

THE COMMUNITY OF
ST. DYSMAS

I was in Prison & You Came To Visit Me



July, 2018
Newsletter

Hello, Pastor Susan! Farewell, Pastor Gerry!

The Council of the Community of St. Dysmas is excited to announce the arrival of our new interim pastor, the Reverend Susan Beck. Pastor Beck was appointed the pastor of CSD on July 5, 2018. She can be reached at the St. Dysmas Pastor email at pastor@communitystdysmas.com or by phone at 443-326-1115.

The Reverend Gerry Rickel has been called as the interim pastor of Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in Eldersburg, MD. He can be reached by email at gerryrickel@gmail.com or by phone at 443-687-0894.

From the Outside Looking In

When Pastor Gerry Rickel approached me about being a Community of St. Dysmas volunteer pastor a couple years ago, my first thought was “you must be kidding.” I’m claustrophobic enough that when my CPE group visited the Harrisburg jail as part of our training, I almost had a full-blown panic attack when the big doors closed behind me. But I took a step of faith, and a lot of deep breaths, and I found that inside the walls there’s a ministry that’s pure, essential, and joyful. This is the gospel in its truest form: no matter who you are or what you’ve done, Jesus came to show you God’s love and forgive your sins. That’s a game-changer for someone whose sin has landed them in incarceration. And so, I was hooked on prison ministry, and I’m honored and excited to be the new interim pastor of the Community of St. Dysmas.



Pastor Susan Beck

I graduated from Gettysburg Seminary in 2010, and I’ve served two churches, St. John’s in Thurmont and Shepherd of the Glen in Glenwood. I’m one of a growing number of bi-vocational pastors — for the last 35 years I’ve worked as a childbirth educator and lactation consultant, and I’m currently working with Capital Women’s Care in Maple Lawn. I wouldn’t want it any other way because each vocation informs the other and

From Pr. Beck (continued)

keeps me thinking about relationships, family dynamics, looking to the future, and dealing with pain in the present. My husband Bill and I live in Woodbine, MD, and have three grown children, all married and living blessedly close by. We have six grandchildren and being an active part of their lives is a joy. For fun, I play violin for community orchestra and theater pit.

I'm coming to this position of interim CSD pastor with big shoes to fill. With Pastor Gerry Rickel this has become a healthy and vibrant ministry, and I hope to be able to build on the very strong foundation that he has set. He assembled a gifted and passionate board that works well together and is both collegial and congenial. With Lois Carrigan as chair, Susie Jordan as administrative assistant, and Bob Harvey as treasurer, this is a group that gets things done. Our big challenges going forward are maintaining and renewing the volunteer cadre and building the aftercare program, and there is energy and expertise on the board to address those issues.

As the Bishop pointed out at our July 5 meeting, we need to keep in mind that this is an interim period with its own challenges, but also opportunities to take a good look at where we've been and where God is leading us next. I look forward to walking that path with you all.

Peace and all good,
Pastor Susan

At Our Fundraiser at Tino's



Thanks to everyone who supported our fundraiser at Tino's Italian Bistro in Columbia. Our next one will be on Tuesday, September 4. Please save this date!

Outside Looking In — Final Newsletter Thoughts from Pr. Gerry

So I have resigned as Pastor of The Community and am taking on the ever-popular interim. I am please to be serving the good people of Holy Spirit in Eldersburg. The last seven years have been a blessed time for me ... among the most blessed of my ministry. Let me give you 10 reasons why The Community of St. Dysmas has blessed me.

1. I have been privileged to walk beside Patrick and Kas, Krista and Jennifer, Michael and Inga, and many others in their journey to freedom. They are some of the most courageous people I have ever known. Living on the “inside” is a debilitating, depressive, and oppressive experience. It will beat you down and give you little hope of a future. I have been with folks who have not only survived but are better children of God despite the system.
2. I have discovered again and again that we are all in the same boat called humanity. Some of us have a thick coat of respectability, while others of us wear ragged clothing called survival. No matter the surface games we play, we are all working to get through life. Let’s drop our pretensions and partner with other! Life would be so much easier.
3. Going through the gates to the “inside” is not an act of courage, as much as it is walking with Jesus. Jesus says that when we are in prison we meet Him (Matthew 25). Society and the System make it extremely difficult to meet Jesus So to whom are we going to listen: Jesus or man?
4. The people we meet on the “inside” are children of God. God created them, Jesus died for them on the cross, and the Holy Spirit nurtures them along the way. They deserve our respect not because of what they have done but because of who God says they are!
5. The ministry of The Community of St. Dysmas is pure Jesus. There is no church politics, no tradition, no dogma, no committees, and no denominations. The Community of St. Dysmas is church at its best!
6. The Good Samaritan story over the years has been interpreted many different ways (“thank God I am not one of them”). I have discovered in the last 7 years that the message is all about being in the ditch with people who are down trodden and beaten up by the world. The people of God are to be “in the ditch” with their fellow travelers!
7. The Lord’s Meal is for everyone. Who are we to put strings on who receives and who does not! We are to stand aside and let God do Her work!
8. We imprison way too many people in this country ... the most of any country in the world. I weep over our injustice and racism. There are better ways to treat substance abuse (“War on Drugs” that started in the late 1960’s), mental illness, and our racism. (“The United States imprisons a larger percentage of its black population than South Africa did at the height of apartheid” from *The New Jim Crow*, p. 6) Instead of more unjust laws, God calls on us to repent and reform.
9. God does God’s best work in times like this and in places like prisons. Jesus is heard, hope is given, and the Cross is lifted up! Look at the prophets’ message to God’s people in Exile, look at who Jesus hung with during his ministry, look at who Jesus hung between on Good Friday! This is the church’s finest hour!
10. Following Jesus is not easy, but it is the only Way. As Daniel Berrigan said, “If you are going to follow Jesus ...you better look good on wood!”

So Shalom to you my fellow travelers. Be of good cheer. We have Jesus!

Gerry Rickel, Blessed

Synod Assembly, 2018

Thank you to everyone who stopped by our St. Dymas booth at Synod Assembly. It was a blessing to share with you what this ministry is all about!



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 Beck is available to worship with your congregation, to lead Adult Forums, or to meet with you 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 Beck to visit your congregation to lead worship, to participate in an adult forum, or to meet at some other time, contact her by phone at 443-306-1115 or by email at pastor@communitystdysmas.com.

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, worshipping 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 to add your presence, please contact us by phone at 443-306-1115 or by email at pastor@communitystdysmas.com.

Join Us With Your Financial Support

Unlike other Lutheran congregations, The Community of St. Dysmas 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. Dysmas. The best way your congregation can do this is by putting St. Dysmas in your budget. This shows intentionality 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 having 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 hear about them!

Another way to support CSD is through Thrivent Choice Dollars. Through this program, eligible members are designate 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 Cjchoice dollars to gift the ministry of St. Dysmas. Thank you (and as the old saying goes, "What Rome throws out, the Lutherans pick up.")



Pray for and with the Community of St. Dysmas

I would like to pray for all of our outside guests, for good health and safe travel. I would also like to pray for the health and safety of my family. And also pray for the suffering addicts. And pray for our country's peace and let us come together as one.

I pray for a clear mind and understanding, also that my family is OK and that I make parole when I go up this year. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

I would like to pray for my children, family, and friends to keep them in the best of health and spirits. I pray that the relationship between my son's father can be repaired while I'm incarcerated. I pray all my legal matters work out in my favor, and I be granted parole.

Please pray for Pastor Susan as she settles in to being the pastor of CSD.

Please pray for Pastor Gerry as he begins his new interim call.



The Community of St. Dysmas

A Lutheran Congregation within the walls of Maryland Correctional Institutions

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