



FreeIndeed

Summer 2020

If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. —John 8:36

FreeIndeed Prison Congregation
A congregation of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
at Anamosa (Iowa) State Penitentiary
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A word from inside

Carry each other's
burdens, and in this
way you will fulfill
the law of Christ.

—Galatians 6:2

Even though I walk
through the valley
of the shadow of
death, I will fear no
evil, for You, [my
Savior and my God] are
with me.

—Psalm 23:4

The law of Christ ends, "...you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). The increased examples of Christ's love around me during the COVID-19 crisis period has been uplifting.

Even though our lifestyles and routines have not changed as much as they would have outside these walls, what has changed is the emerging of empathy. Civility has increased between faith groups, support has increased for men who have family members with COVID-19, out of work, or struggling with isolation. Men are sharing each other's burdens. Men are sincerely asking how staff members are handling the crisis – humanity has been exposed.

The virus has imprisoned the world, one person at a time. As a member of a prison population, I can sympathize with the hardship of isolation. I can relate to the mundane existence of "home"-bound living. I also long to turn a ZOOM correspondence into a hugging embrace.

2 Peter 1:3 states, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life..." Yet, during this crisis, God has shown me that I had been taking advantage of my "needs for life;" all that I have in prison are not God-given needs. *I have been wrong. What I need are the basics to keep a sparrow alive. All the rest are blessings.*

And I am not the only one who realizes this. The revelation has become conscious thought in this prison. Charitable acts of kindness abound – even if it is just a gift of an envelope for a letter home. The institution has been showering gifts of free phone calls, free emails, and free video visits. There are men having live conversations with family members they thought they would never see again.

This virus is devastating. It has taken loved ones and shattered economies. The summer heat will not send it away. Yet, its presence forced me to look inward to my heart; to look outward to my fellow inmates in the present – their present – not just as someone who will be gone in the future.

Most importantly, the virus has forced me to look humbly at what God had blessed me with prior to the infection. I pray for these blessings to be added to my life again.

I am blessed. All of us are blessed. Right now in this storm of uncertainty.

—Michael
an incarcerated individual at ASP

Introducing Pastor Dirk Stadtlander



A little about me

I'm Dirk Stadtlander, the recently called pastor of FreeIndeed-A Prison Congregation of the ELCA at Anamosa (Iowa) State Penitentiary (ASP). First of all, **thank you!** Thank you for your support of this ministry either from

its inception or coming on board more recently, and now through its pastoral transition. I'm indebted to all of you and am thankful for your collaboration, as well as Pastor Jerry Collell's ministry among you and the incarcerated individuals at ASP.

As COVID-19 has brought about many changes in our personal lives, this is also the case for FreeIndeed. One major change is that *no outside volunteers are able to visit the institution* at this time. I'm eager to meet all of you and look forward to when time and opportunity allows for that and for when our worship volunteers will once again be able to physically worship and study the bible with us inside the walls.

A bit about me... I was born and raised in Southeastern Iowa. I was baptized at Christ the King, Iowa City and affirmed faith at Zion, Iowa City. After high school, I studied at Luther College and Wartburg Theological Seminary. My internship year was in a congregation in Sacramento, California. My first call as pastor was serving as an ELCA Missionary in the country of Senegal (West Africa) for eight years before returning to the United States and being called as pastor to a congregation in Colorado. Most recently, I completed a second unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (chaplains training) and was on the Spiritual Services staff as an Interfaith Chaplain at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. I'm married to a teacher and we have two daughters.

Thank you, again, for your continued support of FreeIndeed. I was pleasantly surprised to hear a **prayer request from an incarcerated individual** at our Ecumenical Easter Worship Service to include the Governor, the Director of the Iowa Department of Corrections, and the Warden of ASP... a request of thanksgiving for their leadership and decisions made that

have "up to now" kept COVID-19 out of Anamosa State Penitentiary. A side benefit was noted as well in this thanksgiving that with the closing of schools and reduced demand of restaurant kitchens, the food preparation at ASP has included much better produce: fresh asparagus, pineapples, grapes, and kiwis!

Use of Force AND Compassion

As local and national conversations explore topics surrounding policing and use of force, I find myself reflecting on training sessions I recently experienced as part of new employee orientation and training at Anamosa State Penitentiary.

When rules and norms are not being followed, a person in a position of authority and help seeks to gain compliance. As the use of force increases from verbal warnings through pepper spray and hard hand techniques to batons and deadly force, the liability and risk of injury to both people also increase. The mantra that a new mailroom worker, a facilities worker, several correctional officers and I learned was that the goal is "to use the least amount of force necessary to gain compliance."

Other training modules introduced us to communication and de-escalation strategies and the Iowa Department of Corrections Core Correctional Practices. In general, the Core Correctional Practices help to facilitate a collaborative working relationship between incarcerated individuals and staff in order to reduce recidivism and facilitate a safe environment inside the institution. As effective communication and de-escalation strategies are employed, I believe that this sometimes leads both parties into a place of vulnerability. When we allow ourselves to see each other as fellow human beings and truly empathize with each other, we risk feeling one another's burdens and pain. Even *our prejudices and biases, both consciously learned and implicitly applied, are not immune to being transformed when we truly encounter and communicate with others.*

I would like to add to our "use of force" conversations another continuum called the "use of compassion." As effective communication and de-escalation strategies limit the use of force necessary to gain compliance, I believe that the use of compassion adds vitality and strength to our life together.

To see the work of the ministry and help support the congregation during this time of transition, visit our website: <https://seiasynod.org/ministries/prisonministry/>

Meet the Outside Council!

FreeIndeed has an Outside Council that cares for organizational and financial concerns in support of the members inside. The group is made up of folks from throughout the Southeastern Iowa Synod (from top left): Beth Ahrens, Trinity Lutheran Church in Tipton; Pastor Dan Kuckuck, St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Urbandale; Pastor Dirk Stadlander, pastor; Pastor Erika Utte, Director of Evangelical Mission in the Southeastern Iowa Synod; Pastor Travis Fisher-King (treasurer), St. Mark Lutheran Church in Davenport; Pastor Lisa Parker, Redeemer Lutheran Church in Indianola; Pastor Paris White, Seeds of Faith Lutheran Church in Lisbon; Lori Nietert (president), First Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids; Pastor Katie Lowe-Lancaster, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in North Liberty; and Pastor Chad Whaley (secretary), Bethany Lutheran Church in West Branch. Not pictured: Pastor Rodney Bluml, St. Paul Lutheran Church in Anamosa; Pastor Kathryn Franzenburg, St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids; Christine Vincent, St. Paul Lutheran Church in Davenport.



Thank you!

FreeIndeed is supported by the generosity of countless individuals, congregations, and organizations. These gifts help ministry flourish within the walls of Anamosa State Penitentiary.

Thank you for supporting FreeIndeed in 2020:

Anne Almquist • Augustana Lutheran Church, Boone • Bethany Lutheran Church, Vinton • Bethany Lutheran Church, West Branch • Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Vinton • Beth Carlson • Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Iowa City • Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, North Liberty • Memorial Lutheran Church, Nevada • Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Des Moines • Lynn Batchter Robinson • Jerry Schwenker • Jay and Melanie Sigafosse • St. John's Lutheran Church, Des Moines • St. Paul Lutheran Church, Anamosa • Trinity Lutheran Church, Tipton • Zion Lutheran Church, Wyoming

Giving Ideas

Are you interested in giving a special gift to FreeIndeed? Here are some gifts that will go a long way toward supporting the men inside:

- * Augsburg Fortress Gift Cards for Bible Studies, New Member/Catechumenate Resources, Worship Supplies/Supports
- * Regular or one-time monetary gifts to sustain ongoing ministry



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Thank You so very much for such warm and meaningful Father's Day greetings. You all are missed here at A.S.P., and we pray to see you all very soon; So, stay safe, wear your P.P.E. at all times until we meet again.

*—Michael, June 21, 2020 - Jesus Lives
a different Michael from page one!*