



Disciples

October 2009

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

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We cross boundaries for reconciliation

For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith ... you were baptized into Christ... [thus] there is no longer Jew or Greek [Gentile], there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

— Galatians 3:28

By Ryan Chaddick

Sometimes it is easy to forget why we do the things we do. What is the reason behind this action of mine? For what purpose does doing this serve? In the church, global mission work is perhaps misunderstood. Why, for instance do we go over there when there is struggle here.

Although I have yet to travel to some distant land with good news, I have been a few places. Furthermore, since the theory behind -- or better yet, the reason for -- mission work simply flows out of the genuine Christian experience, anyone is quali-

fied to engage in reflecting on and explaining global mission.

There are invisible lines in this world which visibly and audibly cry out, "Injustice!" A group representing St. Matthew's crossed such a line on Sept. 12.

With charity in our hands (\$1,100 for food, shoes, toiletries, and medicine) we sought to better understand the economic oppression and marginalization our brothers and sisters, in the body of Christ and humanity, suffer in the northern regions of Mexico.

Although Paul teaches us to be a whole and undivided body of Christ, from the moment one crosses the border, the realization that the body of Christ is divided by socioeconomic lines becomes too apparent. In Christ, we are told, there is neither rich nor poor. And yet, in the world of Pax Americana and free trade, there is rich and there is poor, there is the land of

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Deaf Awareness Sunday



Photo by John Cantu



Photo by Steve Devol

Pastor Susan Masters, right, brought the struggles of people to light with stark illustrations during her sermon on Deaf Awareness Sunday. Above, Don Rosenkjar, right, participates in the service.

Get your sparkle on



Kenny Callaghan,
Music And
Outreach
Coordinator

Have you noticed the pumpkin patches being set up all over town? Each year as October arrives I love seeing children play at pumpkin patches, enjoying games, a petting zoo and selecting their favorite pumpkin.

All these things are so simple yet bring such happiness and excitement. Year after year I see the sparkle of joy a simple activity like a pumpkin patch puts in the eyes of children... It's an amazing reality I love to witness. As I grow older it's the sparkle from simple things that matter so much to me. Witnessing the change that comes from a smile, a word of welcome, a nod of understanding, the sharing between people, a warm hug or handshake reminds me of God's endless love. It's all so simple and yet so profound and worth knowing. Look around you at worship or an event at St. Matt's.... You'll notice lots of sparkling eyes: some because they have found a home within our church and some experiencing a St. Matt's connection for the first time. What God has given us in our church home is life-changing and always reminds us we are loved by an amazing God.

This month there are many events and activities to serve as opportunities for outreach and sparkle-starters. Please review these activities and invite someone to join you in participating in them.

Bring someone with you to worship and be aware of people new to our church. Reach out to someone you may not know and introduce yourself. It's the simple things that help people sparkle and feel welcome. Evangelism starts when we reach out and share the love of God with others. We have lots going on and lots to share.

October Food collection is canned soups. Donations may be placed on the table in front of the sanctuary.

Christmas Toy Drive continues until Sunday, Oct. 18. Toy donations may be placed on the donation table in the sanctuary. If you prefer, you can donate money by marking envelopes with "Christmas Toys" and someone will do the shopping for you. All toys benefit needy children through Lutheran Social Services.

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 12 to 1:30 p.m.

"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 "Life To-

gether" by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

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

Positive Images meets Tuesdays from 7 to 9 p.m. This is a small group empowering gay and bisexual men living with HIV. For more information and to RSVP, call (323) 860-7321, e-mail: positiveimages@lagaycenter.org

Book Club will meet Tuesday, Oct. 20 at 8:30 p.m. at Pastor Sue's home. Contact Pastor Sue with any questions.

Great Events Lunch Bunch, Wednesday Oct. 21, 10:30 a.m. Join us for a day in fabulous Hollywood as we "step beyond the red carpet" of the Kodak Theatre. Experience all of the renowned elegance and celebrity glamour that the Home of the Academy Awards® has to offer! Kodak Theatre tour tickets: Adults: \$15, Senior (65 & over) \$10. Group of 15 or more, \$12 per ticket. After our tour we'll have lunch at California Pizza Kitchen. After lunch have your picture taken by your favorite "star" on the famous Hollywood Walk of Stars. Sign up in the narthex before Sunday, Oct.

18 to be part of the group rate for the Kodak Theatre tour. For this event meet at the North Hollywood Metro station on Lankershim Boulevard at 10:30 a.m. See Kenny with any questions.

Growth Group meets Thursdays from 7:30 to 9 p.m. in the church library.

This small group will meet every other Thursday (Oct. 1, 15, 29) 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 will 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 if Faith" by Marcus J. Borg. See Kenny Callaghan with questions.

For a list of 12-step groups meeting at St. Matt's, please review our website calendar at www.stmatthewsnoho.org.

New Member Brunch is Oct. 4 immediately following worship for those interested in joining St. Matthew's. Contact Pastor Sue at (818) 761-3540 or suewdevol@gmail.com with questions.

St. Matt's Alive is Oct. 18

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Updates, Upcoming & Kudos

A thankful look back and a helpful look forward

Meet Alexandra Mc



Bride Alex's story

I was adopted at birth by a homosexual father and when he died of AIDS when I was two years old his partner adopted me. When I was thirteen he became unable to care for me due to alcoholism and other related problems. From there I became a ward of the court and put into the foster care system. Luckily I ended up living with my second adoptive father's ex-partner Dan Smith whom I've known since I was four years old. He is a great blessing to me and has been my role model of how to live and have faith in Jesus Christ. He has done so much for me but is unable to help me financially as I continue my college education.

This fall semester I have been privileged to Study Abroad in Oxford, UK. This opportunity which used my college loans was made possible by your help with airfare and miscellaneous expenses. Thank you so much for raising money for me. I

truly appreciate your prayers and support.

2009 Alex Mc Bride Fundraiser

Would you like to save between \$300.00- \$700.00 a year? Do you go to movies? Eat out? Like amusement parks? Do you believe in higher education? Does having thousands of local & national merchants offering you savings on things you buy everyday sound good? Your "yes" answer could mean so much to the Alex Mc Bride Scholarship fund. We will be offering a nationally accepted discount savings card which will do all this, plus help local businesses & raise money for Alex. Savings at Target, Macy's, movie theatres, amusement parks, local restaurants like Miceli's, Tang's, Baja Fresh, Magnolia Grill, auto, personal & pet supplies and many more!

Please join us for our "kickoff" on Sunday October 18th in the Fireside Room there will be a light lunch served and Bob East of Fundaz will be there to answer questions. These cards can be used nationally, not only in North Hollywood, there is an online list for each area code. Want to buy today? Need more information now? Call – 818-633-6179 Matching Funds Drive On Sale Dates

October 18th – November 22nd. These are the perfect holiday gift or stocking stuffer! If we raise \$2,500, California Lutheran University will match that, taking \$5,000 off Alex's college debt.

October Birthday Cake Donation

Thank you to Leon Alexander and Timothy Stocks for providing the October Birthday cake. If you are able to make or supply a cake for our monthly Birthday celebration please email Jack in the church office.

St. Luke's Woodland Hills

On Sunday Sept 20th St. Luke's voted to become RIC "Reconciled In Christ." This means they will be openly welcoming to GLBT people. Our thanks to Pastor Sue and the St. Matt's Church Council who allowed her to preach at St. Luke's. To Dr. R. Guy Erwin who preached an extra Sunday here. Also, thanks to Dave Allen, Brenda Bos, and Pastor Glenn and Audrey Anderson who went to St. Luke's to share their stores.

Staff Hours

Pastor Sue and Kenny Callagh are both off on Mon-

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:

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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>

Injustice cries from across the border

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landscaping and there is the land of dust, there are the full and there are the hungry, there are the clothed and there are the unclothed, and there is the world of apartments, townhouses, large homes and five-star hotels, and there is the world of 10-by-10 plywood housing.

The world is not a place of shalom. Injustice cries from the streets of places such as Tijuana, and as the fractured body of Christ, we must hear her plea.

Anytime a theologian, philosopher, preacher, or 25-year old teacher, indicates a "must," "should," or "need to" in regards to faith in Jesus, it is advisable to ask, "Why?" If we are not careful we become a faith of earning faith in Jesus, rather than a faith in response to Jesus.

To illustrate why our faith must move in response to Jesus and the poor, the sick, and the marginalized, it might serve us well (as Christian pastor and theologian Rob Bell frequently teaches) to begin in the beginning -- the beginning of the Christian story and every Christian's story.

In the beginning God creates a generative world -- an ever-creating and -sustaining world. In fact, recent research indicates our world produces enough food to sustain and feed the nearly 1 billion living in starvation. God poetically creates this world with word and breath and calls it good. God treasures this Earth because this world is

good. Every creation is good, according to God.

You and me, we are good.

Furthermore, in the very image of God, humans are created. We begin in the image of God; we begin with the divine dwelling in us. The first humans are said to begin with the essence of God.

Not only does God dwell in us, God dwells in this world -- faithfully communing with these early humans. If heaven is where God

As the resurrected and living body of Christ, we who join in the chorus of 'Yes' cannot fully live when others created and reconciled in God are suffering. God's 'yes' is a yes for the whole Earth, all of creation.

dwells, then heaven is not a faraway place from Earth -- Earth and heaven are simultaneously one. Earth is where heaven is.

"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over

every living thing that moves upon earth," God instructs, according the ancients.

God makes us partners in the stewarding and creating of the Earth. God shares power. Here the ancient Hebrew implies that God's creation was not perfect and needed careful tending.

In the middle, humanity decides against being faithful stewards, creating conditions for the starving.

One billion people in this world -- bearing the image and essence of God -- are starving because we do not steward and distribute God's ongoing creation. Additionally, and perhaps too painfully obvious to many of us, millions of marginalized -- including the deaf community and the queer family -- are left unheard, unseen and unwanted.

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer points out in many of his works, when we do not hear the least of these, we cannot hear God.

Too many Christians wish to begin the story here: that the world is off its proper course thanks to our greed, our desire to take what is forbidden, and our desire to be more than caretakers of God's creation.

The created Earth is off. Creation is evil.

Therefore, I must try to escape -- mission work is then telling others how to escape too.

To be raptured.

Heaven is somewhere else.

God is somewhere else.

But this is not how the story begins.

And, this is not how the story ends.

In the middle, something else happens. A second one comes. Not only does a second one come, this second one carries with him the image of God in such a powerful way, people say he is the Son of God -- that is, the true essence of God.

While the first ones chose not to be faithful stewards to God's creation, this second one teaches, "Be compassionate, therefore as your Lord God is compassionate."

And, what does compassion mean?

Frederick Buechner writes, "Compassion is the sometimes fatal capacity for feeling what it's like to live inside somebody else's skin. It is the knowledge that there can never really be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you too."

Certainly Jesus' compassion was fatal. His grace and love for the marginalized (the deaf, the blind, the lepers, the other-gendered, the sick and the poor) led him into a direct confrontation with the empire of his day.

Jesus' death represents the world's and the empire's "No!" to peace, stewardship, love and compassion.

The cross also represents God's resounding "Yes!" to peace, hope and love. The body of Christ is alive -- Christ is resurrected.

As the resurrected and living body of Christ, we who

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Let's Get Our Sparkle On

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after worship. Join us for lunch in the Fireside Room. This is a wonderful opportunity to stay and visit with friends and to make new ones. After lunch join us for: **"A Big Gay North Hollywood Wedding"** at Crowne City Theater. Tickets for St Matt's are \$10. Joshua Weienberg and Brent Logan attempt to have a civil and respectable wedding, but their loving friends and family get in the way. Be a part of this wedding and join them for the reception. Language may not be appropriate for children.

Reformation Sunday is Oct. 25 We'll have an Oktoberfest lunch with beer and brats. Join us on this festival day as remembrance of the ministry of Martin Luther and his posting of the Ninety-Five Theses, a summary of the abuses in the church of his time. At the heart of the reform movement was the gospel, the good news that it is

by grace through faith that we are justified and set free.

Movie Talk is Friday Oct. 23 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room. This is a movie discussion group led by Jeff Drushal. This month's movie is "A Serious Man," the new Coen brothers movie. This is an ongoing movie discussion group on the fourth Friday of every month. Invite friends. It's BYOB, with some light snacks offered.

Feed the Homeless will be Saturday Oct. 31 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



Photo by John Cantu

Khai Nguyen, left, signs a hymn being sung by the St. Matthew's choir during Deaf Awareness Sunday.

through Thrivent Financial for Lutheran Care Abounds in Communities program to help us broaden our outreach to those needing assistance.

Looking Ahead...
November 1, 6:00pm
Erase Hate candlelight vigil

and reception, Nov. 1 at 6 p.m. We'll be remembering GLBT Victims of anti-gay hate crimes. This event is sponsored by Lutherans Concerned Los Angeles. Contact Kenny Callaghan with questions.

We — the Body of Christ — Must Hear Plea of the Disenfranchised

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join in the chorus of "Yes" cannot fully live when others created and reconciled in God are suffering. God's "yes" is a yes for the whole Earth, all of creation.

Thus, in the end, through the healing, resurrecting and reconciling spirit of Christ Jesus, heaven smashes back into Earth.

The reconciliation began with Jesus and his opening

sermon, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor."

We do not condemn, we do not send people to hell, we do not teach escapism, we bring good news -- God is here, God is in you and God loves you.

Therefore let us proclaim two things: 1) any gospel, or good news, which is not good news to the poor and the

whole of God's creation, is not the Gospel -- regardless of how many Bible passages are quoted; and, 2) the reconciliation continues because of God's affirmation and resurrection of Jesus, and now we -- the anointed ones through Christ - are to bring good news to the poor and the ends of the Earth.

When they suffer, we suffer. When they eat and par-

take of the feast, we eat and partake.

It is for this reason, and this reason only, that we at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in North Hollywood continue to cross boundaries and lines -- be they global, sexual, socioeconomic, political, physical and theological - for the healing and reconciling of the body of Christ and the entire world in Christ Jesus.

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