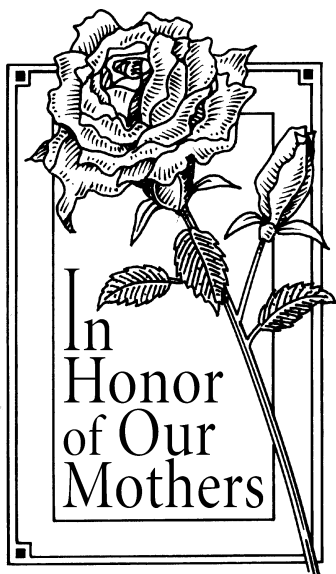


The Church of the Damascus Road

Echo!

Volume 7
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May 2004
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA



The Birth of Mother's Day

Anna M. Jarvis (1864-1948) loved her mother dearly. It was Miss Jarvis who first suggested a national day to honor all mothers. At a memorial service for her mother on May 10, 1908, Anna gave a carnation, her mother's favorite flower, to each person in attendance. Within a few years, the idea to honor mothers gained popularity, and Mother's Day was soon observed annually in many large cities of the United States.

On May 9, 1914 by an act of congress, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the second Sunday of May as Mother's Day. He established the day as a time for "public expression of our love and reverence for the mothers of our country." By then, it had become customary to wear white carnations in honor of departed mothers and red carnations to honor the living. The custom continues to this day.

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An Abundance of Love

As parents, most of us believe that losing a child through death is the worst-case scenario. But I know, from personal experience, that there is another worst-case scenario—to lose a child to prison.

My own son was one of those kids that got hooked on drugs—permanently. The nightmare started during his last two years of high school and continued into young adulthood. Jeffrey managed to stay clean and sober for about nine months at a time—tops. Convinced that he would always have only this kind of life, he turned to a life of crime to support his habit.

When he was finally caught and convicted, my son entered the Texas prison system for the rest of his life. I didn't know anyone who had ever been in prison before.

Shortly after Jeffrey's conviction, an acquaintance asked me about my family. As I choked on my unusual answer, "My son is in prison," I could see the uneasy look in her eyes as she cut the conversation short and hurriedly walked away. Suddenly, I felt the stigma associated with an incarcerated loved one. Although most people didn't want to deliberately close me out, they couldn't overcome their feelings.

As a long-time volunteer in our church, the PTA and other organizations, I knew support was available to me. Remembering a discussion about prison ministry, during my volunteer work with Cursillo, I called a few people that had worked with me on that Christian weekend. To my disappointment, no one had a recollection of who might know about the prison ministry.

Feeling desperate and alone, I stopped by a church that I once attended. At the coffee hour after Sunday service, I was greeted by someone who was eager to hear what my children were up to. For once, when I mentioned that my own son was in prison, I saw a genuine look of hope.

The woman put her arm around me as she explained, "My husband is working at a Kairos weekend in a nearby prison, and I'd be happy to have him call you after he re-

turns. Is that okay?"

Relieved that someone had finally understood how I felt and unable to speak, I simply nodded.

"Good. John will be in touch. God Bless!" She smiled and waved as I walked away in tears. I was grateful that she reached out to help me in my time of despair.

The following week, John called. "My wife, Brenda, told me about your visit to our church. Have you ever heard of Kairos or Kairos Outside?" he asked.

Clearing my throat, I answered, "I'm familiar with the word Kairos."

"Well, it's a three- to four-day weekend that surrounds the inmate with love, forgiveness and understanding," John continued. "The devoted volunteers go into prisons to work with people who have a willingness to change their lives. Are you interested in helping out?"

My mind wandered. Here is a way for both Jeffrey and me to survive this ordeal. People are giving their time and love to help make life more bearable for inmates and their families.

As we talked, John promised to see if the program would be available at Jeffrey's facility. "There's a Kairos Outside Weekend coming up in three weeks. Would you like to go, Joan?"

Kairos Outside supports women who have loved ones who are, or have been, incarcerated. Being a steadfast volunteer myself, I assumed he meant as a volunteer. But as we talked, I discovered that John really meant as a guest. "I don't know," I responded with trepidation. "I need time to think about it."

"Fair enough," John said. "Let me know when you're ready."

Even though I had been hurt by others who didn't want to associate with me, I asked myself, Am I ready to be in a room with other women who share my plight?

Continued on page 2

Mother's Day





Drawn by Dan Skalla FDCF

Feeding the Hungry Christ

Feeding the hungry Christ. Clothing the naked Christ. Visiting the sick Christ. Giving shelter to the homeless Christ. Teaching the ignorant Christ. We all long for heaven where God is, but we have it in our power to be in heaven with Him right now- to be happy with Him at this very moment. But being happy with Him now means loving like He loves, helping like He helps, giving as He gives, serving as He serves, rescuing as He rescues, being with Him twenty-four hours a day- touching Him in his distressing disguise.

— Mother Teresa



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Who took your place?

One day, a man went to visit a church. He got there early, parked his car, and got out. Another car pulled up near and the driver got out and said, "I always park there! You took my place!"

The visitor went inside for Sunday School, found an empty seat and sat down. A young lady from the church approached him and stated, "That's my seat! You took my place!" The visitor was somewhat distressed by this rude welcome, but said nothing.

After Sunday School, the visitor went into the sanctuary and sat down. Another member walked up to him and said, "That's where I always sit! You took my place!" The visitor was even more troubled by this treatment, but still he said nothing.

Later, as the congregation was praying for Christ to dwell among them, the visitor stood up, and his appearance began to change. Horrible scars became visible on his hands and on his sandaled feet. Someone from the congregation noticed him and called out, "What happened to you?"

The visitor replied, as his hat became a crown of thorns and a tear fell from his eye, "I took your place."

A Thought—

There are people in the world so hungry that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread.

— Mahatma Gandhi

Abundance - Continued from page 1.

Aren't I different? I was looking for someone who would accept me—someone who would understand my feelings. Most of these women probably feel the same way I do, I surmised.

So, I went to Kairos, where I felt more love and understanding than I had ever known. Living with the shame and embarrassment of having a loved one in prison is a disheartening journey—a journey far too difficult to experience alone.

After my weekend, I made a commitment to volunteer in the Kairos Outside ministry. I went there to find someone I could talk to, and I left knowing I would always have an abundance of love to turn to.

Those gentle volunteers made it possible for me to live through a double tragedy—two worst-case scenarios. Not only did I lose my own son to prison, but I lost him a second time when he died there. Many people stood by me through the painful days that followed. Without the volunteers from Kairos Outside, I would never have been able to survive the journey.

Abundance of Love. Reprinted by permission of Joan K. Johnson. ©2000 from "Serving Time, Serving Others"



Seeing with God's Eyes

Heavenly Father, Help us remember that the jerk who cut us off in traffic last night is a single mother who worked nine hours that day and is rushing home to cook dinner, help with homework, do the laundry and spend a few precious moments with her children.

Help us to remember that the pierced, tattooed, disinterested young man who can't make change correctly is a worried 19-year-old college student, balancing his apprehension over final exams with his fear of not getting his student loans for next semester.

Remind us, Lord, that the scary-looking bum, begging for money in the same spot every day is a slave to addictions that we can only imagine in our worst nightmares.

Help us to remember that the old couple walking annoyingly slow through the store aisles and blocking our shopping progress are savoring this moment, knowing that, based on the biopsy report she got back last week, this will be the last year that they go shopping together.

Help us to remember that the vulgar punk with spiked hair, satanic tattoos, and the bad attitude, is someone that your Son loved enough to give His life for, and if Jesus loved him, who am I to say he's unlovable or unworthy of your love?

Heavenly Father, remind us each day that, of all the gifts you give us, the greatest gift is love. It is not enough to share that love with those we hold dear. Open our hearts not to just those that are close to us, but to all humanity. Let us be slow to judge and quick to forgive, show patience, empathy and love.

The Church of the
Damascus Road
Echo!

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Jeffrey Roberts, Editor

If you are reading a copy of this letter that is not yours, you can subscribe and receive your own copy by writing to:

The Church of the Damascus Road
PO Box 834
Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834
Office at St. Olaf Lutheran Church
239 North 11th Street, Fort Dodge
515-955-3579

Hymns for All Things

- Dentist Crown Him with Many Crowns
- Weatherman . There Shall Be Showers of Blessings
- Contractor The Church's One Foundation
- Tailor Holy, Holy, Holy
- Golfer There's a Green Hill Far Away
- Politician Standing on the Promises
- Optometrist .. Open My Eyes That I Might See
- IRS Agent Surrender All
- Gossip Pass It On
- Electrician Send The Light
- Shopper Sweet By and By
- Realtor I've Got a Mansion, Just Over the Hilltop
- Masseuse He Touched Me
- Doctor The Great Physician

AND for those who speed - a few hymns:
 45mph—God Will Take Care of You
 55mph—Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah
 65mph—Nearer My God To Thee
 75mph—Nearer Still Nearer
 85mph—This World Is Not My Home
 95mph—Lord, I'm Coming Home
 100+ —Precious Memories



Biblical Bumper Stickers

- Adam: "You are what you eat."
 - Eve: "At least he doesn't compare me to his mother."
 - Abraham: "I'm goin' not knowin'."
 - Noah: "Honk if you believe in treading water."
 - Moses: "From a basket case to the promised land."
 - Elijah: "When Jezebel ain't happy, ain't nobody happy."
 - Balaam: "My second donkey talks!"
 - At the Sinai desert: "Winding road next 40 years."
 - At the Red Sea: "Caution! Subject to sudden flooding."
 - The children of Israel wandered around the desert for 40 years. Even in biblical times, men wouldn't ask for directions.
- ECULAUGH Terry Fitzgerald, Portland, OR



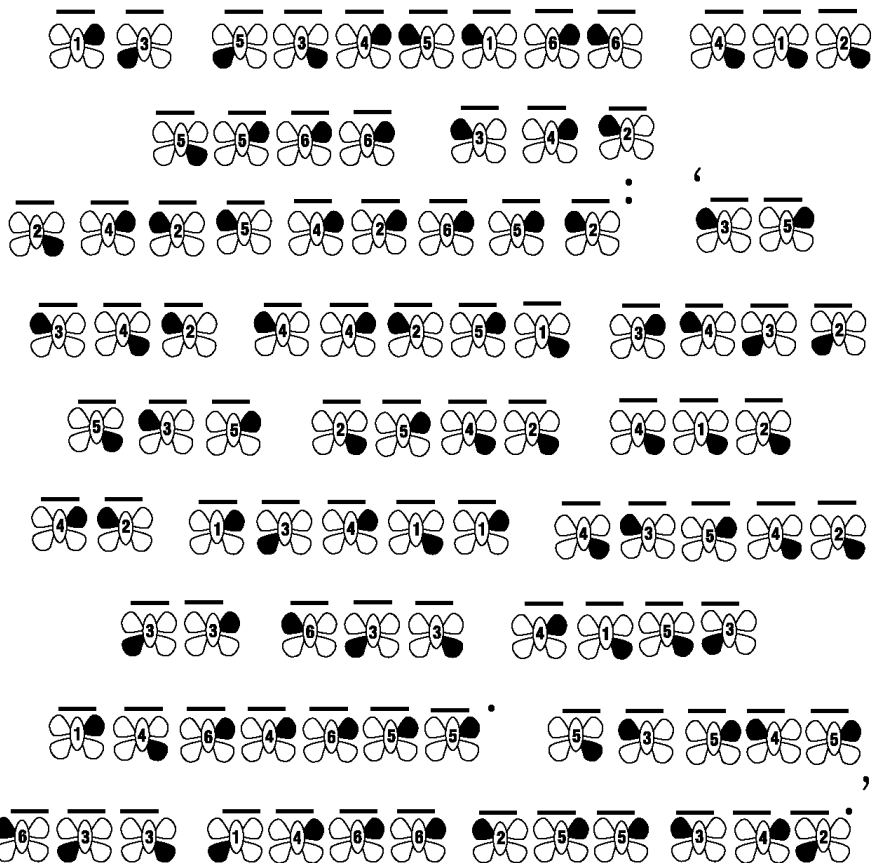
The Angel's Message

When Mary and Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' tomb, an angel suddenly appeared before them! He told them not to be afraid and gave them a message for Jesus' disciples.

Use the code to read the message from Matthew 28:7 (NIV).



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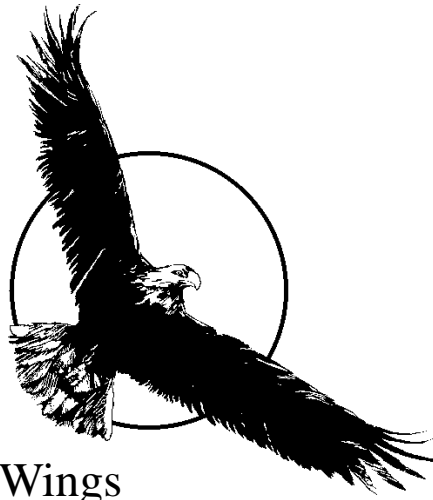


Answer: "Go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.'"

God's Grand Majesty

The moon and the stars are bright,
 To guide my steps, right through the night,
 The grass is green, and the sky so blue,
 They are quite an amazement,
 they shine so bright
 They are quiet so true.
 Things I cannot touch,
 But I am able to see,
 They were created for the enjoyment
 Of you and me.
 With the intent that we understand
 God's grand majesty.

Written By: T. Rada



Wings

Our main goal on earth is to earn our wings, so we can join our father, the creator of all things.

Life is special and truly pure, love it and respect it, it's ours to endure.

If you are kind to each other and maintain grace, you'll be granted your wings, and God will look upon you with a smiling face.

But if you live a free life of sin, you'll be denied your wings and vanish without a trace.

Each and everyone of us are God's children shining ever so bright, may all of us earn our wings, and enjoy our glorious flight.

— by Joe Frederick, 2/11/04

Getting to Know God

The Christian life could be described as getting to know God better every day. A friendship which does not grow closer with the years tends to vanish with the years. And it is so with us and God.

— William Barclay



Luis Andrade FDCF 2004

Emotions

Life is you and me.
 It's the air that we breathe,
 The way we hold each other's hands,
 The brightness of our eyes,
 Tears that we share,
 The smiles on our lips,
 The feelings that we express,
 The love that we have.
 It will always be there,
 You and me, emotionally.
 by Finus Atwood 2-25-04

You Can Do It, Too!

A day here can be compared to standing around with a bunch of people who just lost their wallets. Imagine the hostility in a situation like that. In prison it's not much different: anger, hate rudeness, cursing seven days a week, arguing over who won a card game, or irritated because someone didn't get their way, always trying to outdo the other. But for these people there is a way to be full of peace, Joy, contentment, and everlasting grace; and that's by knowing the Lord Jesus Christ who has been through all these things that upset and irritate us.

Life is not long enough to always be walking around in a grumpy mood. You see, Jesus knew that we would have problems here on earth, but he was willing to walk right along beside us through this life. He said "I will never leave you, nor forsake you. He cares and loves us so much that he died so we could live. I'm living proof of his great work, so let's be in love with Christ and give ourselves to him completely.

I guarantee you will not be disappointed. You can always go back to that misery if that's what you desire, but Christ will fill your heart with such joy you'll be a changed person, and you'll welcome him all the time with open arms.

— Matt Renaud

Appearances

Two cars were waiting at a stoplight. The light turned green, but the man in the 1st car didn't notice it. A woman in the car behind him is watching traffic pass around them. The woman begins pounding on her steering wheel and yelling at the man to move. The man doesn't move. The woman is going ballistic inside her car, ranting and raving at the man, pounding on her steering wheel and dash. The light turns yellow and the woman begins to blow the car horn, flips him off, and screams profanity and curses at the man. The man looks up, sees the yellow light and accelerates through the intersection just as the light turns red. The woman is beside herself, screaming in frustration as she misses her chance to get through the intersection.

As she is still in mid-rant she hears a tap on her window and looks up into the barrel of a gun held by a very serious-looking policeman. The policeman tells her to shut off her car while keeping both hands in sight. She complies, speechless at what is happening. After she shuts off the engine, the policeman orders her to exit her car with her hands up. She gets out of the car and he orders her to turn and place her hands on her car. She turns, places her hands on the car roof and quickly is cuffed and hustled into the patrol car. She is too bewildered by the chain of events to ask any questions and is driven to the police station where she is fingerprinted, photographed, searched, booked and placed in a cell.

After a couple of hours, a policeman approaches the cell and opens the door for her. She is escorted back to the booking desk where the original officer is waiting with her personal effects. He hands her the bag containing her things, and says, "I'm really sorry for this mistake. But you see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing your horn, flipping the guy off in front of you, and cussing a blue streak at him. Then I noticed the "Choose Life" license plate holder, the "What Would Jesus Do" and "Follow Me to Sunday School" bumper stickers so I assumed you had stolen the car.

Contributions invited

The editor of this newsletter is inviting ALL READERS to contribute articles, poetry, art work, and opinions for the newsletter. So don't be bashful.

Worship & Bible Study

FDCF Fort Dodge

7:00pm Wednesdays Holy Communion
 6:30pm Fridays Prayer Team
 7:00pm Fridays Bible Study

NCCF Rockwell City

6:30pm Tuesdays Prayer & Bible Study
 6:30pm Thursdays Holy Communion