

# THE COMMUNITY OF ST. DYSMAS

*I was in Prison & You Came To Visit Me*



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## **FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN**

Snoopy would have said “It was a dark and stormy night.” Actually, it was the first snowfall of the Winter of 2017–18 and I was heading to the Women’s Prison for worship. The snow while not heavy was driving hard into my windshield. I find myself muttering and questioning my judgement making this drive to Jessup.

As I walked down the hallway to the class room where we have our worship services, I wondered if any of the women made the trek from their tiers to the chapel area. When I opened the door, there were 11 women singing Christmas hymns. They greeted me with applause.

During the reading of the First Lesson in walks Viola Noffsinger trudging her keyboard. Her drive was further than mine. Once again, she was greeted by the ladies with applause. Worship was spirited, rich and heart felt that evening. As I often do, I felt a sense of deep gratitude for making the trip to be involved with The Community of St. Dysmas.

I share this experience for a several reasons. First note the commitment of the ladies of The Community of St. Dysmas. They gathered for worship whether the worship leaders could make it or not. They were singing Christmas Hymns when I arrived. Secondly the faithfulness of our volunteers. Viola made the trip (over a hour one way) that Saturday evening despite the weather. Finally, the deep appreciation of the ladies for our

volunteers. The “outside guest” who give of their time and talents for the sake of this ministry are welcomed by the men and women who make up CSD in all four of our Institutions. You are prayed for and anticipated. (Pastors and musicians imagine being greeted by applause in your congregations some Sunday)!

St. Paul writes; “Every time I think of you, I give thanks to God!” We have reasons to give thanks for and with The Community of St. Dysmas!

Blessed 2018!

Gerry Rickel

Pastor of The Community of St. Dysmas

### **GENEROSITY ABOUNDS**

Treasurer Rev. Robert Harvey reported that St. Dysmas will finish slightly ahead financially this year which is always good news! This positive income does not even count the \$50,000 gift CSD received upon the sale of the Building of Second English Lutheran Church!

Thanks to...

Salem Lutheran Church for placing CSD in their Budget (please consider doing so at your congregation)!

Recent gifts from Joy Reigns in Edgewater, Community of Grace at Christ Lutheran Church in Catonsville and St. Luke in New Windsor.

And the modern day Widow’s Mites from two of our worshipers who made small gifts but the very BEST GIFTS OF ALL!

God Bless you as you consider why and how you share your abundance with this unique and transforming Lutheran Community!

## SUNDAYS WITH CSD

Looking for something different? Would you like to plan an outreach event – a ministry event – or a day of community awareness for your congregation? In addition to the worship and Bible studies conducted within the prison walls, Pastor Rickel is available to worship with your congregation, to lead Adult Forums, or to meet with your council or social outreach committees in congregations of the Metropolitan Washington DC and Delaware–Maryland Synods, and to attend conference meetings.

Why not have a special **CSD** Day at your congregation! To schedule a Sunday or other time for Pastor Rickel to visit your congregation to lead worship, to participate in an adult forum, or to meet at some other time, *contact him* by phone at 443–306–1115 or [pastor@communitystdysmas.com](mailto:pastor@communitystdysmas.com).

## THE COMMUNITY OF ST. DYSMAS COUNCIL

### CSD ANNUAL MEETING

On Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December eleven of us met for the Annual Meeting of The Community of St. Dysmas.

We began by hearing a “Keynote” from Linda Fleischer who is a Professor of Criminal Justice at the Dundalk Campus of Baltimore County Community College. Her presentation was both personal and professional. She shared eye opening statistics about the causes of incarceration and the obstacles folks faced upon their release leading to recidivism in our society.

Bob Harvey reported our positive finances and a Budget of \$107,363 was approved for

2018.

A needed discussion followed concerning the lack of new volunteers and the impact that could mean for the future of CSD. Amongst the concerns is the aging of our current volunteers and obstacles with which we deal by the Institutions.

### **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 participate or lead worship, participate in the music ministry, or simply participate to add your presence, please contact us at [pastor@communitystdysmas.com](mailto:pastor@communitystdysmas.com) or call 443-326-1116.

### **PLEASE PRAY FOR AND WITH THE COMMUNITY OF ST. DYSMAS**

I want to lift up those who are struggling with missing loved ones. Thank you for the good health for my family and friends.

Heavenly Father, Thank you for all the many, many, many blessings I've been receiving over the past week. Thank you for bringing Pastor Rickel, Pastor Joanie and Susie to worship with us. Lord keep my family safe and the women here safe. Pray for my fiancé and I to keep walking on the right path through your glory. Amen.

For all the women here. For Lawrence, Steven, Brady and Stephanie. Pray for parole to sign my release date.

LORD, IN YOUR MERCY...HEAR MY PRAYER

## JOIN US ON AMAZON SMILE

On your first visit to AmazonSmile ([smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)), you are prompted to select a charitable organization from our list of eligible organizations. You can change your selection at any time.

To change your charitable organization:

1. Sign in to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) on your desktop or mobile phone browser.
2. From your desktop, go to **Your Account** from the navigation at the top of any page, and then select the option to **Change your Charity**. Or, from your mobile browser, select **Change your Charity** from the options at the bottom of the page.
3. Select a new charitable organization to 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. Dysmas. The best way your congregation can do this is by putting St. Dysmas in your budget. This shows intentionally on your part and allows us to 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 include St. Dysmas offering envelopes available for your people. If you come up with special ideas to raise contributions for The Community of St. Dysmas we would love to know!

## JOIN US WITH THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS

Thrivent Choice Dollars offers another way to support CSD. Through the Thrivent Choice Program, eligible members are designated 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

[www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice/program/index.html](http://www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice/program/index.html)

Your dollars for CSD go far to support this ministry and to bring God's Word to many who so desperately need to hear God's grace, love and forgiveness.

### **JOIN US WITH YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

Unlike other Lutheran congregations The Community of St. Dysmas receives no internal financial support.

### **WHO WE ARE**

**CSD** – The Community of St. Dysmas – a Lutheran Congregation within the walls of the Maryland Correctional Institution.

**PASTOR** – Rev. Gerry F Rickel

**DEACON** -- Raymond Toy

+ Please share this information with your congregation. +

*I was in prison, and you came to visit me. Matthew 25:36b*

**The Community of St. Dysmas**

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