

Minutes of the 2023 St. Dysmas Annual Meeting January 20, 2024

Values of The Community of St. Dysmas

VALUE ONE: We are a Christ centered ministry that honors the teachings of the Bible = FOCUSED ON WORSHIP & BIBLE STUDY IN EACH CORRECTIONAL SITE

VALUE TWO: We believe that no life is beyond reach since all are created in the image of God = FOCUSED ON MEMBER EVANGELISM & SHARING MISSION/VALUES TO ALL

VALUE THREE: We rely on congregations and volunteers to accomplish and enhance the ministry= FOCUSED ON MARKETING; FUNDRAISING; VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

VALUE FOUR: We use faith stories to connect and enrich the lives of congregations, volunteers and persons incarcerated = FOCUSED ON SHARING FAITH STORIES

VALUE FIVE: We hold ourselves accountable to excellent management for the ministry including time, talent, and treasures = FOCUSED ON MANAGING MINISTRY

VALUE SIX: We are committed to a continuum of ministry and support in and outside the Institution = FOCUSED ON AFTER-CARE

Present: Lois Carrigan, Susan Beck, Linda Fleischer, Melody Hession, Bob Harvey, Myra Keel, Terry Lockridge, Linda Smith, David Kaplan, David Roberson, Alan Ramsey, Viola Noffsinger, Amy Shimonkevitz, Lil Tomecek, Bishop Bill Gohl

Welcome and Introductions by Lois Carrigan

- Thanked everyone for attending and being flexible with transition to all Zoom meeting
- Introduced the CSD Council

Opening Prayer – Pr. Susan Beck; Opening song – Pr. Melody Hession

Approval of 2022 Annual Meeting minutes

- Alan Ramsey moved to approve the 2022 minutes; approved by acclamation.

Pastor's Report by Pr. Susan

- Participation in the facilities has normalized but still not at pre-COVID level.
- Pr. Susan reminded us that the work in our congregations is changing lives. The impact of God's grace allows the members to go forward while adjusting to the reality of their confinement.
- Worship is held at MCIW, MCTC, and CMCF. Each congregation is a different community with a core of faithful and devoted disciples.
 - MCIW is the oldest congregation (40 years) and has a faithful group of women who attend services. Attendance does fluctuate and Pr. Susan is hopeful that it will increase through word-of-mouth.
 - MCTC has a well-established congregation and Pr. Susan recognized Viola for her faithful presence every week. Consistent leadership and long-term relationships are invaluable at the facility.
 - CMCF has the most dynamic membership with good attendance and a very supportive chaplain. This is a Pre-Release facility so turnover in membership is high. But, they all share a passion for worship and prayer.
- Pr. Susan continues efforts to rebuild and form new congregations.
 - MCIJ had a congregation before COVID but the current leadership does not support our return. She remains diligent in making contact with those who control access.
 - RCI appears to be close to allowing us to return. The new chaplain expresses support for our congregation but has not given us permission to resume worship.
 - JCI would be a new congregation and incarcerated individuals there have shown interest. However, the chaplain denies the presence of Lutherans and the need for another protestant worship service.
- She continues the practice of taking prayer requests between facilities and it is rewarding to see the power of prayer shared across the entire congregation.
- She outlined her successful efforts to support creation of a new CSD congregation at the Loretto Federal Correction Institute in Cresston, PA. They have 2 worship leaders and 60 men attended the first service there.
- Pr. Melody Hession has become a vital part of CSD as a volunteer and assistant to Pr. Susan.

- The mailing ministry continues to be strong and now sends devotional material to 47 incarcerated individuals who are unable to attend worship. Linda Smith and Linda Fleischer are instrumental in this success.
- Pr. Susan expressed appreciation for our volunteers and the many ways they contribute to the success of CSD. She is blessed with a network of support that makes her position of CSD pastor such a blessing to her.

Nomination of Pr. Melody Hession as CSD Council member:

- Lois introduced Pr. Melody Hession and nominated her for CSD Council.
- She described Pr. Melody's current role as a volunteer and the ways in which she assists Pr. Susan with activities. She has been attending meetings since July and is eager to become a voting member of Council.
- Terry Lockridge seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.
- Lois reminded us that CSD Council could use more members to provide fresh ideas and perspectives. She asked if anyone would be interested in serving or knows anybody who would like the opportunity.

Financial Report and 2023 Budget review by Bob Harvey - available on request

- Our budget is in excellent shape. We had a great year with receipt of a \$50,000 gift from St. Peter of Eastpoint.
- The 2023 budget includes a 3% increase in Pr. Susan's salary.
- Viola Noffsinger moved to approve the 2023 Budget as presented. It was approved by acclamation.
- Bob will be sending out the giving statements next week.
- He anticipates retiring from his role as CSD treasurer by the end of next year. David Roberson has agreed to step in and assume that role when necessary. He has experience as a Council member.

CSD Growth Plan

- St. Peter of Eastpoint made a \$50,000 donation to CSD in honor of Pr. Bob Harvey's service there. Lil Tomacek (representing St. Peter) was present to describe St. Peter's support of CSD and appreciation for Pr. Harvey's ministry there. It was given in the spirit of growth and the hope that the money would nurture our expansion.
- Given this donation, Lois described the plan to hire another part-time pastor who would work with Pr. Susan in a co-pastor role.
- Pr. Melody has been identified as the ideal candidate for this position. She is a current volunteer and source of support for Pr. Susan. She looks forward to blending her strengths with those demonstrated by Pr. Susan. In addition, Council will be voting in February to compensate Pr. Melody for 10 hours/week that she will spend assisting Pr. Susan and working on the co-pastor model with the sub-committee.
- A sub-committee is being formed to create this model of leadership with 2 co-pastors. Linda Fleischer will chair the committee and work with Pr. Susan, Pr. Melody and volunteers from the facilities who can provide input from our members behind bars regarding this structure.

Questions and comments

- We lift up in prayer all incarcerated individuals as well as those being released in need of re-entry support. Barriers exist for those inside the facilities and those in transition in the community.
- David Kaplan gave an example of God's grace at when needed most. He was faced with the decree that only wafers could be brought into a facility when a corrections officer provided a roll that he had at his desk. This was used at communion and appreciated by everyone.
- Healing prayers were requested for Pr. Melody facing removal of her wisdom teeth and Pr. Susan facing serious surgery for glaucoma and cataracts in both eyes.

Lois thanked everybody for attending and supporting our mission.

Final thoughts and closing prayer by Reverend Susan Beck, CSD Pastor and music from Pr. Melody.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Fleischer; 01/28/24