



St. Dysmas Newsletter

September 2017

Invite the Pastor

Our worship services are on weeknights on the inside. This enables the Pastor of St. Dysmas to visit congregations on Sundays. He can give an update on the ministry, a sermon, a children's sermon, and adult forum, a cross generational class, or any of the above, and is open to suggestions.

Please call 443-326-1115, or write to The Community of St. Dysmas, 905 Frederick Road, Catonsville, Md., 21228 or email pastor@communitystdysmas.com to arrange a visit.

Pray With and For Us

"Pray that God fills me with his love, grace and peace. Bless my mom and son."

"Lord, please keep all the women and Pastor Rickel safe, healthy and full of your grace. Thank you for the many blessings you have brought into my life. Lord give me the strength to stay sane during the next 3 – 6 months and to return home to my family the healthiest of my 44 years of life." "Lord help me to forgive and forget the pain others have or are causing in my life today. Keep the devils off my heels and the trolls under the bridge."

"Thank you Lord for each and every beautiful day and all many blessings. Lord please watch over my family and loved ones, heal the sick and help the homeless. Thank you for blessing us with such awesome volunteers. I pray for strength, peace and joy."

FROM THE OUTSIDE IN

"Cross Fertilization"

Attendance at our Hagerstown worship site has been declining. It had gotten so low that Dave Kaplan and I met to discuss and pray over the matter.

After that attendance rose by 50% - from two to three. Then in the last two Mondays of July "cross-fertilization" happened. JT and ER who were faithful worshippers at other St. Dysmas worship sites, were transferred to Hagerstown. They discovered that there were CSD services and Bible Studies at MCTC, and so they walked into worship. Now we are five! The next Monday in walked LB who was transferred over from Patuxent Institution! He was beaming from ear to ear to discover that MCTC had CSD activities. Now we are six!

I witness "cross fertilization". A member of CSD at one site was transferred to another DOC Institution only to find out that CSD services were being held there also. They could attend worship and reacquaint themselves with volunteers and folks they had known at other places of worship. A reunion of sorts.

Meanwhile a sagging site in terms of attendance now has more people at worship than they have had in months! A win-win situation for everybody.

Christ fertilized all of us from the cross. I witnessed three men fertilize the CSD site at MCTC when they sought out worship! No accident that the Lesson that evening was the Mustard Seed and the Leaven!

CHANGES! CHANGES! CHANGES!

Changes have come to The Community of St. Dymas so it is time for an update. The changes in many ways will have little to do with what takes place on the inside – Worship and Bible Study will continue. The changes revolve around the goals for St. Dymas that the new Council will be working on over the next couple of years.

- A Ministry Review of The Community of St. Dymas in April of 2016. While it took place over only 24 hours, it was extensive and thorough! The Review Team developed 10 Affirmations (CSD is an important Matthew 25 ministry) and more importantly 11 Recommendations; chief of which was that a Task Force be appointed to develop a Mission Statement, Values and Goals.
- Task Force began its work in the early part of 2017. It consisted (in my opinion) of several highly competent and insightful people. In the space of 6 months, the Task Force completed their assigned task! Work has already begun to implement their recommendations.

New Mission Statement

God's purpose for The Community of St. Dymas is to share the transforming power of Christ's love with persons incarcerated in the Maryland Department of Corrections and the support them upon their release.

The work of the Community of St. Dymas aligns with the ELCA Social Statement "The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries" passed Churchwide Assembly – August 2013. It is grounded in scripture from Matthew 25:36b: "I was in prison and you visited me."

Values

1. We are a Christ centered ministry that honors the teachings of the Bible

2. We believe that no life is beyond reach since all are created in the image of God
3. We rely on congregations and volunteers to accomplish and enhance the ministry
4. We use faith stories to connect and enrich the lives of congregations, volunteers and persons incarcerated
5. We hold ourselves accountable to excellent management for the ministry including time, talent and treasures
6. We are committed to a continuum of ministry and support in and outside the institution

Goals

1. In all our actions, we will focus on the life-saving love and forgiveness of God in our worship, Bible studies and in how we interact with one another throughout all the care ministry as witnessed in the Holy Bible.
2. Equip and empower members to share the transformative journey and life-giving power of God and to have them invite others to join in worship and Bible study. To be evangelists for this ministry!
3. Create a deeper covenanted partnership between a number of congregations and CSD.

Thank You For Your Support

We thank you in advance for your financial support. You may give in several ways;

You can send a check directly to The Community of St. Dymas, 905 Frederick Road, Catonsville, Maryland 21228

Online giving can be found on The Community of St. Dymas Website! <http://www.stdysmasmd.org/home.html> and click on the donate now tab.

