

THE COMMUNITY OF
ST. DYSMAS

I was in Prison & You Came To Visit Me

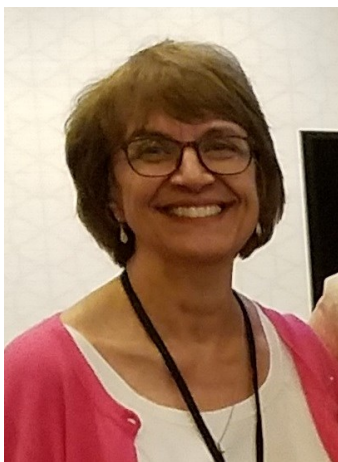


January, 2020

Inside Looking Out

What is Church?

If I say the word “church,” what does that conjure up in your head? Steeples and stained glass? Polished wood pews and an altar with cross, candles and ornate paraments? The resonant sound of an organ (or the praise band, if you prefer) and the scent of candle wax and communion wine? Those are all precious to us who have grown up Lutheran, and those things are certainly ways that reverence is communicated to us. In our Community of St Dysmas worship



Pastor Susan Beck

services, we don’t, of course, have all the beautiful things we do in “outside” churches, but we do try to create a sacred space in the middle of a prison with nice colorful cloths, communion ware, and a cross to place on the table. We have musicians who bring all the different styles of worship to life in their accompaniment. But, what if we didn’t have the “stuff” we usually do to have a *real* Lutheran service?

A few weeks ago at one of our CSD sites, I was notified that the items in our storage had all been removed, and I was to come pick them up. Musicians would no longer be allowed to bring in their instruments, and we would have to use pre-filled communion cups rather than our bread and grape juice. Needless to say, our members there, our volunteers and I aren’t happy with this. While this issue is still being worked out at this writing, it looks like we’ll have to make adjustments and do things differently to continue to have a presence there.

This whole situation, as dismaying as it is, has made me think about just what *is* church, in particular, what do we *need* to worship. All the “stuff” is good and helpful, but none of that defines us. What defines us is the gospel, pure and simple, pure and alone. We have a God who loves us enough to come in the

From Pr. Beck (continued)

person of Jesus and tell us so. We come together and celebrate that we see that God reflected in all the faces of our members, and that, it seems, is the core of what it means to worship together.

On a recent Sunday, I was at Trinity, Boonsboro. During the children's sermon, I asked the group of kids what they could see, hear, smell and touch in the church that reminded them of God's love. They looked around the sanctuary, then several of them all spoke out at once with the same answer, "The people here!"

Kids, of course, always hit the truth spot on. While we cherish our sacred objects and traditions, those aren't what church is. We are! Each of our members at MCIJ, MCIW, MCTC and CMCF and all of our dedicated volunteers are! Every one of you who supports us and prays for us is!

We are church--the real, living, breathing, moving—and ever adjusting—Body of Christ.

Peace and all good,
Pastor Susan

Tino's Fundraiser

Our next fundraiser at Tino's Italian Bistro and Wine Bar in Columbia is on Tuesday, February 18, 2020. Please save this date! Ten percent (10%) of the total proceeds for the day will be donated to the St. Dymas AfterCare Program. This includes **ALL** catering, takeout, lunch, and dinner orders. Tino's is located at 8778 Centre Park Drive, Columbia, MD 21045. To see the menu and get directions, check out [Tino's website](#).



Congratulations to One of Our Members!

On January 16, I was privileged to attend another graduation at Second Chances Horse Farm and see one of our faithful CSD members at CMCf receive his certificate of graduation from that program. This program pairs incarcerated men with horses that have been retired for various reasons. This month's graduate was paired with Lucy, who looks deceptively docile in the picture with me. She's not! She's a horse whose feisty temperament requires work and patience—and the good possibility of getting bitten or kicked if she is displeased! In learning to deal with Lucy, our member learned a lot about applying himself to the hard work of caring for and training a 1200 pound animal with a mind of her own. But he also spoke about how he learned so much about himself and building relationships through the process. We are so proud of him and his accomplishments!



Pastor Susan



Lucy and Our Member



Lucy and Pr. Susan

A Poem by One of our Members

PASSION

The night when Judas gave my Savior,
Christ, the kiss of death.
He gave me the kiss of life,
That came from Jesus' dying breath.

With every scathing whip that cracked,
My sins were oozing from His back.
Yet, a glorious pain it was for He,
Who would set my demons free

When He was crowned the King of Jews
Again, our sins of blood would ooze,
For generations, yet unborn,
Will bear those scars of every thorn!

For Satan's sake, we won't succumb,
Beneath the weight of crosses bear.
Our souls are His patibulum,
That faith through Christ to God, we share.

And every stop along the path,
As Christ is stoned and spat upon,
Those heartless cheers, the demons laugh,
Until three days have come and gone.

At noon, when Satan nailed my Savior,
Jesus to the tree,
I, and billions more were saved
While every hammering set us free!

On day three, in early morn,
An incarnated Christ appeared.
So we of faith, again, were born,
As our redemption's now revered.

The night when Judas gave my Savior,
Christ, the kiss of death.
He gave me the kiss of life,
That came from Jesus' dying breath.

Join Us With Your Financial Support

Unlike other Lutheran congregations, The Community of St. Dymas receives no internal financial support. The necessary goal of CSD's Council is that every congregation of our Synod and as many individuals as possible become financial supporters of The Community of St. Dymas. The best way your congregation can do this is by putting St. Dymas in your budget. This shows intentionality on your part and lets us know we can count on you for support. Other possibilities might include special offerings either monthly or during special services such as Lent, unique fund raisers, or having St. Dymas offering envelopes available for your people. If you come up with special ideas to raise contributions for The Community of St. Dymas, we would love to hear about them!

The Community of St. Dymas is an Amazon Smile charity. Please consider supporting CSD in this way.



Another way to support CSD is with Thrivent Choice Dollars. Through this program, eligible members are allocated Choice Dollars, based on insurance premiums, contract values, and Thrivent Financial volunteer leadership. Check to see whether you are eligible to direct your Thrivent Choice Dollars to CSD on the [Thrivent website](#). Your dollars for CSD go far to support this ministry and to



bring God's Word to many who so desperately need to hear of God's grace, love and forgiveness. Recently, a devout Roman Catholic lady used Thrivent Choice dollars to gift the ministry of St. Dymas. Thank you (and as the old saying goes, "What Rome throws out, the Lutherans pick up.")

In 2018, Gifts of Hope added CSD to the organizations that they support. Gifts of Hope is a ministry sponsored by the Metropolitan Washington DC Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). It is a family of volunteers, congregations, donors, the Synod, and 19 beneficiary organizations. In 25 years they have raised and disbursed over \$3,370,000 to their many and varied beneficiary organizations. These funds have helped the homeless, the hungry, the job-seeker, the young, the elderly, immigrants, refugees, seminary and college students, and those seeking to improve their lives. They also support the work of companion synods in Namibia, Slovakia, and El Salvador. Gifts of Hope touches the lives of thousands of people—locally and globally.



Gifts of Hope serves as an intermediary between donors and organizations serving individuals and families in need. Gifts are may be given year-round at www.giftsofhopedc.org; however, the program's primary focus is during the Christmas holidays, including the season of Advent. You can contact Gifts of Hope for more information by emailing director@giftsofhopedc.org.

Sundays With CSD

Looking for something different? In addition to the worship and Bible studies conducted within the prison walls, the CSD Speakers Bureau is available and delighted to attend conference meetings, to worship with your congregation, to lead an Adult Forum, or to meet with your council or social outreach committee anywhere in the Delaware-Maryland or Metropolitan Washington DC Synods.

Why not have a special **CSD** Day at your congregation! To schedule a Sunday or other time for Pastor Beck or someone from our Speakers Bureau to visit your congregation to preach, to participate in an adult forum, or to meet at some other time, please contact us by phone at 443-326-1115 or email pastor@communitystdysmas.com.



Do you have a memory or inspiring story of an experience with CSD? If so, please share it with us, and we'll include it in a future newsletter!

Get Involved!

There are several ways you can be involved with this meaningful ministry to God's children behind bars. Please consider praying for us, worshiping with us, and supporting our ministry with your contributions. If you feel a calling to lead worship, participate in the music ministry, or simply to add your presence, please contact us by phone at 443-306-1115 or by email at pastor@communitystdysmas.com.

CSD Alumna Speaks at Interfaith Gathering

Krista Hudson, who was a faithful member of our congregation at MCIW during her time there, was one of a panel of speakers at the Soul to Soul gathering January 29 at Temple Isaiah Synagogue in Fulton, Md. This is an interfaith organization of Muslim, Jewish, LDS and mainline Christian women who have been meeting for years to bring understanding among religious groups and in particular to address women's issues. It's been my pleasure to be one of the directors for the last year, so when we were planning a meeting based on the theme of "feeling separate," I invited Krista to speak. She spoke so eloquently of being welcomed into the Community of St Dymas and the difference it made for her. Her remarks about forgiveness and relationships inspired all the women there of every faith. I'm so grateful that amazing women like her have the courage and heart to speak out and strengthen us all.



Pastor Susan



Panel at Soul to Soul Gathering



Participants at Soul to Soul Gathering

Pray for and with the Community of St. Dysmas

Pray for peace and understanding. That I make it home in March.
Amen.

Dear Lord, we give thanks for Pastor Rickel and his ministry to us. We pray for healing for Edith, Pat, Miriam, and Amy. Please bring Andy, Amanda, and Camden to a relationship with you! I give thanks, father God, for healing in our family. Please help me to stay the course with exercise and healthy habits. Amen.

Thank you , Lord. Thanks you, Lord. Thanks you. I pray that you keep the children save. Help them make the right decisions on their journey. Keep my grandma healthy, my momma healthy and safe. Protect the sick and addicted. In Jesus' name. Amen.

May we all see ourselves in God! Amen in Jesus.

Please be with Melvina's family during this difficult time. Give them a feeling of peace amongst their distress. Also, please lift up each of your children's hearts and bring salvation to those who have not truly found you yet. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

LORD, IN YOUR MERCY, HEAR OUR PRAYER!



The Community of St. Dysmas

A Lutheran Congregation within the walls of the Maryland Department of Corrections

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