

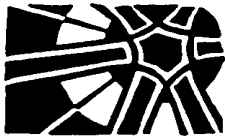
The Church of the Damascus Road

Volume 13
Issue No. 6b
December 2010
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Echo!



Because
the
maker
of us all



lay with
the
cattle
in the
stall

Because
the
Great
comes
to the
small
I thank my God



A BLESSED
CHRISTMAS

Inside the Echo!

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Two Babes in a Manger

In 1994, two Americans answered an invitation from the Russian Department of Education to teach morals and ethics (based on biblical principles) in the Russian public schools. They were invited to teach at prisons, businesses, the fire and police departments and a large orphanage. About 100 boys and girls who had been abandoned, abused, and left in the care of a government-run program were in the orphanage. They relate the following story in their own words:

It was nearing the holiday season, 1994, time for our orphans to hear, for the first time, the traditional story of Christmas. We told them about Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem. Finding no room in the inn, the couple went to a stable, where the baby Jesus was born and placed in a manger. Throughout the story, the children and orphanage staff sat in amazement as they listened. Some sat on the edges of their stools, trying to grasp every word.

Completing the story, we gave the children three small pieces of cardboard to make a crude manger. Each child was given a small paper square, cut from yellow napkins I had brought with me. No colored paper was available in the city. Following instructions, the children tore the paper and carefully laid strips in the manger for straw. Small squares of flannel (cut from a worn-out nightgown an American lady was throwing away as she left Russia), were used for the baby's blanket. A doll-like baby was cut from tan felt we had brought from the United States.

The orphans were busy assembling their manger as I walked among them to see if they needed any help. All went well until I got to one table where little Misha sat. He looked to be about 6-years-old and had finished his project. As I looked at the little boy's manger, I was startled to see not one, but two babies in the manger.

Quickly, I called for the translator to ask the lad why there were two babies in the manger. Crossing his arms in front of him and looking at this completed manger scene, the child began to repeat the story very seriously.

For such a young boy, who had only heard the Christmas story once, he related the happenings accurately — until he came to the part where Mary put the baby Jesus in the manger. Then Misha started to ad-lib. He made up his own ending to the story as he said, "And when Mary laid the baby in the manger, Jesus looked at me and asked me if I had a place to stay. I told him I have no mamma and I have no papa, so I don't have any place to stay. Then Jesus told me I could stay with him. But I told him I couldn't, because I didn't have a gift to give him like everybody else did. But I wanted to stay with Jesus so much, so I thought about what I had that maybe I could use for a gift. I thought maybe if I kept him warm, that would be a good gift." So I asked Jesus, 'If I keep you warm, will that be a good enough gift?' And Jesus told me, 'If you keep me warm, that will be the best gift anybody ever gave me.' So I got into the manger, and then Jesus looked at me and he told me I could stay with him' — for always."

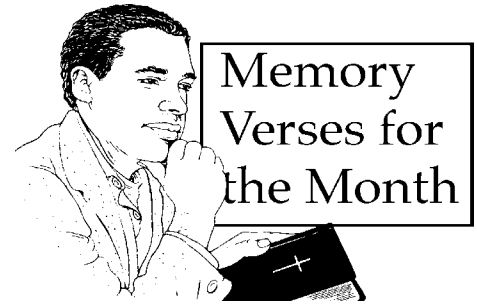
As little Misha finished his story, his eyes brimmed full of tears that splashed down his little cheeks. Putting his hand over his face, his head dropped to the table and his shoulders shook as he sobbed and sobbed. The little orphan had found someone who would never abandon nor abuse him, someone who would stay with him — for always.

And the Americans? They had learned the lesson they had come there to teach — that it is not what you have in your life, but who you have in your life that really counts. We should all give thanks for the people that "keep us" — in life — and for all of God's many blessings to us: freedom from want, life, love, togetherness, and for the enduring love of Jesus Christ, the one person who keeps us warm and safe for always.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!



—Unknown



Infant Discovered in Barn

Child Protective Services Launch Probe

Date: 12/27—2:05 EST

Nazareth Carpenter Being Held on Charges Involving Underage Mother

Authorities were today alerted by a concerned citizen who noticed a family living in a barn. Upon arrival, Family Protective Service personnel, accompanied by police, took into protective care an infant child named Jesus, who had been wrapped in strips of cloth and placed in a feeding trough by his 14-year old mother, Mary of Nazareth.

During the confrontation, a man identified as Joseph, also of Nazareth, attempted to stop the social workers. Joseph, aided by several local shepherds and some unidentified foreigners, tried to forestall efforts to take the child, but was restrained by the police. Also being held for questioning are three foreigners who allege to be wise men from an eastern country.

The INS and Homeland Security officials are seeking information about these who may be in the country illegally. A source with the INS states that they had no passports, but were in possession of gold and other possibly illegal substances.

They resisted arrest saying that they had been warned by God to avoid officials in Jerusalem and to return quickly to their own country. The chemical substances in their possession will be tested. The owner of the barn is also being held for questioning.

The manager of the Bethlehem Inn faces possible revocation of his license for violating health and safety regulations by allowing people to stay in the stable. Civil authorities are also investigating the zoning violations involved in maintaining livestock in a commercially-zoned district. The location of the minor child will not be released, and the prospect for a quick resolution to this case is doubtful.

Asked about when Jesus would be returned to his mother, a Child Protective Service spokesperson said, "The father is middle-aged and the mother definitely underage. We are checking with officials in Nazareth to determine what their legal relationship is. Joseph has admitted taking Mary from her home in Nazareth because of a census requirement. However, because she was obviously pregnant when they left, investigators are looking into other reasons for their departure.

Joseph is being held without bond on charges of molestation, kidnapping, child endangerment, and statutory rape. Mary was taken to the Bethlehem General Hospital where she is being examined by doctors. Charges may also be filed against her for endangerment. She will also undergo psychiatric evaluation because of her claim that she is a virgin and that the child is from God.

The director of the psychiatric wing said, "I don't profess to have the right to tell people what to believe, but when their beliefs adversely affect the safety and well-being of others -- in this case her child -- we must consider her a danger to others.

"The unidentified drugs at the scene didn't help her case, but I'm confident that with the proper therapy regimen we can get her back on her feet."

A spokesperson for the governor's office said, "Who knows what was going through their heads? But regardless, their treatment of the child was inexcusable, and the involvement of these others frightening.

"There is much we don't know about this case, but for the sake of the child and the public, you can be assured that we will pursue this matter to the end."

—Ray Kerley

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:4-7).

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger (Luke 2:16).



Story Tellers

Story Tellers is the third Friday of every month at FDCF and the third Saturday at NCCF unless a scheduling problem arises. You can read a book to your child on tape, and then send the book and audio cassette tape home for your child to listen to you read to them, and read along with you. The tape, and book are free to you. You just pay regular mail home to your child, or, at FDCF, you can send them out on a visit like regular property through R&D. Sign up with Pastor Stone, or at our regular worship service, or with any Inside Church Council member.

**The Church of the
Damascus Road
*Belho!***

Issue 13.6b December 2010

An official publication of The Church of the Damascus Road, a Christian Community of Reconciliation, serving the inmate population of the correctional facilities at Rockwell City and Fort Dodge, Iowa.
Rev. Paul E. Stone, Pastor
Rev. Carroll Lang, Editor

Worst? Maybe Not

In prison, holidays are the worst. Birthdays, anniversaries, Thanksgiving, Christmas, even Valentine's Day can be a "bummer." It's difficult and painful to be away from those we love, to be left out of the celebrations and the memory-making. Many times we feel a little forgotten or overlooked.

Birthdays in prison come and go without the comfort of cake with candles and the magic of blowing them out. Christmas mornings are without a fancy tree or presents. Thanksgivings are hard to feel thankful for a dinner served on a cold plastic tray.

On my first Thanksgiving in prison I refused to eat. My first birthday I spent alternating between rage and feeling more sorry for myself than ever before. On Christmas I would not even get out of bed and stay under the covers, feeling sad all day.

So, holidays in here (prison) are the worst — at least I thought they were until I realized a few things. Once I stripped away all the commercialism and hype, I saw what holidays are all about. They're elaborate excuses we use to take a look at our lives, our successes and failures, and to spend quality time with our loved ones.

In here or out there we can still take stock of ourselves and make plans, dream dreams, and examine our behavior to see what we like and don't like. Even in here (prison) we have the power to change what falls short of our ideal self-image.

Not being able to spend quality time with those we love is a little tougher — until we realize that the people we care for are always with us in our hearts and minds. And just as they're with us, we are with them in spirit.

The days we can't spend together physically, we can still take time to remember them fondly, make phone calls, send emails, cards or letters, all of which help both us and our loved ones.

Other people don't make us happy. Special places and people might help the mood, but the celebration and love comes from within. The challenge is to find it there — a state of mind, a positive attitude. It's easy to use a holiday as an excuse to be sad or edgy. I've been there. Our challenge is to celebrate every day as special. Life is a precious gift, whether we're in prison or not. I'm planning a celebration every day this year — a celebration of life. You are, of course, invited. Happy Holidays! RSVP. Psalm 23.

"The worst prison would be a closed heart"
(Pope John Paul II).

God bless always,

—Richard Valente,

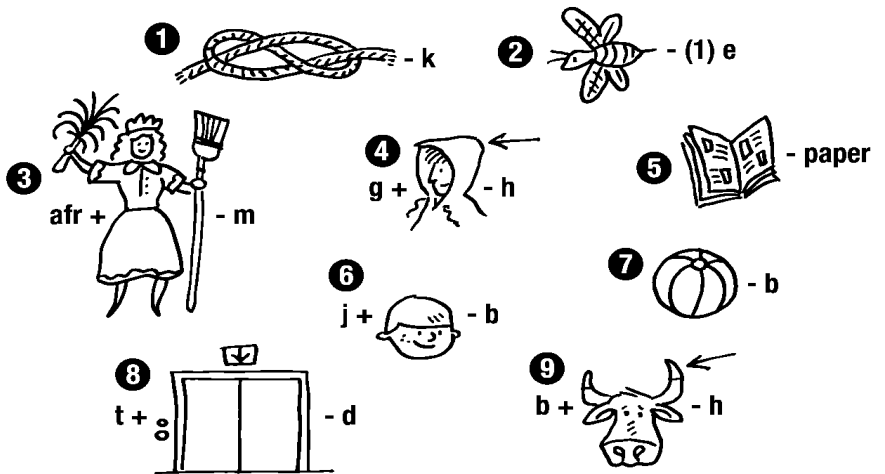
Federal Correctional Institute, Petersburg



The angel's message

On the first Christmas Eve, shepherds were watching over their flocks when an angel suddenly appeared.

Use the picture clues below to find out what the angels said to the terrified shepherds.



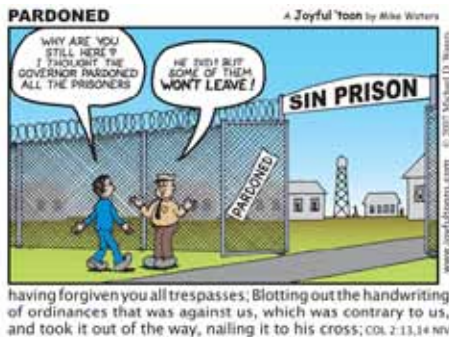
"Do _____ of great _____ that will be for _____ the people.

Today in the _____ of David a Savior has been _____

to you; he is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10-11, NIV

Answers: 1. knot-k=not; 2. bee-(1)e=be; 3. afr+maid-m=afraid; 4. g+hood-h=good; 5. newspaper-paper=news; 6. j+boy-b=joy; 7. ball-b=all; 8. t+down-d=town; 9. b+horn-h=born

Answers: 1. knot-k=not; 2. bee-(1)e=be; 3. afr+maid-m=afraid; 4. g+hood-h=good; 5. newspaper-paper=news; 6. j+boy-b=joy; 7. ball-b=all; 8. t+down-d=town; 9. b+horn-h=born



All I Ever Wanted

I took the time to ponder
 Wondering one day
 Where is all the love Lord
 In the world today.

What happened to this world?
 To everything we had?
 Where is all the good?
 All I see is bad.

No one love their neighbor
 Or cares about the poor
 Full of self-centeredness
 Only wanting more.

Crime and sin runs rampant
 Worldly pain and sorrow
 Living for today As if there
 Is no tomorrow.

Then the Lord spoke clearly
 Words straight from the heart
 No one has time for me
 Sins keep us apart.

I'm not allowed in your schools
 You took me out of there
 You only say my name in vain
 As if I am not there.

Only when in trouble
 You care to speak my name
 When life does not go your way
 I am the one you blame.

No longer will you listen
 What am I to do?
 When all I ever wanted was
 To show my love for you.

Robert L. Johnson- II 9-23-2003

Holidays for Everybody

An atheist complained to a friend, "Christians have their special holidays, such as Christmas and Easter. Jews celebrate their holidays, such as Passover and Yom Kippur. Muslims have their holidays, such as The Holiday of Charity and The Commemoration of Abraham's Sacrifice. Every religion has its holidays. But we atheists," he said, "have no recognized national holidays. It's unfair discrimination, I say!"

His friend replied, "Well, why don't you celebrate April First?"

— Unknown



Focus on Jesus

Present reality, sights are set
 Cross, eternal, Savior met
 Our "future eyes" need to see
 What we will eventually be

Faith of Hero's, can't be found
 Unless you too, a Cross are bound
 Give it all, Give today
 Focus on Jesus, He's the way

Hindsight vision? Caught in error?
 Gazing in the rear view mirror?
 Zoom in, focus, Jesus Face.
 Beyond the windshield of today.

Warrior! Soldier! Servants of Christ!
 Mighty dancing in heavenly heights.
 It gives our Father great delight
 New song, His children, always right.

Get off your seats, with boldness go
 Where rivers of Living Waters flow
 Glory of the Lord come down
 With His servants to be found

— William Bell FDCF

Worship Opportunities

Worship & Bible Study

FDCF Fort Dodge

6:30pm WednesdaysHoly Communion
 6:30pm Fridays Prayer & Bible Study

Pastor Contact Hours

2:00pm - Count Wednesday
 2:00pm - Count Friday

NCCF Rockwell City

6:30pm Tuesdays Prayer & Bible Study
 6:30pm ThursdaysHoly Communion

Pastor Contact Hours

2:00pm - Count Tuesday
 2:00pm - Count Thursday

JustSome Thoughts

Beat the Christmas rush, come to church this Sunday!

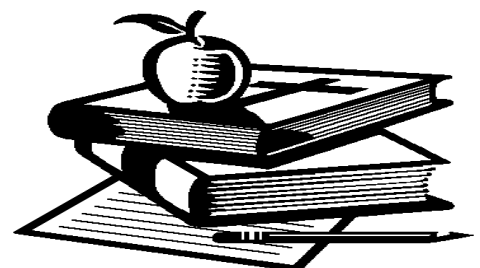
Don't give up. Moses was once a basket case!

Where will you spend eternity — smoking or non-smoking?



Articles 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. Give all your newsletter submissions to Pastor Stone.



Check Them Out!

The Church of the Damascus Road Librarians are inviting you to come to the chapel (MPR 23 in FDCF H Building; Treatment Center Room A in NCCF), and "check out" the books, tapes and compact discs in our library! There are many genres of books to choose from! We hope to see you there!

For Heaven's Sake

