900, German was one of the most spoken languages in San Francisco. There were about 24 German newspapers in the Bay Area and many shops and clubs. It all changed at the onset of World War I. While in 1914, 25% of high-school students took German in school, 1918 only 1% remained. Parents stopped talking German to their kids, Germans were suspected of supporting the German Emperor and his war. Many German churches, among them St. Mark’s and St. Paulus, gave up services in German so as not to be suspicious. However, Pr. Gehrcke had the courage to continue worship services in German. His only concession: an additional service in English. After the war the Germans in San Francisco were in a state of shock but revitalized their clubs quickly.
Family Service on June 2nd: ‘Blessings’

On Sunday, June 2nd, St. Matthew’s offered its second quarterly family service. God’s children of all ages gathered to hear and think about ‘blessings’ – and bless each other.

June 2nd was also the day we said farewell to the Ginsbach Family, who, after more than 4 years at St. Matthew’s, left for Moscow. They received a special blessing during the service. We all wish them well in their new endeavors.
On July 6th, Anna & Nicholas celebrated their wedding at St. Matthews. What a special day and a beautiful wedding performed by Pastor Kerstin Weidmann.

Members of the DELKINA (German Evangelical-Lutheran Conference in North America) met for their biannual conference June 29th – July 3rd in the San Francisco Bay Area. On Sunday, June 30th, the DELKINA delegates joined the people of St. Matthew’s for worship. Rev. Dr. Karin Achtelstetter, Executive Director for Canadian Lutheran Social Services, was our guest preacher that day and talked memorably about the need to care for all children – especially those who are forced to flee their home countries. Raphaela Groß shared her musical gifts with us as she played the trumpet during the service that morning. During the conference, which was held at Sonoma State University, the delegates voted to continue with the work of DELKINA, albeit under a new and simplified structure. Outgoing DELKINA president Pr. Kerstin Weidmann was thanked for her work.

DELKINA Conference in the San Francisco Bay Area June 29th – July 3rd

The participants of the 2019 DELKINA conference

Pr. Weidmann leading the children's sermon during the worship service with DELKINA members on June 30th
‘Thank You’ from Pr. Kerstin Weidmann

Dear People of St. Matthew’s,

I would like to thank you so much for the surprise party on July 7th as I celebrated my 50th birthday and 5 years of being pastor at St. Matthew’s. I would also like to thank you for the generous gift card for my favorite restaurant! My family and I enjoyed a lovely dinner at ‘Wence’s’ in Pleasant Hill.

Thank you also to those who made donations to St. Matthew’s in honor of my birthday and anniversary. Those funds will be used to give assistance to people who need help with the cost of daily living. May God bless you all!

Celebration of Pastor Weidmann’s 5th Anniversary at St. Matthew’s

On Sunday, July 7th, the people of St. Matthew’s and Pr. Kerstin Weidmann celebrated 5 years of ministry together.

This joyful event also coincided with Pr. Weidmann’s 50th birthday, which was celebrated at the same time. Here’s to many more years together!

Special Music during Worship on July 21st

On July 21st, violinist Janne-Lisabeth Pelz, sister of Tia Pelz, who recently won first prize at the National music competition ‘Jugend Musiziert’ in Germany, enriched our worship experience by playing during the service. One almost felt transported to a concert hall as the highly gifted musician shared her gifts with the worshipers. We thank her for her participation in our worship service, and wish her all the best for the future!
Upcoming Events

Back to Regular Worship Service Schedule in September

We will go back to our regular worship schedule on September 1st.

First Sunday of the month: Bilingual worship service at 11 a.m.

All other Sundays:

English worship service: 9:30 a.m.
German worship service: 11 a.m.
(unless otherwise announced)

Please note: no English service on 9/22 due to a German service that will be recorded for German TV

Back-to-School Family Service on September 1st, 11 a.m.

On Sunday, September 1st, at 11 a.m. we will celebrate a ‘Back-to-School’ worship service and blessing for the entire family.

There will be special activities for children. Adults are invited to bring pictures of their ‘first day of school’, which will be displayed.

Christa and Bernhard from Germany visited St. Matthew’s on August 18th to commemorate their 50th wedding anniversary. They were married in August 1969 at St. Matthew’s. God’s blessings to them!
Sunday, September 22nd, 10:30 a.m.

ZDF Fernsehgottesdienst in der Matthäusgemeinde –
German Worship Service to be broadcast in Germany

Do you want to be on (German) TV? On Sunday, September 22nd, the ‘Zweite Deutsche Fernsehen’ (public broadcast station in Germany) will record a worship service at St. Matthew’s. This service will be broadcast in Germany on Sunday, 9/29.

The service’s subject will be ‘Du erforscht mich und kennst mich’ (‘You have searched me and known me’ – Psalm 139:1) and deals with the effects Artificial Intelligence has on our lives.

Bp. Mark Holmerud of the Sierra Pacific Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Hans-Ulrich Südbeck, German Consul General in San Francisco, will participate. The mixed choir of the ‘Oakland Turnverein’ will sing Schubert’s ‘Deutsche Messe’ after the service.

The service will begin at 11 a.m., but please make sure to be there by 10:30 a.m. (everyone has to be in their seat so that filming can begin promptly).

NO ENGLISH WORSHIP SERVICE THAT DAY!

See below for a press release in by the Evangelical Church in Germany - EKD (in German).

PRESSEMITTEILUNG
Evangelischer Gottesdienst
Am 29. September 2019, 9.30 - 10.15 Uhr
im Zweiten Deutschen Fernsehen
„Du erforschst mich und kennst mich“
aus der Matthäuskirche in San Francisco
mit Pfarrerin Kerstin Weidmann


Die Predigt hält Pfarrerin Kerstien Weidmann. Für die Musik sorgt ein Projektchor unter Leitung von Sylvia Braselmann.

Weitere Informationen zum Jahresthema 2019 und zu diesem Gottesdienst finden Sie im Internet unter http://www.zdf.fernsehgottesdienst.de
Sunday, October 6\(^{th}\), 1:30 p.m.: Lecture

‘Mutmacher’ (‘Encouragers’) – Where ethics and innovation merge into a sustainable economic concept

Walter Stuber, a Christian entrepreneur from Saxony, Germany, visited St. Matthew’s in the fall of 2017. He since has co-written two books on business practices informed by Christian values. He and his business partner, Dirk Eckhardt, have held lectures all over Germany. On Sunday, October 6\(^{th}\), they will be at St. Matthew’s. The lecture will be translated into English. All are welcome to attend!
Mark your Calendar

September 1 - Eleventh Sunday after Trinity/11. Sonntag nach Trinitatis
  11:00 a.m. - “Back to School” Family Bilingual Service
  Coffee Hour and Birthday Celebration

September 8 - Twelfth Sunday after Trinity/12. Sonntag nach Trinitatis
  9:30 a.m. – English service with Holy Communion
  11:00 a.m. – German service with Holy Communion
  “God’s Work, Our Hands’ Sunday; we will gather items for Lutheran Social Services
  Council Meeting

September 15 - Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity/13. Sonntag nach Trinitatis
  9:30 a.m. – English service
  11:00 a.m. – German service

September 22 - ZDF Fernsehgottesdienst in der Matthäusgemeinde
  German Worship Service to be broadcast in Germany
  10:30 a.m. – German service with Holy Communion

September 29 - Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity/15. Sonntag nach Trinitatis
  9:30 a.m. – English service
  11:00 a.m. – German service

St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church
3281 - 16th Street,
San Francisco, CA 94103-3323
Tel.: 415 863 6371
office@stmatthews-sf.org
www.stmatthews-sf.org