

August 13, 2020

What's New? Was gibt's Neues?

A Bi-Weekly Update about What's Going on at and around
St. Matthew's during the Pandemic

Dear Members and Friends of St. Matthew's,

Hello from Germany! I am currently in my hometown of Delmenhorst, mainly to visit with my mom, who is undergoing cancer treatment. I want to thank anyone who has prayed for her and sent their good wishes. As I am writing this, my mother is recovering from a surgery she underwent this morning to remove the remainder of the tumor. We are quite confident that she will recover.

You can always call me if you wish to talk to me; my cell phone number is: 925-330-2289.

Please take into consideration that I am 9 hours ahead of Pacific Summer Time; leave a message if I don't pick up the phone - I will call you back at my earliest convenience. Or you may send me an email at: (pastorweidmann@stmatthews-sf.org).



Stay well! May God bless us all until we meet again!

Pr. Kerstin Weidmann

Word of the Week (as chosen by the Moravian Brethren – Herrnhuter Brüder):

From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded. *Luke 12: 48b, NRSV*

Wem viel gegeben ist, bei dem wird man viel suchen; und wem viel anvertraut ist, von dem wird man um so mehr fordern. *Lukas 12, 48b, Lutherbibel*

A Brief Reflection on the 'Word of the Week' by Pr. Weidmann:

'Wearing of face covering is required.' We all have read this or a similar line in many places over the last months. As I traveled from San Francisco to Bremen via Munich, I saw this kind of sign a lot: at the airports, at the gates and on the planes I boarded. And I for one was very grateful for this requirement. Especially when people share a rather small space, precautions need to be taken when there is a pandemic going on that shows no sign of letting up.

And, by the way, stores, banks, restaurants and public transportation here in Germany require the wearing of a face covering as well, even though COVID case numbers here are way below where they are in the USA. People here are alarmed that the number of new infections in a day recently reached 1,000 among a population of about 83 million. In the U.S. we now think it's acceptable when there are no more than 1,000 COVID related *deaths* a day in a population of 328 million.

As we all know, there are always those who don't like requirements. How does that fit together with the freedom we are promised in the country in which we live? Why should I be required to do something that crimps my style, even though it potentially benefits my neighbor (but also me)?

However, the interpretation of freedom as we often find it in the worldly realm differs much from how freedom is interpreted in the Bible. Yes, we have freedom in Christ. But this freedom includes the responsibility to love and care for our neighbor. As Martin Luther famously said in *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520): "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."

This sentiment is also reflected in this week's chosen Moravian Bible verse, 'From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required.' We've been given grace and mercy without bounds by the God who loves us. At the same time, God requires much of us: to share this abundance of mercy and grace we have received, and to 'but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.' (Micah 6:8).

So if you think about it, wearing a face covering is not such a big requirement at all. Is it inconvenient? Sure! But at the same time, it follows God's commandment and requirement to look out for our neighbor, who, after all, is made in God's image.

Update: In-Person Worship Services and Events at St. Matthew's

Because of the still high number of COVID-19 infections, the City and County of San Francisco still doesn't allow any indoor gatherings. As Pastor Weidmann learned this past week, even once such meetings (like worship services) are again permitted, we first have to prove that we have the proper policies and guidelines in place for reopening. In short, it could take a while before we can worship in person again. **Until further notice all indoor meetings and events at St. Matthew's are suspended** (we currently expect that we won't be able to worship in person until at least the end of September).

Sunday Online Worship Services

Since the shelter-in-place order was instituted, St. Matthew's has offered recorded worship services which have been made available every Sunday by 10 a.m. on our website (www.stmatthews-sf.org) and our Facebook page (Matthew Lutheran). We will continue to offer these worship service until further notice.

If you'd like to receive a link to these worship services in your email inbox every Sunday, please let us know by sending a request to office@stmatthews-sf.org.

The guest preacher for the worship service on 8/23 will be the Rev. Dr. Fred Weidmann from Hillcrest Congregational Church in Pleasant Hill.

Irregular Office Hours

We continue to offer irregular office hours during the ongoing pandemic. Our office administrator, Angie Holt, usually is in the office on Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Pastor will be in Germany through 8/28

If you need to contact Pr. Weidmann, please send her an email (pastorweidmann@stmatthews-sf.org) or call her on her cell phone (925-330-2289). Please take into consideration that she will be in a different time zone (9 hours AHEAD – e.g., 10 a.m. in San Francisco is 7 p.m. in Bremen, Germany). Should any need for in-person pastoral care arise, Pr. Weidmann will arrange for a colleague in the San Francisco Bay Area to be available.

Continued Financial Support of St. Matthew's Ministries

We want to thank everyone who has supported St. Matthew's financially during the past several months. Please continue to send in your contributions!

Looking Ahead: Singing at Dolores Park?

Pastor Kerstin is thinking about different ways to keep the St. Matthew's community connected. She would like to offer a 'hymn sing' at Dolores Park near the MUNI station off Church Street (with proper distancing and face masks!) starting in September – day of the week to be determined. If you are interested in participating, contact her.

If YOU have any ideas what to do to stay connected during the pandemic, please let Pr. Kerstin know, and we will figure out how to do it!

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