

Sept. 10, 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,

Firstly, I want to thank everyone who kept my mom and my family in their prayers as she was going through cancer treatment this spring and fall. Your prayers carried her (and me as well) through those difficult times. It feels good to be part of a church family that cares.

As I am writing this, most of California is dealing with a record heat wave, ongoing massive wildfires, and bad air quality. At the same time, we still have to deal with the ongoing pandemic. I feel stifled during these days, and I know many feel the same. I for one am very impatient with the current situation. But what else can we do but be patient – and pray for a change for the better? This is one of those situations when I am reminded that, in the end, God is in charge, and we can do very little but wait and see – and do what we can to help those who are much worse off than we are during these trying times. This coming Sunday, September 13th, we observe 'God's Work – Our Hands' Sunday, a day dedicated by the ELCA for hands-on work in and for the larger community. Since we are very limited in that we can do as a congregation this year, I invite you to instead make a donation to 'Lutheran Disaster Response' to alleviate the suffering of many in this country and around the world who suffer from the effects of natural disasters, like the California wildfires (more information see below).

Just a reminder that you can always reach me via my cell phone number (925-330-2289) or via email (pastorweidmann@stmatthews-sf.org) with any questions or concerns – or if you just want to talk.

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):

Jesus says, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ *Matthew 25:40, NRSV*

Christus spricht: Was ihr getan habt einem von diesen meinen geringsten Brüdern, das habt ihr mir getan. *Matthäus 25, 40, Lutherbibel*

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

We all know the so-called ‘Golden Rule’: Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you. Jesus commanded his followers to follow this rule, but basically every world religion has a variance of this rule to treat others as one wants to be treated. It’s about human decency – don’t be a selfish oaf who takes advantage of a position of privilege or power to harm others.

But in the Moravian ‘Word of the Week’, Jesus takes it even a step further: whatever you did or have done or do unto one of the least powerful of God’s family, you did or have done or do it to me. And this, of course, applies to the good things *and* the bad things we do unto others.

Jesus Christ asserts his solidarity with all those who are ‘the lowly ones’ – those without possessions, those without power, those without privilege. It is no coincidence that Jesus Christ especially embraced those at the ‘bottom of the power chain’: women, children, the poor, the sick, the outcasts. We see the ultimate expression of God’s solidarity with ‘the least of these’ as he dies the death of a criminal on the cross.

It may be good to remember, especially during these times when we experience so much division and spite, that we were all created as God’s children – and thus become siblings to each other, no matter who we are, where we are from, and what we look like. Whenever we dehumanize someone, we dehumanize Christ. Whenever we seek to connect with our siblings, we connect with Christ. Whenever we bind someone, we bind Christ. Whenever we release someone from any kind of physical or spiritual confinement, we set Christ free.

Martin Luther famously said, ‘God doesn’t need your good works – but your neighbor does’. My prayer is that God give us open eyes, an open mind and an open heart to see Christ’s face in the face of everyone we encounter – even and especially the ones we deem below us.

God’ Work – Our Hands Sunday, September 13th

Speaking of ‘doing unto the least of these’...

As in previous years, we, together with our sister congregations in the ELCA, will observe ‘God’s Work – Our Hands’ Sunday. Since this year it is very difficult to actually use our

hands to help the larger community or collect items for distribution to our siblings in need, I would like to encourage you to support the ministries of ‘Lutheran Disaster Response’ (for more information, see <https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Lutheran-Disaster-Response>). Lutheran Disaster Response helps wherever natural disasters like wildfires, hurricanes and tornadoes strike – but it also has programs for those affected by COVID-19. As we know, people in this country currently deal with many issues and need help – our help. So I would like to encourage you to make a financial contribution to Lutheran Disaster Response this year – either directly through the aforementioned website, or through St. Matthew’s. You may send a check or cash to St. Matthew’s, 3281 16th Street, San Francisco 94103 or make a donation through Paypal on our website: <http://www.stmatthews-sf.org>. If you make a donation through St. Matthew’s, please write ‘Lutheran Disaster Response’ on your check/your offering envelope or in the subject line of Paypal.

God bless givers and gifts!

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

You may have heard that SF Mayor Breed announced that indoor gatherings, among them worship services, may be permitted to resume by the end of September (pending further developments in regards to the COVID pandemic). The maximum number of participants in such gatherings shall not exceed 25% of maximum room capacity or 25, whatever number is lower.

A task force is currently looking into the possibility of reopening St. Matthew’s for worship and other events. As per stipulation of the City and County of San Francisco, we also have to come up with guidelines and safety protocols that are accepted by Health Department before we can reopen. St. Matthew’s council will receive recommendations by the reopening task force and make decisions about the process. Stay tuned!

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 (even beyond the date we will continue with in-person worship services)

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.

Phone-In Services on Thursdays at 10 a.m.

Now that Pr. Weidmann is back from Germany, she will resume offering phone-in services on Thursdays at 10 a.m. (ca. 30 minutes). You don't need to do anything – Pr. Weidmann will add you to a conference call. If you are interested, please let her know by either sending her an email at pastorkerstin@stmatthews-sf.org or calling her on cell phone: 925-330-2289.

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.

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!

Update: Singing at Dolores Park

Since only one person has expressed interest in meeting at Dolores Park for hymn singing, we will not pursue this idea any further.

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