

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

Dear Members and Friends of St. Matthew's,

Now that California is 'fully opened' again after the brunt of COVID-19 seems to be over in our part of the world, things may be more confusing than ever. First of all, there are still some environments where special rules apply, like care facilities, schools, and public transportation.

Businesses and organizations have the freedom to continue with restrictions. Those who are fully vaccinated don't need to wear masks indoors in most cases anymore (but: see exceptions above). Those who are not, for whatever reason (and that includes all children under 12), still must wear a face covering in public indoor settings.

We also get mixed messages from different authorities: whereas the CDC and the State of California assure us that vaccinated folks are pretty safe, even without masks, social distancing, etc., the World Health Organization (WHO) just warned everyone that we need to remain watchful and mindful – the 'Delta' variant of the novel Coronavirus could still make us sick (even though vaccinated folks have a good level of protection against severe illness).

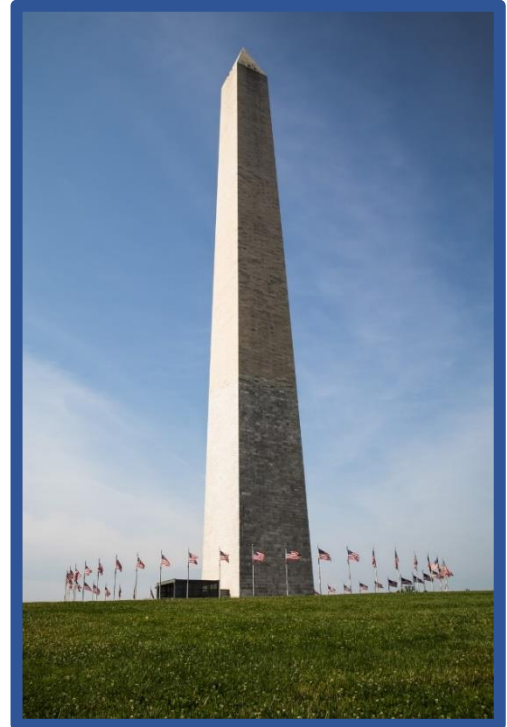
What does this mean for us at St. Matthew's? We can operate at full capacity again. We sing in worship. We have a coffee hour after church services.

If you are fully vaccinated, you do not need a face covering anymore when you enter the building. HOWEVER, as a house of God, St. Matthew's is a public setting. The church council at its last meeting in June decided that we recommend that everyone, regardless of vaccination status, continues to wear a mask indoors – as an expression of our concern for the wellbeing of our neighbor in the pew, and for the community into which we are dismissed after worship ends. We also continue to offer a designated section in the church where all those who, for whatever reason, want to physically distance, can do so. Everyone should feel welcome at St. Matthew's!

I want to thank everyone who has graciously followed this recommendation as they have worshiped in our sanctuary. Let's continue to beat this virus!

Blessings,

Pr. Kerstin Weidmann



Spiritual Reflection by Pr. Kerstin Weidmann

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” *Matthew 11, 28-30, NRSV*

This month, I am celebrating 2 anniversaries. For one, I have been your pastor for 7 years now. Also, July 13th will mark the 19th anniversary of my ordination, which happened at St. Matthew’s. I remember the day of my ordination fondly – the hospitality of the people of St. Matthew’s on that day was outstanding.

But there is one memory that especially has left its mark on me to this day: when it was time for Bishop David Mullen to bless and consecrate me, he and some clergy colleagues who were gathered that day laid their hands on me as I was kneeling down. I wasn’t quite prepared for what happened next. Those hands of the bishop and my colleagues were laid on with some heft. All of a sudden, there was all this weight on my shoulders. And as I was kneeling there, quite confused and also a little overwhelmed, struggling to keep a straight posture, feeling this sudden burden, I was wondering: is this what ministry will be like for the rest of my life? Jesus Christ, what have I gotten myself into?

And at that moment, I was reminded of Jesus’ words, ‘Come to me, all you that you are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me: for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’

It seems to be an oxymoron, doesn’t it? Come to me, you who are burdened, and I will give you rest. And then: take my yoke upon you. But this is one of the Christian paradoxes with which we live. In Christ we are liberated. But on the other hand, we are called to serve God and serve one another and to take Christ’s yoke upon us.

As we are about to celebrate Independence Day, it is quite interesting to compare Christian freedom, which never is without accountability and responsibility for ones neighbor, with a certain idea of freedom that is widespread in this country: that it’s about freedom to do whatever we please - implying that we don’t need to give a damn about anyone else or our environment, because we are free. But total independence, total freedom is an illusion.

Whenever we live in a community, it’s not only take, but give and take. It’s called interdependence – we rely on each other. We are yoked together. And, yes, this also means that we do our part, that we serve to our abilities as we are served in many other ways by the community around us.

Like it or not, we always carry some form of yoke. But what is a yoke for? Just think of a work horse or oxen in the fields: a yoke makes work easier for the beast. It helps more evenly distribute

any weight that has to be pulled. Often, two animals are hitched to the same yoke, thus helping each other. And the easy yoke Jesus talks about is a yoke that fits well. It makes work and service in this world easier for us. It is a yoke of love, mercy and compassion.

My hope and prayer for us all is that we embrace this yoke with the interdependence we experience not only in God's church, but also in our communities, our societies and our world. That we receive what others have to offer with gratefulness and do our part with joyful hearts. And that we understand our God-given freedom as the freedom to work for the good of all.

Pr. Kerstin Weidmann

In-Person Worship Services at St. Matthew's

Bilingual Worship Services are offered **every Sunday at 11 a.m.**, followed by coffee hour.

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

Sunday Online Worship Services

St. Matthew's continues to make recorded worship services available every Sunday by 2 p.m. on its website (www.stmatthews-sf.org) and its Facebook page ('Matthew Lutheran').

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

Pastor Weidmann's Upcoming Vacation

Pr. Weidmann will be on vacation August 10th through September 6th. We are currently working on finding a clergy person who will be the emergency backup for this period.

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

We are offering regular office hours again (Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.).

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).

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

