



"Remember Me"

"From Custody to Community"

Video from Friends of Dismas Australia celebrating their 1st Decade's Journey 2012 - 2022



Click the link below to play the video
https://youtu.be/Br73cN_HRw0?si=EPLYeeHdFPy9aNVs

"Mark's Ride to Hope"

It's 2:00 AM. While you and I are tucked in and sleeping soundly, Mark has just climbed on to his bike to begin a 260 km ride, from Waterloo to Goderich and back.



He rides as part of Great Cycle Challenge Canada. He won't get home until 10:15 pm with "sore legs, sore butt, but did I ever kick cancer's butt!"

Story continues on page 2 ...

"Hello Canada, with love from Dismas Down Under"

Transition from a correctional facility into civil society often brings profound alienation and formidable barriers. Recognizing the immense vulnerability inherent in this juncture, the Australian "Friends of Dismas" was established in 2012 through the collaborative efforts of Prison Fellowship Victoria, the Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania, and the Baptist Union of Victoria.

Taking its namesake from Dismas—traditionally recognized as the repentant thief crucified alongside Jesus Christ—the ministry was founded upon the theological premise of radical grace and restoration. We had a singular vision: to cultivate a secure, ecumenical community where formerly incarcerated individuals, parolees, and their families might find spiritual sanctuary, mutual accountability, and lasting integration.



This mission is put into practice through regular fellowship gatherings in Melbourne, Geelong, Box Hill, and Ballarat. These meetings typically begin with communal sharing followed by a sermon, communion, and prayer each week, creating an environment where participants can speak openly, unburdened by societal stigma.

One participant arrived at our Melbourne assembly profoundly isolated and conditioned by institutional life. Through unconditional Christian fellowship and

Story continues on page 2 ...

"Mark's Ride to Hope" *(continued)*

The inspiration for his ride is his little daughter, Evelyn Hope who passed away 3 days before her due date, and in memory of his mother, Christine who passed away from cancer in 2024.

"When the rides get tough, I think about Evelyn", Mark says. "Evelyn may never ride beside me, but I carry her with me every time I clip into my pedals. Every kilometre is also for the children and families facing childhood cancer today."

Discovering purpose in his life was a crucial challenge when Mark returned from prison 11 years ago. He and his family faced rejection as they worked to rebuild their life together. He credits friends like Marv Rempel, Steve Brnjas and Eileen Henderson for supporting them even to this day.



He became part of helping develop a "Surrogacy" group in Kitchener Waterloo, a place where unrelated offenders and survivors meet to share their stories.

"To hear survivors' stories is extremely humbling", Mark says, "I don't want to cause any more harm. The way to do that is to practice empathy, and over time you learn to forgive yourself."

Mark is actually a member of three Dismas Fellowships - in Guelph, Kitchener and Cambridge where he has discovered ongoing community and belonging.

He marvels at one woman who attended after leaving Grand Valley Prison for Women and the transformation that he witnessed as she grew into community.

I recall my friend Rick Brown, who served many years as Director of a Halfway House in Brampton referring to the residents of his home not as "ex-cons" or "ex-prisoners" but as "heroes" - for the courage to face themselves and to change and to give back.

Mark's courage and resilience is profoundly moving. It's a story of a wife and family who did not give up. "Hero" – to his friends at Dismas, Mark happily qualifies.

- Harry Nigh

"Hello Canada, with love from Dismas Down Under" *(continued)*

strict confidentiality, this individual gradually rebuilt trust. He secured stable housing, reconciled with estranged family members, and ultimately transitioned into a mentorship role for newly released peers.

This enduring commitment finds its theological foundation in the scriptural directive of Hebrews 13:3: *"Remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering."*

Bridging geographical divides, the Australian Dismas fellowship maintains a spiritual affinity with its Canadian counterparts, whose foundational ministry originally inspired the adoption of the Dismas name. To our Canadian brothers and sisters, we offer this message of enduring encouragement: remain steadfast in provision and the arduous labor of compassion.

Although our regional contexts differ, our divine commission remains identical—to look beyond past transgressions and bear witness to the transformative power of redemption. Continue to prepare the table and uphold the circle of grace, confident that we stand in steadfast solidarity with you.

May your tireless dedication to this ministry of reconciliation continue to bear abundant fruit, inspiring hope in every heart that walks through your doors...

Love, prayers, and warm wishes from,

"The Friends of Dismas Australia"



Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
				1	2  Dismas FELLOWSHIP Toronto West	3
4	5	6	7  Dismas FELLOWSHIP Guelph	8	9  Dismas FELLOWSHIP Kitchener	10
11  Dismas FELLOWSHIP Woodstock	12 Thanksgiving  Dismas FELLOWSHIP Brockville	13	14	15  Dismas FELLOWSHIP Sarnia	16  Dismas FELLOWSHIP Hamilton Toronto East	17
18	19  Dismas FELLOWSHIP Cambridge	20	21	22  Dismas FELLOWSHIP Kingston	23	24 
25	26  Dismas FELLOWSHIP Niagara	27	28 	29	30 	31 HAPPY HALLOWEEN 

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Friends of Dismas Inc. and our entire community, I wanted to extend a sincere thank you to our many individual donors who have generously supported our Fellowships and other projects over the years.

Norberto & Gina Aquino
Doug & Penny Asselstine
Carolyn & Chris Bacik
Annalyn Badian
James Balmer
Paul & Joan Bar
Harriet Ann Barrett
Steve Brnjas
Stephan & Lynne Brunck
Margaret Childs
Elizabeth Chong
Christopher Clapp
Marg Clarke
Michael Coyne
Shirley Currie
Vera Danculovic
Martha Dilazzaro
Oliver & Gwyneth D'Mello
Craig Doig
Vivien Doyle
Augustine D'Souza
Tim & Marie Dunlop
Roy & Judith Emmanuel
Tracey Ferguson
Leona Fernandes
Gail Ferris
Silverio & Olivia Fidalgo
Siobhan Flanagan
Paul Fujiwara
Jacqueline & James Gage

Norma Gicana
Ted Gilverson
Christopher Gosselin
Suzanne Grant
Eileen Henderson
Mark Hiemstra
Michael & Isabella Ho
Mary Ann Jansen
John Kane
Evelyn Kaye
Jim Kemp
Christopher Lao
Andrew Lemos
Lynn Lewis
Roman & Agnes Lim
Zarina Lit
Peter & Theresa Lovrick
Alistair Martin
Mary Anne McDonald
Roy McIntosh
Mike & Lynne Miranda
Alan & Olivia Morris
Doug & Celia McManaman
Robert Monster
Robert Nevins-Selvadurai
Harry Nigh
Don O'Shaughnessy
Steve & Ann Palmer
Rick Pauw
Steve Pitre

Pete Pynenburg
David & Elisabeth Quail
Mary Radojcic
David Raponi-Monk
Rhea Rasquinha
Bill Reimer
Marvin Rempel
Michael & Barbara Robertson
Ed Ross
Bryan & Judy Round
Gillian Sandiford
James & Helen Shaughnessy
Kyla Sinclair-Peters
Raphael & Grace Sumabat
Neil & Carol Sweeney
Peter & Zenaida Takaoka
Paul Tuck
Sarah Tuck
Robert & Denise Tunney
Ferdinand & Anna Valera
Mike Walsh
Grant Watkinson
Mary Weiland
Richard Weisman
Tom Welsh
Christopher Wilkinson
Dorothy Williams
Anthony & Agnes Wong
Hai Zhang
plus many anonymous donors...

Our volunteer Board takes their responsibility to act as good stewards of your charitable gifts very seriously and strives to make sure, as much as possible, these gifts are efficiently used within our community. Whether the donation is ten dollars or ten thousand dollars, like Jesus, (*Mark 12:41-44*), who recognized the sacrifice of even the smallest donation to the Temple Treasury, we too, recognize that all gifts are both meaningful and sacrificial and are heartfelt. To that end they are to be treasured.

With gratitude,
Deacon Paul Bar
President, Friends of Dismas Inc.

If you feel you are able and interested in contributing to Friends of Dismas, there are two methods by which you can make donations to support our work serving some of the vulnerable within our community.

1. To make a tax-deductible donation by Post Mail please make your cheque payable to Friends of Dismas and send to the address below. You can specify on your cheque which Fellowship or which part within the Friends of Dismas organization you would like to direct your support.

Friends of Dismas, 1730 Bur Oak Ave Bldg. G
PO Box 3005 Bur Oak PO,
Markham, ON., L6E 0J1

2. You may also make a tax-deductible donation online by clicking on the link below. This will allow you to securely donate online using your credit card or PayPal through our partner Canada Helps.

canadahelps.org/en/charities/the-friends-of-dismas/

You may direct funds by selecting either a specific Fellowship or the General Fund. Please note that tax receipts are issued immediately by Canada Helps.



Thank-you for helping us to
build a community of hope.