



Living Stone Prison Church Springfield, SD *Summer, 2019*

An Eye and Heart Opening Experience

Mark Your Calendar to come Worship with us

7-21-19
Aurora Reformed & Fusion

7-28-19
Volga Reformed

8-4-19
First Reformed Sioux Falls

8-11-19
open

8-18-19
Delaware Reformed & Fusion

8-25-19
open

9-1-19
Aurora Reformed

9-8-19
open

9-15-19
Brothers in Blue & Fusion

Please call 605.366.3624 to set up a date to come worship with us! Visitors are always appreciated!

By: Pastor Dan Ebbens

Reprinted from an article in the South Dakota Mail

I didn't know what to expect walking through the door. I had never been to a penitentiary before and I found myself a little nervous. No, I was not going as a long term guest of the state of South Dakota, rather I was filling in for a good friend of mine, Jason Wiersma, who is one of the prison pastors in Mike Durfee Prison in Springfield, SD. Jason is currently on a sabbatical for a couple months and had asked for help from pastors within our region to go into the prison and help with the worship service. I eagerly jumped at the opportunity to see what happens behind the barbed wire during one of their Sunday evening worship services. I was not only blessed for the opportunity to go, but was at times moved to tears at what I experienced and was wildly blessed to be there. I have to own and acknowledge my own personal bias before I arrived. I expected there to be a colder environment during the worship service. Years of hard living and even possible trauma have a tendency to do that to people, which I have seen time and time again in the world around me outside the prison walls. I expected to see a small Bible-study-sized crowd in the worship service for whatever reason. I expected there to be coldness towards me as someone not from the prison, not able to understand the difficulties of their life and the difficulties of life behind bars. I quickly learned that I really didn't have a reason for any of these expectations and I couldn't be more wrong.

I arrived a little early in order to give time to check through security and get situated in the chapel. The first inmates to come into the chapel were those involved in the worship leading. When I asked what they wanted me to do, they responded, "just preach, we'll do everything else." They led worship with singing, playing instruments, reading poems they had written, sharing prayer concerns, and giving testimonies as to what Christ has done in their lives. It was an incredibly gifted group of people leading worship that day. Another thing that I noticed was the level of joy as the prisoners were coming

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“And We are Back”

After taking a sabbatical from the end of March to the end of May, Ruth and I are back and actively fulfilling our roles with Living Stone Prison Church. We had some great people covering for us during our absence and things clicked along as if we were never gone. During the sabbatical we had multiple opportunities to get away and pray and plan for the future of the ministry. I (Jason) camped in our van in the woods to find some seclusion by which I could clearly hear from the Good Shepherd. I also wrote a book that should be published later this year called “Prisons We Live In” that traces my journey and that of others in the prison and in society. The book identifies some of the things that can hold us back (imprison us) and how Jesus’ provides an escape plan.

It was great to take some time away to experience God in different ways than normal. There was concern with some that God would transition us into something else during our time away, but that hasn’t happened. We are excited about the future of Living Stone and are excited that Jason Burhoop has joined us as a summer intern. Jason is planning on writing an article for the Fall newsletter about his experience. We also want to thank Pastor Dan Ebbens for letting us share his article with you, he was one of the great volunteers who stepped up to serve while we were away.

IN CHRIST’S LOVE,
Pastor Jason and Ruth Wiersma

Article Continued . . .

into worship. There was a tone of worship being a privilege and the opportunity to praise God was like pure gold. Throughout the worship time they worshiped with passion with joy in their hearts. Another thing I noticed was their absolute hunger for the Word of God. Their Bibles were tattered from use, and as I preached they stayed on the edge of their seats. They truly were desiring more of God through worship. I found myself embarrassed over thinking the way I did before I arrived. God truly humbled me that day and taught me some important lessons. The most important lesson I learned, was that I (and maybe churches in general) desperately need what they have. Using the gifts we have been given, hungering after the Word of God with joy, and seeing worship as an absolute privilege. How many of our churches are marked with these attributes as a rule, not as an exception? I also came to the realization that they are no different than me when it comes to their need for redemption with Christ as their Redeemer. I believe the reason many of the worshippers that night were so excited and joyful in their worship was because they understood their need for Christ. What would my life be like and how would things be different if I understood my need? The Bible teaches that every one of us is fallen and in need of redemption.

I am grateful for the time I had with the prisoners down in Springfield, and I hope there are future opportunities to be able to worship with them. Until then, God has taught me to listen and learn from those around me. God often times uses the people in our lives we might not expect to speak to our hearts and to bring us into seasons of growth - if we will just listen. Please pray for the church meeting behind prison walls, both here and around the world.

God Bless,
Pastor Dan Ebbens, Aurora Reformed Church

Please prayerfully consider how you can help us meet our annual budget.

Please pray-

That we stay faithful to the job God has called us to do.

That God would work in the hearts and lives of the inmates at the Mike Durfee State Prison.

That God would continue working in the lives of the men as they are released from prison.

Please make your **tax deductible checks** payable to Living Stone Prison Church.

All contributions can be sent to our treasurer:

Scott Lee, PO Box 415, Yankton, SD 57078

God bless-

Pastor Jason & Ruth Wiersma, 605.366.3615

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