
UPDATE FROM THE COMMUNITY OF ST. DYSMAS
a Lutheran congregation in the Maryland Correctional System

Dear Friend; It has been some time since I sent any news to you about The Community of St. Dysmas (CSD). Even our volunteers may not know what is happening at other Institutions at which we serve. So here goes...

- For the last seven months, a Task Force has been looking at CSD to see where we can do better, what we can do differently and what areas need some tuning. The Task Forces work is nearly finished. My thanks to Karen Kretschmann (Interim DEM), Pat Payne, Robin Simpson-Litton, Charles Zang, Susie Jordan, Stan Steele, and John Deason for their insight, ideas and willingness to look into the future with new eyes. Along with being faithful in our prison worship and Bible Study, expect more intentionality in After Care and Development.
- We have had a long-standing relationship with our Seminary in terms of the students' multi-cultural requirement. In the past few months Seminarian Amy Wagner actually did more leading than observing at MCTC. Thank you, Amy, for sharing your gifts with the men of MCTC. Plus, Seminarian Mike Lengel observed at CMCF. He also proclaimed the Gospel to the men at his last service. I love telling the men (and women) that they are professors training future pastors and then watch them take this role so seriously. God's richest Blessings to Amy and Mike!
- Many of you know that I served as Pastor of Second English Lutheran Church in Baltimore before serving CSD. You likely also know they closed as a Congregation after 175 years. I attended the closing service not knowing how I feel. Well I am not ashamed to say, I wept at a service that felt at times like a funeral. SELC did honor St. Dysmas by sharing a legacy of \$50,000. "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains a grain of wheat. But if it dies it bears much fruit." I give thanks to God for SELC allowing St. Dysmas, and other church related ministries, to continue their good work.
- The Lutheran Campus Ministry of College Park attended services at the Women's Prison in Jessup in early May. I am always delighted when our young people can share this unique ministry. Ask the young people about their jeans!!
- The Rev. Eric Wester, Asst. to the Presiding Bishop/Director of Federal Chaplaincy, will be attending services at MCIW in June. I thank Rev. Wester for his interest in The Community of St. Dysmas (and his patience).
- Speaking of the Women's Prison. Recently a sad event occurred. One of our "alumni", who was doing quite well, died due to a combination of factors. I will be conducting a Memorial Service for her Sunday, the 28th at MCIW. Thank you to Chaplaincy at MCIW for encouraging this Memorial Service for the ladies.
- A final word about the closing of one of the Institution where we serve. We started conducting worship at Patuxent Institution about a year ago. Since then attendance has dwindled. I made the decision last week to cease service there. Over the 32 years of CSD, services have come and went at various places. So, while I am thankful that the Holy Spirit allowed us to touch lives at PI for a season, I understand that everything has a season.

I give thanks to God for your prayers, financial support, and your volunteerism! We need to be where we are and the church needs us there also!

Peace,
 Reverend Gerry Rickel, Pastor of the Community of St. Dysmas