



Inside Looking Out

Summertime ...

For most of us, summer offers a welcome break from the usual routine—long hours of daylight, warm temperatures to enjoy getting outside, looking forward to vacation.

But in the last month or so, some of our Community of St Dysmas members have offered up prayers that highlight how different their lives are -- prayers for safety because “as the temperature goes up, so do the tempers.” Prison environments can never be entirely safe for those inside, both for the inmates and the correctional officers, but from those prayers we can imagine that warm weather makes the issues of finding safety even harder.



Pastor Susan Beck

That issue of a “safe place” to be who you are, or who you are becoming, is one of the important aspects of our ministry. For those couple of hours that our members have a place where they are safe to be who they are and to fully embrace the transformation that Christ is making in their lives. We’re proud to be the inclusive, accepting place “inside the walls,” and yes, it’s ok to be proud when you’re showing the love that God shows us!

We live in a national context where those who are marginalized—the immigrant, the person of color, the LGBTQ individual, the one who worships differently, the incarcerated—are increasingly losing a sense of safety. Let’s pray, let’s speak up, let’s act and let’s continue to be that safe place for all.

Blessings and peace.

Pastor Susan

Community of St. Dysmas Aftercare Program

One of the goals of the CSD is to provide continuity and care for our members when they are released and transition to life “outside.” Volunteers who have contact within the prison are not allowed by DOC regulations to have contact once a person is released, so we are looking for a separate group of volunteers to provide this help. We’ve found that while there are many resources that can be tapped, we as an ELCA congregation have a special role we can play to offer that sense of spiritual community and connection that is so very needed.

To that end, we are looking to find volunteers who would be willing to be a point of contact for a CSD member who is soon to be released. The contact would ideally be through their church office phone number so that no personal phone numbers are shared. The immediate needs of our members upon release are transportation (especially being picked up from the prison upon release and transported to their new housing), help with everyday tasks such as using a computer or filling out forms for government services/benefits, providing for emergency needs such as food or clothing, and being willing to accompany the returning citizen to a church worship service. The contact person would not necessarily be the one to provide this help, but would be connected to a congregation or other people in the community who might be willing to help. We anticipate that each contact person would get 1-3 calls per year, so there would not be a large volume of calls, but some flexibility would be helpful.

We will provide training for safe boundaries for contact persons as well as for congregations who are welcoming to returning citizens. Consider how much support your home congregation provides for you—this is what we hope our sibling Lutheran churches “outside” can provide for our members when they are released. Please think and pray about this and if you might be interested, contact Pastor Susan by September 1 at 443-326-1115 or pastor@communitystdysmas.com.

Second Chances Farm Graduation

On June 6, I was privileged to attend another graduation at [Second Chances Farm](#), where men from Central Maryland Correctional Facility (CMCF) in Sykesville can be trained to work with retired race horses who have difficult temperament issues. This is a challenge to say the least, and watching the men work with these 1500 pound animals is awe-inspiring. Over and over, the men tell us that working with these horses teaches them a lot more than just equine care. They learn that with patience and hard work, trust can be built and relationship can overcome a difficult past.



One thing that was particularly notable to me—I realized that inside the horse barn, there were no flies. Have you ever been in a livestock barn that had no flies?? The only way that can happen is through very hard work to keep it clean. The absence of flies is a testament to the dedication of the CMCF participants, many of whom are Community of St Dismas members!

Pastor Susan



Bible Study at MCIW

A group of ladies at the Maryland Correctional Institute for Women (MCIW) have started a new study on Luther's Small Catechism called *By Heart*. They are learning about the history of the greater church and the background of the Lutheran faith in particular. They will be studying the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments and the Apostle's Creed.



When the study is completed the women will receive the Rite of Confirmation.

Then the study materials will move to MCTC and the men will have the opportunity to learn about the Lutheran faith.

Susie Jordan

Tino's Fundraiser

Our next fundraiser at Tino's Italian Bistro and Wine Bar in Columbia is on Tuesday, September 3, 2019. Please save this date! Ten percent (10%) of the total proceeds for the day will be donated to the St. Dysmas 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](#).



Stray Cats and Scarlet Letters

I have a friend who is so committed to taking care of God's creatures that she's the mother, (and sole caretaker), of a Feral Cat Colony. She uses her own money to feed and medically provide for them, which includes having each of the cats spayed or neutered. What I find most fascinating about her feline charges is that they are increasingly affectionate with their human mother. (Feral Cats are usually weary of human contact.) My friend is able to touch, hug and kiss most of the cats in the colony. They recognize her as being the bringer of the light in their lives. They trust that she'll be at their feeding spot every day. Rain or shine, she is there and the cats rejoice in her love and care.

Another thing I find fascinating is that this Cat Colony is located in a rural county area. The cats are surrounded by acres of green fields and wooded areas that could lead to unimaginable discovery. Yet every day, these (wild) cats run to greet my friend as she refills their feeding bowls under their special tree. Even with acres of land at the cat's disposal, they willingly return to my friend every day. Why? Simply put, she fills them. She feeds their bodies and little cat souls.

I remember a neighbor's comment to me as a young child. I was attempting to feed a stray sniffing around my backyard. My neighbor's voice boomed through the summer air, "Don't feed that stray or it will never go away!" I jumped back with fear and almost let my furry friend pass me by. I remember being sad over this experience for days to come. Somehow, even then, I knew it was wrong to turn away one of God's creatures.

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Matthew 25:35-36 (NRSV)

I find that the majority of men and women who attend CSD Worship services could easily be classified into two categories: Stray Cats and Scarlet Letters. The Strays are hungering to be fed in the Lord, and the Scarlet Letters want a place to feel accepted and loved. Praise God that CSD Congregations are a place where they can find healing, hope and encouragement.

Thank you for your continued support of The Community of St. Dymas. Thank you for emotionally supporting our volunteers, prayerfully supporting our congregants and financially supporting our ministry. You have helped create a sacred space for redemption and forgiveness inside the walls of the Maryland Prison System.

So, I guess my old neighbor was correct. When you feed them; they will keep coming back. I praise God for that and for your continued prayers for the ministry of CSD.

Peace,

Lois Carrigan

CSD Council Chair

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.



Join Us With Your Financial Support (continued)

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? Of 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.

Pray for and with the Community of St. Dysmas

Lord I pray for physical and mental healing for me Lord. I want to thank you for all the times you've carried me. Keep watching over me and my children. Bless the addicted, sick and fools Lord. In Jesus name, Amen.

Please pray for my sentence modification to be granted so I can be scheduled for a hearing. Also I would like to just thank God for all my blessings thus far in my life. And please pray for all the women here at MCIW.

Prayers for my mother to recover while in the hospital. Prayers for all the women going to parole, count and any other blessings to leave this place. Be with me while I try to get home and do as I need while here. Help all the women with all of their needs wants and desires.

Dear God get me out of here please. And bless everybody. Thanks.

I pray Lord that you continue to strengthen and guide me in the right direction. Help me to get over and understand that what God has for me. It is for me. Thank you for all my children, the blessings known and unknown. Remove any and all evils. Amen

Lord please help me and be with me and my people. Help me get out of here and do better with my life. Everyone will be alright. Amen people.

I pray for parole and happiness within myself and the world. Thank you for protecting and guiding me. Thank you for my six blessings called children and just waking me up. In Jesus name, 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

Pastor Susan Beck
Deacon Raymond Toy

905 Frederick Road
Catonsville, MD 21128
Phone: 443-326-1115
Email: pastor@communitystdysmas.com
Website: www.stdysmasmd.org

CSD Council -- council@communitystdysmas.com

Lois Carrigan, Chair
Bob Harvey, Treasurer
Stan Steele, Call Committee Chair
Susie Jordan
Myra Keele
Alan Ramsey