

# Spring/Summer 2019



## Die Gute Nachricht

### Die Evangelisch-Lutherische St. Matthäusgemeinde

*Dear Members and Friends,*

“When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.” It’s one of these cheesy memes people tend to send you as a postcard or set up in front of their homes. I mean, what do people try to say through it? To me it sounded either like a joke or like a cheap attempt of comfort. Or, even worse, like blaming people for staying in the midst of grief or sorrow instead of making the best out of it.

Here, in the Bay Area this popular quote appealed to me in its literal way. In front of our house grows an old lemon tree. During its harvest season, it even needs to be stabilized by a strong stick. My kids love to climb up to pick the ripest lemons high up in the branches.

When we first arrived, one or two lemons a week would fall down. We picked them up and made lemonade. With lots of sugar of course. It still tastes somehow sour, but it definitely is as sugary as coke (and not the diet version of it).

A week before Easter our lemon tree was ready to be harvested. I picked a basket full of fruits and started googling “What to do with loads of lemons?” Friends of mine squeeze them and freeze them as ice-cubes. Every time they want a lemonade, they just add these cubes to a water jar. It’s yummy but sour. I have more of a sweet tooth. So, I cooked lemon curd. Lemons mixed

with butter, eggs and sugar, what better can there be? When filling it into the jars and labeling it, I suddenly thought: This is the perfect Easter-spread: When sourness turns into sweetness. When the death of Jesus Christ turns into bringing eternal life to all of us. When we can ask: “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

Easter is not about owning your own misfortune. Easter is not about making the best out of a truly screwed up situation. The disciples of Jesus didn’t comfort themselves by “O, there must be a meaning to our Lord’s and best friend’s death. Let’s find out and be happy anyway.” The disciples were absolutely devastated after the crucifixion. God hung at a tree, leaving the disciples with a world full of lemons. Without offering any sugar or even a squeezer. Because it was beyond their power to turn the world upside-down. It was beyond their power to bring Jesus back to life. It was beyond their power to get their own lives back.

Only God has the power to turn all our life’s lemons into lemonade. Only he is able to defeat death and despair, presenting us with the most wonderful gift: the lemons of love, grace and forgiveness. What a sweet gift for us to receive. What a sweet-sour gift to us when our enemies receive it as well. And we can’t do anything about it but admit that God’s love and grace and forgiveness is so much bigger than our imagination.

With the cross God gave us a lemon tree to cling onto forever. A tree in which presence life tastes sweet like everlasting love. A tree full of grace, free to take away. A tree full of true forgiveness, that doesn't forget and has the ability to change sour into sweet. "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

So, when life gives you lemons. Let God make lemonade out of it.

Wishing you a summer filled with lemonade! *Peace, Pr. Tia!*

## History

### 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 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. 125 years of people sharing lives with God and each other. 125 years of immigration and settlement and building homes and a future.

In preparation for 2020 we will continuously tell the story of Germans in San Francisco and St. Matthew's in our newsletter. Follow us on an adventurous trip throughout over 125 years of German-American dreams and realities.

Part I: Let's dig up the gold!



King Friedrich Willhelm III. Of Prussia sure wasn't too good at predicting the future. When offered to buy California from Mexico in 1842, he refused to do so. Only six years later he probably regretted his choice tearfully. The gold found in 1848 could have been his. But Mexico had just sold that soon to be famous piece of land to the United States.

Within a couple of years the small city of San Francisco grew from 56,000 inhabitants in 1860 to 234,000 in 1880. The City was overrun by immigrants, many among them Germans. Or, maybe it was just very quickly changed and newly created by

wonderful people from all over the world, adding their talents to build a beautiful home. It depends on the point of view.

Meanwhile in Germany, in 1848 the people fought against privileges of the rich and for democracy and one national state of Germany. Young men had to serve in bloody wars, revolutionaries were killed. Leaving home for good therefore appealed to many young adventurers and artisans. Few of them went to actually dig for gold. The fortunes were being made as salesmen, suppliers and craftsmen. Between 1865 and 1932 approximately 50% of all carpenters, clockmakers, bakers and butchers in San Francisco were Germans.

One of those early German immigrants was Albrecht Küner from Lindau. At home the economy had gone down due to the political upheavals of 1848/49. When 29-year-old Albrecht heard about golden California, he didn't hesitate but took a ship and went to "this glorious land" together with three friends and their dog "Attila". In New York he found work quickly but the West called. The boat-trip took them six months, going from New York to Rio de Janeiro, Valparaiso and San Francisco.

Albrecht describes the travel as quite a pleasant one, until one day they discover water in the first cabin. It kept "four men constantly engaged in bailing it out", he remembers in his autobiography, written in 1904.

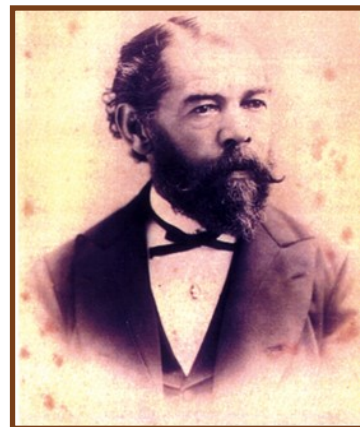
The cruise was a huge adventure to him. In his memories he in-depth tells the story of how they caught a 14-foot shark with large chunks of pork. Going around Cape Horn took them nearly a month during which one German drowned. Finally, on July 4<sup>th</sup>, they saw San Francisco and rejoiced. But the weather changed and they did not get into the harbor until July 22<sup>nd</sup>. When they finally did “all the crew ran away to get to the mines as quickly as possible, leaving us to look after ourselves.” The passengers had to get their tidings ashore and find storage and shelter.



Albrecht understood that he wouldn't earn a fortune digging for gold. On his second day in the City, the learned engraver found employment at “Moffat & Co Assaying Office”, producer of ingots. No work-permit needed. His first task was to engrave a set of steel dies for a ten dollar piece. “I took great pains to do my work well, and I met with great success, giving perfect satisfaction to my employers.” he remembers. Three months he worked for the company until he decided to become self-employed. Just in time to have earned a good reputation. When the first legislature of California met at Monterey, they passed an act to have “The great seal of the State of California.” German immigrant Albrecht was honored to be the engraver. He also mastered all the official seals for the newly created counties.

Albrecht's little store burnt down twice during the fires of 1850. Just saving his necessary tools he survived and started all over again. Within a few years, it seems as if Albrecht had settled very well in San Francisco. He took a ship back to New York during Easter week of 1854 “for the purpose of obtaining a passport”.

After five years the immigrant Küner had the chance to become a well-reputed citizen of the U.S. Time for him to start a family. In May 1854 he arrived at his “dear old home”, convinced and married Judith Rhineck on July 14<sup>th</sup> and returned to California with a beautiful bride by his side in late 1854.



Germans from Romania and Hungary, Austria and Germany arrived. In the 1880s, over 1 Million Germans came to the U.S., bringing with them their mostly Lutheran or Catholic faith. California back then was one of the few places where people regardless of their faith were able to settle. In the following years until World War I another 7 Million Germans immigrated to the U.S. 85% were Protestants or Lutherans.

Obviously, the new arrivals were in need of pastoral care. Over time an estimated 4,000-5,000 pastors moved to the U.S. to serve the newly founded congregations. So, in Schleswig-Holstein a seminary was even founded to educate and send German Lutheran pastors to America. In 1849, St. Markus, the first German Lutheran church, was founded by the Prussian refugee and pastor Heinrich Ludewig Mooshake.

By 1900 25% of the San Franciscan population was German. So, in 1895 the assistant pastor of St. Markus, Hermann Gehrcke, was authorized to plant a new church in the Mission. St. Matthäus was born, starting out with just 28 dedicated charter-members. Among them was Albrecht Küner, father-in-law of Hermann Gehrcke, the Great-Grandfather of our today's member Dorothy Praeger.

Albrecht Küner died in 1906, shortly before the great earthquake. One of the church's stain-glass windows honors him.

*History was written by Pastor Dr. Tia Pelz*

## Council President's Message

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

Time continues to fly by much too quickly and we are now well into our subtle spring season with somewhat warmer temperatures, the blooming of flowers and trees again, and the beginning of our dry months after quite a wet winter. At least we don't have to worry about a drought for the coming year! This past Sunday marked the third Sunday of the Easter Season and the anticipation of upcoming summer travels and activities.

Now to recap the happenings at St. Matthew's since the last newsletter at the end of February: During the month of March the pastoral staff was augmented by the continued friendly and inspirational presence since January of Pr. Tia Pelz, our "Vikarin" from the **EKD** in Germany and Monica Butler, a parish teaching student from the seminary in Berkeley (**PLTS**). Also for the month of March we were fortunate to have Myo Dang, a seminary student from Germany, here with us. On April 7<sup>th</sup> we bid her farewell and all the best in her future studies and career. I'm sure she will make a wonderful pastor with her warm and caring personality.

The other and significant change in our church staff was the resignation effective March 31st of our well-loved and capable organist of the past six years, David DeAngelis, who is moving to Chicago to pursue his Ph.D. degree in music education at Northwestern University. A selection committee was formed to find his replacement and we thought would be difficult task. Indeed it was hard to choose among the seven applicants we interviewed during two weeks in March as they were all talented organists. After careful deliberation Andrew Birling was hired; he is an excellent organist with a friendly personality and extensive experience and education in Lutheran Church organ music. On his first Sunday on April 7th, the transition from David to Andrew was seamless and very successful. After the service on March 31st a farewell reception was held for David as we thanked him for his dedicated service and wished him all the best and God's blessings for a successful future; we will miss him.

The Lenten season began on Ash Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, with a joint service followed by a generous luncheon held again at St. Mary and St. Martha Lutheran Church on Van Ness and led by Pr. Kerstin and our good friend, Pr. Monique Ortiz. The church setting was reversed on Good Friday when we held a joint Good Friday service preceded by a light lunch. During the Lenten season Pr. Kerstin led weekly Bible study sessions. Palm Sunday saw the church decorated as usual with palm fronds from the yard of the Fehrs. Then on April 21<sup>st</sup> an inspirational, joyous and well-attended family Easter service was held. The Council has now decided to implement a family style service every three months on the first Sunday of that month.

Two major events now in their planning stages are on the church's horizon. The first is the taping of a special church service at St. Matthew's by the German television station **ZDF** (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen) on September 22<sup>nd</sup> to be broadcast nationally in Germany on the following Sunday. Please do your best to attend this service as we would like to have a full church for this very unique honor. Details will be announced before the event. The second event concerns our 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration to be held next year in February, 2020. The Pastor and Council would appreciate your ideas and help in planning and carrying out this big undertaking.

The annual **Sierra Pacific ELCA Assembly** will be held on just one day this year on Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, with Pastors Kerstin and Tia attending along with Annett Wagner and Alois and Thea Scholz as our lay member representatives. Also please note that Pr. Kerstin will be on vacation experiencing the the beauty of Southern Utah from Monday, May 13<sup>th</sup> until Thursday, May 30<sup>th</sup>. During this time period pastoral needs and the regular church services will be handled by Pr. Tia.

Outside events held at the church (exclusive of our regular weekly users) included a **Resound** choral rehearsal on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, an **Inspire** concert on March 9<sup>th</sup>, a **GAPA** concert on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, the spring **Freundschaft Liederkrantz** concert and reception along with the **Damenchor Liederkrantz**, and **Oakland Turnverein** choruses on April 6<sup>th</sup>, an Easter Eve special service by the **First Mennonite Church** (our neighbor), and a recital of the young students of **Jill's Music Studio** on May 4<sup>th</sup>. Upcoming events include a **Tactus** choral concert on May 11<sup>th</sup> and a **Rainbow Symphony** concert on May 18<sup>th</sup>.

In conclusion I hope this message finds you all happy, in good health and enjoying the bounty of God's wonderful creation. Please join us whenever possible and support the church and enjoy our inspiring Sunday services led by our great pastoral leaders. Thank you, Alles Gute, and God's blessings!

Respectfully submitted,

*William H. Bremer, M.D.*

President, St. Matthew's Lutheran Church Council



## Past Events

### Family Service on March 2<sup>nd</sup>

On Sunday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, St. Matthew's offered its first quarterly service aimed at families with young children. The theme of the service was '100 Sheep'. This service was very interactive. Young and old participated in song, prayer and storytelling. At some point, the children had to help the good shepherd from the parable of the Lost Sheep find his sheep that had spread out all over the sanctuary – all 100 of them! 99 were found quite quickly, but the last sheep took a little longer to find. But we wouldn't give up, for every sheep is important to God!



Our next family worship service will be held on Sunday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> at 10 a.m. All are welcome!



### Ash Wednesday at Saint Mary and Martha's

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, the people of St. Matthew's celebrated Ash Wednesday together with the people of St. Mary and Martha's. This year, we reflected on the question how the experience of being close to death or losing someone who is close to us influences how we live. We heard moving testimonies from 4 lay people. After the service, the people of St. Mary and Martha's treated us to a scrumptious lunch buffet (as they did the previous year). We are grateful for the connection we have with Pr. Monique Ortiz and the people of St. Mary and Martha!

In the picture: Ministry in Context student Carl Onofrio (St. Mary and Martha), Pr. Monique Ortiz (St. Mary and Martha), Pr. Kerstin Weidmann (St. Matthew's), Ministry in Context Student Monica Butler (St. Matthew's), Pr. Dr. Tia Pelz (St. Matthew's) and Intern Myolee Dang (St. Matthew's)



### Farewell and Godspeed for Organist David DeAngelis

On Sunday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, St. Matthew's said goodbye to organist David DeAngelis. David had been playing for St. Matthew's for more than six years. David will be moving to Chicago later this spring with his wife Hillary in order to pursue a PhD in music education.

David did not only play the organ at St. Matthew's, but worked as a music teacher at a charter school in San Francisco. A couple of years ago, he even was named 'Teacher of the Year'. He also volunteered after the Tubbs Fire in October 2017 and helped organize donations for the victims.

David will be missed, not only because he is a fine musician – but also because he is such a wonderful human being. May God bless his future endeavors!







### Welcome to Our New Organist: Andrew Birling

After David DeAngelis announced that he's be moving to Chicago, a committee to find a new organist was quickly formed. We were blessed to be able to interview several highly skilled organists and accompanists. In the end, the committee agreed to hire Andrew Birling, who started his position at St. Matthew's on April 7<sup>th</sup>.

Andrew has been a church musician for more than 20 years and brings a wealth of experience and skill. His journey led him from Wisconsin and Minnesota to California, Oregon, and back to the Midwest. He currently pursues a career as an elementary school teacher in Oakland.

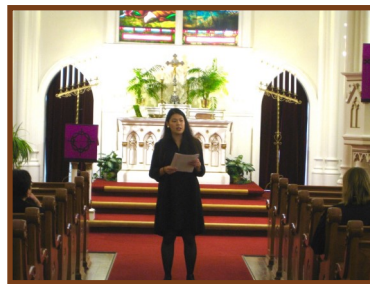
Andrew is not only an accomplished accompanist, but has given many organ recitals during his career. He is also a church music composer, whose work is published mainly through the publishing house of the ELCA, Augsburg Fortress.

We feel blessed to have Andrew join the St. Matthew's family. Welcome, Andrew, and God bless!

### Thank You to Our Intern, 'Myo' Dung Bich Nhi Dang

From March 4<sup>th</sup> through April 7<sup>th</sup>, 'Myo' Dung Bich Nhi Dang, a seminary student from Germany, worked as an intern at St. Matthew's. Even though her time with us was relatively short, she managed to build relationships and fully immerse herself in the work of our church. Beyond observing how a German-American congregation functions, she took on leadership roles in worship and congregational life. She led one of our Lenten Bible studies and preached on Sunday, March 31<sup>st</sup>.

When the congregation bid farewell to her on April 7<sup>th</sup>, it felt as if she'd been with us much longer than the roughly 5 weeks she spent here. We wish her all the best and God's blessings as she continues her studies in Germany.



**Rosa Adelsberger**, wife of former **Pastor Kurt Adelsberger**, passed away on April 7, 2019. Memorial Service was held on April 29<sup>th</sup> at the American Lutheran Church in Woodland, CA



### "Deutscher Musikverein" plays 'Friedensmesse' During Service on April 7<sup>th</sup>

During our bilingual worship service on April 7<sup>th</sup>, the 'Deutsche Musikverein' under the direction of Adrian Quince played the 'Friedensmesse' ('Peace Mass') by German composer Edmund Löffler. This piece has been composed for a brass ensemble.

The musicians led the congregation through the worship, from the traditional cry 'Lord, have mercy' ('Kyrie eleison') to a solemn sending at the end. The Musikverein also played W.A. Mozart's 'Ave Verum' during communion.

The assembled congregation greatly appreciated this musical offering. With all the violence going on in this world right now, it was also very timely to reflect on peace – peace between people, and peace as God offers it to all humanity. Thank you so much to the musicians who enhanced our worship experience that day!





### Good Friday 2019

On April 19<sup>th</sup>, members of St. Matthew's and St. Mary and Martha gathered for a Good Friday service at St. Matthew's. This is the second year these two congregations worshiped together during Lent.

During the service, we reflected on the 7 last words of Christ. The service, which was held in English, Spanish and German, reminded us that Christ died for all of humanity and that we are one in Christ.

During the simple and solemn service, pianist Katelyn Tan (who plays for the SF Ballet and Opera) very thoughtfully and beautifully underscored the story of the passion of Christ. Vocalist Alvin Walker once more moved everyone by singing 'Were you there when they crucified my Lord?' at the end of the service.



### Baptism on Easter Sunday

On April 21<sup>st</sup>, **Jonas Weian Gast** was welcomed into the family of God through baptism. May God bless him and his family!

### Easter Sunday 2019

On April 21<sup>st</sup>, we celebrated the resurrection of Christ with a festive, family-oriented worship service, which was attended by well over a hundred people. We shouted and sang the message that Christ is risen, indeed, over and over. Pr. Dr. Tia Pelz and Ministry-in-Context student Monica Butler told the Easter story to the children with the help of 'Resurrection Cookies', and Pr. Kerstin Weidmann in her sermon reflected on what it means to 'remember' the Easter story in our daily lives. Christ is risen, alleluia! He is risen indeed, alleluia!



### In Memoriam: Jackson Weller (1996-2019)



In the early morning hours of May 4<sup>th</sup>, Jackson Weller, son of Patrick and Lisa Weller, grandson of Dorothy Praeger and great-great-grandson of St. Matthew's founding pastor Hermann Gehrke, was murdered in Albuquerque, NM. Jackson, who was 23 years old at the time of his death, was baptized at St. Matthew's. He was a student at the University of New Mexico and played college baseball.

Please keep Dorothy Praeger and her family in your prayers as they grieve Jackson's loss.

Dorothy would like to establish a fund in Jackson's memory. Monies donated to this fund will be used to support St. Matthew's children's and family ministries. If you would like to contribute to the Jackson Weller Memorial Fund, you may do so by sending a check and make it payable to St. Matthew's Lutheran Church. Please indicate that the donation is meant for Jackson Weller Memorial Fund. Thank you for your support!

## Mark your Calendar

### May 19 - Fifth Sunday of Easter

9:30 a.m. – English service

11:00 a.m. – German service

### May 26 - Sixth Sunday of Easter

9:30 a.m. – English service with Holy Communion

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

### June 2 - Seventh Sunday of Easter

10:00 a.m. - Family Service

Coffee Hour and Birthday Celebration

**Council Meeting**

### June 9 - The Day of Pentecost

10:00 a.m. - Bilingual Service with Holy Communion

**Pr. Weidmann** will be on vacation from May 13<sup>th</sup> – May 30<sup>th</sup>. Pr. Dr. Tia Pelz will be providing pastoral leadership and care during that period. If you need to contact Pr. Tia, please email her at [tiapelz@yahoo.de](mailto:tiapelz@yahoo.de) or call the church office at 415-863-6371.

### Summer Worship Schedule

June 2<sup>nd</sup> - September 1<sup>st</sup>

One Bilingual worship service at 10:00 a.m.

### St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

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