



REMEMBRANCE

Memories of Dance and Laughter

By Richard Gasparotti

Many of you knew both Timothy Stocks and Madalyn Minch and perhaps a number of you would have liked to have known them better. As we grieve with Timothy's partner Leon Alexander and their families, and join Madalyn's family and friends in their loss, I thought I might share some of my memories of these two very special members of our congregation. Over the last week, remembering my two friends working, dancing, organizing and laughing has helped me trust in God's grace and mercy.

A faithful member, Timothy served on the St. Matthew's church council. Perhaps many of us will fondly recall his matchless performance as our recording financial secretary for at least 17 years. His careful detail on the annual giving of each member and friend of St. Matthew's was admired by each regular giver and by many of our accountants, I am certain. A ritual that I looked forward to was the gentle greeting from Timothy in the narthex on my first Sunday at church in a new year. With a knowing dip into the canvas bag from his most recent cruise, Timothy would produce a discreetly folded



Madalyn Minch



Timothy Stocks

Photos by Steve Devol

statement of my giving for the previous year with a gentle smile. How many bags carried those careful reports, how many people over the years did he serve so diligently, how many gentle smiles did he give to us?

Timothy was good with numbers and a talented manager of money. Among his passions were lovely cruises on Holland America, leading bridge tournaments, and beautiful ballroom dancing.

(Continued on page 3)

He's Now Ordained; So What Was He Before?

By Guy Erwin

You know the teacher in me can't resist a lesson, but I think this time it might be important to explain what it means for me to be ordained now, after having already worked so long at St. Matthew's in a pastoral role. What is different now? What was I before, if I needed this

additional thing to be a "complete" pastor?

Well, one part of the story St. Matthew's folk know well: As a partnered gay man, until August 2009 the ELCA had rules that prevented my ordination. Those rules began in the late 1980s, and they were the main reason it has taken me 25 years to get to this point. But rather than just sitting outside

the gate waiting for change to come, I decided early on that I would do as much ministry as I could get permission to do, with whatever community needed and wanted me to help them, while pursuing my first love: scholarship and teaching. So that's how I became "almost a pastor"—by filling the ministry and leadership role in congregations that needed me, until

such time as the ELCA came around (if it ever did, I sometimes wondered) and allowed GLBT pastors to be ordained without restriction.

Somebody asked me the other day what ordination would mean for my week-to-week life, and I joked that it probably meant that I could now give up church work! I was kidding, of course, but

(Continued on page 5)

FROM PASTOR SUE

A Summer Vacation From the Lectionary

I want to announce a Summer Preaching Series for June and July. This means that instead of preaching on the lectionary (the assigned Bible passages for each Sunday), sermons will be offered which are based on the book "A New Kind of Christianity" (HarperOne, 2010), in which Brian McClaren articulated 10 questions that are central to the emergence of a postmodern, post-colonial Christian faith. I believe this exciting book and the questions it asks will offer us some new, stimulating thoughts as we seek to live our faith in the world.

June 5

What is the Overarching Story Line of the Bible?
(1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

June 12

How Should the Bible be Understood? (Acts 11:1-18)

June 19

Is God Violent? (Hebrews 1:1-3)

June 26

Who is Jesus and Why is He Important? (Matthew 16:13-20)

July 3

What is the Gospel? (Matthew 4:12-23)

SYNOD ASSEMBLY



Photo by R. Guy Erwin

From left, Dave Allen, Pastor Sue Devol and Melissa and Ryan Chaddick at the Southwest California Synod Assembly at the Burbank Marriott June 19 & 20. The theme was "Freed to Serve."

July 10

What do we do About the Church? (1 Cor 12 & 13)

July 17

A Who is Welcome at the Table (Acts 8:26-40)

July 24

How Should Followers of Jesus Relate to People of Other Religions? (John 14:1-6)

July 31

Can We Find a Better Way of Viewing the Future?
(Micah 6:1-8)

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
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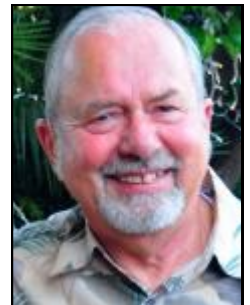
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St. Matthew's worships on Sunday mornings at 10:30. Worship services are provided in ASL for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. St. Matthew's is a member

of the Southwest California Synod of the ELCA and is a part of the Reconciling-in-Christ program of Lutherans Concerned/North America.

ST. MATT'S CLASS OF 2011



Photo by Judy Hoewisch



Photo by Lumen Photography

Megan Hoewisch, left, with her degree in mathematics from Occidental College. Pierce Devol, above with graduating fiancée Greta Morgenthaler, is getting a degree in ancient studies from St. Olaf. And Brenda Bos with master of divinity from the Claremont Theological.



Photo by Steve Devol

Remembering Timothy Stocks, Madalyn Minch

(Continued from page 1)

An accomplished dancer, I know of several brides and terrified grooms who have been married at St. Matthew's that were prepared for their scary first dance by Timothy. He proved that perfectly nice Lutherans with two pairs of left feet were able to glide into matrimony like Fred and Ginger.

Together with Leon, Timothy was known for his generosity to St. Matthew's, and the Colony Theatre. Leon and Timothy donated the lights in front of the Chancel area.

When Timothy was voted "St. Matthew's Volunteer of the Year" Leon donated the beautiful green paraments for

the Season after Pentecost.

Madalyn was perhaps one of the funniest people I have ever laughed with and her wit and humor are legendary. A talented writer, her creative outlook kept her going through many tough personal challenges and losses.

Like so many of us, she was a big fan of our choir. She encouraged our relatively small group to participate in choral events with other churches and even hired a stretch limo with a fully stocked bar to deliver "her" choir to such an event. A show biz maven at heart, Madalyn thought the St. Matthew's choir deserved to be better outfitted.

She started a fund to buy

new choir robes and festive, liturgically correct-colored collars. She was a fund-raiser at heart and created some amazing coffee houses and originated "Big Fat Drag Bingo" events that left many of us seasoned members and new visitors wondering aloud if church was supposed to be this fun. Even her annual Christmas cards reflected her insouciant outlook on the world.

I will never forget the year Michael Jackson held his infant son over the heads of paparazzi outside a Paris hotel window. Her card clearly showed Madalyn in all her glory holding her kitty wrapped in a baby's receiving blanket outside her balconied

window. The italicized comment on the back stated that, *"No kitties were hurt during the production of this Christmas greeting...a little freaked, yes, but hurt no."*

In community we can each share such memories with each other and Madalyn and Timothy and all those we love and have lost can mend our hearts with the smiles they can still bring to us.

Please keep Leon and the rest of Timothy's family and Madalyn's family and friends in your prayers. God's richest blessings.

Richard Gasparotti is a longtime member of St. Matthew's and former Church Council president.

ST MATTHEW'S CONNECTS

Here's How to Get Your Pentecost On

By Kenny Callaghan

Music and Outreach Coordinator

This month we celebrate Pentecost, the moment when God sent the Holy Spirit to work among God's people. Today it is a celebration of newness found in the Holy Spirit. We celebrate new beginnings and a renewal of purpose, mission and calling as God's people. As people are out and about experiencing the joy of summer, be aware of visitors and people new to worship. Warm smiles, inviting handshakes or a kind "hello" help people feel noticed and welcome. Encourage visitors to sit with you during worship and invite them to join you at our coffee social. Review our congregational events and encourage their participation. In welcoming people to our church, we do the work of God. People everywhere need to hear the message of God's love, forgiveness and healing through Christ. When we reach out to those around us with God's love, we bring renewal, hope, peace and love. This is the message of Pentecost and the power of the Gospel.

Celebration of Guy Erwin's Ordination at the Abbey Bar and Grill 692 N. Robertson WeHo, June 20, 7-10p.m.. This cocktail party is sponsored by Lutherans Concerned LA and will also honor the work of Bishop Paul Egertson.

June Food collection for

Lutheran Social Services is macaroni and cheese, pasta and pasta sauce. Donations may be placed on the table in the front of the church.

A new Bible study with Pastor Sue, "Grow a Heart for God," begins Wednesday, June 1, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. for six sessions, based on 1 & 2 Samuel. Join us for conversation about life, faith and finding meaning. Meet in Pastor Sue's office.

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

Adult Forum meets every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. in the Fireside Room. The DVD series is "The Goddess Remembered." Join us for coffee and discussion.

Meditation Group is Monday, June 6, from 7 to 8 p.m. in the Fireside Room. Led by Amber Keating, this group will focus on breath-work and meditation to calm the body and mind, as well as reconnect with God. Together we'll encourage one another in bringing meditative practices in our daily lives.

Growth Group meets Thursday, June 9 and 23, from 7:30 to 9 p.m. at church. This small group will meet for fellowship, study, prayer and is geared to help strengthen

your faith. For discussion: "The Way of Forgiveness" by Marjorie J. Thompson.

The Los Angeles Gay Pride Festival will be Saturday and Sunday, June 11 and 12, in West Hollywood. Volunteers (who get free tickets and T-shirts) are needed to staff our booth at Pride and walk in the parade on Sunday. Please see Kenny.

Spark Creative Workshop meets Monday, June 13, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room for a relaxing evening of mandalas.... What are they? Only the Tibetan monks know for sure, but come discover creativity, relaxation and a supportive environment. Questions: see Brenda Bos.

Great Events Lunch Bunch, is Wednesday, June 15 at 11 a.m. Rained out in May, let's try it again in June. Meet at church to carpool to Descanso Gardens. Explore the gardens on a covered, handicap-accessible "green" tram. Admission: general \$8, senior \$6, tram \$4. We'll have lunch at the Descanso Café. More information and signups on the poster board in the narthex/lobby.

St. Matt's goes to Crowne City Theatre on Sunday, June 19 at 3 p.m. Join us for "I'm Just Wild About Harry," an old-fashion musical comedy adapted by Gary Lamb and William A. Reilly from

Brandon Thomas' "Charlie's Aunt." The special St. Matt's ticket rate is \$15. Sign up on the poster board in the narthex/lobby.

Book Club is Tuesday, June 21 at 7:30 p.m. at Pastor Sue's home. "Those Who Save Us" Jenna Blum

Movie Talk summer schedule to be announced. This is a discussion group led by Jeff Drushal. It's BYOB, with some light snacks offered.

Feed the Homeless: Help us expand this ministry by serving a hot meal at Lutheran Social Services on June 21. Meet in our church kitchen at 9:30 a.m. to prepare lunch and then take it to Van Nuys. On Saturday, June 25, from 9 to 10:30 a.m., Meet in the church kitchen to make sandwiches and lunches with non-perishable food items. This outreach ministry has been blessed with a grant from the Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Care Abounds in Communities program.

St. Matt's Alive! will be Sunday, June 26. Topic: Questions about Islam? Join us in the Fireside room following worship for a light luncheon and fellowship. Ani Zonneveld, co-founder of Muslims for Progressive Values, will be our guest. She will give a presentation with Q & A. Suggested donation for lunch and speaker, \$7.

Celebrating an Ordination, and ‘the New Normal’

(Continued from page 1)

for somebody who is excluded from the system and the formal status of clergy, the only way to demonstrate your commitment to service in ministry is constantly to be doing it. So there have been only relatively short periods of time since about 1987 that I haven’t had some kind of an every-Sunday ministry job in a parish, usually part-time alongside my teaching “day job.” But now that I have the formal status of a clergyman in the ELCA, I don’t have to prove anything to the church any more—I can just serve as I feel called and needed, without having to be on a particular church’s payroll.

So if I am a pastor now, what was I a few weeks ago, when I presided or preached at St. Matthew’s before this ordination? An impostor? By no means! Those of us who worked to get the church to accept partnered gay and lesbian clergy have two kinds of important allies: congregations like St. Matthew’s, willing to bend the rules for justice’s sake and to anticipate a more inclusive future; and bishops like our own Dean Nelson, who in the ways he could, also supported us and me. It was Bishop Nelson who helped make my ministry at St. Matt’s possible, by licensing me as a “not yet ordained person” to celebrate Holy Communion in this Synod. This special status is really guarded carefully in the ELCA and it is supposed to be used only when absolutely necessary, but in our case Bishop Dean took a chance on me.

And of course, St. Matthew’s carried this permission further, because when it took me on as one as staff several years ago, it decided to treat me just as if I was ordained already, since there wasn’t any pastoral function I couldn’t carry out (with the bishop’s explicit permission) and if there had been any justice I would have been ordained 20 years earlier. So St. Matthew’s moved forward just exact-



Photos by Amity Erwin Parks

Newly ordained Pastor Guy Erwin with partner Rob Flynn, above, after the ordination service at Cal Lutheran University, below.



ly as if I had been an ELCA pastor: It issued me a formal letter of call, and it “ordained” me—in the sense that when I started working at St. Matt’s, we had a service of installation in which I made the same promises to this congregation that I made to the whole church last week in my ordination service. This was another way our congregation simply “lived forward” into the more inclusive church we were all working to help the ELCA become.

In our Lutheran tradition, ordination is understood as a setting apart of a person for service in a function that was established by Christ and is validated by the Holy Spirit. It remains the job of the church to establish rules to keep this holy tradition within proper boundaries for the benefit and protection of the people of God. St. Matthew’s, like many of our sister congregations in the progressive end of American Lutheranism, chose to go beyond the rules of the ELCA and be Lutheran in a further, more radical way. This put us in tension with the rules, but it was done in the strong hope and clear faith that the church would understand and eventually follow us into a new, more inclusive reality. Now—at least on this issue—the tension is gone.

Now what? Well, it is a little strange to go from being outside the box to being inside so quickly and smoothly, now that the time of change has come. I am not “leaving” St. Matt’s—Rob and I are keeping our membership here and will be at Sunday worship when we’re in town. I’ve made Pastor Sue promise to keep me her “first choice” substitute if she ever needs some help in worship leadership. I have no plans to take on another open-ended church commitment unless there is some pressing need somewhere. But—ironically—I now won’t be leading worship as many Sundays as I used to with Pastor Sue at St. Matt’s!

But now we all get to celebrate not just my ordination, but also the “new normal” that the rules change means for GLBT people in the ELCA, and turn to thinking what we can do next to make our church a more genuinely welcoming place, where people of every race and class and sexual identity can hear about a God who loves us all so much that nothing—not even death—can stand in God’s way!

(See Kenny’s article for details on the upcoming Ordination party).



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