



Disciples

February 2010

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
ST. MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CA

On the Web: www.stmatthewsnoho.org Username: stmatts Password: 2009user

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Season of Light



Ash Wednesday

Feb. 17

- Imposition of Ashes and Holy Communion, 7:30p.m.

Midweek

Soup Suppers and Lenten Worship

Every Wednesday,
Feb. 24 — March 24
Soup Supper, 6:30 p.m.,
Worship 7 to 7:30 p.m. ;
both in the Fireside Room

Soup Lunch and Lenten Worship

Every other Wednesday,
Noon, Feb 24, March 10 and
March 24

Palm Sunday Worship & Brunch March 28



Photo by Steve Devol

Kyle Jensen lights the Advent candles during the Lessons and Carols Service at St. Matthew's on Dec. 20. the service was written by Brenda Bos with hymns chosen by Melanie Ronning, 175 people were in attendance.

With the Hosts of Heaven

A message
from
Pastor Sue



In our Sunday worship, just before we sing the "Holy, Holy, Holy" the presiding pastor prays this: "And so with all the choirs of angels,

with the church on Earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn."

These words hold special

meaning for me as we join together in prayer and support for the people of Haiti. The "whole church on Earth and the hosts of heaven" means everybody we ever loved and lost, including the ones we didn't know we loved until we lost them. It

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The Month Ahead



Kenny Callaghan,
Music And
Outreach
Coordinator

In a few days we transition from the joy and light of Epiphany to the reflective season of Lent. Lent is a special time to reflect upon our journey as people of God, our relationship with Jesus and our understanding of what it means to be a child of God. During Lent we have the opportunity to take an intentional journey to deepen our faith by drawing closer to God through prayer, worship, meditation and outreach by sharing God's love with others.

This Lenten season there are many opportunities to grow spiritually and to invite others to participate in a variety of activities at our church. As I interact with people within our church and community more and more I realize people are floundering and need to know God loves them. Our community needs people committed to reaching out to them with the good news of God's grace. More than ever, people need to be invited and welcomed into a place where they can feel the love of God and feel loved by the people of God.

February Food collection is devoted baby food and diapers. Donations may be placed on the table in front of the sanctuary. All donations will be taken to Lutheran Social Services at the end of the month.

Adult Forum meets every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. in the Fireside Room. Join Pastor

Sue and Dr. R. Guy Erwin as they lead a Bible Study and discussion on "The Seven Deadly Sins." You are invited to attend at any time; classes are not sequential.

Feminine Sacred Circle meets the first and third Sundays of the month in the church library from noon to 1:30 p.m. Topics for discussion include: Feb. 17 – New Age Perspectives; Feb. 21 – Mary Magdalene. All are welcome.

"Ubuntu" Theology on Tap meets Sunday afternoons at 2 at Robin Hood Pub, 13640 Burbank Blvd., Sherman Oaks. Group leader Ryan Chaddick will lead a discussion on the book "Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography" by John Dominic Crossan.

St. Matthew's Choir rehearses Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 9 in the sanctuary. The choir is rehearsing music for Lent, Holy Week and Easter. All are welcome to sing; no previous experience is needed.

Growth Group meets Thursdays from 7:30 to 9 p.m. in the Church Library. This small group will meet every other Thursday (Feb. 4 and 18) for fellowship, study and prayer and is geared to help strengthen your faith. Growth Group participants will discuss a topic sharing their experience, struggles, ask questions and learn from

each other. We will discuss "The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life if Faith" by Marcus J. Borg. See Kenny Callaghan with questions.

Lutherans Looking Forward Breakfast will be Saturday, Feb. 6 at 8:30 a.m. at Woodland Hills Country Club, 21150 Dumetz Road, Woodland Hills. The event will feature Olympic gold medalist Rafer Johnson and also recognize the Lutheran and Congregation of the Year for volunteer service to Lutheran Social Services. A free-will offering will be taken for breakfast expenses. Questions: See Kenny

The Great Events Lunch Bunch will meet Wednesday, Feb. 10 at 10:30 a.m. Join us for this not-to-be missed event as Office Manager Jack Fulkerson leads us on a Hollywood adventure. This month's stop: Roscoe's House of Chicken and Waffles at 1518 North Gower St. Meet at church or the North Hollywood Metro Station for a short ride to Hollywood and Highland.

Community Pancake Breakfast will be Saturday, Feb. 13 at 9 a.m. Meet at the church to car-pool to Angelica Lutheran Church in downtown Los Angeles. Members of Angelica will join us as we prepare and serve a Community Pancake breakfast including scram-

bled eggs, sausages and more!

Book Club will meet Tuesday, Feb. 16 at 7:30 p.m. at Pastor Sue's home. Contact Pastor Sue for details or questions. Ash Wednesday Worship, Wednesday February 17, 7:30pm

Lenten Soup Supper and Worship will be Wednesday, Feb. 24, at noon and 6:30 p.m. Our theme this year is, "Getting Real in Faith & Life." Volunteers are needed to bring soup for the evening suppers. Please sign up in the narthex or see Kenny.

Movie Talk will be Friday, Feb. 26, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room. This is a discussion group led by Jeff Drushal. This month's movie is "The Night of the Hunter" (1955), starring Robert Mitchum. Invite friends. It's BYOB, with some light snacks offered.

Feed the Homeless will be Saturday Feb. 27, from 9 to 10:30 a.m. Meet in the church kitchen to make sandwiches and lunches with nonperishable food items. Donations of granola bars, individual bags of chips, box drinks, etc. are gladly accepted. We are grateful this ministry has been blessed with a grant from the Thrivent Financial for Lutheran Care Abounds in Communities program to help us broaden our outreach.



Photos by Erwin David

Birthdays

January's children above are, from left, Dan Wescott, Pastor Glenn Anderson, Elizabeth Loken, Dylan Jensen and Kyle Jensen. December's gang, below, are, from left, John Bejshak, Ursula Black, Cindy Messler-Early, Nancy Beecroft and David James.



Thinking of Haiti

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and the people we never heard of. It means everybody who ever did or who sometime in the future will come together at the Lord's feast.

If you have not had an opportunity to donate to our sisters and brothers in Haiti through an agency you can trust, then I invite you to contribute to Lutheran World Relief, www.lwr.org. Or you can contribute to LWR through St. Matthew's.

The last Sunday in this season of Epiphany is called Transfiguration Sunday and it falls this year on Feb. 14, St. Valentine's Day.

The themes intertwine. "Transfiguration" means a "marked change" or a "metamorphosis." Nothing changes us as powerfully as does love. Moving from Epiphany to Lent, we are invited to the Lenten discipline, a time of increased thanksgiving and self reflection. See Ryan Chaddick's article on Page 5 for more on the meaning of Lent. I am grateful to all of you for the powerful journey we have taken together through Christmas, and Epiphany. May God continue to guide our witness as we head toward Ash Wednesday.

Ask Hildegard

A monthly advice column dealing with All Things Lutheran

Editor's note: This issue sees a new monthly feature in Disciples. Hildegard Von Gelischen Kirche has decades of experience in the mysterious ways of Lutheran liturgy, church etiquette and general Midwestern common sense, having been raised in a small farm town midway between Lake Wobegon and St. Cloud, Minn. She's been active in several Lutheran congregations but is not, contrary to rumor, the model for "Saturday Night Live's" Church Lady. She's here to help! And here's the first query in what we hope is long line of thoughtful questions from St. Matthew's members.

Dear Hildegard:

Is it appropriate to drink from the chalice rather than dipping the host in the wine?

— *Thirsty for Knowledge*

Dear Thirsty:

Your correct use of the terms chalice and host for the cup containing the sacramental wine and the wafer representing the body of Christ makes this church lady want to leap for joy in an open display of liturgical dance.

Both practices are acceptable, I would add, though, to please be aware of common courtesy when opting to drink from what is sometimes referred to as the "common cup." There is no need for the communicant to act in a common manner. Take the cup firmly in your hands and quietly take a small sip, returning the cup to the worship assistant and making certain that they have a good grasp before you release your hold. I once witnessed Sven Svenson back in Bemidji throw back his head like a hungry baby sparrow and wait for the minister to "fill 'er up." Not a pretty sight, I assure you.

I would admonish those men, and in the interest of fairness (and you know who you are), women with long moustaches to opt for communion by intinction or, as you described it, dipping the host into the wine. The worship assistant will wipe the rim well after each person sips from the chalice but will not be able to retrieve jetsam loosed from a communicant's cookie duster.

When communing by intinction, please use good judgment and your very best depth perception. No need to go in up to your elbows, and this is yet another good reason to wash your hands before worship!

Thank-you for your inquiry and I hope to see you at the rail.

Hildegard Von Gelischen Kirche

Feeling not quite Lutheran? Have questions about policies, practices and traditions at St. Matthew's or within the Lutheran church in general? Send an e-mail Hildegard and we'll publish selected queries each month in the newsletter. She can be reached at: heilighildegard@gmail.com



Photo by Steve Devol

Geek-Out at the Arlight

Cinephiles of St. Matthew's trekked to the cinema in December to catch a screening of "Avatar" in 3-D. Clockwise from upper left Jeff Drushal, Pastor Sue Devol, Gregory Schaefer, Steve Stoppel, Chuck Dellamarie, Margaret Kelly, Jennifer Macias, Lori Drushal, Melissa Onnen, Ashley Drushal and Ryan Chaddick. At the latest Movie Talk, filmgoers gave the James Cameron epic mixed reviews.

Updates, Upcoming & Kudos

A thankful look back and
a helpful look forward

Congratulations to **Dylan Jensen**, who won first prize with his paper for Martin Luther King Day at Laurel Hall School. Congratulations also to **Kyle Jensen**, who won second place at Walter Reed Middle School with his paper for MLK Day.

We are sad to announce the death of Gina's Uncle **Albert di Nicola**. For details about the funeral service please email donkhi99@aol.com.

Thank you to **David Matlock**, whose energy in the

kitchen and whose homemade desserts were a blessing for all of us at the St. Matt's Alive luncheon last month. Also thanks to Melissa Onnen and Ryan Chaddick for hosting coffee hour.

Do you make soup? If you are able to bring a soup to one of the Lenten suppers or noon lunches please let Kenny Callaghan know. We are also in need of Sunday coffee hour hosts.

For unloading all your clothes and cleaning out your cup-

boards ... we and the people who are served by Lutheran Social Services thank you.

Welcome back to our Office Manager **Jack Fulkerson**, and many thanks to **Lori Drushal** for filling in during Jack's illness.

Save the Date for a Church Workday on Saturday, March 6, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Join friends, or make new ones by helping us with a variety of tasks (including cleaning out the custodial closet). Lunch will be served.

Disciples



St. Matthew's Disciples is published monthly for the community of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in North Hollywood, Calif. Information or articles are due on the third Sunday of the month and can be left in the church office or e-mailed to Steve Devol:

stevedevol@gmail.com

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St. Matthew's worships weekly on Sunday mornings at 10:30 a.m. Worship services are provided in ASL for the deaf and Hard-of-Hearing. St. Matthew's is a member of the Southwest California Synod of the ELCA. St. Matthew's is a part of the Reconciling-in-Christ program of Lutherans Concerned/North America. You can find St. Matthew's on the Internet at <http://stmatthewsnoho.org>

Jonah and Lent

By Ryan Chaddick

There is a beautiful and redemptive story tucked away in the proverbial corners of our Bibles and dismissed by too many as a fun child's tale.

The parabolic narrative of Jonah eloquently describes the vision and dream of God and humanity's struggle to live within the just imagination of our Lord.

Our hero - the one we all can too easily identify with - does not want to confront the liberating dream of God, at the beginning of the story. God provides a vision to confront the people of Nineveh to change their evil ways, for God is a just God.

A note on the possible evil nature of this particular city. As the capital of the Assyrian Empire, it would also then be the capital and epicenter for oppression and violence - as all other capitals of empires have been and are.

While growing up listening to Sunday school teachers tell this particular tale, I always assumed Jonah was afraid the Ninavites would harm him. Rather, Jonah - it turns out - did not want to go to Nineveh, because "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity."

Jonah was not afraid the Ninavites could cause harm; Jonah was afraid God would not smite the evil Ninavites, because God abounds in love, graciousness, and love.

At the beginning of this narrative, Jonah rejects the compassionate and just God's dream. I can relate all too easily.

Jonah's rejection leads to trials, storms - moments in which his actions cause others to experience grave and serious danger - and, three



days cooped up in the belly of a large fish. Life stunk!

While I do not believe in a God that forces heartache or calamities to swallow us up, I do realize that often times when we reject God's redemptive and graceful dream, we find ourselves overcome by the literal giant fishes of the world - be they depression, anxiety, selfishness, or addiction.

Again, this is not to say that God is a vengeful being who punishes us with such awful states of mind. This is to say, however, we navigate our way there easily enough.

The God I believe in, indeed the God I hope you worship as well, is more akin to imagination and dreams than a judgmental old white male

with a really white beard. God's dreams haunt us, inspire us, and motivate us to be involved in justice, charity, and righteousness.

When we, like Jonah, do not wish to be apart of God's dream, we therefore reject justice, charity, and righteousness. The writer of Jonah describes this place as the pit of a fish's stomach.

We are called to dream with God. And, when God's dream inspires our imagination we live beautiful and glorious lives.

I cannot, nor do I want to, imagine a world in which the Gandhi's, the MLK Jr.'s, the Bonhoeffer's, the Mandela's, the Aung San Suu Ky's, the Tutu's, and the Haitian relief and rescue workers, reject God's vision.

God dreams dreams for all of us to be involved in.

During this upcoming time of Lent, may we focus on emulating the life of another brave individual who found himself caught up in the hope of our God - Jesus, a Galilean peasant.

It is often overwhelming to consider the narrative of an oppressed and illiterate peasant standing courageously, proclaiming God's good news (the dream), and speaking out against cruelty, injustice, and the systemic violence of imperial occupation. Jesus lived out the hope and vision of God.

He had a choice.

He chose to pick up his cross; he did not run; he did not hide on a ship heading towards Tarshish; he did not cower in fear of a compas-

sionate, loving God; he did not spend days swallowed up with self-pity; and he did not struggle to stay afloat in the storms of the sea - he controlled the seas. For this and so much more, we now claim that Jesus is the divine revelation of the hope, grace, and dream.

To truly understand the grace and vision of God, we must understand that God also extends compassion and love to us, even when we act more like Jonah than Jesus. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus claims that God is mysteriously blessing and on our side when we are "poor in spirit." That phrase is perhaps one of the best ways to describe our condition when we live apart from the egalitarian dream of God.

Just as God extends open arms of love, forgiveness, and compassion to the Nineveh's of the world, he also extends the everlasting embrace of love for us - even in a "poor in spirit" state of mind.

As we gather and focus our thoughts on the life and ultimate sacrifice of our freedom fighter and savior, may we spend more and more time living within the dream of God. May we find justice, love, and charity as means to a more meaningful story - a story infused with the justice of our Lord God. May you no longer know the stomach pit of the literal fishes in your life, may you profoundly know and understand the grace of God.

May the deepest peace be with you.

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