



Advent/Christmas 2018

## Die Gute Nachricht

Die Evangelisch-Lutherische  
St. Matthäusgemeinde

## The Good News



Dear Members and Friends,

*'Comfort, comfort now my people;  
tell of peace!'  
So says our God.*

*Comfort those who sit in darkness  
mourning under sorrow's load.*

*To God's people now proclaim  
that God's pardon waits for them!*

*Tell them that their war is over;  
God will reign in peace forever!*

*Comfort, Comfort Now My People, LBW 29,1*

*You may have heard that some churches offer a 'Blue Christmas'. This term is taken from the Elvis classic 'Blue Christmas' ('I'll have a blue Christmas without you'), in which he bemoans the sad fact that he has to celebrate the holidays without someone he loves.*

*Churches who offer 'Blue Christmas' services and events acknowledge the fact that there are those for whom this celebration is not joyful, because they grieve or suffer, can't be with the ones who love, don't have a family to celebrate with, or don't have a home – and offer such people a space to express their not so jolly feelings about the holidays. I have to say that I have mixed feelings about all this. Yes, I understand that there are many for whom Christmas does not resemble a Hallmark card or the myriads of advertisements we are bombarded with right now, where we see happy families doing fun things together and giving each other lavish gifts. However, Christmas is about joy. In the Christmas story from Luke, chapter 2, we hear the angel say, 'Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is the Messiah, the Lord.' How do we deal with the disconnect between this 'great joy for all the people' and the fact that many are far from being joyful?*



*Years ago, I attended a workshop on the Advent and Christmas seasons. As the presenter went on and on about the joy of Christmas, one of the participants interrupted him and asked him if we as the church shouldn't offer a 'Blue Christmas'. The presenter didn't miss a beat. He replied, 'But the church has been observing a 'Blue Christmas' for ages – it's called Advent.'*

*The church year with its varying seasons reflects our lives: times of joy and sorrow, of loss and of hope. Advent is a time of preparation for the coming of Christ – as the babe in the manger, but also as the Lord of all at the end of the days. Advent is time for us to be reflective, to be quiet, and offer that, which burdens and grieves us – our 'blues' – to God (the liturgical color of the Advent season happens to be blue). Advent in our hemisphere is observed during the darkest days of the year, reflecting the dark times in our lives. But, as we approach Christmas, with each candle we light on the Advent wreath, it gets brighter and more hopeful. Until, at last, we hear the good news of great joy that Christ, the Savior, is born for us and for all. Many Advent hymns express this arch from sorrow to joy. One of my favorites is 'Comfort, comfort now my people' – a merry tune that acknowledges the grief and suffering of people, but at the same time promises God's intervention and redemption. God knows we go through many things, and that life isn't always easy. God is with us in such times – and ultimately leads us into joy.*

*I invite you to explore this journey from sorrow to joy with us at St. Matthew's. Each Sunday during Advent, we will hear about longing and hope as people walk in darkness. Then on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, join us in a joyful celebration of God with us and for us and among us.*

*Pr. Kerstin Weidmann*

## Council President's Message

*Dear Members and Friends of St. Matthew's,*

*I can hardly believe that another holiday season is fast approaching, and as I grow older, it seems to arrive sooner every year! And now that our probably over-generous Thanksgiving meals have been digested, and as we begin to enter the Advent and joyous Christmas season, let us also remember those who have lost so much in the horrendous Butte County wildfire and help them as we are able. Sadly their holiday season will definitely not be so wonderful.*

*Now for an update since our last newsletter of early September... The church's planned capital projects for this fiscal year have now been successfully completed. As previously reported, a new stairlift was installed to aid those with mobility problems, the old incandescent lights in the sanctuary were replaced with new energy efficient and brighter LED lighting, and the social hall floor was refinished. Lastly, during the week of November 12 some painting and repair work was done on the blue ceiling at the front of the sanctuary as well as several other areas upstairs. The church building itself now seems to be in good repair and it also looks good, which is important to our members, potential members and visitors.*

*On November 14 the finance committee under Juergen Fehr met to prepare the budget for fiscal year 2019. It was presented to the Council on November 18 and will be submitted to the congregation's voting members for approval at the February annual meeting. Please plan on attending if possible.*

*The other major issue the Council has been dealing with is negotiating a new lease/rental agreement with Mission Dolores Basilica and the San Francisco Archdiocese regarding new terms for the parking lot adjacent to the church. The cost will go up and there will be restrictions on our usage, although not on Sunday mornings for our worship services. This agreement is awaiting final legal approval by the Real Property Division of the Archdiocese of SF. As part of the new agreement, Mission Dolores Church has reserved the right to use the parking lot for their exclusive use for special events/projects and they have just done so to set up the lot for the selling of Christmas trees from November 19 until Christmas. So during this timeframe they are providing parking for our services in their lot behind their church building in their school and church parking area. Access to this area is gained via an alleyway on Church Street between 16th and 17th Streets and with the exit onto 16th Street. It is a one block walk from this parking area to our church.*

*Events that have taken place: On September 16 the annual church picnic was held at the **Oakland Friends of Nature**. On September 29 the **International Orange Chorale** held a retreat in the social hall and on November 17 the young piano students of **Jill Brenner's Music Studio** had their semi-annual recital here. Also at one of Pastor Kerstin's Bible studies on October 25, Rabbi Mychal Copeland of **Sha'ar Zahav** was a special guest and answered questions regarding Judaism. Pastor Kerstin was back in Germany from Nov. 6-15 to attend a planning meeting with a German TV channel for a televised Sunday service to be broadcast in Germany from St. Matthew's next fall.*

*Upcoming events include a **Damenchor Liederkrantz** musical Christmas celebration on Sunday, December 9th at 1pm, and five **Golden Gate Men's Chorus** holiday concerts on Thursday, Dec. 13 at 8pm, Saturday, Dec. 15 at 3pm, Sunday, Dec. 16 at 3pm & 7pm, and Tuesday, Dec. 18 at 8pm. Also the GGMC will again beautifully decorate the sanctuary for the season on Dec. 1.*

*In conclusion I would ask you to remember your church as you purchase your Christmas gifts and make your year-end charitable donations. The Church Council wishes you all a joyous and blessed Christmas season and a happy, healthy and meaningful New Year. We hope to see you soon attending one or all of our upcoming services and events. God's blessings to one and all!*

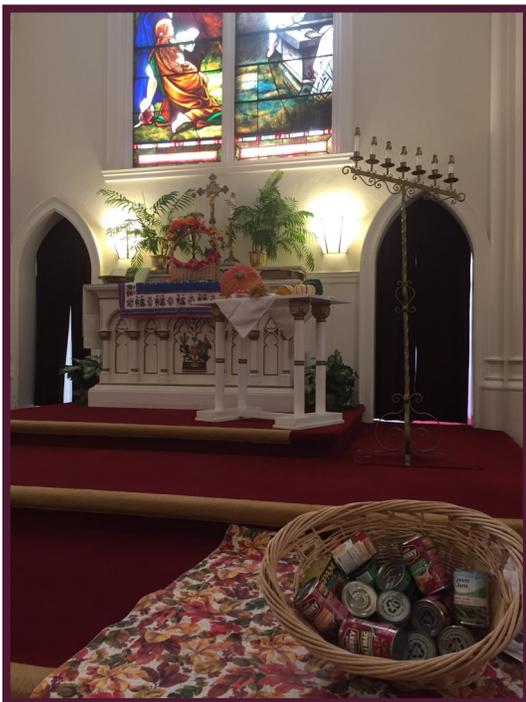
*Respectfully submitted,  
William H. Bremer, M.D., Council President*

## Past Events

### Church Picnic at Oakland Nature Friends on Sept. 16th



Pastor Kerstin  
Giving Sermon



### Erntedank

On Sunday, **October 7<sup>th</sup>**, we celebrated 'Erntedank', the traditional German 'Thanksgiving for the Harvest'. As a way of giving thanks, worshipers donated money as well as fresh and canned goods to be passed on to the needy. Pr. Kerstin Weidmann delivered those donations to the community food room of Hillcrest Congregational Church in Pleasant Hill (where her husband is the senior minister). The gifts were gratefully accepted. Thanks so much for your generosity!

## Past Events

### Reformation Sunday, October 28th.

On Sunday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, we celebrated the 501<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther's Reformation. As in previous years, Martin and Katie Luther made an appearance and talked about God and the world. We also had special musical guests this year: the mixed choir of the 'Oakland Turnverein' sang several uplifting pieces and helped make the worship service festive. We thank the singers and Dr. Andreas Ginsbach (as Martin Luther) for their participation!



### An 'Introduction to Judaism' with Rabbi Mychal Copeland

On Thursday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, members of St. Matthew's gathered to welcome Rabbi Mychal Copeland from Synagogue Sha'ar Zahav (which is located right across from St. Matthew's). Rabbi Copeland not only gave a lively introduction to Judaism, but also encouraged people to ask questions. Thank you, Rabbi Copeland, for sharing your wisdom and humor with us!



## **An Exchange between Rabbi Mychal Copeland and Pastor Kerstin Weidmann in Light of the Murders at 'Tree of Life' Synagogue in Pittsburgh**

*Just two days after Rabbi Copeland engaged with us in a conversation about Judaism, 11 worshipers were murdered at 'Tree of Life' Synagogue in Pittsburgh. On behalf of the St. Matthew's church council, Pr. Weidmann reached out to Rabbi Copeland.*

Dear Rabbi Mychal, dear Siblings at Sha'ar Zahav,

The St. Matthew's church council asked me to write some lines to you in the light of the cowardly attacks on worshipers at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. The timing of events is really striking for us – a few days ago, we enjoyed your presence and your words of wisdom at St. Matthew's, as you shared with us some of the basics of the Jewish faith. Just two days later, the murders in Pittsburgh happened. Then yesterday, we observed Reformation Sunday and remembered the father of the church we call Lutheran, Martin Luther.

In our congregation (and especially as Germans), we are painfully aware of the role Luther and the church has played in the oppression, persecution and murder of countless people of the Jewish faith. It pains us today to see violence perpetrated against Jewish brothers and sisters. We are appalled that people of faith can't worship in peace and safety. As your neighbors (quite literally and in a symbolic sense as well), we would like to let you know that we grieve with your community and stand against any kind of violence. Please guide us in regards to how we can best support you (as a congregation and as a part of the wider Jewish community). At St. Matthew's, we had a rather playful and lighthearted approach to the main message yesterday. But I would like to share with you the words I spoke as we prepared to confess our sin (something we do every Sunday).

*'Today is Reformation Sunday. This is a day we usually celebrate in the Lutheran Church as we remember how Martin Luther brought something new to the table and emphasized God's amazing grace for all creation. Later today, the message is going to be rather playful and lighthearted. In the light of yesterday's murders at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, I would like to say at this point that Martin Luther is not just some hero we can put on a pedestal, not a man whose teachings we should adopt without criticism, but that he was a flawed human being, like the rest of us – saint and sinner at the same time, as he himself said. Luther, especially in his later life, was a ranting anti-Semite, and unfortunately his strong words against the Jews were used consequently to justify violence against and the murder of millions of Jews. So this is not only a day of celebration, but also a day for us as the church in the tradition of Luther to take honest stock of our heritage. This is a day to confess the sins committed in the name of the Lutheran Church. And this is a day for us, who we believe in the amazing grace and mercy of God, to boldly reject all hate and terror committed against any of God's children, no matter, what religion they follow, and to stand with victims of violence. I invite you to observe a moment of silence for the victims of yesterday's assault on Tree of Life Synagogue. And since it is part Jewish tradition to place a rock on a grave stone to express one's remembrance and grief, I will place a rock on our altar as an expression of our respect and our grief.'*

### **Response by Rabbi Copeland:**

This is just beautiful and so appreciated. What kind words and acknowledgment of a tough history. I feel blessed to have you as literal and symbolic neighbors! The stone is such a poignant and fitting way to remember and acknowledge these losses and what it represents. Thank you! (As we gathered on Monday night for a vigil), I read some of your words in the context of our liturgy about love, and the love we are feeling from our friends, neighbors, and people we don't even know. It was followed by two NAACP leaders speaking about bigotry and our overlapping history. We had hundreds of people! Amazing. I feel blessed to be in community with you and St. Matthew's.



## Upcoming Events

### **NO Use of Parking Lot Next to Church (11/19 - 12/24)**

**Monday, November 19th, through Monday, December 24th:**

Due to the fact that Mission Dolores will hold a Christmas tree sale out of the parking lot next to St. Matthew's, parking will not be available in that lot from **November 19th through December 24th.**

**Alternative parking will be available in the Mission Dolores School lot, accessible on Church Street between 16th and 17th Street.**

### **Advent Bible Study: Fling Wide the Door: Thursdays November 29th, December 6th and 13th:**

You are invited to attend this year's Advent Bible Study, 'Fling Wide the Door'. We will meet on the following Thursdays: November 29, December 6, and 13 to explore the Advent season. On Thursday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, we will gather for a Christmas celebration.



### **Toy Drive for the Pelz Family**

As you know, St. Matthew's will host a 'Vikarin' (pastor in training) starting in January 2019. Tia Pelz and her family hope to take only few things with them to California - their children Antonia (5) and Theodor (4) will not be able to bring along all their beloved toys and books.

To welcome the Pelz Family, St. Matthew's will have a Christmas toy and book drive for the children. Maybe you still have toys or games in the attic? We will be collecting new or gently used games and toys (the more versatile, the better – like Legos, building blocks, etc.), new or used children's books (both in English and in German) and NEW stuffed animals. Please bring such items to church any time before **January 7<sup>th</sup>** (maybe you can take advantage of sales after Christmas Day?). Thank you very much in advance for your generosity!



### **December 24 (Monday) – Christmas Eve**

4:00 p.m. - German Candlelight Service for the Whole Family

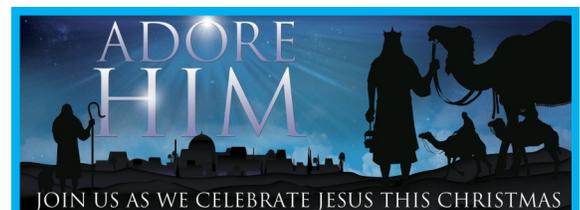
6:00 p.m. - English Contemplative Candlelight Service



### **December 25 (Tuesday) – Christmas Day / Weihnachtstag**

11:00 a.m. – Bilingual Service with Holy Communion.

Musical guests: 'Freundschaft Liederkranz'



## Upcoming Events

### Sunday, December 31<sup>st</sup> – Sunday after Christmas

ONE bilingual worship service at **11 a.m.** We will sing our favorite German and English Christmas carols.



### 9<sup>th</sup> Annual St. Matthew's Crab Feed

**January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019 (Saturday)**

Time: 4:30p.m.-7:30p.m.

Cost: \$50/person (all you can eat and drink!)  
\$10 (for those 6-12 yrs)

Salad/Garlic Bread, Pasta  
Crab (or chicken)  
Dessert  
Coffee/Tea/Beer/Wine



### Sunday, February 10<sup>th</sup>

ONE bilingual worships service at **11 a.m.**, followed by the Annual Congregational Meeting (approx. 12:15 p.m.)  
All Members are invited and encouraged to participate.

## December

- 1 Bill Bremer
- 2 Lore Sternberg
- 6 Ilse Carnes  
Hans Kleinlein  
Anneliese Manning
- 7 Edith Schober
- 8 Hansueli Surber



- 13 Elizabeth Lahman
- 19 Jutta Leibrock
- 23 Richard Gutknecht
- 24 Claus Hildebrandt
- 26 Annett Wagner
- 30 Elfriede Werth
- 31 Fred Weidmann

*We apologize for any birthdays missed in December. Please inform the Office of any omissions.*

## Mark your Calendars

### **December 2– Bilingual First Sunday in Advent Service**

11:00 a.m. – Bilingual service

### **December 9 - Second Sunday in Advent Service**

9:30 a.m. - English Service with Holy Communion

11:00 a.m. – German Service with Holy Communion

1:00 p.m. – Damenchor Liederkranz Concert

### **December 16 - Third Sunday in Advent**

9:30 a.m. - English Service

11:00 a.m. - German Service

GGMC Concerts: 3pm and 7pm

### **December 23 – Fourth Sunday in Advent**

11:00 a.m. – Bilingual service

### **December 24 (Monday) – Christmas Eve**

4:00 p.m. - German Candlelight Service for the Whole Family

6:00 p.m. - English Contemplative Candlelight Service

### **December 25 (Tuesday) – Christmas Day / Weihnachtstag**

11:00 a.m. – Bilingual Service with Holy Communion.

Musical guests: 'Freundschaft Liederkranz'

### **December 30 – First Sunday after Christmas**

11 a.m. Bilingual Worship Service

Christmas Carols and Their Stories

### **St. Matthew's Lutheran Church**

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