

Minutes of the 2024 St. Dysmas Annual Meeting

January 18, 2025

Values of The Community of St. Dysmas

VALUE ONE: We are a Christ centered ministry that honors the teachings of the Bible = FOCUSED ON WORSHIP & BIBLE STUDY IN EACH CORRECTIONAL SITE

VALUE TWO: We believe that no life is beyond reach since all are created in the image of God = FOCUSED ON MEMBER EVANGELISM & SHARING MISSION/VALUES TO ALL

VALUE THREE: We rely on congregations and volunteers to accomplish and enhance the ministry= FOCUSED ON MARKETING; FUNDRAISING; VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

VALUE FOUR: We use faith stories to connect and enrich the lives of congregations, volunteers and persons incarcerated = FOCUSED ON SHARING FAITH STORIES

VALUE FIVE: We hold ourselves accountable to excellent management for the ministry including time, talent, and treasures = FOCUSED ON MANAGING MINISTRY

VALUE SIX: We are committed to a continuum of ministry and support in and outside the Institution = FOCUSED ON AFTER-CARE

Present: Lois Carrigan, Susan Beck, Linda Fleischer, Melody Hession-Sigmon, Linda Smith, David Roberson, Alan Ramsey, Mary Ann Ruley, Paula Thistle, Pr. Mark Fischer

Welcome and Introductions by Lois Carrigan

- Thanked everyone for attending
- Introduced the CSD Council and reviewed agenda

Opening prayer and song – Pr. Melody Hession-Sigmon

Approval of 2023 Annual Meeting minutes

- Alan Ramsey moved to approve the 2023 minutes; approved by acclamation.

Pastor's Report by Pr. Susan and Pr. Melody

- The three worship sites:
 - MCIW is the oldest congregation and reflects the personality/dynamics of this diverse population.
 - MCTC meets as a tight-knit group that considers itself a family.
 - CMCF is a pre-release facility with good attendance, a passion for worship, and fluid membership.
- Efforts continue for mission development at JCI, RCI and Dorsey Run Correctional Facility and both pastors are committed to expanding our congregation.
 - In order to reach incarcerated individuals who are unable to worship, we mail devotional and spiritual literature monthly. There are currently 35 recipients in several non-CSD facilities.
- We have a committed group of volunteers who assist in Bible Study at all 3 facilities.
 - Several people also send letters to include in our mailing ministry.
 - Charlotte Syms received the DE/MD Synod Lay Ministry Award in April. She is the first non-Lutheran to be recognized and is a dedicated volunteer at CMCF.
- We celebrated our 40th anniversary last year and lifted up this milestone at Pr. Melody's installation in October.
- Our community connections expand as both pastors summarized their involvement in groups and events that support our mission and population. Examples are:
 - Pr. Melody participated in Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform work group planning sessions.
 - Pr. Susan belongs to Soul to Soul, an interfaith group of women fostering connections and sisterhood.
 - We are a strong voice and presence in the Central Maryland Ecumenical Committee and ICJS (Institute for Islamic Christian Jewish Studies). Both organizations are influential on a state wide level and have impact on criminal justice reform issues.
 - Asst. to Bishop Gohl, Rev. Alejandro Mejia participated in worship at MCTC.
 - Pr. Melody highlighted her involvement in youth and young adult activities, including confirmation instruction at Mar-LU-Rudge and a young adult gathering that resulted in a letter-writing project for our incarcerated members.

- The Baltimore Area Aftercare Program has diminished but Pr. Melody identified additional resources in the community to assist our returning citizens. She created a spreadsheet divided into aftercare/re-entry resources and geographic location for our returning citizens. Both pastors summarized programs and people available help our members as they are released.
 - Pr. Susan connected to the re-entry coordinator at MCIW to provided clothing to women as they are released. As word of this need spread, she was pleased with the number of people who donated clothing.
- Examples were provided that reflect the connections built in the facilities between members.
 - Pr. Melody described an initiative that was very rewarding and allowed our members to use their talents to serve the community. The women at MCIW sought to use their abilities to create artwork for distribution outside the facility. The outcome was that the pastors took pictures to congregations they visited and asked the pastors to take them to homebound members when visiting. This expanded to Advent when they made Christmas cards for other confined individuals (nursing homes, hospitals). Men at CMCF made cards for Seafarers who were impacted by the bridge collapse.
 - Prayer requests are being sent between facilities as members express the desire to feel connected as “one congregation”. Intercessory prayers are lifted up during worship.
- Lois expressed her appreciation for the dedication and passion that both pastors demonstrate for our ministry.

Nomination of David Roberson and Mary Ann Ruley as CSD Council members and Bob Harvey's retirement

- Lois recognized Bob Harvey's service and dedication as Treasurer upon his retirement in September.
- Lois introduced David Roberson and Mary Ann Ruley and moved to accept them on council after they summarized their connections to CSD.
 - Due to Bob Harvey's retirement as member and Treasurer, David will be assuming that position.
- The motion was unanimously approved.

Financial Report and 2024/25 Budget review by David Roberson - available on request

- Our budget is in excellent shape as the result of generous donations.
- Alan Ramsey moved to approve the 2025 Budget as presented. It was approved by acclamation.

Overview of Co-Pastor Ministry Model

- Lois described the current co-pastor job description that assigns all duties equally to both pastors. We are now looking at a division of labor where each pastor has separate responsibilities to accomplish these goals so there is not a duplication of efforts.
- Our goal is to arrive at the best ways in which to efficiently achieve our goals and utilize the talents of our two dedicated pastors.

Questions and comments

- Pr. Mark Fischer (St. David's Lutheran Church, Allegheny Synod, PA) expressed appreciation for Pr. Susan's assistance in coordinating worship at the Loretto Federal Institution. He leads worship there once a month and now has an appreciation of the need for prison ministry. He asked us to pray for inmates pending transfer to facilities far away from their home (typical for those serving sentences in federal institutions).

Lois thanked everybody for attending and supporting our mission.

Before closing with prayer, Pr. Susan Beck read a letter she received from an incarcerated individual prior to his release from the Baltimore City Correctional Center. He expressed the ways in which CSD helped his mental/spiritual adjustment to custody and preparation for release.

Pr. Melody led a closing song.

Meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Fleischer; 01/20/25