

What's New? Was gibt's Neues?

For the week of Nov. 15, 2020

(sent out a little later than usual this week)

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,

We thought we had it all figured out. The first Sunday in Advent, which marks the beginning of a new church year, seemed to be a great day to start worshipping indoors again (in accordance with guidelines and ordinances of the San Francisco Department of Public Health, of course). And then this past week every county in the San Francisco Bay Area was moved to a more restrictive tier regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Most counties now are in the purple tier (which currently is the most 'serious' tier with more than 7 new cases per day per 100,000 people and a test positivity rate of 8% or more). Indoor activities are highly restricted or prohibited in these counties - and that includes houses of worship as well.



San Francisco County is currently still in the slightly less restrictive red tier – but health officials yesterday announced that this will most likely change next week – and not for the better...

What does this mean for indoor worship services at St. Matthew's? At this point, we can't tell. It's likely that we can't worship in-person indoors after all in the near future. But at this point, we are still hoping – and waiting. The current plan is to offer one bilingual worship service on November 29th at 11 a.m. But we may have to change our plans on a dime.

Should San Francisco be moved to the purple tier in the next few days, and indoor worship services prohibited, we will let you know about it – via email and a phone tree. In case we can meet in person as planned, we need to observe certain rules (see in separate article below). Please know that our worship services would look somewhat different from what we are used to. There would be no singing, limited communal speaking, and no social hour. In addition to in-person worship services, we will continue to offer our online worship services, which will be made available on our website (www.stmatthews-sf.org) and Facebook page (Matthew Lutheran) every Sunday by 10 a.m.

If you have any questions, or just need to talk to me, you can reach me via my cell phone number (925-330-2289) or via email (pastorweidmann@stmatthews-sf.org).

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

Pr. Kerstin Weidmann

Biblical Reflection: Thanksgiving by Pr. Weidmann:

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. *1 Thessalonians 5, 16-18, NRSV*

This Thanksgiving will be different from Thanksgiving celebrations in previous years. The COVID-19 pandemic is raging in this country like never before. Travel is strongly discouraged by health authorities, as are (indoor) gatherings with people from different households (and, yes, that includes family members who don't live at the same address). This smarts. Thanksgiving, after all, is not just about the food, but even more so about with whom we share it around the table.



I know quite a few people who either have already resolved to break the rules and gather with family more or less as usual anyway, or who feel depressed about spending Thanksgiving home, more or less alone. And in all that, the question beckons: with the virus attacking precious life left and right, is there a reason to feel thankful?

The Apostle Paul admonishes us to 'give thanks in ALL circumstances'. That means, in times of COVID as well. Even though we have to discipline ourselves this year. And isn't he right? I, for one, live very comfortably in the house I own. I can pay my gas and electricity bills. Fridge and freezer are full, and I can venture out to a number of markets and buy what I need and want. Jesus loves me, this I know. Do I miss seeing family and friends (beyond my husband)? Yes. But overall, I can't complain. I'm good. And very grateful.

Maybe this year, instead of focusing on what we can NOT have, we ought to focus on what we DO have. And count our blessings...

I want to wish you all a blessed Thanksgiving, in whichever way you celebrate it. Here's to a better 2021!

Pr. Kerstin Weidmann

Sunday Online Worship Services

St. Matthew's will continue to make recorded worship services available every Sunday by 10 a.m. on our website (www.stmatthews-sf.org) and our Facebook page ('Matthew Lutheran') 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.

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

The St. Matthew's council made the decision to reopen the sanctuary for in-person worship services on Sunday, November 29th (this date is subject to change, depending on ordinances by the San Francisco Department of Public Health, see above). This happens to be the first Sunday in Advent – the beginning of a new church year – and what better date to gather again? *The current plan is to meet on Sunday, November 29th, and henceforth, for one bilingual worship service at 11 a.m. This plan may change due to rising COVID-19 cases in San Francisco and the Bay Area.*

As we gather for worship, we will follow the guidelines and ordinances of the San Francisco Department of Public Health – for our sake and the sake of the neighbors we encounter outside of the church building. As you make the decision as to whether you should attend these in-person worship services, please consider the following:

- We will continue to offer online worship services, which will be made available on our website (www.stmatthews-sf.org) and our Facebook Page ('Matthew Lutheran') every Sunday by 10 a.m., so if you feel uncomfortable attending in person, there is another worship option.
- If you feel unwell, have been around someone who feels unwell or has been diagnosed with COVID-19, or have been advised to quarantine, please don't come to worship.
- A face covering has to be worn indoors at all times.
- Please come a few minutes early since we will have to conduct a simple health screening.
- Entrance to the church building will be through the main entrance on 16th Street only. Please follow the instructions of our ushers once you are in the building.
- As per ordinance of the SFPDH, there will be no singing during worship for the time being.
- As per ordinance of the SFPDH, there also won't be any social gathering before or after the service; currently, houses of worship are permitted to open for worship ONLY.
- Please refrain from hand shaking, hugging, or other close contact.
- Bring a warm jacket. Since we have to improve the air flow in our sanctuary, it may get a little chilly.

Should we not be able to worship in person after all, we will let you know about it via email and phone tree.

Worship Services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day 2020

Given the current developments regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the St. Matthew's leadership has decided to not offer any in-person worship services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. There will be two pre-recorded services (one entirely in German, another mainly in English), which will be made available via our website and Facebook page on December 24th by 2 p.m.

Visits on Your Front Porch or in Your Backyard

Since outdoor meetings in small groups (with masks and proper distance) are deemed to be safe by the CDC and other agencies, Pastor Weidmann would like to offer to visit you on your front porch or in your backyard. These would be strictly pastoral visits (check-in, prayer, Holy Communion, if so desired) – no hospitality is expected. If you would like to receive such a visit, please contact Pr. Weidmann at 925-330-2289 or pastorweidmann@stmatthews-sf.org.

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. You can reach Pr. Weidmann at any time: 915-330-2289 or pastorweidmann@stmatthews-sf.org.

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!

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