

What's New? Was gibt's Neues?

For the week of November 29, 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

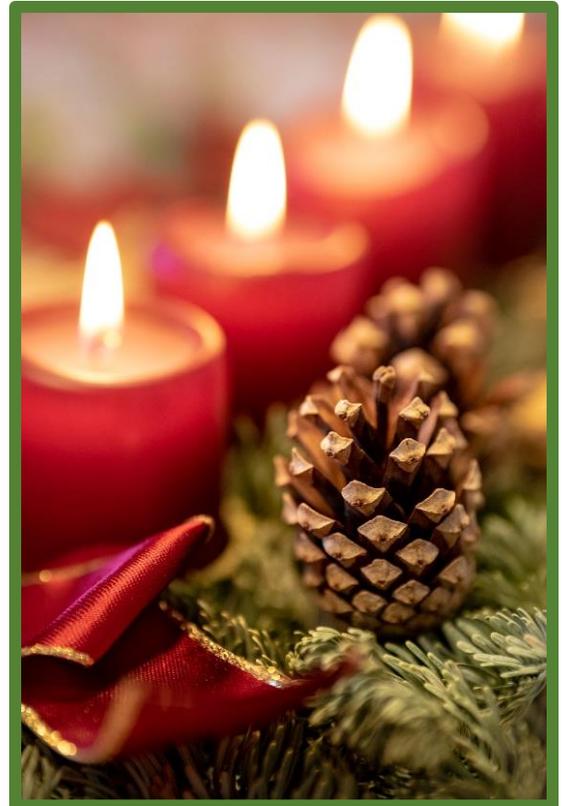
Dear Members and Friends of St. Matthew's,

By now you should have heard about it: The County of San Francisco has been moved to the 'Purple Tier' because of an explosion of COVID-19 cases. Houses of worship have to cease all indoor worship services once more. That means we would not be able to worship in our sanctuary for a while (When will be able to meet in person for worship again? To quote the Bible, 'About that that hour or day no one knows...but the Father.' Mark 13: 32).

This is tough. For more than 8 long months we have been living under many restrictions. What impacts us most is that we can not see people face to face (without using an interface), that we can't chat casually, that we can't shake hands and hug each other. If the last 8 months have taught us anything, it is how much we need all these things.

The wait for COVID-19 cases to go down and the widespread suffering and dying to end continues. But: there is hope. A Coronavirus vaccine is on its way. It is now only a matter of time until people will receive the vaccine and the protection it provides. We just have to hang in there a little bit longer. And continue to do our part to stop the spread.

Now this situation is very fitting for the Advent season, which we entered this past Sunday. Advent is a season of waiting, of longing. We wait for God to become flesh and live among us; we long for God's everlasting realm of peace and justice to be established in our midst. We are not there yet. I do not need to tell you how much is wrong in this world and with this world. But there is hope: that God, somehow, will break into our reality and bring change. There is hope, and we live in this hope and of this hope. We just have to hang in there a little bit longer. And continue to do our part to spread the kingdom of heaven wherever we go.



I miss seeing you. But I am confident that the day will come when we will be able to meet again. Until then, may God bless us and keep us all.

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 and sane! Have a blessed Advent season!

Pr. Kerstin Weidmann

Advent Reflection by Pr. Weidmann:

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his Word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. Ps 130, 5-6

Everything that is done in the world is done by hope. Martin Luther (1483-1546)

The Advent season just started. This past Sunday, we lit the first candle on our Advent wreath. In many church traditions, the four candles on the Advent wreath symbolize different things; traditions vary, but the first candle is often called the candle of HOPE. We hope for Christ to return, we hope for God's kingdom of peace and justice to be established among us, we hope for the day when suffering and crying and pain and death will be no more. In our specific context, we hope for the COVID-19 pandemic to come to an end. We hope that the darkness we currently experience in this world will be conquered by each spark, each flame, that shines forth, no matter how small.

What makes us go on in times that are hard, in times when we are close to despairing? According to Martin Luther, this is hope. 'Everything that is done in this world is done by hope,' he says. The hope that better things are coming and that healing are possible. That God has more in store for us and all of creation. Luther also allegedly said that he would still plant a little apple tree, even if he knew that world would end tomorrow. This sums up his philosophy and his faith: to defiantly hope, even though things seem hopeless. To keep the light burning, even and especially in the darkest night.

My prayer for this week is, that we never lose hope; that we act upon our hope; that we never let the darkness in our lives and our world overcome the light we carry in our hearts and souls. May it be so.

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

As mentioned above, 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.

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.

Worship Services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day 2020

Given the current developments regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, 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. The links to these services will also be sent out to all those on our direct worship mailing list.

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.

Advent Recital on December 20th

Our very gifted organist, Andrew Birling, is preparing 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!

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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