

What's New? Was gibt's Neues? For the of Month of May

A Monthly Update about What's Going on at and around
St. Matthew's during the Pandemic

Dear Members and Friends of St. Matthew's,

You may have noticed that this newsletter doesn't say 'biweekly update' anymore. Since we will be reopening the sanctuary for worship this coming Sunday, May 2nd (more information below), and people will be able to congregate once more, going forward we will publish a *monthly* newsletter.

I can't tell you how excited I am to worship in person again - even though our worship experience will at first differ from what we are used to. We can't just go back to 'normal', as if nothing had happened. A lot has happened in the last 14 months. So many deaths had to be mourned, so many people were hit with (severe) illness, so many people have suffered economically. Even though most of us are fully vaccinated by now, we are still called to look out for our neighbor and to take precautions. I hope and pray that our joy and thankfulness as we are able to gather and worship again will outweigh any disappointment over things we will miss at first.



I am aware that some folks may not be willing or able to attend in-person worship services for the time being. We will continue to offer our online services for those who prefer to worship from home. I also will continue to check in with people I don't see at church (and you can always call me if something's up or you just want to talk!).

Hope to see you soon! Stay safe!

Pr. Kerstin Weidmann

Spiritual Reflection for the Easter Season by Pr. Kerstin Weidmann

“Wie lieblich ist der Maien aus lauter Gottesgüt,
Des sich die Menschen freuen, weil alles grünt und blüht.
Die Tier sieht man jetzt springen mit Lust auf grüner Weid,
Die Vöglein hört man singen, die loben Gott mit Freud.”

Martin Behm, ‘Wie lieblich ist der Maien’, EG 501

*‘How lovely is the month of May because of God’s goodness;
Now people rejoice because everything greens and blossoms.
One can see the animals frolicking in the green meadows,
One can hear the birds singing – they praise God with joy.’*

In the German tradition, we have quite a few songs that welcome spring, and especially the ‘lovely’ month of May. Whereas April in Germany can be quite fickle when it comes to the weather (over the last few weeks, Northern Germany for example experienced temperatures in the 70s – and then a period of overnight frost and quite cold days again), May promises consistent milder weather and a burst of new life and color. Spring delicacies like white asparagus and the first strawberries are harvested. No wonder so many songs were written to extol the month of May.

Here in California, most spring blossoms are already gone by now. The hills that turned green for a brief period after some winter rains now are brown again. This year, we are experiencing another severe drought. However, May tends to be a lovely month around here as well. We enjoy consistently warm days (which are not as beastly hot as in the summer), and we feel this special energy around us in nature and in people.

This year, May feels very special to me: things are looking up after a very long time during which we had to isolate ourselves because of the COVID-19 pandemic. With more and more people vaccinated, it feels safe to enjoy a meal (outdoors) in a restaurant again. We can gather once more for indoor, in-person worship. All the while, the beautiful nature that surrounds us beckons us to venture out and marvel in the intricacies and wonders of God’s creation.

I for one am thankful to God for this month of May – just as the writer of the poem above expressed his gratefulness to God. Life may not be perfect, and there sure are still many things to be concerned about (like the effects of climate change we are experiencing), but God provides us with lovely times and spaces to take a deep breath, enjoy the beauty, and be reenergized. Furthermore, God reminds us again and again that (new) life has a way to break through.

Have a wonderful month of May,

Pastor Kerstin

Reopening of Our Sanctuary for In-Person Worship Services on May 2nd

Good news! St. Matthew's church council decided to open the sanctuary again for in-person worship services, starting on **May 2nd**. There will be just **one bilingual worship service at 11 a.m. on Sundays** for the time being. We will hold any indoor worship services in accordance with the ordinances and guidelines of the San Francisco Department of Public Health. That means (at the time I am writing this):

- Please stay home if you feel unwell or know you have been exposed to the Coronavirus.
- Please wear a face covering at all times while you are in the church building (if you forget your mask – no worries, we have extras at church). You will be able to remove your face covering for a brief period during communion.
- Please still keep a 6 feet distance from people outside of your 'bubble'.
- The building will be accessible through the front door only.
- Bring a coat – since we will use fans to provide ventilation in the sanctuary, it might get cool.
- Please try avoid using the bathrooms at church; they are our 'Achilles Heel', since we cannot provide proper ventilation there.
- There will be no congregational singing for the time being.
- There will be no coffee hour for the time being.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact Pr. Kerstin Weidmann.

Sunday Online Worship Services

Even after the reopening, 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') for the time being. 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.

Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly May 6-8

This year's Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly will be held online. Pr. Kerstin Weidmann and Steve Crabiel will be St. Matthew's voting members at this assembly. If you are interested in 'attending' as a non-voting visitor, you may do so using this link:

<https://spselca.org/assts/uploads/2016/06/YouTubecolor.png>. The assembly will start on Thursday, May 6th, at 6:30 p.m.

Pentecost Sunday and Celebration of Confirmation

On Sunday, May 23rd, we will celebrate Pentecost. We will also celebrate the confirmation of Kenneth Tauscher in our worship service that day. Please plan to come and welcome Kenneth to our community!

Visitation

Since Pr. Weidmann is now fully vaccinated (and most of you are, too), she feels comfortable making home visits again. If you'd like to arrange a visit, please contact her at (925) 330-2289 or pastorweidmann@stmatthews-sf.org.

Office Hours

Regular office hours (Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) have resumed this week.

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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