



Third Cross Quarterly

a Publication for Friends and Supporters

Spring 2016

Yarn Working: Knitting and Crocheting at SDSP and MDSP



“Pastor Kwen Sanderson and some of the items made by the knitters at MDSP (Mike Durfee State Prison).”

Volunteers inside and outside two of South Dakota’s state penitentiaries are helping keep others warm.

For many years, yarn donations delivered to St. Dysmas in Sioux Falls have been provided to selected inmates at both South Dakota

State Penitentiary (SDSP) and Mike Durfee State Prison (MDSP) in Springfield. Inmates approved for the program crochet or knit, producing hats, scarves and a few miscellaneous items.

St. Dysmas of South Dakota pastor at MDSP, Kwen Sanderson, says approximately 1500 hats made by MDSP inmates were handed out in 2014. The men at SDSP made over 1700 hats for distribution in 2015.

“An inmate at Springfield oversees the knitting and crocheting activities and maintains a detailed record of yarn supplies and items that are made,” Pastor Sanderson says. “For the items made over the year at Springfield, we look for events like the Thanksgiving dinner served this past year at Yankton’s Calvary Baptist Church where we can hand them out to people as they come in. We also hand hats and scarves out at some of the Yankton Banquet meals.”

The hats, scarves, prayer shawls and a few stuffed animals created by MDSP inmates are also donated to food pantries in Yankton and Bon Homme counties.

At both SDSP and MDSP, approximately 12 inmates work throughout the year to make hats and scarves.

“At Springfield, we currently have six men who use crochet hooks and six who use

knitting looms to make the items,” Pastor Sanderson says. “Four of those inmates have special needs and this is something they can do to feel productive and make a contribution to society.”

Most of the yarn donations are dropped off at the St. Dysmas of South Dakota office at East Side Lutheran church, 1300 E. 10th St. in Sioux Falls. Donors wishing to provide yarn can also contact St. Dysmas pastor at SDSP, Bob Chell at pbob@stdysmas.com.

Visitors to St. Dysmas at SDSP sometimes bring yarn for Pastor Sanderson the night of their visit. All types of yarn are accepted. Inmates select the colors and patterns of items they create.

Pastor Sanderson is currently seeking additional venues for distributing the crocheted items. Distribution ideas or requests for receiving hats and scarves that can be handed out should be sent to kwen.sanderson@gmail.com.

“The inmates are very creative and take a lot of pride in making the items,” Pastor Sanderson says. “Churches who may have an outlet for the items are welcome to contact us.”

For information about attending a St. Dysmas worship service or supporting the ministry call 605-338-1735 • www.stdysmas.com

Three Questions

As St. Dysmas celebrates its 25th anniversary we asked Pastor Bob to provide an historical update for those who weren't around at the beginning.

Why St. Dysmas?

St. Dysmas takes its name from the penitent thief in Luke 23:33 who asks Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom. When I began as pastor of St. Dysmas I thought the significance of our name was that Dysmas repented. However, after serving as pastor for 2 ½ years I've come to realize it is being remembered which is most significant. Many of the men incarcerated don't receive visits, calls or letters. Being remembered by weekly visitors from outside the walls sustains them; a living sign of God's promises and their hope for life after incarceration. Visitors truly are the face of Christ for those incarcerated. Visitors also discover the truth Jesus speaks of in Matthew 25, recognizing Christ in the faces of those who are incarcerated.

How is St. Dysmas different from other prison ministries?

St. Dysmas is a PCA congregation. This means we were born out of and follow the model developed by Prison Congregations

of America. There are several things which set PCA congregations apart from other prison ministries. One is that we are a congregation like any other congregation in our denomination, in our case the ELCA or Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This means as pastor I am called by the congregation, not hired by the warden. It means we have a church council behind the walls I am accountable to. The men of St. Dysmas take great pride and ownership of their congregation.

More important, I think, is the PCA model of partnering with outside congregations to bring in visitors. I am convinced that this is what keeps our congregation growing and dynamic, enriching our congregation as well as the lives and congregations of those who visit.

Who pays the bills?

Because prison jobs pay 25¢ an hour St. Dysmas relies on outside support. I have been told that those who began St. Dysmas 25 years ago did not seek synod or church-wide funding for our ministry because they wanted St. Dysmas to partner with other congregations which has, in fact, happened. One third of our support comes from congregations and units of congregations like Women of the ELCA. Sunday schools or

Lutheran Men in Mission. Two thirds of our budget comes from individual donors, many of whom have visited St. Dysmas.

What is one thing you want supporters of St. Dysmas to know or do?

There isn't one thing, there are three. First I want them to know that Paul's letter to the Philippians comes to mind when I think of our supporters. St. Paul writes, "I thank my God every time I remember you..." I am astonished, humbled and grateful for the many generous people and congregations who support our ministry.

Secondly I want them to know that the single best thing they can do to support St. Dysmas is to continue to visit our worship services on Thursday evenings in Sioux Falls and Springfield. Contact us anytime to schedule a visit.

Finally, I would ask them to consider becoming a Disciple with Dysmas, our name for those who provide monthly gifts through regular giving. This can be set up at our website by clicking on the 'support' link, or by contacting our office. These regular and faithful gifts in any amount (as little as \$5 a month!) provide stability to our budget.

THRIVENT FINANCIAL/THRIVENT CHOICE

November 2015

David Anderson
Marc Christofferson
Reid Christopherson
Joan Eitrheim
Julie Fedeler
James Gardner
Elizabeth Goodart
Margaret Greene
Mark Gronseth
Mark Hinkley
Earl Johnson
Coreen MajorErika
Iversen
Correen Major

December 2015

Jenean Aadland
Jeffery Clark
Dennis Ellingsen
Sandra Ellingsen
Kathleen Gorsett

In Memory of

David E. Berge by Earleen Berge
Myra (Mike) Hartley by Glenn and Joy Hagen
Harold Verhulst by Family and Friends
Bev Medenwaldt by Pastor Sheila and Dave Pohl

In Honor of

Marc Eldal's 53rd Birthday by Marvyl Eldal

January 2016

Renae Bostrom



25th Anniversary Update

We have been celebrating our 25th Anniversary year since Ascension Day, May 14, 2015. Although our anniversary year ends on Ascension Day, May 5, 2016 we will conclude our anniversary celebration at this year's SD Synod Assembly June 3&4 in Watertown.

Each month we have invited special guests to worship to thank and honor for their support of St. Dymas. Guests have included Bishop David Zellmer, Jack and Mary Mortenson of Prison Congregations of America (PCA), as well as PCA founder Pastor Ed Nesselhuf and former St.

Dymas Pastor Marlin Wangsness and others. We will continue to honor guests throughout the remainder of our anniversary year.

In conjunction with our anniversary celebration we are pleased to announce a new video featuring interviews with two of our congregation members. The nine minute video, 'Amazing Grace,' can be viewed on our website: www.stdymas.com or contact our office and we will be pleased to send you a DVD copy. We sent copies to ELCA congregations in South Dakota and supporting congrega-

tions in surrounding states along with a study guide and have been pleased with the response.

In December we received a call from SD Public Radio about doing an interview with men apart from their families at Christmas. We invited them to a meeting of our Inside Church Council on the Hill, the unit of the SD Penitentiary in Sioux Falls. That interview is also available on our website. Both the video and interview provide a deeper look into our congregation and how God's promises impact the lives of the men of St. Dymas.

St. Dymas Sunday

Congregations are invited and encouraged to celebrate our 25th anniversary in their congregation by lifting up prison ministry. One way to do this is with "Called to Hear" the new study guide to the ELCA statement on criminal justice. The 5 session guide and accompanying DVD are available at www.ELCA.org/socialstatements by clicking on the criminal justice link. Please encourage your congregation to utilize this resource.

Are you a Thrivent member?

Thrivent is changing the way it supports ministry by the creation of Thrivent Action Teams. Every Thrivent member is encouraged to initiate two projects a year with \$250 funding support from Thrivent. Projects can be in the areas of Service, Education or Fundraising.

Service grants could cover travel costs to visit St. Dymas, Education costs could provide meals to view and discuss the ELCA's new resource, "Called to Hear" about the criminal justice service. Fundraisers could supply yarn for men who knit caps donated to the needy or to provide a special meal or event in our congregations.

We would love to partner with you! Let us know how we can help.

Thrivent Choice

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans members, please direct Choice Dollars to St. Dymas of South Dakota.

Either: (1) Log into Thrivent.com/thriventchoice and select "Get Started;"

Or: (2) Contact a representative from the Member Connection Center at 800-847-4836 and, when prompted, say "Thrivent Choice." When next prompted, say, "Choice Dollars."

St. Dymas of South Dakota
1300 E 10th St
Sioux Falls, SD 57103-1779

Address Service Requested

Prayer Corner - Please pray for these concerns

- Continued growth of St. Dymas presence at Yankton
- Reaching out to inmates across the State of South Dakota in after care
- Monetary donations for the ministry
- Continued development of St. Dymas Sundays throughout South Dakota
- Continued blanketing of the inmates in South Dakota with God's promises.

For more information about
St. Dymas:
call Sioux Falls - 605-338-1735
www.stdymas.com

If you need to change the number of
newsletters you currently receive
call 605-338-1735

The School of Adversities

“Joseph’s master took him, and put him in prison...” -Genesis 39:20

There was no question concerning the innocence of Joseph, yet God allowed him to be thrown into prison for a crime he did not commit. Where was Joseph's God who had previously given him dreams of success and a destiny far from being unjustly sent to prison? Why does God allow “unjust” suffering for His children today?

Well, many fine books and papers have already been written on questions like these, so, we will focus on God's promise of “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28; cf. Gen. 50:20)

We know from reading the rest of Joseph's story,

that this promise was definitely fulfilled by God, but then that's of course after God had already worked things together for good in order to accomplish His purpose --and in His way and timing. For you see, God also knew in advance what Joseph needed to be “taught” in order that good would come to not only Joseph, but in this case, the future nation of Israel! God knows what you and I need to be taught as well, and often time, that schooling takes place in adverse circumstances--which most often seem to be the best teacher.

For those currently in adverse circumstances--and especially for us in prison--there may indeed be some positive lessons that God is calling us to learn. The following are some of the possible reasons God allowed Joseph's (and our?) adversities:

- To overcome attitudes of pride
- To develop a servant's heart
- To train him to be faithful
- To prepare him for leadership
- To test him in moral purity
- To teach him how to respond to false accusations
- To be an “energy-giver” while in prison
- To teach him how guilty men think
- To prepare his brothers to repent
- To learn patience in God's timing

“Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:11

-Tim
Mike Durfee State Prison