

FEBRUARY 2024

# LIVING STONE PRISON CHURCH

MIKE DURFEE STATE PRISON, SPRINGFIELD, SD

# FREEDOMS GATE CHURCH

4800 S TOMAR ROAD, SIOUX FALLS, SD

## “ASSISTING THE GREAT PHYSICIAN” by Pastor Jason

He stormed out of the doors of the halfway house where he'd been living. Vulgarities and other malicious words flew out of his mouth aimed at someone he was obviously very angry with. I watched as he walked down the sidewalk still swearing and discerned that now was not a good time to try and engage him in conversation.

Three days later, another man walked into the doors of the Freedom's Gate church building just prior to the Sunday service starting. I was standing in the hallway towards the backside, squinting to see who it was as I was partially blinded by the sun coming through the glass doors behind him. I turned to the person beside me and said in a surprised tone, "Is that Harry\*?" (\*name changed)

Sin... the thing sinners do, the thing a Pastor like me warns about, the thing all of us struggle with, and many times try to hide from others. Sin... the thing Jesus came to this earth to remove from our life so we can be forgiven and free from its consequences.

Sinners... people Jesus had compassion for, people Jesus came to save, people that Jesus befriended and forgave, people Jesus intentionally hung out with. In fact, when the Pharisees grumbled and complained that Jesus was hanging out with sinners, the Master Teacher responded this way, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:31-32)

The relationship between those with obvious or ongoing sin and the church has been a shaky one historically. One person who was struggling was asked if they'd gone to church for help. They responded by saying: "The church? Why would I go to church? I feel bad enough the way it is. The people there would just make me feel worse!"

That situation happened in another state so I cannot speak for the church in question. I think it's sad that anyone would avoid God's people in their struggles instead of looking to the church for grace and direction in whatever ails them. A quote often attributed to Saint Augustine goes like this, "The church is not a museum for saints, it is a hospital for sinners."

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!

## 12th 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 14, 2024  
at 6:30 pm

RSVP: Please let us know by  
March 10 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

We at Freedom's Gate and Living Stone  
Prison Church hope to be that hospital for  
sinners in which the Great Physician does His  
spiritual surgery on those with hearts sickened  
by sin and returns them to spiritual vitality  
through both Grace and loving correction. It  
seems like people are getting that memo.

The angry man whose outburst I'd witnessed,  
was standing in the sanctuary as we sang  
Amazing Grace together at Freedom's Gate the  
following Sunday. I wondered if he knew I'd  
seen his behavior the Thursday before. I was  
thankful that he came even if he did.

I was surprised to see "Harry" at Freedom's  
Gate because it had been reported to me that  
he had gone on a drug bender and landed in jail  
(again) just a couple days earlier, but there he  
was in the front row as I preached about how  
God's arms can reach us in the deepest of self-  
made pits. Earlier in the service he had  
requested prayer for those struggling with their  
addictions, including himself.

Both men had reasons why they might have  
avoided worship out of shame, and yet there  
they were which made my heart glad.

We fully realize that not every church body  
is prepared to take on the challenges of having  
a congregation with a high percentage of  
former inmates and addicts, some of whom are  
still struggling with addiction and iniquity of  
other kinds. However, I am also fully aware that  
there are those struggling with sin in many  
forms within every body of believers. I implore  
you to make every effort to welcome in those in  
your congregation who may be tempted to flee  
when their sin becomes obvious and maybe  
even public knowledge. For the sinner, the  
medicine needed to bring people back to health  
is found in the pharmacy of the church and not  
apart from it. Jesus is the Great

Physician, and we are his assistants. If the  
message we are sending reads only of  
condemnation and judgement, we can expect  
the sick to try and find "medicine" somewhere  
else which will harm instead of heal.

We are thankful for all those who  
partner with us to provide a place that  
both sinners and saints find the Grace and  
Truth for the journey of life!