

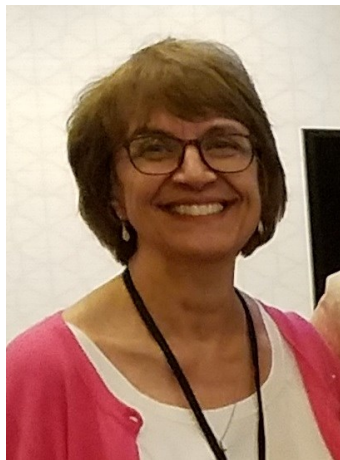


## From the Outside Looking In

I just got in from the Prison Congregations of America gathering in Atchison, Kansas, last night, and I'm going to be processing it all for a while—not just the information that I received but the way that the people I met told the story of what we do in and through prison ministry.

It all began, in fact, before the actual conference, on the plane to Kansas City. I was seated next to a very large man who introduced himself as someone who was traveling for work and had the “worst job in the world.” So, of course I asked, “What makes it the worst job in the world?” He explained that he works in a meat rendering plant, where poultry, beef and pork are butchered, processed and shipped out. His days are full of long hours, heat, and stench. When I asked if that made him a vegetarian, he smiled and opened the pizza box on his lap—meat lovers!—and offered me a slice.

He said his job stunk (literally) but he was happy to have it because of his “past.” He went on to talk about how he had spent most of his adolescent years incarcerated, then again in his twenties for the “terrible things I've done.” I asked him about his life then, his life now, his journey. The words just spilled out and he spoke of his shame, of how he was trying to stay sober and hard working, of the toddler son he hoped to set a good example for.



Pastor Susan Beck

I didn't need to say much; I think he just needed some permission to unburden his pain and a little affirmation for the courageous steps forward he's taken. He talked about his spiritual journey—how he had found the strength to keep going through faith in God, but was having a hard time finding a church because “so many churches don't follow the Bible—like, they have lady pastors.”

He kept talking, and I kept discovering a child of God, a brother in Christ, a convicted felon, who was moving through pain, and working out his progress one day at a time. He wondered out loud if he could ever prove himself to God, but also to himself. We talked a lot about that, and when the plane landed he said I “made sense” and he'd like to keep in touch. So, I gave

## From Pr. Beck (continued)

him my business card and said, "Ok, but I'm one of those lady pastors ... and a prison pastor." A wide and warm smile came over his face and he said he suspected that.

I heard Gospel there in the air between BWI and Kansas City-- the Gospel according to a "random" person I met on a plane, and a fitting beginning to a time of learning and sharing about ministries to those who have been in prison and, with God's help, are finding a way to move forward from there. The Gospel continued to be told over the course of the next few days. I heard the Gospel through the amazing stories of mingled pain and joy told of prison ministry in all its forms. I heard the Gospel through the quiet and tireless hospitality of the Benedictine sisters at the retreat center at Mt. St. Scholastica. I heard the Gospel in the lovely singing at the daily prayer services where the sisters and the retreatants all raised voices together to become one voice. I heard the Gospel in the laughter as we played games way too late into the night. I absorbed some information, got some valuable resources, and made contact with dedicated ministers with a wealth of experience and heart for the incarcerated and returning citizens. And it all happened, as the Gospel always does, through human beings and their stories: truly the word of God incarnate, over and over. I hope and pray you hear the Gospel in the next person you encounter.

Peace and all good,  
Pastor Susan

## **2018 Annual Meeting** **Sunday December 2, 2018, at 3 PM** **Salem Lutheran Church, Catonsville MD**

Join us on this very special day as we not only share all the amazing things that have happened in 2018, but also celebrate the ministry of Pr. Gerry Rickel with a special worship service.

## Sundays With CSD

The St. Dysmas council has developed a Speakers Bureau for the Community of St. Dysmas. Our speakers are available to preach and lead an adult forum or bible study. Our ordained leaders are available to preach and preside. Why not have a special **CSD** Day at your congregation! To schedule a Sunday or other time for Pastor Beck or one of our Speakers Bureau to visit your congregation to lead worship, to participate in an adult forum, to lead a day or evening bible study, to speak to a council or other interested group or simply sit down and chat, contact her by phone at 443-326-1115 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, 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 to add your presence, please contact us by phone at 443-306-1115 or by email at [pastor@communitystdysmas.com](mailto:pastor@communitystdysmas.com).

Watch this space for information about the work of our After Care Task Force as they put together an orientation program for our returning citizens.

## 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!

 The Community of St. Dysmas is an Amazon Smile charity. Please consider supporting CSD in this way.

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 Choice 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 pray that the Holy Spirit fills me with his love and Guidance. Also spirit and leads me and guides me on the right path. Place a hand of prot guide my son on the right path.

Pray for the safety, courage, strength and health of my six children, t my family, my friends, and my enemies. Also my freedom out of those walls a

I would love to send a prayer to my Heavenly father for my upcoming my family, as well as help with my anger and my impulsiveness.

Please pray for Pastor Susan as she settles in to being the Pastor of CS

Please pray for CSD's newly formed After Care Task Force as they pi program for congregations and volunteers who have a heart to work with our returning citizens. Pray for willing persons to discern the call to this very important new ministry of CSD.



LORD, IN YOUR MERCY, HEAR MY PRAYER

## Tino's Fundraisers

Thanks to everyone who supported our fundraiser at Tino's Italian Bistro in Columbia on September 4. Our next one will be on Tuesday, February 5, 2019 Please save this date!

## The Community of St. Dysmas

**A Lutheran Congregation within the walls of Maryland Correctional Institutions**

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)