



Disciples

October 2008

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

On the Web: www.stmatthewsnoho.org

Photo gallery: picasaweb.google.com/stmatthewsnoho

Email: stmatthewsnoho@aol.com

Taking Our Temperature



A message
from
Pastor Sue

Our congregational president Dave Allen and I just returned from a seminar in Richmond, Va., on "Creating Healthy Congregations." We were inspired and informed by the seminar and brought back many new resources to help our congregation move forward in its effort to grow. Another wonderful benefit of attending the seminar was that we were able to connect with clergy from other denominations and found the exchange of ideas stimulating and insightful. The seminar was based on work by Dr. Peter L. Steinke, who has pioneered work on congregations as emotional systems.

Dave and I were happy to discover that we have done a lot of things in a "healthy" way at St. Matthew's, which put us in a "forward" position for the future of the congregation. For this we have many of our church leaders to

thank. I particularly want to thank last year's executive committee: Clayton Larson, Judy Hoewisch, Erin Childs and Dave Allen. This group set a strong course for our congregation to succeed and thrive as we reach out in God's name to those who are looking for meaning and purpose in their lives, and a community in which to live out their faith.

That said, we have much work ahead this year. It became very clear to me that we need to focus first on training and developing our congregational leaders and staff to

work together in ways that will promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the joy of living in God's grace. Our focus needs to be not only on new program and bringing in

new members, but also on enabling people to become disciples, excited about living out their faith in their lives outside of the congregation.

(Continued on page 3)

Breaking Bread



Photo by Steve Devol

Brad Kruihof, David Matlock and Dan Smith were among those who enjoyed a post-worship luncheon followed by a meeting in which the redesigned St. Matthew's website was unveiled to the congregation on Sept. 14.

Updates, Upcoming & Kudos

A thankful look back and a helpful look forward

Community & Outreach Events

What is Outreach?

Outreach is simply the act of reaching out to, or connecting with, another person.

Within a faith community, outreach is the way in which we share our belief in Jesus Christ and God's love with others. Every time we greet someone with a smile, welcome or invite a person to worship, sit with a visitor during a worship service, volunteer our time, or give of ourselves in some way we are reaching out with the love of God. There are many ways people can participate within our outreach program at St. Matt's. Consider getting involved in some or all of the following:

Invite a friend, family member or co-worker to church or one of the following events. Sign up to volunteer at one or all of these events on the poster board in the church narthex.

Habitat for Humanity Build in Los Angeles

Saturday, Oct., 11, 8 a.m. -4



From
Kenny Callaghan

p.m., see website for details.

L.A. Valley Pride

Big Fat Gay Wedding booth; Sunday, Oct. 12, 11 a.m.-6 p.m. – join us in representing St. Matt's at Pride; free Pride entrance for all volunteers.

Reformation Sunday

Oct. 26. Special guest preacher Bishop Emeritus Paul W. Egertson, former St. Matthew's pastor. Festival worship followed by German-themed luncheon including bratwurst, beer, and sauerkraut.

No on 8 Press conference

This will follow our German lunch on Reformation Sunday. Folks in support of No on 8 are urged to stay and attend.

All Saints' Halloween Costume Party

Saturday, Nov. 1, 7:30 p.m. Wear your costume a second night! Play bingo, win fabulous prizes, enjoy dinner with friends; this is a fund-raiser for the Alexandra McBride Scholarship Fund, with matching funds through California Lutheran University

Thanksgiving brunch

Sunday, Nov. 23; invite friends to our cornucopia of food, music and fun

AIDS Awareness Sunday

Sunday, Nov. 30; join us in worship and prayer for people living with or those affected by HIV/AIDS; a time of remembering, healing and celebrating God's love; special adult forum presentation: "HIV/AIDS 101 How Can I help?"

Annual Lessons and Carols Service

Sunday, Dec. 1; elegant champagne reception after worship

Christmas Eve candlelight worship reception

Dec. 24, 9:30 p.m., with festive music and appetizers; candlelight worship at 11 p.m.

Cookies, Creches, Carols

Sunday, Dec. 28; bring your favorite Christmas cookies, nativity sets and sing Christmas carols after worship in the Fireside Room.

Kudos

... to Brenda Bos for the Marriage Equality banner hanging on the front of the church. Brenda proposed the idea to the Church Council and did the work to get the banner made. Thanks to Scott Kensey and Brenda for putting it up. We have had good responses.

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>

Disciples photos, in color, now online:

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Kudos

Healthy Congregations

October Food Collection

Soup: (flip-tops preferred); bring your donations to church and place on our food offering table. Thanks to all who donated baby food and diapers last month.

October birthdays

1 David Matlock
15 Nick Gordon
17 Peter Thorslev

Feminine Sacred Circle

Meet in the church library from 3:30 to 5 p.m. on the following days; contact Melanie for more details: simpljoiz@aol.com
Oct. 12 and 26
Nov. 9 and 30
Dec. 14 and 28

Book Club

Book Club meets on Oct. 20 to discuss "When Peace Like A River." Join us for dessert and discussion in the church library.

St. Matt's Choir

Besides learning music for Sunday worship, our choir is preparing music for Reformation Sunday, AIDS Awareness Sunday and the Christmas Season. Rehearsals are Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 9 p.m. in the sanctuary. Anyone who enjoys singing is welcome to participate. No previous experience necessary.

(Continued from page 1)

The "Healthy Congregations" model begins by defining health for congregations as balance. Health is enhanced when the congregational community functions well; "poorly functioning congregations don't attract people."

Steinke offers the following characteristics of healthy congregations:

- Healthy congregations focus on mission. This does not mean merely that the congregation has a mission statement, but that it uses that mission statement to organize its activities. A good mission statement, Steinke noted, is no longer than a sentence, with no more than one comma, "can be understood by a 12-year-old and can be repeated at gunpoint." Mission helps mobilize the energy of the community; if the congregation isn't focused on mission, it will focus on its past, its budget, problems or something else.
- Healthy congregations focus on challenge. Most congregations go under-challenged but are like people who feel better when they exercise. Congregations sometimes need to create small challenges and meet them with successes and good
- outcomes.
- Healthy congregations focus on strengths. Congregations need to stop trying to recover old strengths they no longer have, but to focus on those they do have. This means building up options; feeling trapped without options builds anxiety.
- Healthy congregations manage conflict. It is almost impossible to change without crisis. In one study cited, those congregations that were able to change had strong pastoral leadership, laity with a high level of education and/or a willingness to learn, and were willing to bear conflict. Where change did not occur, there was always an aversion to conflict. Healthy leaders, he added, have a greater toleration of pain in themselves and others.
- Healthy congregations see clarity. These congregations have clear boundaries, have defined what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior, and are willing to confront when needed.

Dr. Steinke points out that lay/clergy authority issues can be tense if pastors and congregations don't spend a lot of time defining how leadership and authority will

play out. In a democracy, what is important is to gain and implement clarity, and not violate principles.

Steinke points out that in family-sized congregations (like ours), there are often volunteers who have helped the congregation to stay together by over-functioning, and now that over-functioning can get in the way of change. He points out that we cannot take care of people's feelings if they continue to feel dismissed. However, good communication about our common goal and mission helps to get a congregation on board for growth. Steinke notes that resistance and rejection are part of the process, and it's not possible to avoid misery. Leaders will attract bullets. A congregation has to ask whether the anxiety of those whose tendency is to nay-say (usually about 16%) is going to determine the congregation's future. And if one or a few have a vision, and can find others with the same vision, they should begin to take action. Change missionaries need to mobilize change agents to foster the change; this has the advantage of delegating the anxiety and "sharing the bullets."

Prayer is essential for our leaders and for our members. I invite you to participate actively in prayer and service. Serving Christ with you, Pastor Sue

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We Are at War

deaf mission
developer notes



elow is a text I wrote for Richard Ray, president of the California Assn. of the deaf, and it was delivered Sept. 26 on the steps of the Capitol in Sacramento during the ASL Celebration.

This event was in response to the Alexander Graham Bell Assn.'s recent attempt to legislatively ban American Sign Language in schools.

For those who not familiar with Alexander Graham Bell's role in the sphere of deafness, his wife was deaf and he attempted to invent a hearing aid. A byproduct of that effort was the telephone.

He advocated the oral method and fiercely opposed the use of sign language. He also advocated the separation of deaf people to reduce the incidence of deaf children.

...

Oh, what a beautiful day here! It's a happy day that we are able to celebrate, truly celebrate our culture, our own ASL celebration. It is a wonderful feeling -- that we are able to talk so freely -- with our language. It's a wonderful feeling when we feel free. Yes! We can express our joys through poetry. We can describe Albert Einstein's theories so clearly and precisely through our own language.

We can be thrilled, and describe the wonderful smell of a flower -- through our

own language. Our language that is American Sign

Language, or ASL. It is a wonderful language. It is a useful language. It is an important language. Confucius, a Chinese philosopher some 3,000 years ago said, communication is everything."

So ASL is everything for our people, that we can succeed in life, that we can argue a case in a court-

room, that we can tell the world why we ought to vote for McCain, or for Obama, or for Richard Ray.

We can do anything, express anything. We have that freedom. We demand it.

As president of California Assn. of the deaf, I must report to all of you that we are at war. We are at war with those who deny newly born children be exposed to American Sign Language. We are at war against communication abuse. We are at war against teachers of the deaf with poor signing skills. We are at war against school districts who are more concerned about keeping deaf, yes, our deaf children, within the district instead of transferring them outside of the

district -- simply because the district does not want to lose money -- that money is of greater importance than the quality of communication and education for the deaf child. It's cruel! It's wrong.

One early warm morning, a plane, filled with people, flew over New York City. That plane was aimed, and crashed into, one of two

World Trade Center towers. Moments, another plane, also filled with people, crashed into the second WTC tower. Moments later, both towers collapsed, crashing down. That terrible, horrible incident happened on Sept. 11, 2001. Every

single person who died on that fateful morning had a name. Every person had a life story. Every one. Tall, majestic buildings crashed, building parts, body parts, all pulverized. From that day and on, the world was never the same again.

In 1880, an international conference of deaf educators, the Second International Congress on Education of the deaf, took place in Milan, Italy. On the last day of the

conference, on Sept. 11, in Milan, yes on Sept. 11, a tower of freedom of sign language use collapsed. No other event in the history of deaf education had a greater impact on the lives and education of deaf people.

At this conference, a declaration was made that oral, oral, oral education was better than manual (sign) education. A resolution was passed banning sign language. The only countries opposed to the ban were the United States (represented by Edward Miner Gallaudet, the Rev. Thomas Gallaudet, Issac Peet, James Denison and Charles Stoddard) and Britain.

Prior to the Milan Congress, most superintendents of schools for the deaf were deaf. Most teachers at these schools were deaf. Gallaudet

University has archives of deaf people's writings, and their mastery of English language far surpassed of that most of us. After 1880, most deaf superintendents and their deaf teachers were let go of their employment, and replaced them with hearing people, often poorly versed in deaf culture and language. Oral method was emphasized, so that the deaf can function more like hearing people, that they can get along with hearing people better. And the tower of well-educated deaf collapsed.

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Photo by Steve Devol

Choir Boys and Girls

The St. Matthew's Choir is ready for Reformation Sunday and beyond. Top row, from left: Dave Olsen, Dan Smith, Karl Arasmith, Steve Stoppel, David James, Melanie Ronning, Richard Gasparotti, Charles Peck; front row: Bonnie den Bleyker, Heath Butler, Ashley Drushal, Karen Mears, Choir Director Kenny Callaghan.

An Assault on American Sign Language

(Continued from page 4)

The second tower of freedom of sign language use collapsed in 1975 as Congress passed Public Law 94-142 (Education of All Handicapped Children Act), now codified as IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). In order to receive federal funds, states must develop and implement policies that assure a free appropriate public education to all children with disabilities.

This led to mainstreaming of deaf students in public schools. That led to the closure of a number of residential schools for the deaf. Collapsed because too many, if not most, teachers were simply not at all qualified to accommodate the deaf. Deaf students living in a hearing environment proved to be stifling experience, stunting both intellectual and emotional growth. Residential schools were often staffed with deaf teachers, and ASL

was used, both in the classroom and elsewhere.

Students enjoyed sports, government, Scouting, drama -- all in ASL that provided them with healthy self-esteem. Mainstreamed settings denied such freedom. Freedom to participate.

I can understand that when most parents discover their child is deaf, their first reaction would be that of grief. Out of grief, they sought a remedy, and they go to their doctors, often inadequately informed about deaf culture. So an agenda, very often, is set for the child: that he/she is to function as closely as hearing people.

That is a gross, brutal, scenario for many of us. It amounts to verbal abuse, or communication abuse. For many of us, we had to endure the environment with haze or fog. We missed out many things when people tried to communicate with us, especially teachers. Clarity, for many of us, is a for-

eign word. We have a right to clarity.

Ladies and gentlemen in the world of education, let us open windows and doors, and blow the fog out of the room. With American Sign Language, we have clarity. With clarity, through ASL, we absorb information like sponges.

Armed with information, we achieve our goals. Clarity! It is really amazing! American Sign Language is third most used language in the country, after English and Spanish, yet ASL is not recognized as an official language. Instead, it is recognized as a foreign language. Does that make us foreigners? We were born here! Legislate, my friends, legislate ASL as an official language of the deaf. To quote Martin Luther King, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!" We have work to do! We have work to do!

—Don Rosenkjar

Congregational Calendar

Recurring Events

Adult Forum: every Sunday in the Fireside Room, 9:30 a.m.
Book Club: third Monday of the month, 7:30 p.m., Pastor Sue Devols house.
Executive Committee, Church Council: 2nd Tuesday of each month, 7:30 p.m.
Morning worship for deaf and others: Second and Fourth Sundays at 10:30 a.m. in Fraser Chapel, other Sundays in the sanctuary. Class every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. in the Sharing Hands office.

Congregational Calendar

October

Oct. 11: Habitat for Humanity
 Oct 12: L.A. Valley Pride
 Oct. 26: Reformation Sunday

November

Nov. 1: All Saints' Fundraiser
 Nov. 23: Thanksgiving Brunch
 Nov: 30: AIDS Awareness Sun.

December

Dec. 21: Lessons & Carols
 Dec. 24: Christmas Eve reception 9:30pm, Worship 11 p.m.
 Dec. 28: Cookies, Creches & Carols

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