

March 4, 2021

What's New? Was gibt's Neues? For the of Week of February 28, 2021

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,

Things are finally looking up! As I am writing this, the County of San Francisco is about to move from the severe 'purple tier' regarding Corona Virus cases to the less restrictive 'red tier'. Cases have been going down. People are getting vaccinated – and I am so glad to hear that many of you have been able to receive at least one dose. A new one-dose vaccine has just been approved by the CDC, and its first doses will be available this week. I personally hope to be counted among the next group eligible for the vaccine. It's so strange to be considered 'too young...'

These developments, combined with continued diligence and watchfulness as we continue to deal with the virus (and some new and more contagious variants), will hopefully enable society to enter a period of time when personal contacts will be safe again. God knows, we all need personal contact!

What does this mean for reopening the St. Matthew's sanctuary for in-person worship again? The St. Matthew's council will reassess the situation at the next council meeting on 3/14 (and any council meeting after that, if necessary), based on the data available. We also have to follow the guidelines and recommendations from the church's insurance company. Please know that YOUR safety and health is our top priority. We will inform you about any decision that is made.

But be prepared: the moment we go back to in-person worship services, it won't be like before the pandemic (at least not at first). Singing and chanting will be prohibited for the time being. There will not be any coffee hour. Masks that cover mouth and nose have to be worn at all times. And we will have to keep our physical distance from each other.

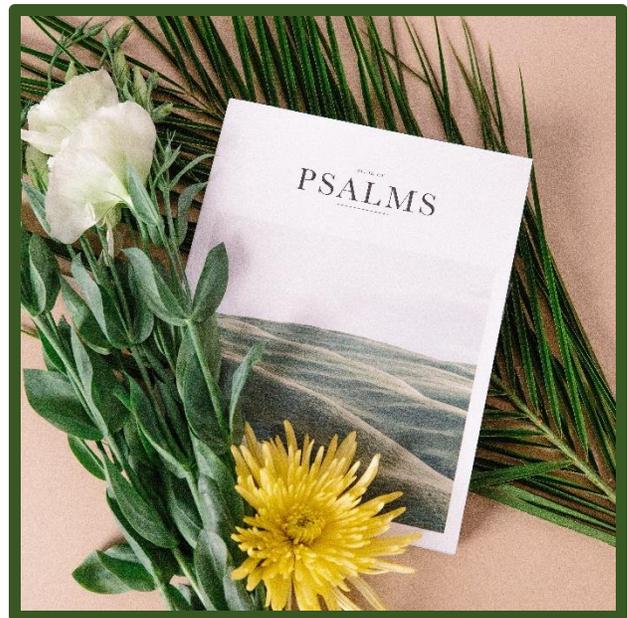
Until we meet again: stay healthy and safe! God's blessings,

Pr. Kerstin Weidmann

Spiritual Reflection as We Continue the Journey through Lent by *Pr. Kerstin Weidmann*

“Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’”

John 13:33, NRSV



“Why do you go away? So that you can come back. So that you can see the place you came from with new eyes and extra colors. And the people there see you differently, too. Coming back to where you started is not the same as never leaving.”

Terry Pratchett, A Hat Full of Sky

As an immigrant from another part of the world, the words Terry Pratchett uses in his book ‘A Hat Full of Sky’ truly resonates with me. Leaving the familiar and encountering a totally different environment has had an immense impact on me, and how I look at things. The proverbial horizon has broadened for me, and I can honestly say that I have changed. This always becomes obvious to me when I go back to Germany to see family and hear the comments about how ‘American’ I have become (whatever that means). I am sure those of you who are immigrants yourselves understand what I am talking about.

One thing I hope is that the changes I have gone through are mostly signs of maturity. And what is maturity but the ability to ‘connect the dots’ and have a more comprehensive understanding of the life experiences we go through? To understand that our personal experiences are not the center of the universe, but merely a minuscule part of the whole human experience? To become somewhat less egotistical and open for the needs of others?

Every journey, every exposure to unfamiliar experiences, is the chance to grow and mature, and to come back with a changed mindset and ‘heartset’. Every journey helps us get a better perspective of the things that are familiar to us – we may gain more appreciation for the things we have, and/or we may discover that some of the things familiar to us are actually hard to live with. The journey through the COVID-19 pandemic we are (still) on as a society right now has definitely shown us what we truly treasure – and also taught us a few things about things that maybe should and could be changed as we go forward.

Whenever we commit to go on a Lenten journey, we will leave some of the familiar behind, and expose ourselves to the adventure of unfamiliar and maybe even surprising experiences on the way. To walk with Jesus through his suffering on the way to the cross takes us places we don’t necessarily want to go. However, this journey has the potential to change our perspective, to help us mature in faith, and to return to our lives with a greater appreciation for the gifts and blessings we have been given – and to acknowledge those parts of our lives that need changing. The invitation to annually go on this journey is a great gift from God.

Why do we go away? To come back and share the gift of new experiences and insights gained along the road. Coming back to where we started is not the same as never leaving – we are changed by God’s passionate love for us as we see it in Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross.

May your continued journey through Lent be blessed!

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

St. Matthew’s church council will discuss the reopening of the church for in-person worship services during our next meeting on 3/14. Many of you have received at least one dose of the vaccine – this is good news! As you are reading this, the County of San Francisco may have been moved to the less restrictive ‘red tier’. So there is reason for careful optimism.

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 St. Matthew's worship services in your email inbox every Sunday, please let us know by sending a request to office@stmatthews-sf.org.

Recap: Congregational Meeting on Sunday, February 21st

On Sunday, 2/21, St. Matthew's held its annual meeting via telephone. We have since heard that people on a landline without a long distance plan had trouble dialing in and couldn't connect. We sincerely apologize for this glitch – we did not anticipate this technical difficulty. We would have loved to hear from ALL of those who wanted to participate, but couldn't.

17 voting members were able to attend (which constituted a quorum necessary for making decisions). Council President Bill Bremer, Pr. Kerstin Weidmann and Treasurer Juergen Fehr presented highlights from their reports (as presented in the written annual report, which was distributed by mail or email). All reports were adopted unanimously.

Juergen Fehr then presented the budget for 2021 (which was part of the written report that was distributed to all voting members). The budget passed unanimously.

No new council members were elected. If you are interested in serving on the council, please let one of the current council members know.

The council also talked about its decision not to open the sanctuary up again for in-person worship services at this time.

We truly hope and pray we can meet in person again for our annual meeting 2022! Thanks to everyone for their continued support of St. Matthew's!

Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly 2021 – Looking for a Female Lay Voting Member!

This year's Sierra Pacific Assembly will be held from Thursday, May 6th, through Saturday, May 8th, ONLINE via Zoom. St. Matthew's is entitled to 'send' two lay voting members to the Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly. Since we have already found a lay male voting member (thank you, Steve Crabiel!), we are still looking for a female lay person who might be interested in participating. This year's assembly will be quite interesting, since we will be electing a new bishop. Mark Holmerud, who has served in the capacity of bishop for the last 13 years, will be retiring.

Requirements for participating as a voting member are: the access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone, the willingness to download the video conferencing program 'Zoom' on their device, and a stable internet connection. If you are interested, please contact Pr. Kerstin: pastorweidmann@stmatthews-sf.org. Registration deadline is April 1st.

Even if you can't or don't want to be a voting member, you can still follow the synod assembly at your own leisure online. It will be live streamed via YouTube (more information to come).

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: 925-330-2289 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 months. Please continue to send in your contributions!

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).

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