



Disciples

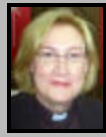
November 2009

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

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Reflecting on 25 Years



A message from Pastor Sue

On Sunday evening Oct., 18, Steve and I went to meet our friends Jim and Sheri for dinner. We were going to their house, but at the last minute Sheri texted and said they wanted to meet us at Third & Olive, a restaurant in Burbank. It didn't seem unusual to me at all.

I had no idea that what I would walk into was a surprise party. As we entered the restaurant, there was a whole group of people standing in the bar area. Suddenly I noticed my niece Kelsey, then Richard Gasparotti, Max Bruno, Jon Cantu and Jennifer Macias. Completely shocked doesn't even begin to describe how I felt. As the pictures here illustrate, I broke into tears. It was one of the most incredible nights of my life.

Two of God's most amazing party planners, Richard Gasparotti and Morgan Rumpf, had managed to keep me in the dark and pull off a dinner in honor of my 25th anniversary of ordination. To be hon-

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Photos by Kris Turk

Pastor Sue Wolfe is caught by surprise at Third and Olive. Among the surprise party conspirators were Richard Gasparotti, above left, and husband Steve Devol. More than 50 guests attended the party, including Timothy Stocks, below left, and Leon Alexander.



The Word, Flesh and Text?

Pick up Luther's lenses
to see the difference

By Dr. R. Guy Erwin

Martin Luther stands out in the history of Christianity as a remarkably bold and free interpreter of Scripture. Lutherans, thus, stand theologically in a mediating position between overly literal and overly casual readings of the Bible — sometimes a fine line to walk.

Now the [ELCA Book of Faith](#) initiative helps us recapture distinctive Lutheran interpretive principles, and the public debate on human sexuality lets us see the usefulness of interpretive methods that neither imprison us in the culture of an ancient past nor leave us adrift in a rapidly changing world.

As we have often heard, Luther saw the whole of Scripture through two inter-

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The Month Ahead



Kenny Callaghan,
Music And
Outreach
Coordinator

November begins the busy holiday season and its festivities. It's easy to sense the excitement of this season, with colorful decorations everywhere, special gatherings with family, friends and co-workers, the change of weather bringing a sort of crispness in the air, festive music and all the familiar happenings we enjoy.

This month provides a time to be thankful for life and the blessings of God. Gratitude and thanksgiving are simple words with many meanings and expressions, words often forgotten or taken for granted. Thanksgiving is a wonderful time to reflect on the experiences of life and marvel at the goodness of God. At times it can be hard to be grateful or give thanks. However, the journey of living a life of faith often brings the realization of God's provision and handiwork. Always reminding us God provides, generously, for God's people. For this awareness and truth, we can be grateful.

This month at St. Matt's, there are many events and activities to serve as opportunities for outreach. Attend one, or all, and bring someone with you. While at worship or an event, look around you and find visitors or someone you don't know. Introduce yourself to others and help them find a St. Matt's connection. What God has given us in our church home

is life-changing...share it!

FunDAZ Cards, to benefit the Alex McBride Scholarship Fund, are available through Sunday, Nov. 22. These discount cards can be used nationally and can save the owner lots of money on everyday items. For more information, call Bob East, our FunDAZ representative, at (818) 633-6179, visit www.stmatthewscard.org, or see Pastor Sue. Donations up to \$2,500 will be matched by California Lutheran University, taking \$5,000 off Alex's college debt.

November food collection is Thanksgiving dinner packs. Please pick up a shopping bag and shopping list in the narthex. Donations may be placed on the table in front of the sanctuary.

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

Feminine Sacred Circle meets the first and third Sundays of the month in the church library from noon to 1:30 p.m.

"Ubuntu" Theology on Tap meets Sunday afternoons at 2 at the Robin Hood Pub, 13640 Burbank Blvd., Sherman Oaks. Group leader Ryan Chaddick will lead a discussion on the book "Life Together" by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

St. Matthew's Choir rehearses Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 9 p.m. in the sanctuary. The choir is rehearsing music for Advent and Christmas. All are welcome to sing...no previous experience needed.

Growth Group will meet every other Thursday from 7:30 to 9 p.m., starting Nov. 12, in the Church Library for fellowship, study and prayer, and is geared to help strengthen your faith. Growth Group participants will discuss a topic and share their experiences, struggles, ask questions and learn from each other. In this process, group members will experience the value of Christian community realizing in living a life of faith, no one stands alone. We will discuss "The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith" by Marcus J. Borg. See Kenny Callaghan with questions.

Book Club will meet Tuesday, Nov. 17 at 7:30 p.m. the book being discussed is Dennis Lehane's "The Given Day." The meeting is at Pastor Sue's home. All are welcome.

Great Events Lunch Bunch, will be Wednesday, Nov. 18 at 10:30 a.m. Join us for a Metro trip to Hollywood for lunch at the California Pizza Kitchen followed by the movie "A Christmas Carol" with Jim Carrey in Disney Digital 3D

at the El Capitan Theatre. "Everybody loves a good transformational story. You know, somebody who sees the light, who finally finds out what's important in life. And, this is one of the greatest ones ever written." -- Jim Carrey, who plays Scrooge and the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come. Tickets are \$16 for Adults, \$14 for seniors. Sign up in the narthex before Sunday, Nov. 15, to make advance movie reservations.

Movie Talk will be Friday Nov. 20 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room (this is change due to the fourth Friday falling during the Thanksgiving weekend). At this month's meeting, we will forgo our normal single selection of a film. In honor of the holiday season, we will instead be discussing favorite holiday-themed movies. All are welcome, just come and be prepared to talk about your most beloved flicks of the season. Eggnog and/or rum will be provided.

Feed the Homeless will be Saturday, Nov. 21, 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.

For a list of Twelve Step groups meeting at St. Matt's, see www.stmatthewsnoho.org

Updates, Upcoming & Kudos

A thankful look back and a helpful look forward

Blessing of the Animals Sunday, Nov. 8

Bring your pet, or a picture of your pet, to church to receive a blessing. Pets which are "church-broken" are welcome. If you wish to bring a pet in a carrier, you will be given a chance to go out and bring your pet inside for a blessing. Guests are welcome.

Our Annual Thanksgiving Potluck Brunch

On Sunday, Nov. 23, join us following worship in the theater. Fair trade handcrafts, chocolate and coffee will be for sale for holiday treats and gifts. This is a wonderful opportunity to invite friends to St. Matthew's and to stay and visit with friends, and make new

ones. A signup sheet is available on the poster board in the narthex for the potluck.

From the Dellamaries

Thank you to all who have helped us to remember and to celebrate the life of our daughter and sister Diana. Your gifts of food to the potluck, your prayers, cards, and gifts to the fund for Diana's daughter Alex, are truly appreciated. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

A Special Thanks to Jeff Drushal

Jeff's experience with sound systems and his willingness to serve continue to enhance our events. Thanks to Jeff for his extra volunteer efforts this month with Diana's me-

morial, and the Erase Hate Candlelight Vigil. Jeff sets up our sound system every Sunday, as well as serving as Council Vice President, and congregational drummer.

What? Advent begins in November?

Its true: On Sunday, Nov. 29, we light the first light of the Advent wreath as we await the Coming of Christ.

AIDS Awareness Sunday

The second Sunday in Advent follows World AIDS Day, so we will observe Nov. 8 with the theme "Living with HIV/AIDS: Living with HOPE and God." Kenny Callaghan will preach and special music will be provided.

Prayers for Jack

Our office manager Jack Fulkerson had a mild heart attack earlier this month and was to undergo heart bypass surgery at St. Vincent's Hospital in Los Angeles on Nov. 3. We keep Jack in our prayers. Cards may be sent to his home address. Jack's sister and niece, who are staying with him, will make sure he receives them.

In the Church Office

Lori Drushal is serving as interim office manager in Jack's absence. The church office is open Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. You may reach Lori at stmatthewsnoho@aol.com.

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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Kenneth Callaghan

Office Manager:
Jack Fulkerson

Deaf Minister:
Donald Rosenkjar

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>



Photo by Steve Devol

The Erase Hate Candlelight Vigil Nov. 1 at St. Matthew's was sponsored by Lutherans Concerned LA. Prominent gay activists joined residents of the Valley in calling for a stop to hate crimes against the GLBT community. You can find out more about the Erase Hate Project at www.matthewshepard.org.



Remembering the Saints of the Church

On All Saints Day, parishioners Kay Gunderson, left, and Art Figueroa read the names of fellow St. Matthew's parishioners, friends and family who have died. We live and serve God inspired and surrounded by the saints.

"O fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no want."

Psalm 34:9



Photos by Steve Devol

Searching for the Word Within the Text

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pretive lenses: first, the idea of the Word of God as Jesus — the Word made flesh — as distinct from the words of the biblical text. Then, second, in the special relationship between "law" and "gospel" as paired ways of communicating the divine message of grace.

The first leads Lutherans to distinguish sharply between the content of the message and the medium in which it comes to us.

For Luther the text of Scripture isn't holy because of its divine origin but because of the message of divine favor it contains.

Even the ancient claim of the Hebrew Bible to speak to us of God would, he believed, not make it valid for Christians if it didn't also witness to Christ. Luther makes this clear again and again.

In fact, Luther sets the whole understanding of

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God's revelation to God's people first in a person and only secondarily in a text. Jesus is God for us. The Bible, in turn, is a story of the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and a proclamation of salvation offered freely to humans redeemed by grace.

Jesus, as incarnate Word, is for Luther always in clear focus as the center, subject and meaning of the Scripture's forest of words: the inner Word of God preserved and communicated in the outer, visible words of Scripture.

This leads Luther to his second distinctive principle: what shows us Jesus in the Scriptures communicates God's favor; what does not, shows us only human weakness and limitation and judg-

ment. The former (wherever we find it) is gospel; the latter is law.

Suddenly, for Luther, law and gospel appear — simultaneously or parallel — everywhere in Scripture, both in the writings of the ancient law and in Jesus' teaching of mercy and peace.

The old laws of the people of Israel become gospel as much as they were obviously law: law in that they demonstrate to an erring humankind the impossibility of achieving even the most basic of God's commands; gospel in that they show God's enduring love for humankind, a love that sees human achievement not in terms of maintaining purity or earning salvation but in humility and service to neighbor.

This law-and-gospel simultaneity of judgment and redemption was for Luther the second basic way the Bible communicates God's Word. And this insight makes it possible for him to read the writings of ancient Judaism according to his first principle: that the Hebrew Scriptures contain the same gospel message that was made flesh in Jesus Christ.

Luther applied his insights with astounding boldness. With two basic principles, he elevated some parts of the Bible to great importance — while relegating others to relative insignificance — with what for us may seem like breathtaking assurance.

This seems harder for us today, and our inclination is to cling to the sure and ancient. But Luther challenges us to believe more firmly and read more deeply — and not be afraid to search for the Word within the text!

One Incredible Night

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ored and affirmed in this way was a joy beyond belief. The fact that some former parishioners flew down from Washington state floored me. So many St. Matthew's members came and even more donated to a scholarship fund so that Steve and I could take a trip perhaps to the Holy Land. The fund is over \$3,000, which is equally shocking to me. Grateful, thankful, and blessed by this amazing tribute, I first want to thank all who were involved and made contributions and then I want to share a few reflections on my years as a pastor.

There are so many job descriptions for ministers that it is hard to even find one that fits. Even when a congregation comes up with what they require, you can never live up to the expectations of what each individual you are called to minister to has in his or her own mind about how a "good" pastor acts or how a "good" pastor leads or responds.

What I have learned is that you need help. For me the first and most important help has come from my husband, a man who married an ordained minister, having no idea what he was getting into and having no church background whatsoever, but who has been Christ to me in more situations than I can describe.

I have also learned what an incredible privilege it is to be a part of people's lives,

from birth to death. To provide pastoral care and to preach and teach the all-embracing, unconditional love of God, is more than a job, it is a way of life -- a "calling" -- and it is extremely rewarding.

Ministry is a calling we all share. It is born out of gratitude. Gratitude for those who touched my life with the power of Christ is the reason I went into professional ministry. Being grateful for God's power to love us, resurrect us, and send us out to serve others is the easiest way to open ourselves to all the abundance of life. Gratitude is the quickest form of healing. As we approach our Thanksgiving holiday in this time of recession and sad

economic realities. I am more grateful than ever for all the blessings which are not material, and for those saints whose generosity and love surround me. Out of gratefulness let us begin our giving of thanks. With joy let us open our wallets, our kitchen cupboards, and offer our time to serve others. When we serve, we demonstrate our living hope in the God who binds us together as a worshiping community.

What a wonderful and meaningful holiday season this will be because of friends who have reminded me of all I have to be grateful for. "Thanks living" is something we can all recapture. It is what Bishop Howie Wennes preached at my ordination.

He used this this text. It still holds great meaning for me. It is from the apostle Paul to his young friend Timothy.

I am grateful to God — whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did — when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

-- 2 Timothy 1:3-4, 6-7

Helping Alex through College



Photo by Steve Devol

Dan Smith offers thanks to the congregation for that's been done to help Alex Mc Bride, his former foster daughter, attend California Lutheran University. There's still two weeks to buy FUNDAZ discount cards (similar to entertainment cards) for \$27 each. These make great Christmas presents. Alex gets \$12 per card, which will be matched by the college. You can buy these Sunday mornings or online at www.stmatthewscard.org. The discounts are for stores, theme parks and restaurants. Savings are substantial.

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