

THE COMMUNITY OF  
**ST. DYSMAS**

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



\*

## JOIN US AT TINO'S ITALIAN BISTRO

TUESDAY JUNE 26

10% of the proceeds from the day will be donated to CSD's After Care Fund. All you need to do is eat in or carry out to support our ministry. See you there!!!

8775 Centre Park Dr, Columbia, MD 21045

Menu: [tinositalianbistro.com](http://tinositalianbistro.com)

Reservations: [opentable.com](http://opentable.com)

Order: [grubhub.com](http://grubhub.com)

Phone: [\(410\) 730-8466](tel:(410)730-8466)

### FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

#### **"We receive The Warmest Letters"**

"You have recently sent a very fine newsletter. I was moved by it. I felt touched by the faithful work you are doing. How touching to be teaching and talking about the mark of compassion and then be given such a compassionate gift by the youth (Good Shepherd, Bel Air). I loved the photos of my friend with the basket in front of prison. Good for you and those you serve." From Lutheran Pastor Michael Fonner serving in Nairobi, Kenya (Michael, it is a team effort!!! Gerry)

"Behind bars? Of course, you are. But don't feel alone. Because pretty much everyone who exist are behind a bar of some kind. I don't mean the neighborhood 'Cheers' kind of bar,

but behind 'bars of darkness'. Maybe that dark moment you had way back when, put you where you are today. All people have a dark place inside (probably all their lifetime). It's how we choose to deal with it.

I am not behind bars but believe me, sometimes I feel like I am in such a dark place I might as well be. I think (however not in your shoes) that the bad thoughts might be worse than spending time. I am spending time. I am spending time because the bad thoughts don't go away. It's so scary. And I am one person out of a million. That is why I say, don't ever feel alone.

Now I know I said my bad thoughts don't go away. They actually do go away with the help from my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is the only one who can save us from the trials and sinful nature of our being. I pray and talk to Him confessing my bad thoughts. One image I find helpful is looking at Jesus hanging on the cross. Then picture myself at the foot of the cross. I bury myself at the base in the mud. And he tells me, that is where you will find me.

The other idea I want to share is, talk to someone. You'll be surprised at how much it helps to hear yourself tell someone how you are feeling.

In a Book I'm reading called Prayer by Richard J. Foster, he has a section about imagination. I have an overactive imagination and concoct all kinds of images in my brain. Romans 1:21. It is important to throw our concerns and dependence upon God.

Who knows, maybe one day we'll meet in Heaven at the neighborhood bar (Cheers) where everyone knows your name.

Renee

PS My donation given in gratitude for my new job.

## OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

I must be showing my age. There is a new word being used in the church which is “Generosity. It seems to have replaced the former “Stewardship”. Perhaps it is more explanatory. The word “respond” also works for me since we are to respond to what God has first bestowed on us!

Whatever word we use, I know generosity/stewardship/response when I see it. Let me give you two examples.

CSD member “JS” at MCTC in Hagerstown sends a check into the CSD office every quarter. It may only be for \$15.00 but he identifies it as his TITHE. You may do the math if you choose, but his TITHE means more to me than any of the larger “generous” donations CSD receives because it is heartfelt and comes from all he has!

Then there is JO at another facility in which we have access. JO recently made a large (5 figures) to one of our Synod’s congregations. While I don’t know the details, I am overwhelmed by this CSD members generosity.

Many of us have preached on the Widow’s Mite. JS and JO are my Widow’s with their generous mites!

Gerry Rickel

Pastor of The Community of St. Dymas

## New Paraments for CMCF

Pr Susan Beck

One of the challenges of worship “within the walls” is creating a sacred space in what’s often a noisy and drab environment. While all you really need to have “church” is a group of sisters and brothers gathered to express their love for Christ, it helps to have an

environment that brings our hearts and minds in focus on worship.

We certainly do have that essential group of sisters and brothers in the CSD, and one of our Delaware–Maryland pastors has been working to help us have that worshipful environment as well. The Rev. Anke Deibler, of Calvary, Mt Airy and Zion, Baltimore has been making lovely seasonal paraments for the worship community at the Central Maryland Correctional Facility.

A talented seamstress, Pastor Anke has made paraments in the liturgical colors of the church year with colorful and detailed appliques to fit the season, sized for the long plastic table we use as an altar. As one of the worshipers said, “This brings beauty to us and makes it more like church.” We have paraments for almost all the church seasons now—and Pastor Anke promises more are coming! These cloths help us create a sacred space and become a teaching opportunity to communicate the changing themes and moods of the liturgical seasons. The men who set up our worship space each week do so with dedication and reverence, and handle those paraments with all the respect due any church article.

We are so very grateful to Pastor Anke for giving her time, talents and materials to us to bring beauty and color to our worship space—truly a “sacrifice of praise!”



### **Our Own Amazing Viola Noffsinger**

At the Celebration of Lay Ministry held at Carrol Lutheran Village on April 15th, Viola Noffsinger was awarded the Luther Award for the Ministry she does with and for St. Dysmas.

In my opinion The Celebration of Lay Ministry is the finest event the Delaware–Maryland Synod puts on every year. On this occasion we honor and give thanks to some ordinary people who do some pretty extraordinary things. Basically, this is what the church is all about. Viola Noffsinger exemplifies the Celebration of Lay Ministry! Miss Viola is a pretty humble person and so she would not want me to praise her...so I won't.

I'm just going to give you a few facts. Miss Viola started her music ministry with the Community of St. Dysmas in 1988. So she has been providing music for St. Dysmas services for 30 years.

According to what I know she travels to prison every Monday evening and every Wednesday

evening. In addition she goes once a month to both the men's prison on Friday and women's prison on Saturday in Jessup. Now I will admit my math may be a little off but according to my calculation that is about;

125 evenings a year

Or let's look at it another way...

Miss Viola lives in the Metropolis of Creagerstown which is North of the little hamlet of Frederick . Creagerstown to Jessup is 120 miles roundtrip. She makes that trip two times a month for a total of 240 miles/month.

Once a week she drives to Roxbury Road outside Hagerstown which is a roundtrip of 220 miles/month.

Once a week she drives to CMCF in Sykesville at 60 miles roundtrip which is 240 miles/month.

My conservative calculations are 4,000 miles a year.

Miss Viola willingly goes where most people would not go let alone angels would dare not tread.

She has worn out green hymnals, blue hymnals and is now working on a red one.

She has broken in 4 St. Dysmas pastors, including me.

I compare her to the Post Office. "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of nite stays Viola from completion of her rounds". Miss Viola has shown up for worship when pastors have not because of the threat of snow.

I compare Miss Viola to Cal Ripken - minus the mansion - she is the Iron Woman of St. Dysmas.



## 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).

## 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 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

Pray for all children abused, born addicted, lonely and hungry. Fill their souls with all you Lord.

My name is D. I am mentally ill. I just need help with that.

God bless my mother & son. Please ease the burdens of my heart. Fill me with the Holy Spirit. Let your word resonate within me each and every day.

LORD, IN YOUR MERCY...HEAR MY PRAYER

## 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. Dymas. The best way your congregation can do this is by putting St. Dymas 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. 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 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.

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.").

## **WHO WE ARE**

**CSD** – The Community of St. Dymas – 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

905 Frederick Road + Catonsville, MD 21228

Phone 443-326-1115 + [www.stdysmasmd.org](http://www.stdysmasmd.org) + [pastor@communitystdysmas.com](mailto:pastor@communitystdysmas.com)