

THE COMMUNITY OF  
**ST. DYSMAS**

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



September, 2019  
Newsletter

## Inside Looking Out

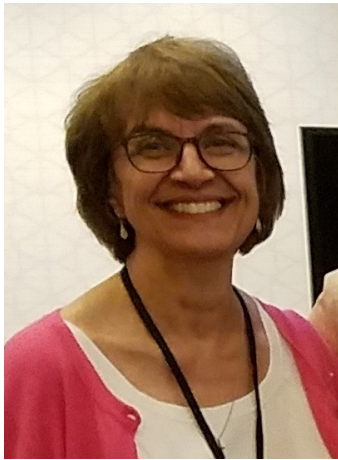
*"I am the church!*

*You are the church!*

*We are the church together!*

*All who follow Jesus, all around the world, yes, we're the church together!"*

Way back when my kids were little and I taught Sunday School and Vacation Bible School, I'd often teach this song—usually belting it out with big arm motions to illustrate I am, you are, we are the church with a circle as wide as we could stretch our arms to show how the church that we're a part of spans this whole wide world.



Pastor Susan Beck

When I preach at churches on Sunday mornings, the first thing I do is bring greetings from our congregations and the brothers and sisters at MCIJ, MCTC, MCIW and CMCF. That's important because we are a sibling congregation with every other Lutheran congregation, but you can't see us because we exist behind the walls of prisons.

One evening before worship at CMCF, we were talking about how, unlike other "prison ministries" that minister *to* those incarcerated, we are a congregation that ministers *with*, and worships together.

The conversation began with one of the men asking me "Where is your church?" I answered, "Right here." He asked again, "I mean where is your church—your *real* church out there?" and I answered again, "Right here! This is my real church!"

We talked about how the CSD is a Lutheran congregation with four sites, and all of us are part of that congregation that exists only inside the walls of prison. One of the men, who had been transferred from MCTC and had been a faithful worshiper there as well, exclaimed with a broad smile, "So I'm still in the same congregation as my buddies at MCTC!"

## From Pr. Beck (continued)

What a wonderful realization of what the Body of Christ is all about, the connection we have as Christians and in particular as Lutherans: wherever we are, whoever we are, whatever our past, all of us saints and sinners, all around the world, have a place and an essential part to play in that Body.

If you sang “We Are the Church” as a kid or teacher like me, you’ll recall that one of the verses goes,

*“The church is not a building,  
The church is not a steeple,  
The church is not a resting place,  
The church is a people!”*

Just as buildings, steeples and resting places don’t define our churches, neither do the walls that our CSD members live behind. We are defined by the love of Christ. Inside the walls and outside the walls, we are the church together!

Peace,

Pastor Susan

## Fund Raiser at Tino’s

On Tuesday, September 3, the CSD AfterCare Program received 10% of the total proceeds for the day at Tino’s Italian Bistro in Columbia. That included **ALL** catering, takeout, lunch, and dinner orders. The pictures below show some of our volunteers and others affiliated with CSD who came out to enjoy a wonderful meal and support this ministry. That’s definitely a win-win! Watch for our next event at Tino’s next year.



## Re-Entry Workshop

On the evening of August 22, we were exceptionally blessed to have several synod representatives with experience in re-entry and aftercare of returning citizens hold a workshop for us. They were in town for the Congregational Vitality Conference, and graciously came to speak with us at Salem Lutheran Church in Catonsville. There was a good turnout of CSD volunteers who have a heart for helping our members transition to the outside world when they are released and a spirited conversation.

This was a timely and important event for us at CSD as we endeavor to offer our members what we as a Lutheran congregation can uniquely provide: a connection to congregations on the “outside” who can give the same sense of community that our members have while they are part of the CSD on the “inside.”

The take away from this workshop is “**love them.**” While we discussed the various issues congregations can experience welcoming returning citizens and the importance for congregations to place appropriate boundaries as needed for the well-being of both the congregation and the returning citizen, the overriding principle is “**love them,**” and obey Jesus’ mandate to welcome. The synod representatives, some of whom had experienced this welcome themselves as returning citizens after incarceration, attested to the power of being welcomed into congregations when they needed it most.

The CSD is currently looking for regional contact persons who would be willing to be that connection through their congregations. If this is something God may be calling you to do, contact Pastor Susan at 443-326-1115 or [pastor@communitystdysmas.com](mailto:pastor@communitystdysmas.com).



# NOVEMBER 17, 2019

## 3pm-5pm



Friends,

Consider this your personal invitation to CSD's Annual Meeting on Sunday, November 17, 2019 at 3pm. The meeting will be held at Salem Lutheran in Catonsville. We will elect new CSD Council Members and approve our operating budget for 2020. Your voice and your vote are important. In fact, last year at the Annual Meeting, some of our CSD Musicians mentioned how hard it is to attend meetings in December, because of Advent responsibilities at their churches. Their voice was heard and we changed CSD's Annual Meeting to November. The Community of St. Dymas is a community and we need everyone in this community to help us live out our mission in Jesus Christ. Thank you for your support. Thank you for being a very special part of our community.

Peace,

Lois Carrigan

CSD Council Chair

## Interfaith Service at CMCF

On August 24, the Community of St Dymas hosted an event that would be extraordinary anywhere on this planet, but particularly so inside a prison: an interfaith worship that included Christians, Jews, Muslims, Native American spirituality, and others.

It began when one of our volunteers had last minute car trouble a couple months ago and wasn't able to get to worship at CMCF. The chaplain, Rabbi Tobesman, stayed with the CSD men who had gathered and led a discussion. Eventually the conversation turned to how the Holocaust relates to religious intolerance in the world today. It was the CSD men who decided that something should be done to bring people together and began talking about an interfaith worship service.

Chaplain Tobesman and I met a couple times to plan, but it was the men themselves who made the service happen. We used quotes from Jewish, Catholic and Lutheran sources to create a dialogue about the events of the Holocaust and considered how hatred could lead to something like that happening again. We shared scriptures from different faiths, prayed, and sang together. At the end, we invited any faith represented to share a blessing, and we heard words of benediction in several different traditions.

We could measure the interest in this event by the number of chairs we set up. Initially we set up about 25, but as the men kept coming we set up more and more. We lost track of how many men, from so many faiths, came to be in solidarity with their brothers.

What a picture of the kingdom of God—all God's children at peace with each other in the most unlikely of places! This is the second interfaith service that has taken place organized by the CSD with the help of Chaplain Tobesman, and the men expressed the desire to do this on a regular basis. Praise the God who goes by many names and blesses all those who honor that name!

Pastor Susan



## 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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:pastor@communitystdysmas.com).

# Pray for and with the Community of St. Dysmas

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 people 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

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

Pray for parole, my family and our church family and for volunteers. Pray for the homeless, hungry and addicted.

Lord, please be with M's family during this difficult time. Give them a feeling of peace even amongst their distress. Also, please lift up each of your children's hearts and bring salvation to those who have not truly found you yet. In Jesus name I pray

I want to thank God, for all of my blessings and for this upcoming court date in September. God, I pray for you to help give me the strength and for the right words to say to my judge in court for this sentence modification. Thank you Lord



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](mailto:pastor@communitystdysmas.com)  
Website: [www.stdysmasmd.org](http://www.stdysmasmd.org)

CSD Council -- [council@communitystdysmas.com](mailto:council@communitystdysmas.com)

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