

THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

Fall 2026

More Than the German Church

When I meet people I haven't seen for a while and we catch up, I sometimes tell them that I now serve at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church. And sooner or later I often hear: "Oh, you're at the German church!"

And I smile and say, "Yes!"

But after a year at St. Matthew's, I find myself wanting to say more.

Yes, we are a German church. Our history, our language, our music, and our traditions are an important part of who we are. But they are only one part of our story. Over this past year, I have discovered so many other gifts that make St. Matthew's the congregation it is.

One of those gifts is right in front of me every Sunday. Above our altar is a beautiful stained-glass window, given in 1908 by Helene Strybing in memory of her husband, Christian. Helene was a German immigrant who made her home in San Francisco and is perhaps best known today for the generous bequest that helped establish the arboretum in Golden Gate Park.

Her gift to St. Matthew's is one of many gifts that have shaped this congregation. As I have learned more about our history, I have been struck by something

deeper than our German heritage: the people who built and sustained this church were people who knew that they had been blessed—and wanted to become a blessing to others.

They gave their time. They gave their resources. They gave beautiful things that would outlast them. And they gave them not simply for themselves, but to the glory of God and for the life of this community.

Every Sunday, when I look at that stained-glass window, I am reminded that we are the recipients of gifts we did not create ourselves. We have received a beautiful church, a rich history, a living faith, and the generosity of generations who came before us.

And perhaps that is one of the most important things I have discovered during my first year at St. Matthew's: **we are not simply the heirs of a German heritage. We are recipients of a blessing—and blessing is never meant to end with us.** It is meant to be shared. Given away. Passed on.

Whether we have German roots or none at all, whether we have been part of St. Matthew's for generations or are just finding our way through the doors, we have all received blessings. We have received them from God, from those who came before us, and from one another.

Now we have the opportunity to become a blessing ourselves.

That is what I hope for St. Matthew's as we enter another season together: that we will continue to honor the gifts we have received, while asking how those gifts can become gifts for others. That we will be a place where people encounter beauty, welcome, community, and the grace of God. And that, like those who came before us, we will leave something behind that helps those who come after us discover that they, too, are blessed.

So yes, when someone asks me, "Oh, you're at the German church?" I will continue to say, "Yes!"

But I might add: **"And it is so much more than that."**

Grace and peace,

Pastor Beate



Worship at St. Matthew's: From Summer to Fall

This summer, worship at St. Matthew's has been a season of trying new things—new songs, new worship resources, and a sermon journey through Paul's Letter to the Romans, exploring what it means to be **Called by Grace**.

Thank you to everyone who has participated with such openness and patience! Learning new songs and worship practices takes time, and your willingness to try, listen, and respond has been a gift. The Council and Worship Committee will now reflect on what we have learned, and we are eager to hear from you. What has helped you connect more deeply with worship? What has been meaningful, and what would you change? Your feedback is an important part of shaping our worship together.

As summer gives way to fall, our worship will return to the Gospel of Matthew. Several images will accompany us: the vineyard, the table, and the lamp.

What do these three have in common? They all require tending. A vineyard must be cultivated. A table must be prepared and shared. A lamp must be kept burning. These images offer us a rich way of thinking about stewardship. Stewardship is about much more than money. It is about tending what God has placed in our hands: our relationships, our congregation, our gifts, our community, and the world around us.

As we move through the fall, we will explore gratitude, stewardship, hospitality, love, and hope, celebrate Reformation Sunday, and conclude the church year with Christ the King Sunday.

From summer into fall, our worship invites us to receive God's grace, tend the gifts we have been given, and share them with others.



Saying Goodbye To Organist Andrew Birling

For seven years, Andrew has been an important part of our worship and our life together. He has accompanied us through times of joy and sorrow, through the challenges of the pandemic and the changes that followed, and through a significant chapter in the life of our congregation.

Now Andrew has accepted a new position as Director of Music at St. Francis Lutheran Church, and it was time to say goodbye. On Sunday, September 13, Andrew played for us one more time. After worship, we gathered for a reception to celebrate Andrew and to offer our personal thanks and good wishes.

We are grateful for all that Andrew has shared with us over these past seven years, and we wish him all the best in this next chapter of his life and ministry.

Transitions In The Music Ministry

As we say goodbye to Andrew, we are also beginning the search for a new organist. The Council has formed a small search committee—Dorothy Praeger, Bill Bremer, and Pastor Beate Chun—and a job description has been prepared and published. We are now ready to receive applications.

In the meantime, the team has lined up a number of wonderful substitute organists who will help lead our music and support our worship while we search for and welcome our next organist.

I think “while we search for and welcome our next organist” gives the second piece a more hopeful ending than “until we have engaged a new organist,” especially since these will appear right after the farewell.



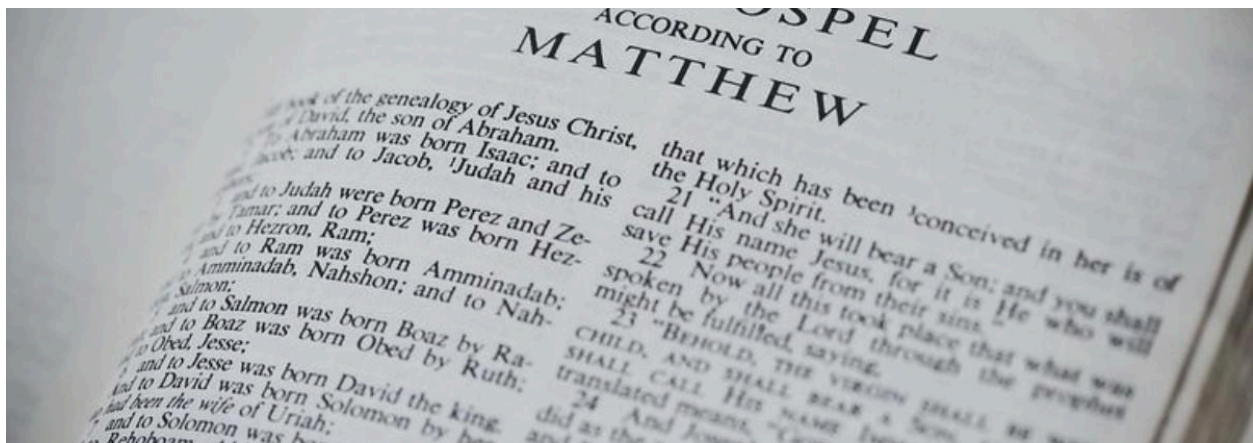
Dinner Church - What an experience!

On Wednesday, September 23, 2026, we tried something new: Dinner Church. We transformed the St. Matthew's Fellowship Hall into a warm and welcoming space—tables set, a simple meal prepared, and room made for anyone who walked through the door. And the result was amazing: “Ein Kirchenschlemmerfest,” as one participant called it.

Jesus often met people at tables—friends, strangers, seekers, and skeptics alike. The early church discovered that breaking bread could open hearts and create community. Dinner Church follows in that ancient pattern. It is not a potluck or simply a fellowship hour; it is a sacred space where hospitality, Scripture, prayer, and everyday stories come together around the table.

Dinner Church is not only for our congregation. It is a way to gather neighbors and newcomers, and anyone who is hungry—hungry for food, hungry for community, hungry for a word of grace. The table is wide enough for all.

A special thank-you to our generous donors and to all the hard-working volunteers who made this event possible. If you are interested in helping plan the next Dinner Church—probably sometime in December—please contact Pastor Beate Chun.



Gift of the Week - Bible Study Every Sunday

What if we approached the Bible each week by asking not only, *“What does this text mean?”* but also, *“What gift is God giving us through this text?”*

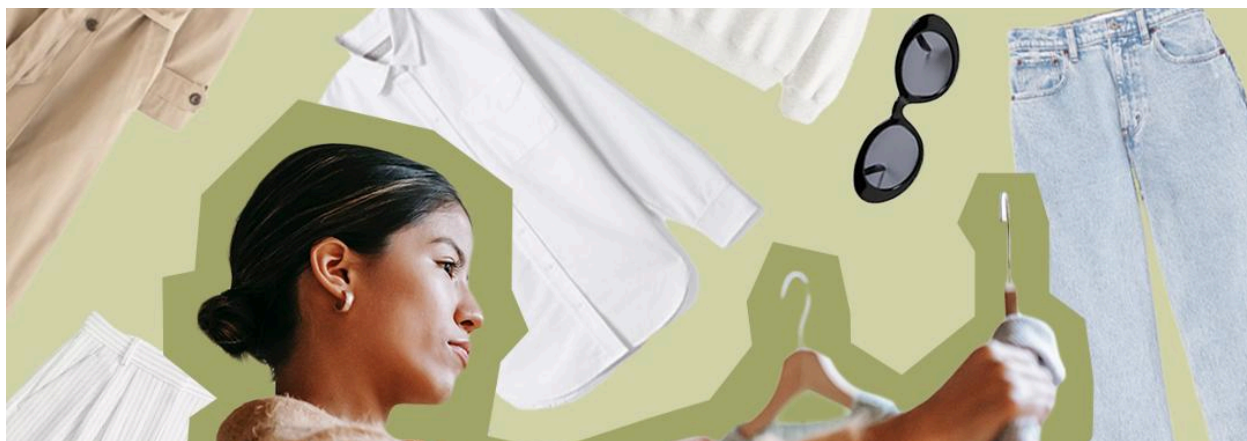
Our Gift of the Week Bible study is now underway. Each Sunday at 10:30 AM, we gather to read and reflect together on the Gospel reading for the coming week. Along the way, we learn a little more about the Gospel of Matthew, with background and context woven into our conversation whenever it is helpful.

The name *Matthew* means “gift of God,” so we let that meaning guide our weekly conversations. The gift we discover in a text might be a promise or encouragement. It might be a challenge, a new perspective, or even a question we are not yet ready to answer.

There is no need to have attended previous sessions or to come every week. Drop in whenever you can and participate as your schedule allows. Each week’s Gospel reading stands on its own, and there is always room at the table for another voice.

We’ll read the text together, notice what catches our attention, share our questions and observations, and see what gift we discover.

Sundays at 10:30 AM in the Fellowship Hall. All are welcome!



Clothing Swap Sunday, Nov 8, 2026 | 1:30–3:30

Have clothes in your closet that you no longer wear—but that someone else might love? Come to our Clothing Swap! A clothing swap is a simple way to give good clothes a new home while finding something new (to you) for your own closet. Bring clean, gently used clothing that you no longer need or wear. Then browse what others have brought and take home something that catches your eye. There is no buying or selling—just sharing, swapping, and giving perfectly good clothes another life.



Sunday, October 28 — 11:00 AM:

Reformation Sunday

Sunday, November 1 — 11:00 AM:

All Saints Sunday

Sunday, November 8 — 11:00 AM:

Harvest Celebration Sunday

Sunday, November 8 — 1:30–3:30 PM:

Clothing Swap

The Summer in Color



Friends at Church - July 2026



Saying Goodbye to Andrew Birling



Dinner Church September 2026



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