

# THE TAU CROSS

## Keeping Faith During Our Regathering Challenges

Since the summer, our parish leadership has been searching for ways for our community to safely regather for in-person worship. Most of us are feeling the effects of social isolation and are desperately looking forward to some sort of regathering plan. In the midst of complicated restrictions from both our Diocese and the San Mateo County, we have been seeking to find a way to gather that will ensure the safety of our entire community. As of this writing, our country has experienced over 500,000 new coronavirus cases in the past week, and there has been a resurgence of cases across the globe. Experts tell us that the resurgence is likely due in part to the fatigue that we all feel and the very human response of being less vigilant in following the practices that ensure our safety. Given the challenges posed by live worship, it is unlikely that we will gather in person before the end of the year.



As most of us know by now, church buildings pose one of the most difficult environments for ensuring safety from the spread

of the coronavirus. Our normal worship practice takes place within a confined interior space, without the benefit of a modern ventilation system, for a duration of about an hour, and where singing and spoken responses form a major part of our ritual. These are the factors that have led our county to strongly suggest that no one over the age of 50 attend any type of worship service even if many precautions are in place.

In October, our Day School cautiously began to allow students to return to campus. The classrooms look dramatically different. Desks are six feet apart. Plexiglass screens are mounted on every desk. An air filtration unit has been placed in each classroom. Students and their teachers are each isolated into cohorts and wear masks. Before returning to campus, every student and teacher was tested for the coronavirus, and additional testing is performed regularly. Even with all of these precautions, two individuals at the school recently tested positive for COVID-19. This has

set back the schedule for a full reopening. The school's experience in dealing with the coronavirus will undoubtedly help to inform church decisions as we move forward.

Our caution with worship service does not mean that we will not look for other opportunities to gather. A first step forward was to provide for the Blessing of Animals on our front lawn on the Feast of Saint Francis. On All Saints Sunday, we will have a children's procession of saints in costumes outdoors. We will also hold the service for the Commemoration of All Faithful Departed outdoors on the evening of November 2nd (also known as All Souls Day). Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are perhaps the most

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difficult to envision without in-person services. At this moment we are working to find a way to film our youth in various roles for the Christmas Pageant and then edit the clips into a single production to be premiered on Christmas Eve. We also plan to set up a large Christmas tree on our front lawn and will invite our community to gather outside for a tree lighting ceremony on Christmas Eve. The lighting will be accompanied by our soloists singing Christmas carols, — and, if we can ensure enough social distance, people could join in. We then plan to livestream our traditional late Christmas service on Facebook.

At the start of the year, none of us could have envisioned the disruption that the coronavirus would have on our lives. The safety of our community of faith remains paramount in our ongoing deliberations. We will proceed with caution while we venture to chart a course for regathering safely. I give thanks for the enormous work and creativity of our church staff and for the resilience of our congregation. I look forward to eventually gathering again for live worship.

Blessings,

### Movement = Balance

“Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.” The quote comes from Albert Einstein’s letter to his son, Edward, in 1930. The exact quote is: *“Beim Menschen ist es wie beim Velo. Nur wenn er faehrt, kann er bequem die Balance halten.”* A more literal translation is: **“It is the same with people as it is with riding a bike. Only when moving can one comfortably maintain one’s balance.”**

Do you remember learning to ride a bike? It was not easy coming off the safety and stability of those training wheels.

But if we wanted to join the fun, we had to find our balance. Frustration and embarrassment came easily, especially when the neighborhood kids were popping wheelies with ease. When I was learning, my dad kept saying, “you’ll find your balance when you pedal faster.” But I was afraid I would crash, so I was not committed to keeping my feet on the pedals. I had to adjust what wasn’t working.

**Movement = Balance.** I had to trust the truth in the things seen, heard, and shared with me. Moving forward brought equilibrium the moment I let go

of the fear that was keeping my feet off the pedals.

Holding our balance in the chaotic and complex convergence of the pandemic, distance learning, isolation, wildfires, political polarization, and the reckoning for justice and equity can leave us too fatigued to stay upright.

The weighted layer of taking in the narratives fed to us from social media, news outlets, and popular culture that ask us to choose a side can add to the sense of overwhelm.

Balance reminds us to keep moving if we don’t want to flip over.

The late Anglican priest and theologian, John Stott, said, “Every heresy is due to an overemphasis upon some truth, without allowing other truth to qualify and balance it.” Love and goodwill can balance us and give us a way to pedal forward. But our capacity to stay in balance in this time of challenge perhaps requires us to let go of that fear that keeps us holding on to the



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Cyclists from St. Matthew's ready to roll out on the Bay Trail, October 18, 2020.

absolute need to be right. Justice has more to do with restoration than about being right.

Last month I experienced a crash onto the pavement when my bike's front wheel got caught in the street car rails right before an intersection in San Francisco. I was going downhill at almost 25 MPH before I hit the pavement. Thank the Lord there were no vehicles or streetcars behind me. I walked away with just a badly injured knee, road rash on my arm, and a sprained and swollen hand, but no broken bones. Needless to say, I have a great appreciation for quality bike helmets and emergency rooms. Since that time, I have not been as confident on my bike. As my hand heals, my balance has been shaky. Sports psychologist Dr. Kristin Keim suggests that following a crash, "Validate that having anxiety or a feeling of fear is completely normal and something worth working on." In other words, listen to how you feel and honor the moment. We all fall down. And when you are ready to get up, she says, "The first step is to make sure you focus your energy on what you can control." To gain encouragement, the next step is to ride again with people you trust.

Faith and family, including our extended kin and wider community, can make a difference in finding stability again. The church bike ride last month on the Bay Trail marked the first time I was on the my own bike since the crash. I ride a 25-year-old vintage hardtail mountain bike that has a higher

center of gravity compared with modern ones, so I've been using my son's bike to keep riding. As we rode out with our St. Matthew's family on that sunny Sunday afternoon, I remembered the formula about momentum and keeping upright. Keeping pace with the younger kids in our congregation helped me find my confident balance



again.

We will be continue to be challenged by this pandemic in our ability to meet in person as a gathered community, as least for the time being. But nothing can separate us from the love of God, and we all have the responsibility to stay balanced. In those opportunities when we can safely met up, let's roll. Life is like riding a bicycle. God blesses in so many ways.

**Movement = Balance**

*-Fr. Jay*

## Spreading Jesus' Love

The following morning prayer is from our *Book of Common Prayer*:

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen. (BCP Page 101).

Right now our world is starving for love. We are looking for God's and Jesus's love in our troubled world, but at times it may seem too difficult or obscure to find. We are constantly inundated by news stories of hatred in our world. We absorb how some are treating their fellow neighbors with contempt and brutality. It is hard to understand how cruelty has taken over our gentle and loving world.



At St. Matthew's, we as a community come together united in God's love. Our belief in moral values of treating one another with kindness and respect binds us together as a community. Even though we are

not able to see one another face to face due to the pandemic, we still are united in our love of God and of one another.

We have as a church community managed to navigate through some extremely difficult waters over the last seven months. St. Matthew's has met that challenge through the use of technology with our Children's Chapel stories, Morning Prayer, and Sunday church services as well as many other offerings available to view online. We are reaching viewers and spreading Jesus love far beyond our four walls and our usual community. Are we not spreading Jesus' love out into the world in a new and unique way?



Last week during our Diocesan Convention, Bishop Marc reflected on our position to spread love. He noted how God draws us out of the false world of hatred and into the Beloved Community, through the ways of overflowing agape love and truth. We must as a community unite in our commitment to God and spread love.

May the lyrics of the song, "*What the World Needs Now*" by Dionne Warwick, inspire each of us to be good stewards of spreading God's love out into our troubled world:

What the world needs now is love sweet love,  
It's the only thing that there's just too little of,  
What the world needs now is love sweet love,  
No, not just for some but for everyone.

Peace and love,  
*Deacon Lauren*

## Commemoration of All Faithful Departed

On Monday, November 2nd at 6:30 pm, we will honor the saints who walked among us and are now part of the “Great Cloud of Witnesses.” Our outdoor celebration of the Feast of All Souls will take place near the bell tower. We will read the names of parishioners and loved ones who have died in the past year. If you would like to include someone in the reading, please contact the Church office. Parishioners are invited to participate in this moving candlelight service. Please let the church office know that you would like to participate (it will make set-up easier) and please wear a mask and observe a safe six-foot distance from your neighbor.

### Prayers of the People

During the Prayers of the People portion of the Sunday Service, we ask for God’s redemptive presence in the church, the world, our community, and individual lives. If you would like to add a name to be read during the Prayers of the People at an upcoming Sunday Service, please contact the church office at [office@episcopalstmatthew.org](mailto:office@episcopalstmatthew.org) or 650-342-1481.

### Need Continues for Second Harvest Food Bank

As the COVID-19 crisis continues, the Food Bank is seeing substantial increases in need as community members are furloughed, losing hourly wages, and forced to deplete savings while still providing for their families. If you are able to provide financial support, donations can be made online here:

<https://give.shfb.org/donatenow>



### Contributions and Pledges to St. Matthew’s

Your generous support helps St. Matthew fulfill its mission: to live God’s love, to share the Gospel, and to grow spiritually. Thank you for continuing your giving during these times.

Contributions and pledges can be mailed to the church or made online at:

<https://episcopalstmatthew.org/giving/donatenow/>

### You Shop, Amazon Gives amazon smile

If you haven’t already, please consider designating St. Matthew’s as the beneficiary of your Amazon orders. Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the charitable organization of your choice. AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you are familiar with--the same products, prices, and service. To learn more, go to AboutAmazonSmile. Amazon Smile is now available in the mobile app! Go to Settings in the app to link to your Smile account.

## Stewardship 2021

### Sharing Our Strength, Keeping Our Faith, Ensuring Our Future



This season we are taking time again to reflect upon our spiritual journeys and how we all share in the support of the mission of the Church. We are entering a season of stewardship that feels very different from previous years. Uncertainty has become a part of the economy and people's planning for the future. One of the great strengths of our parish is that households have made financial stewardship a priority and people give out of their abundance. Our parish rests upon a strong financial foundation because so many make stewardship a priority. We once again ask every household connected to St. Matthew's to prayerfully consider making a financial pledge for the upcoming year. Stewardship pledge materials have been sent to households by mail. Your yearly financial support through pledging allows St. Matthew's to continue to sustain our community of faith. Your support at any level is greatly appreciated.

Blessings,  
*Fr. Eric+*

## Sunday Service and Morning Prayer Video Archives

All service videos are available on our website for watching without a Facebook account.

- Sunday Service Video Archive:

<https://episcopalstmatthew.org/videos/sunday-service-videos/>

- Morning Prayer Video Archive:

<https://episcopalstmatthew.org/videos/morning-prayers/>

- Children's Chapel Storytime Video Archive:

<https://episcopalstmatthew.org/videos/childrens-chapel-storytime/>

- Organ and Bell Video Archive:

<https://episcopalstmatthew.org/videos/organ-and-bell-music/>

- Coffee Hour Reflections Audio Archive:

<https://episcopalstmatthew.org/videos/coffee-hour-reflections/>

- Faith Journeys Audio Archive:

<https://episcopalstmatthew.org/videos/faith-journeys/>

Service videos are also available on our YouTube channel: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCu3LEb\\_tMljL6DNKcZDl2Q/](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCu3LEb_tMljL6DNKcZDl2Q/)

Please contact Ming Lacey at [mlacey415@yahoo.com](mailto:mlacey415@yahoo.com) if you have questions about the website.

## Blessing of the Animals



The Episcopal Church of St. Matthew is  
a family called by Christ . . .

to Live God's Love,  
to Share the Gospel,  
to Grow Spiritually.

**Come Celebrate with Us!**

Sunday Services Livestreamed on Facebook  
at 10:00 am

*The Rev. Dr. Eric Kimball Hinds, Rector*  
*The Rev. Jay Sapaen Watan, Associate Rector*  
*The Rev. Lauren P. McCombs, Deacon*  
*The Rev. Amber Stancliffe Evans, School Chaplain*

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The Tau Cross is the monthly newsletter of the Episcopal Church of St. Matthew. We welcome submissions that have a connection to the parish. Inclusion is at the discretion of the staff and may be edited for space or clarity. The deadline for articles is the 15th of the month and may be sent by email to Beth von Emster at [beth.vonemster@gmail.com](mailto:beth.vonemster@gmail.com). Entries should follow these guidelines: Include title of event or article; 200 word maximum description including when, where, cost and contact information as applicable. Avoid abbreviations and other "insider" lingo. Further guidelines and tips available upon request.

## Upcoming Events

**Monday-Friday** Morning Prayer  
**9:30 am**

**Sundays** Children's Chapel  
**9:30 am** Zoom

**Sundays** Livestream Sunday  
**10:00 am** Service

**Sundays** Zoom Coffee Hour  
**11:00 am**

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