

Dec. 17, 2020

What's New? Was gibt's Neues?

For the week of December 13, 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,

This Christmas will be so different. As the numbers of those infected with and affected by the Coronavirus continue to climb, we have to do our part in trying to flatten the curve and end the suffering and dying. That means to not mingle and celebrate as we usually do during this season, be it as family, with friends, or in church.

And that is tough. I miss being in the physical presence of other people. I miss the joyous holiday celebrations, singing, laughing, sharing stories. I miss celebrating. I miss the traditions that ground me. I miss *you*.



The Advent season has had a special meaning for me this year in the sense that this truly has been a season of patient (or not so patient) waiting. This year, I feel the urgency of hoping and waiting for better times, for redemption, as it is expressed in so many passages of the Bible. People in the Bible did not give up but kept on hoping and waiting. We need to follow their example and not give up either, hang in there just a little bit longer. Things will get better. Especially if we all do our part to make things better.

I hope and pray that next year, we will be able to gather again as usual during this season. And maybe we will appreciate being with each other more...

Be patient! Stay well and sane! I hope and pray you have a blessed remainder of the Advent season and, despite everything that is going on, a joyous Christmas!

Pr. Kerstin Weidmann

Advent Reflection by Pr. Weidmann:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Philippians 4: 4-5, NRSV

“To get the full value of joy you must have someone to divide it with.” Mark Twain
The third candle we light during the Advent season is often called the candle of JOY. And we hear many stories in the Bible about people experiencing deep joy – now interestingly enough, this joy is often expressed in difficult circumstances, when one glimmer of hope breaks through the darkness. Things are not perfect, but there are signs that they will get better. God promises a different future. That is something to be joyful about.

Joy in the Holy Scriptures is often paired with another word: *rejoice*. Here the joy becomes active; it seeks a way out of our innermost being into the world. And when the Apostle Paul admonishes the congregation in Philippi to rejoice, he says: Share the joy! Live the joy. Infect others with your joy. This is how we truly evangelize, which literally means spreading good news. And joy is one of those things that the more you share it, the more you have. Or, with the wise words of Mark Twain, we get the full value of it when we divide it with someone.

That is why so many people can not keep still when they are joyful: from Mary, when she sings about her unborn child, to the angels in the fields to the shepherds, to the women who return from the empty tomb – they rejoice and share the joy - share the good news.

I hope that, despite the pandemic, despite the isolation many feel right now, despite the grief about not seeing family and friends as in previous years, we are always able to tap the joy – the joy about Christ’s birth. The joy about God’s love for us and all of creation. And that we wear our joy on our sleeves, rejoicing, infecting others with it. It is a precious gift to have – and a wonderful gift to share. Especially in times that are hard.

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

All in-person worship services at St. Matthew’s have been canceled until further notice.

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.

The worship service on December 27th will be offered through the Office of the Sierra Pacific Synod. We thank the synodical leadership for this gift during the busy Christmas season. This service will be available, as usual, through our website and our Facebook page.

If you would 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.

Advent Recital on December 20th

Our very gifted organist, Andrew Birling, has prepared a special online Advent recital which will be made available via our website and Facebook page on Sunday, December 20th. The recital will consist of festive music of the season, interspersed by poems and other readings. Celebrate the season from the comfort of your home!

Worship Services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day 2020

We will have 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. The links to these services will also be sent out to all those on our worship mailing list.

Farewell to Michael Dickson

During our online worship service on 12/13, we said farewell to Michael Dickson, Ministry-in-Context Student from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley. Due to the pandemic, his time with us turned out to be quite different than expected. He was not able to really get to know you. However, he shared some gifts with us that turned out to be essential during these times: he got St. Matthew's started with virtual worship services online (that task was assumed by Sam Fehr during the summer). After the summer, he took a greater part in leading our worship services, be it through liturgical leadership or preaching. He has immense gifts which will serve him well in his future.

Thank you for all you shared with us, Michael! May God bless your further journey.

Michael wrote these parting words for us:

Thank you St. Matthew's! As unusual as this year has been, I'm grateful for the opportunity I've had to serve with and learn from y'all as we experience the trials of this year together. This spring I continue my studies at PLTS in Berkeley, and in the Fall I'll begin a year on internship. God bless you all! With love, Michael Dickson



Continuation of Phone Services on Thursdays

Since we will not be able to worship in our sanctuary in the foreseeable future, Pr. Weidmann will continue to offer brief worship services with communion over the phone on Thursdays at 10 a.m. Please contact her if you would like to participate. 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!

Next Mini Newsletter

Our next mini newsletter will be distributed the week of January 3rd.

Pr. Kerstin Weidmann's Contact Information

You can reach Pr. Weidmann via her cell phone (925-330-2289) or via email (pastorweidmann@stmatthews-sf.org).

Pastor Weidmann's Upcoming Vacation

Pr. Weidmann will be on a 'staycation' December 26th – 31st. In case of an emergency, you can still reach her (see her contact information above).

**We want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and
a blessed (and better) New Year!**



St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

3281 - 16th Street,

San Francisco, CA 94103-3323

Tel.: 415 863 6371

office@stmatthews-sf.org

www.stmatthews-sf.org

