



# Merry Christmas and Happy New Year



The congregation sings "Silent Night" during St. Matthew's Christmas Eve candlelight service.

## Council Chat

# Build Your Story, Build Your Church

**By Jeff Drushal**  
*Council Vice President*

**T**he volunteers on the Church Council and the Outreach Committee here at St. Matthew's have had a number of discussions regarding the most effective ways to share what St. Matthew's is all about with those beyond our doors. A broad range of ideas have been brought to the table; some traditional, some quite radical. But through all the brainstorming, the common thread of these discussions always comes down to our affection for our Lord, for

this church and for the people we are surrounded by in this community of believers.

So, how do we communicate this with others who may be seeking a similar church experience? How do we reach those who may have never felt the grace of God in their hearts? How do we let people know Christ is alive in the pulpit and pews of St. Matthew's? The answer we've come up with: we share stories.

A church is a place where you come to be closer to God. This means different things for different people, but that diver-

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**ASK HILDY**

**To Resolve, or Not to Resolve**

Dear Hildy,

New to the church, I was wondering, do Lutherans make New Year resolutions?

-Work In Progress

Dear Work-in,

Why not, if the holiday bills, stains on your new furniture from spilled Glug and the fact that your secret Santa at the Altar Guild Christmas luncheon gifted you an extra, EXTRA large muumuu haven't sufficiently stressed you out for starting 2011, then by all means, resolve away.

None of us is perfect so we all need to ask God to be with us on the road to better living with the Cross in the center of our lives. I've heard that these annual resolutions have worked for some people but like an appetizing fat free dessert, I've never experienced it myself. If you wish to resolve, consider resolving to talk with God on a regular basis about those things with which you need help. The comfort, the gifts, the transformation and healing I have received in my life resulted when I practiced resolute prayer.

To all my friends at St. Matthew's, even a certain secret Santa who really needs to resolve to see the hairdresser about those roots: Have a wonderful New Year filled with Joy, Health and God's Richest Blessings. Happy 2011!

-Hildegard Von Gelischen-Kirche

**The Spiritual Practice of Generosity**

**By Brenda Bos**  
Council Treasurer

I used to work for a guy who gave enormous Christmas bonuses to the lowest paid employees on our staff. Grown men would blink back tears of surprise when they opened the bonus envelope a few days before Christmas. The most talkative young women were rendered speechless when they realized they had just received a check four times their weekly salary. It was a thrilling day in the office, one I looked forward to every year. There was warmth, joy, surprise. "What a generous guy!" we would say.

And it's true, this gajillionaire could have kept every dime he made, but he didn't. He gave to those less fortunate. But I don't think he gave until he hurt. Some of those same junior staffers gave me wonderful gifts for Christmas. It meant so much because I

knew they had to dig deep to give so graciously to me.

Who was the more generous? Jesus answered that question with His famous story of the widow who gave her last mite into the offering box at the temple.

I see a lot of generosity in this congregation. Some of it is financial, some of it is in time, some spiritual, some emotional. Generosity comes from joy and peace and hope. Generosity is actually a spiritual practice. As this congregation grows spiritually, each of us can consider our own ways to be generous. Here are some suggestions:

Take a risk. The rich boss in my story was certainly generous, but it's unlikely he was risking much. Perhaps you can experiment with increasing your donation. Perhaps you can risk sharing more of yourself with your friends and family. Perhaps you can risk

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The StMatthewsNoHo Newsletter is published monthly by the community of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church at 11031 Camarillo St., North Hollywood, Calif., 91602; Phone: (818) 762-2909; Fax: (818) 762-7439; E-Mail: [stmatthewsnoho@gmail.com](mailto:stmatthewsnoho@gmail.com) Website: [www.stmatthewsnoho.org](http://www.stmatthewsnoho.org)

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Organist: **Catherine Popovic**  
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**2010-2011 CHURCH COUNCIL**

President, **Morgan Rumpf**; Vice President, **Jeff Drushal**; Secretary, **Dave Allen**; Treasurer, **Brenda Bos**; Councilmembers **Ursula Black, John Cantu, Ryan Chaddick, David James, Amber Keating**



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Pastor



**Morgan Rumpf,**  
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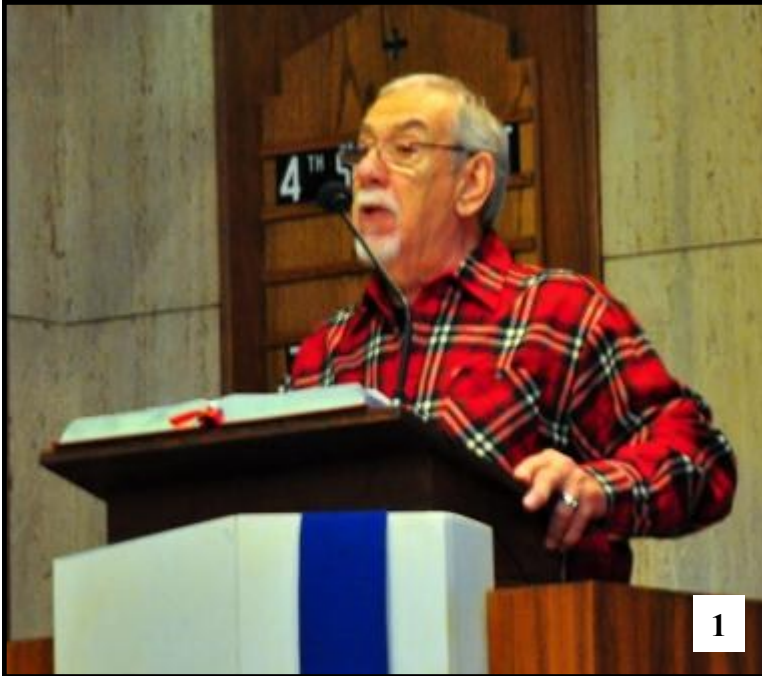


**Don Rosenkjar, Deaf**  
Minister

St. Matthew's worships on Sunday mornings at 10:30. 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 and is a part of the Reconciling-in-Christ program of Lutherans Concerned/North America.

**LESSONS AND CAROLS SERVICE**



A number of our members help the choir provide a wonderful Lessons and Carols Service on Sunday, December 19, 2010. 1.Dominick Morra; 2.John Cantu; 3. Paige Barnett; 4. Jim Loken; 5. Lillian Parker; 6. Ryan Chaddick



## ST. MATTHEW'S CONNECTS

# The Season of Epiphany is Upon Us

By **Kenny Callaghan**

*Music and Outreach Coordinator*

January is the time of year when people reflect on what they accomplished in the past year consider plans for the year ahead. After a holiday season filled with incredible ministry, we Christians look to the future knowing the most important thing has already been accomplished: the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has reconciled all of God's children with creation. We are able to fully live into the Promise of God in the world.

This month we welcome the season of Epiphany. During Epiphany, the church celebrates the revelation of Christ to all nations as represented by the magi's visit. These wise men arrive to find a helpless child swaddled and lying in a manger, surrounded by his poor parents who were taking shelter in a dark cave. Each of the wise men were undoubtedly challenged and changed by this sight. Epiphany is our invitation to come, see and experience what this baby born to a young mother might mean for us and for the world around us. As we grow in our relationship with Jesus, may we be encouraged to live and share God's many gifts of love and grace with others.

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

**January Food collection** for Lutheran Social Services is breakfast cereal. Donations may be placed on the table in the front of the church.

**Koinonia Prison Ministry** needs old and used greeting cards and postage stamps. Donations may be placed on the table in the narthex. See Kenny if you'd like to be a pen pal.

**Growth Group** meets Thursday, Jan. 6 & 20, from 7:30 to 9 p.m. at the home of Art Figueroa. This small group will meet for fellowship, study and prayer and is geared to help strengthen your faith. We will discuss "The Way of Grace" by John Indermark.

**"Ubuntu"** a small group led by Ryan Chaddick will meet Sundays evenings at 6:00 p.m. for four weeks beginning Jan. 9<sup>th</sup> at the Chaddick's home in Pasadena. This group will seek spiritual growth using N.T. Wright's book on Philip-pains.

**Spark Creative Workshop** meets Monday, Jan. 10 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the church library. This is your opportunity to explore the creative side of your spirituality and the spiritual side of your creativity. Writers, artists, musicians, photographers and dreamers are invited to celebrate our God given creativity and work on projects in a supportive environment.

**St. Matthew's Choir** rehearses Wednesday evenings

(beginning Jan. 12) 7:30 to 9 p.m. in the church. A potluck snack begins at 7:10pm. Join us as we prepare special music for Epiphany and Lent.

**St. Matt's Alive!** Sunday, Jan. 16. Join us in the Fireside room following worship for a luncheon with homemade French Onion Soup made by Daniel Ornelas.

**Great Events Lunch Bunch** Wednesday, Jan. 19, 11:00 a.m. Join us at church to car-pool to Griffith Park for a Western adventure touring Gene Autry's Museum of the American West. We'll enjoy lunch at the Golden Spur Café for casual dining at its best, every day...there's even beer and wine for adult buckaroos! Admission: Adults \$9, Seniors \$5. Sign-up on the poster board in the narthex/lobby.

**Breath of Life with Amber Keating** Sunday, Jan. 23 in the Fireside Room following coffee hour. Still reeling from holiday stress? Join the Feminine Sacred Circle as Amber shares strategies for managing emotions through breathing techniques. This event is part 3 of Amber's series comparing Christian and Yoga traditions. All are welcome.

**Movie Talk** will meet Friday, Jan. 28, 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 Christopher Nolan's "Inception." It's BYOB, with some light snacks offered.

**Feed the Homeless Saturday** Jan. 29, 9 to 10:30 a.m. Meet in the church kitchen to make sandwiches and lunches with nonperishable food items. 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.

**Reconciling in Christ Sunday**, Jan. 30. On this day we join with other Welcoming congregations from various denominations in celebrating the witness of God's love for persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities. St. Matthew's has been a Reconciling in Christ congregation for 26 years!

**Service of Healing** Sunday, Jan. 30, 5:00 p.m. St. Matthew's is premiering a series of special worship services using a format completely different from Sunday mornings and will be designed to give participants an enhanced awareness of ways to bring a relationship to Jesus into our lives. The first in the series will have "Healing" as the theme. Come and join us if you have a need for healing, a desire for spiritual growth or just an interest in what's new at St. Matthew's!

For a list of Twelve Step groups meeting at St. Matt's, please review the calendar on our website.

[www.stmatthewsnoho.org](http://www.stmatthewsnoho.org)

## COUNCIL CHAT

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sity of purpose is what makes a community vibrant and alive. Everyday, we each write a new page in our personal story. That story has value. Your story is an integral piece of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, and those of us on the Outreach Committee feel that encouraging you to consciously and purposefully build and share your story is the best way we can communicate the love and grace of God that permeates our congregation.

In last month's newsletter, we gave you three questions to consider. Let's review: Why are you HERE? Why are YOU here? And, WHY are you here? This is the foundation on which you can build your story. If you have begun to answer any of these questions, then it's time to share your answers. Build and share. We encourage you to build and share your story in some way everyday.

If the goal is building and sharing our stories, then how do we get there? Good question. I'm glad you asked. First, we have to trust God.

We have to trust that God will guide and inspire us in this task. In Matthew 18:20, Jesus tells us "Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." Christ is with us in this place and this endeavor, so we should have no fear.

Second, spend time with God when you're away from St. Matthew's. Read the Bible. Pray. Listen to what your God is saying so that you can better understand who you are any why you are here.

And finally, talk to the people around you. This conversation can begin with the people at St. Matthew's, but it should not stop there. Sharing your story with others will help them build their story just as much as listening to other people's stories will help you build your own.

Christ did not intend for us to take the journey of faith alone. We are called to glorify God in a community of believers and we have been blessed with a place like St. Matthew's to come together to do so. Therefore, we encourage you to be an important part of the story of St. Matthew's.

Ask the questions, share your answers, build your story.

## PARTING SHOTS



**Celebrating the Christmas spirit (Above) Ken Stachura and Daniel Ornelas and (Below) Roberta Reynolds and Brian Jorgensen.**



## GENEROSITY

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joining a small group or volunteering to help Feed the Homeless or in the Pride Booth or hosting coffee hour.

Be consistent: One-time gifts are wonderful. But becoming a generous person is a lifestyle choice. Consider giving to St. Matthews on-line to assure regular

giving. Consider becoming a reader or greeter or usher, and keep your commitments to the schedule. Consider making new friends and follow up with them.

Have faith: Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) Jesus offers overflowing life, a life which exceeds our expectations. He is not promising financial windfall in this passage, but He is offering an abundant life. And with this abundance, we can afford to give freely

of ourselves. What can you bring to others? How might that exceed your own expectations?

You will be hearing the theme, "Build Your Story" throughout the year. My story will be one of giving in new and bold ways. I am eager to find new ways to give of myself and see how richly God works in my life. What will your story be? Happy and Generous New Year!



**St. Matthew's**  
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