

MAY 2022

Living Stone Prison Church

Mike Durfee State Prison - Springfield, SD

Freedom's Gate Church

4800 S Tomar St, Sioux Falls, SD

“FATHER FORGIVE THEM FOR THEY KNOW NOT”

This is Pastor Jason of Freedom's Gate Church. The neat thing about being yoked with Living Stone Prison Church is that I get to go back into my old stomping grounds within the Mike Durfee State Prison periodically. The Monday before Easter, my wife Ruth and I met up with Pastor Dan in the prison chapel and listened to the stories Dan and some of the inside leaders had for us from recent months. We were greatly encouraged by what is going on and the continued rebound from the very tricky Covid years. One of the musicians did mention to us that the number of outside guests that have come post-covid is still much lower than before the pandemic. I would encourage you, whether you've ever been to a Living Stone service or not, to go and see what God is doing inside the walls of that prison on a Sunday night. The information you need is to the right or on the website. The groups that come have no idea what a blessing they are for the inmates who attend the worship services. They love having outside people come to worship with them, whether it's 2 or 12 people. They are eager to see you again or meet you for the very first time.

The evening of our Monday visit to Mike Durfee, we, along with the outside council, met with the inside council (inmate led board). A man I'll call Mark had devotions prior to the meeting that

MARK YOUR
CALENDAR TO COME
WORSHIP WITH US
EVERY SUNDAY
NIGHT AT 5:00

Please call Lauri at
712.470.4165 to set up a
date to come worship
with the men at Mike
Durfee State Prison!
**Visitors are always
appreciated!**

Would you be willing to
make a meal and worship
with us at Freedom's
Gate? Please call or text
Ruth at 605.366.3624 to
find a date that works for
you or check our
MealTrain link on our
website.

Check out our updated
website for the calendar
of open dates.

evening. I'd worked with Mark for years before we went on to plant Freedom's Gate and he has remained with Living Stone and serves in many ways on a daily/weekly basis. Mark got everyone's attention right away by stating that he had been brutally assaulted about 3 weeks earlier outside of the chow hall. In what turned out to be a case of mistaken identity, he was attacked from the behind, fell unconscious, and then hit his head on an electrical box in front of him. He did regain consciousness a little while later but was rushed to the ER and stayed in the hospital with a shattered eye socket, loose teeth, and damage to his nose. A staff member showed him a picture of himself when he first sat up after the incident. It wasn't pretty, there was a lot of blood covering his clothing. (Just FYI-there have been no violent incidents in the chapel going on 11 years now)

Mark went on to say that after he gathered his thoughts following the attack, he was concerned about his physical condition, but for some odd reason, he was more concerned about the man who had attacked him. Mark realized that this man was not at peace with his life. He realized this man would face consequences for his actions including being in lockdown for a while and possibly being charged with another felony. Mark realized that this man needed Jesus, and so he forgave him on the spot and began to pray for him. Mark is just one of the many members of Living Stone Prison church who takes their faith and their obedience to Jesus very seriously. (Thankfully many of them land at Freedom's Gate upon release) Love your enemies? Do good to those who hate you? Who does things like that? Those that adhere to the Words in red, that's who!

I am writing this newsletter in the days surrounding Easter. The whole story of Holy Week plays in my mind during this time of year. As I thought about Mark and his reaction to the assault, one of the things Jesus said on the cross came to mind, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). As only Jesus could, He looked down and asked for forgiveness for the Roman soldiers with their hammer and cruel whips, for the Pharisees whose jealousy drove them to seek the death of an innocent man, for the people who sneered at the site of the "chosen one"-being crucified and seemingly unable to save Himself. "Forgive them for they know not what they do". Friends have you forgiven those who have mistreated you? To forgive isn't to agree with what they did, it's to recognize their depravity in understanding how much they hurt you (and me) and release ourselves from the pit of bitterness we could otherwise live in whether they are repentant or not.

Mark's faith in what he went through was inspiring and quite rare, but then again it was simply a reflection of the One he follows.

Thank you for your support of Living Stone and Freedom's Gate Church, where we seek to evangelize and disciple our congregations to have uncommon Faith. We'd love to have you join one of our services soon. Please contact us for more information.

IN CHRIST'S LOVE,
Pastor Dan and Natalie Ebbens (Living Stone)
Pastor Jason and Ruth Wiersma (Freedom's Gate)

All contributions can be made payable
to Living Stone Prison Church and sent to our treasurer:
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Pastor Jason—605.667.0312