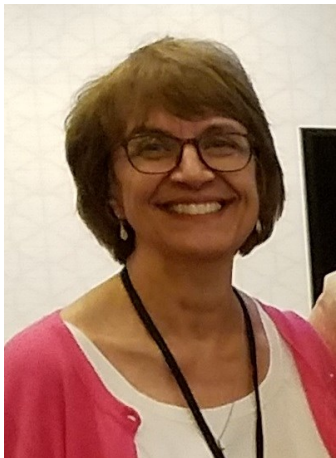




Inside Looking Out

Last month, Deacon Don Helfer, OSSD, and I were privileged to attend the graduation ceremony at Second Chances Farm, where two of our faithful worshipers at Central Maryland Correctional Facility were receiving certificates for completing a program on equine care and management. This program allows selected inmates to work at the farm daily for several months, learning how to care for and train retired race horses, all of which have injuries or temperament problems that make them difficult to manage. The air in the barn was chilly that winter morning, but the atmosphere was festive. The horses were put through their paces in the field, then returned to the stalls for the awards ceremony. The program director, Sarah, explained that it took a lot of work and patience—not to mentioned getting bitten and kicked!—to earn the trust of these horses. Horses



Pastor Susan Beck

know naturally when another creature is a predator, she explained, because all predators have eyes in the front of their faces, like us, while animals who are prey have eyes on the sides, like horses. The horses take one look and are automatically fearful and distrustful of us. But that fear and distrust is overcome with the daily, faithful care that the men learn to give the horses over the course of the months they work together. As one of the men shoveled horse manure out of a stall, he grinned and said, “This glamorous stuff is what the horses learn they can count on from us!”

After the ceremony we toured the barn and met the horses, and it was clear that the connection between the men and the horses was not only one of trust, but of caring for each other. Unlikely relationships between creatures who would naturally mistrust each other had formed.

One of our CMCF congregation members who received his certificate remarked that, like the horses, he had grown up learning never to trust anyone. He had learned to survive by manipulating and taking advantage of others, but through the hard work of earning the trust of the horses, he himself was learning how to trust.

From Pr. Beck (continued)

The writer of Hebrews tells us that, “faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” That’s the essence of building trust and of growing in faith. Before we can hope for or be assured of anything, God takes care of us in ways that, when viewed with the eyes of faith, develop trust and relationship with our Creator. Whether we are hoping for healing from an illness, or for the strength to juggle jobs, kids and traffic jams, or for our parole hearing to go well, all of us naturally distrustful and fearful creatures learn that we can count on God. This is what our CSD congregant preached so eloquently when he spoke of learning to trust—the essence of faith which gives us confidence and assurance in Someone who has promised to care for us always. As we journey through the days of Lent toward the cross and the empty tomb, we see the earth giving us all kinds of clues that we can trust God to bring life out of lifelessness and light out of darkness. May we have the eyes of faith to see those clues and learn to trust God in all things.

Pastor Susan



Deacon Don (above) and
Pastor Susan (right) with
some new friends!

Interfaith Sharing

Pastor Susan represented CSD at a vigil for solidarity at Masjid Fatima Mosque in Catonsville on Friday, March 15, after the massacres in New Zealand . She talked about how we're all "imprisoned" by hatred and are "released" by the compassion common to all our faiths.



Aftercare Update

The aftercare task force has been busy formulating a plan that will give our CSD alumni support after their release from incarceration. John Duberg presented a comprehensive plan to the council last month, and we've been in the process of implementing the first steps. We're developing a vetted list of resources for housing, employment, transportation, etc. for the CSD folks who ask for help in those areas.

To meet those and other re-entry needs, we're hoping to identify regional coordinators in various regions of the synod to function as a first point of contact for returning citizens.

The coordinators would then refer the returning citizens to congregations who could be equipped to welcome a returning citizen or provide support in ways like clothing, food, remembering them in prayer and on special occasions. In this way, we're hoping that relationships will be built between the returning citizens and faith communities so that our CSD members can continue to grow in faith and in a new way of life.

Since this needs to be done with the safety of all involved in mind, we will offer orientation programs for congregations and individuals who want to get involved so that the joys and pitfalls can be viewed honestly and boundaries that are common to all prison after care ministries can be set.

If you have a heart for helping our returning citizens, particularly if you have a background in dealing with re-entry issues, please contact Pastor Susan at 443 326 1115.

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

Join Us With Your Financial Support (continued)

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.

CSD at Synod Assemblies

Stop by the CSD table at the Delaware– Maryland Synod Assembly (May 30—June 1, Hunt Valley, MD) or the Metro DC Synod Assembly (June 14-15, College Park, MD). We will have information on our programs on the inside and on opportunities for congregations and individuals to volunteer to help resettle our members upon their release. Stop by and say “Hi!”



Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



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.

Pray for and with the Community of St. Dysmas

Please be with my family and friends and all their needs. Watch over the women here. Be with all the volunteers and their families. Thank you for all you do for all the women coming up for parole. May your will be done.

Please bless my family, the women at MCIW, our volunteers and Jen Lawsor me home soon.

Prayer for all the ladies at MCIW that are dealing with the loss of loved one who are ill or hospitalized. Keep them safe. Also pray that I'll return home. Thank you for your continued blessings.

Please pray for all the people in my world who are grieving or in pain. Thanks for a blessed visit with my dad and sister. Pray for discernment for Andy and Amy as they make plans for after graduation.

Please protect the abused, addicted, and homeless. Please watch over my kids and grandma. Thank you for your blessings and our wonderful volunteers.



LORD, IN YOUR MERCY, HEAR OUR PRAYER



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!

The Community of St. Dysmas

A Lutheran Congregation within the walls of Maryland Correctional Institutions

Pastor Susan Beck

Deacon Raymond Toy

905 Frederick Road

Catonsville, MD 21128

Phone: 443-326-1115

Email: pastor@communitystdysmas.com

Website: www.stdysmasmd.org