

Spring 2021

FreeIndeed Prison Congregation
A congregation of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
at Anamosa (Iowa) State Penitentiary
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► **On Tuesday, March 23, an unsuccessful escape attempt by incarcerated individuals at Anamosa State Penitentiary resulted in the deaths of a correctional nurse and a correctional officer, and the injuries of other staff and an incarcerated individual who came to the aid of the wounded nurse and officer.**

In the wake of this tragedy, the Anamosa State Penitentiary community is in mourning as we enter this Holy Week. Thank you for your faithful accompaniment of FreeIndeed Prison Congregation.



A prayer for prisons and correctional institutions:

God of justice, for our sake your Son was condemned as a criminal. Visit our jails and prisons with your judgment and mercy. Remember all prisoners; bring the guilty to repentance and amendment of life according to your will; and give hope for the future. When any are held unjustly, raise up for them advocates to bring them release, and give us the wisdom to improve our system of justice. Watch over those who work in these institutions; give them strength and compassion, and keep them from becoming brutal or callous. Lead us to do for those in prison what we would do for Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

—Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 80

A message from **Pastor Stadlander**



Learning & Lockdowns to REBOOT

Learning and Lockdowns sum up much my first year as the newly called pastor serving FreeIndeed Prison Congregation at the Anamosa State Penitentiary (ASP). At the time of my interviews during the winter of 2019-2020, I don't think many of us foresaw the ways in which we would learn about coronaviruses and experience many versions of lockdowns!

With this exciting ministry endeavor of cultivating a congregation using the model of Prison Congregations of America (<https://www.prisoncongregations.org/pca-model>), my formation as pastor expanded to include training to learn the policies and practices of functioning as a staff member in the Iowa Department of Corrections. My cultural learning of the nuances of prison life is far from over, and I look forward to the ways in which I continue to see, hear, and begin to understand life from the perspectives of both staff and incarcerated individuals. I also learned of your generous and abundant accompaniment of FreeIndeed from its inception to today. Thank you *mille fois* to every individual and congregation who has prayed, visited, and given financially! Your support makes this ministry possible.

On October 30, 2020, ASP went on “restricted movement” or lockdown due to its first confirmed case of COVID-19. As the outbreak spread throughout the institution approximately 90% of the incarcerated population tested positive as well as several staff. The chapel and most other activities outside of the living units were shut down for seven weeks. It took several weeks of less restrictive but still modified schedules to facilitate new housing arrangements in hopes of promoting health and safety. Just as chapel activities



and prison life were starting to function with a bit more of a normal, predictable rhythm (including the restart of FreeIndeed worship services on the first and third Saturdays of the month on February 6), ASP was locked down due to a security concern on February 7! For at least four days, incarcerated individuals were not able to leave their cells until security checks could be made. Ash Wednesday was the first day the chapel was open and I had the privilege and honor to preside at a FreeIndeed worship service on the Protective Custody unit and play guitar (because the incarcerated individuals had not had rehearsal time due to lockdown) and co-preside at the Ecumenical worship service in the All Faiths Chapel. It was wonderful to reconnect with one another to begin our Lenten journey.

The events of Tuesday, March 23, involving an escape attempt and the injuring of staff and incarcerated individuals and two staff deaths, have necessitated yet another lockdown. Many are hoping for a bit more freedom of movement by Easter.

FreeIndeed's theme this year is REBOOT '21: **R**ecognizing one another's humanity through the **E**xchange of life experiences by sharing one another's **B**urdens in **O**utwardly praying for- and **O**utwardly visiting each other as we sojourn **T**ogether! This will be experienced inside the walls of ASP through the creation of an Inside Council, worship, bible study, fellowship, pastoral accompaniment and (we hope!) a re-welcome of outside visitors. REBOOT '21 will be experienced outside the walls of ASP through visits to/with congregations, inclusion in prayers of intercession in individual and communal prayer, newsletters, Facebook {@freeindeedprisonministry}, and financial gifts. Please join us as we reboot in twenty-one!

—Pastor Stadtlander



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 to all those who have supported FreeIndeed so far in 2021:

Bethany Lutheran Church, West Branch
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Vinton
Elim Lutheran Church, Marshalltown
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, North Liberty
Memorial Lutheran Church, Nevada
Rachel Mithelman
Barbara Persoon
Lou Putney
Resurrection Lutheran Church, Ankeny
Trinity Lutheran Church, Tipton
Zion Lutheran Church, Wyoming

2020 FreeIndeed Individual/Family Accompaniment Levels

- * **Co-Laborers: \$23,648 or Legacy/Estate Gift** (One Quarter of Ministry Cost)
- * **Disciples Circle: \$7,882** (One Month of Ministry Cost)
- * **Outside-Insider: \$1,819** (One Week of Ministry Cost)
- * **Friend: \$950** (# of ASP Incarcerated Individuals)
- * **Accompanist: \$259** (Daily Ministry Cost)
- * **Prayer Partner: \$25** ("Tithe" of Daily Ministry Cost)

**All gifts are welcome—
 THANK YOU for every good gift!**



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Deepening Relationships with Congregations

FreeIndeed Prison Congregation is indebted to individuals and congregations who are passionate about sharing God's love with those incarcerated at Anamosa State Penitentiary (ASP). Pastor Stadlander is excited to continue his "learning" of what FreeIndeed is by hearing your stories of accompaniment. Why do you as an individual or congregation remember in prayer and through financial gifts these specific individuals whom many in our society forgets? How is this a part of your life: individual/communal prayer? replace a coffee from a coffee shop with an intentional gift once or weekly/monthly/yearly? fundraisers? part of your household or congregational budgeting process?

Congregations are invited into a covenanting relationship with FreeIndeed Prison Congregation. Joining the **REBOOT '21** Cohort of covenanting congregations includes a Three Year Covenant between your congregation and FreeIndeed, including:

- **Prayer** for One Another's Ministry during Communal Worship
- **Visits** from FreeIndeed's Pastor Stadlander to Congregation and "priority invitations" for Congregation members to join the Inside Congregation at Anamosa State Penitentiary for worship and fellowship (as time & opportunity... and pandemics allow!)
- **Gifts:** Congregation covenants to provide a specific dollar amount (\$3 per member is an encouraged starting point) for three years (2021, 2022, 2023)

Congregations who are interested (or individuals who want their congregation to be interested) are invited to send an e-mail to Pastor Stadlander (pastor@freeindeedanamosa.org), send a Facebook message (@freeindeedprisonministry) or use their ingenuity to find another way to communicate for more information. Thank you for considering accompanying us in rebooting.