

OCTOBER 2024

# Living Stone Prison Church

Mike Durfee State Prison - Springfield, SD

# Freedom's Gate Church

4800 S Tomar St, Sioux Falls, SD

## 'CHURCH!!'

**On a recent Thursday afternoon, Steve (Harrison) and I (Pastor Jason) were finishing the set up at church for the Bible Study we would be having that evening when something rather bizarre happened. We heard beating on the fire escape doors beside the pulpit area with someone yelling, "CHURCH-CHURCH" at the top of their lungs. Confused, Steve and I glanced at each other as to what was happening. The church building we are blessed to use is in what is considered to be a good part of Sioux Falls where chaotic behavior isn't often witnessed. I made my way to the front entrance, approximately 50 feet from where the noise was coming from, gently opened the door slightly and peaked out. I saw a man with one of his arms completely inside the cigarette butt receptacle. He had twisted the top off and was digging around vehemently. It reminded me of watching a veterinarian pull a calf or foal. He was really searching around in there. He did not see me at the door, so I slunk back inside and let Steve know what was going on. I called my wife who was planning to join us soon and asked her to hold off until I figured out how to best deal with our unexpected and seemingly unstable guest.**

**I recall that before Ruth and I planted Living Stone Prison Church we went to a church planting convention in Florida. One speaker (a church planter from Colorado) gave a riveting testimony about the kind of people that came his way because he had planted a church. He spoke of a man who had some social deficiencies and periodically swore loudly in the church building. He spoke of another man who struggled with gender identity and at times wanted**

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.

to join the women's programs the congregation offered rather than the men's. The point the speaker wanted to make to the audience was that, if you plant a church "they" will come and who "they" are all depends on the day. It has certainly been my observation over my years with Living Stone, and now even more so with Freedom's Gate Church, that brokenness comes in many different packages, but thankfully forgiveness and freedom are found in the same Savior.

I love what the Savior said after He encountered a broken man by the name of Zacchaeus who found healing through a relationship with Him. Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:9–10-ESV) "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost". I love that! And who are the lost? Well, they are the people that haven't been found yet. They are the sheep that have strayed and need to be navigated towards the Good Shepherd and His fold. The Church exists to provide those directions.

People like Mark for instance. (The cigarette butt guy) My choices on that day were call the cops, wait it out, or go outside and strike up a conversation with the man. I decided to glance out the door one more time before making that choice. This time I pushed the door open a little too far. He glanced in my direction and his eyes met mine. I considered shutting the door quickly and going back inside, but I saw no hostility in his eyes, only confusion, and then he said my name. I stepped out the door and met him on the concrete approach in front of the church building as he smoked some of the used treasure (short cigarettes) he had found in the outdoor ashtray. He remembered me, and as I talked with him, his face and voice became familiar. We had met in prison (Springfield) and he seemed confused as to why I was now standing outside a church in Sioux Falls. Sadly, Mark was in no condition to attend Bible study on that evening, as he was some sort of combination of drunk and high. Steve then joined us. We chatted with him about his life and current struggles. We invited him to join us in the future. We then gave him a bottle of water and a snack to strengthen him for the rest of the day's journey and watched as he crossed the street and eventually headed West. Since our encounter a few days ago, Mark has been on my mind and in my prayers often. Did I do enough? Did I do too much? Where is he now? Will he come back in better condition to be ministered to? (I did give him my number) Friends, there are many broken people out there. Not many are pounding on the doors yelling "CHURCH-CHURCH", but many ARE needing to experience the Love of the Redeemed community of God. (The Church worldwide)

Thank you for your love and support as we continue to point people like Mark towards Jesus! Due to a lower-than-normal yearly donation total, (likely affected heavily by the flooding in our area) we do find ourselves significantly behind on our yearly budget and in need of support. We would love it if you'd consider giving a gift or talking with your church about helping us with the budget. Thanks again for all you've done over the years to help us do what we do!

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

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—605.667.0312