

FEBRUARY 2023

# LIVING STONE PRISON CHURCH

MIKE DURFEE STATE PRISON, SPRINGFIELD, SD

## FREEDOMS GATE CHURCH

4800 S TOMAR ROAD, SIOUX FALLS, SD

*"This will be your opportunity to bear witness. Luke 21:13*

"What a great opportunity..." The puzzled look on my face communicated the need for more explanation as I was visiting with a brother inside this week. We were visiting on all the changes that have taken place over this past year and were sharing some of the difficulties that this poses for the ministry. There is no doubt that many of you who are connected with Living Stone Prison Church are impacted in some way with these changes that have taken place. Many of the changes impact where we can go, what we can bring in, and the requirements for visitors being able to worship with us on a Sunday evening. These changes were the reason for the puzzled look when the brother declared, "What a great opportunity."

What he was explained to me was nothing short of a testimony of growing faith. Though the further restrictions are not something being celebrated themselves, the response the church gives is a great opportunity to witness grace and understanding. First and foremost, it needs to be stated that a great majority of the staff we see inside the walls of the prison are well intended and doing the best job they absolutely can in difficult circumstances. Often, the brothers inside include the correctional officers and their families during our prayer time. Being flexible and compliant shows the world that being inherent in our faith is a sense of submission to the earthly authorities we are commanded to give in Scripture (Romans 13:1-2). To be able to work through frustrations about changes with grace and poise is an opportunity to witness to the world the fruit of true faith. I see this happening with the brothers inside. Please join us in prayer for the ministry during this season of change. Pray for the people making decisions for the safety of the men and the staff, and pray for the ministry staff to weather these changes with grace. Even though there are more restrictions on our worship time together, the need for guests at Living Stone worship service is more important now than ever.

Thank you and God bless - Pastor Dan Ebbens

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

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.

[www.LivingStonePrisonChurch.org](http://www.LivingStonePrisonChurch.org)

# Save the Date!

## 11th Annual - Living Stone Banquet

It will be a night filled with  
yummy food, great  
entertainment and fellowship!

Where: Bethany Reformed  
Church, Canton, SD

When: Thursday, March 23, 2023  
at 6:30 pm

RSVP: Please let us know by  
March 18 if you can come, so we  
can plan on how much food to  
have. Call or text Ruth at  
605.366.3624

Pastor Dan will be giving a  
ministry update on Living  
Stone's activities at the prison  
and Pastor Jason will give an  
update on Freedom's Gate. We  
will also hear from a few former  
inmates how God has used the  
ministry to encourage and  
strengthen their Christian  
journey.

All contributions can be made payable to  
Living Stone Prison Church  
and sent to our treasurer:  
Brad Whitsell,  
PO Box 415, Yankton, SD 57078  
LivingStonePrisonChurch@gmail.com  
www.LivingStonePrisonChurch.org  
Pastor Dan— 605.630.1807  
Pastor Jason—605.366.3615

# IDENTIFIED

BY PASTOR JASON WIERSMA

As I write this, we are just 2  
days past a wonderful baptism  
service we had on January 15.  
There were 5 attendees of  
Freedom's Gate Church who  
were baptized that day. As is our  
custom, I took the opportunity to

talk to those who made this step of faith before they  
would take the plunge. Over the years I've received some  
requests for baptism that I was unable to honor because  
the individual was errant in their understanding of what  
baptism was about. Often the thought was that  
something magical was in the water itself void from an  
actual commitment in the faith. My hope is always that,  
having been denied, I can work with them to understand  
and accept the truth so there will be a valid baptism in  
their future. Sometimes it works.

I make it very clear to those who would partake in the  
sacrament that apart from Jesus and the cross, baptism  
has no power or meaning. To make my point that  
evening, as I spoke to the congregation, I said that apart  
from the cross we just had a crummy little pool party  
with only a handful of people invited. Nothing of  
significance would have happened. **HOWEVER**, following  
Jesus' lead to practice the sacrament in the correct  
manner makes it a holy moment that gives a visible  
display to the spiritual power of forgiveness and  
regeneration. Baptism is a beautiful thing when  
accompanied by an identification with Jesus as Savior  
and Lord!

You have maybe heard a pastor encourage their  
congregation to "remember their baptism". Of course, for  
some, they might roll their eyes and think, I was only 2  
months old, that's not possible. Well, this pastor would  
encourage you to remember your baptism as an  
identification, whether you remember the water and the  
words or not. What I hope we all can recall is the  
symbolism of Christ's blood washing us clean from our  
inherent and sometimes intentional sin stains, and the  
Holy Spirit's power to lead us in a refreshing and distinct  
life that is apart from the soiled plights of society.  
Remember your baptism. Remember your  
**IDENTIFICATION** with Jesus Christ.

I hope to remind the 5 individuals (3 men/2  
women) of their baptism often in the future. It  
was a beautiful evening, and as I think back on it,  
I also remember my own identification and I  
hope you will as well. Jesus came to cleanse and  
restore us to the Father. The waters of baptism  
symbolize this great truth, but we must not stop  
there. Our identification with the Savior is what  
gives credibility to our water baptism. Brothers  
and sisters, may we take pride that we are  
identified.



AS SOON  
AS OPEN  
AND A VOICE