

# The Church of the Damascus Road Echo!

Volume 5  
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Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

## Seven Up!

1. Wake Up! Decide to have a good day. "Today is the day that the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!" Psalm 118:24.

2. Dress Up! The best way to dress up is to put on a smile. A smile is an inexpensive way to improve your looks. "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at outward appearance; but the Lord looks at the heart." Samuel 16:7



3. Shut Up! Say nice things and learn to listen. God gave us two ears and one mouth, so He must have meant for us to do twice as much listening as talking. "He who guards his lips guards his soul." Proverbs 13:3.

"Gossip betrays confidence. Avoid men who talk too much." Proverbs 20:19. "Listen to advice, accept instruction and in the end, you will be wise" Proverbs 19:20.

4. Stand Up! Stand for something or you will fall for anything. "Let us not be weary in doing good; for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good..." Galatians 6:9-10.

5. Look Up! Keep your eyes upon the "man upstairs." "I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me."-Philippians 4:13

6. Reach Up! Reach for something higher. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path." Proverbs 3:5-6

7. Lift Up! Lift those prayers up to God! "Do not worry about anything; instead PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING." - Philippians 4:6

## Musings

Here we are on the threshold of another summer. "Same old same old?" Not necessarily so. We all have the option to vegetate, wasting time, or seeking a productive way to spend our time.

I have discovered that by keeping busy doing something productive, I am able to accept the fact that I have to be here in prison.

As I realized that I was going to do some time (that is, after the initial shock was gone), I realized that it would be easier to justify my incarceration if I would do something positive. To make a difference not only in my life but in the life of at least one other person. Whether that person would be an inmate, a person on the outside, or anyone that the Lord would send my way. No matter who we are we can serve Him and make that ever-so-important difference.

I pray that with the budget crunch we will not have to give up the things that many of us take for granted. This may be in the way of education that allows many of the young men in here to walk away with something positive that they did not have when they were incarcerated.. Tools that may help them turn from the ways that brought them here in the first place.

If they take out education as well as cut some other programs, things such as our library or gym, may not be open as often. Where there may have been 7 employees, there now may be only 3, and if we do not have the officers or staff to over-see things we may be locked down more often.

I pray that the inmates do not come to the point of causing problems or even fight among themselves because they have too much time on our hands. We are all in this together and we must not allow the few trouble makers to make the majority suffer.

I pray that we all will do our best to get along and make the best of a bad situation. WE all are in the same boat and we must not allow anyone to rock the boat, it could very easily be sunk. In order for us to make things work, whether we're an inmate or staff member, the key word is "cooperate". No one promises us a rose garden. After all, this is prison and things could be worse.

Lets not push our luck to the point that we all spend time locked down like a caged animal. We all are adult men, or should be. There ought to be no reason that we should be on lock down.

I do not know if anyone else could see it. I saw how it took a great deal more staff to keep things going. That will not help in times when money is not there to operate. I feel that we all must be here, we should make the best of it.

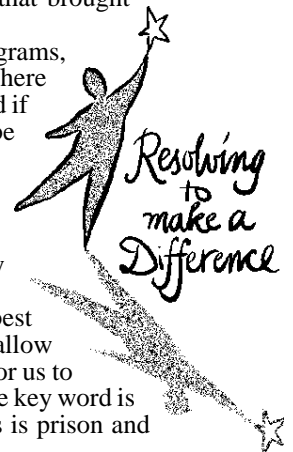
I hear so many men who say that they can't wait to get out and do the same thing that they were doing that brought them here. With these "war stories" they feel that they know that they did wrong and by not repeating it they will avoid being caught.

All that we can do is pray that their eyes will be opened and they will be able to see beyond the obstacles that Satan put between us and the truth. We need to be able to set a positive example that there is a better way to live. That way includes having Jesus as our Lord and savior. I believe in giving credit where credit is due. When we recently had a problem on the yard with fighting, I believe that warden Burt and the staff acted professionally as well as with the best interests of all that were involved whether they were an inmate or staff.

Warden Burt could very easily have locked the inmate population down for an extended time. We could have lost many of the privileges we normally have. Instead of being locked down for a few days, we could have been locked down for 30 to 90 days.

I firmly believe that the decisions that Warden Burt makes reflects the fact that he not only understands the concerns of the inmate but cares about the inmates that are in his charge. I hope that this gives you something to think about. Go in peace serve the Lord.

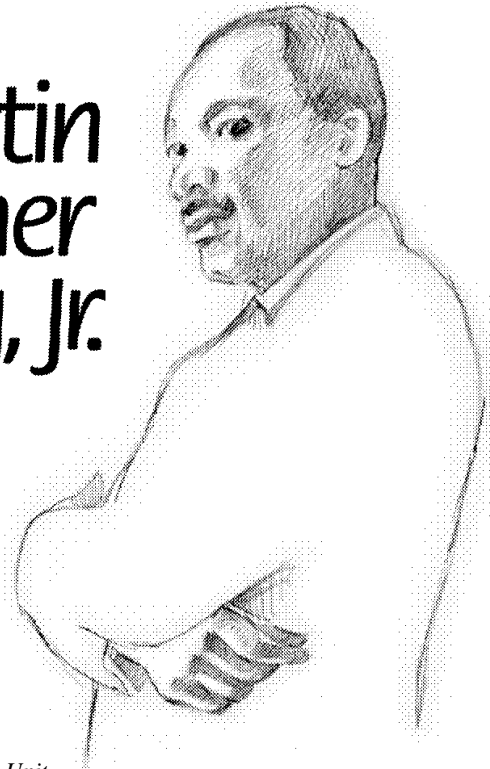
Robert L. Johnson II



## Inside the Echo

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# Martin Luther King, Jr.



## MLK's Spirit

by James Jessop, FDCF Cedar Unit

**M**artin Luther King, Jr. was a man to be admired for his accomplishments and his love for his people. To study his "I have a Dream" speech today, and considered why it would still be relevant, I have realized something. We need to find where he got his strength, wisdom and great love. I know, for I have the same spirit. Yes, the same spirit.

This man was an African-American, and I am white with the same heart, mind and soul. Our spirit is what makes us equal. That is the spirit of Jesus Christ. The only way this country or the world will know peace, is to love one another. Through this faith of his and mine we will overcome anything.

This quote says it all:

"I have a dream that one day every valley shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

"This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the south. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day" (Martin Luther King, Jr.).

This dream of his came from his spirit, this dream of his is in scripture of God's word so we all can live in peace and have love for one another. We all become one in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

So as we read this speech today, let us think of the spirit that was within this great man, let us leave our old ways behind us, let us proceed in search of the spirit that makes us equal, whether we be black, white or any other race, because there are only two races in God's eyes. They would be "righteous" and "not righteous."

And I pray:

*"that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"* (Ephesians 3:16-19).

So with this all above, I say that the spirit that dwelled within this great man is still relevant today and forever. So let's all join in his hope of the Lord's great return, and all become as one in the spirit of his great love, the spirit of Jesus Christ.

*"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever"* (Hebrews 13:8).

*"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation"* (Thessalonians 5:8).

AMEN

## Giving Back

**D**uring our weekly church service we not only pass the peace, we also pass a collection plate. It is at this time we have the chance to give back a small portion of what we receive through the grace of God.

We fill out a store order for whatever amount we choose. This money goes into an account in the Business Office. This money is distributed as such: 12.5% goes to Prison Congregations of America, 12.5% goes to the Western Iowa Synod of the ELCA, we sponsor a child through Children International (Stefani Hernandez of Chili), and we also send money to provide new clothes for school, Christmas gifts, as well as any special occasions. In a sense we're all her adopted parents and can give her things that many children in our world take for granted.

Periodically the Inside Church Council decides which charities will receive these offerings. We have sent contributions to the Make-a-Wish Foundation, Mercy Home for Boys and Girls, Camp Courageous, Ronald McDonald House, Shriners Hospital, or many other charitable organizations.

None of this money goes to pay our Pastor or to operate our church. I hope this will enlighten you about how important your store order is, no matter how big or small. By your generous giving you can make a difference. The next time the store order clipboard comes around, please feel free to give back a little of what we are blessed to have.

Robert L. Johnson II, Vice President

## Pessimism—Not!

**T**here is not a single pessimistic note anywhere in the New Testament after the resurrection.

— Andrew Blackwood

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

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May, 2002

The official publication of The Church of the Damascus Road, a Christian Community of Reconciliation, serving the inmate population of the medium security units at Rockwell City and Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Robert Johnson II, 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:

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239 North 11th Street, Fort Dodge  
515-955-3579

## Keep America in Your Care

We are faced with many problems  
 that grow bigger day by day  
 and, as we seek to solve them  
 in our own self-sufficient way,  
 We keep drifting into chaos  
 and our avarice and greed  
 Blinds us to the answer  
 that would help us in our need...  
 Oh, God, renew our spirit  
 and make us more aware  
 That our future is dependent  
 on our sacrifice and prayer.  
 Forgive us our transgressions  
 and revive our faith anew.  
 So we may all draw closer  
 to each other and to You...  
 For when a nation is too proud  
 to daily kneel and pray  
 It will crumble into chaos  
 and descend into decay.  
 So stir us with compassion  
 and raise our standards higher  
 And take away our lust for power  
 and make our one desire  
 To be a **shining symbol**  
 of **all that's great and good**  
 As You lead us in our struggle  
 toward **new-found brotherhood!**

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord;  
 and the people whom he hath chosen for his  
 own inheritance. *Psalm 33:12*  
 Author unknown, submitted by  
 Victorio Delance



## A Positive Thought

If God had a refrigerator, your picture  
 would be on it. If He had a wallet, your  
 photo would be in it. He sends you flow-  
 ers every spring, and a sunrise every morn-  
 ing. Whenever you want to talk, He'll lis-  
 ten. He could live anywhere in the universe,  
 and He chose your heart.

What about the Christmas gift He sent  
 you in Bethlehem; not to mention that Fri-  
 day at Calvary? Face it, He's crazy about  
 you.

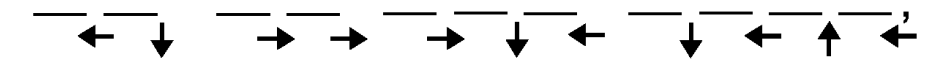
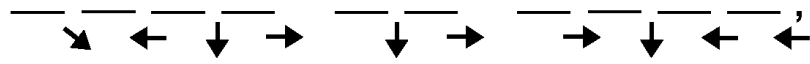
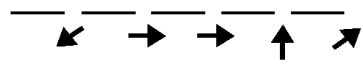
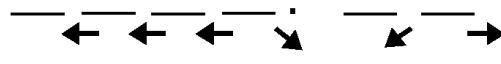
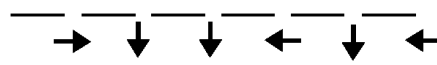
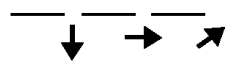
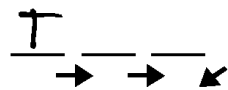
God answers all "Knee Mail."



## "... and on the third day"

Jesus died upon a cross and was buried in a tomb. When the  
 women went there with burial spices on the third day, what  
 did they find?

Follow the arrows.  
 Fill in the blanks.



Begin →

T	H	E	A						
B	S	T	O						
M	O	C	N						
T	H	R	E						
R	O	D	E	F	W	P	R	O	
E	A	F	S	G	Y	A	S	H	L
N	A	L	I	A	A	W		E	L
N	G	E	D	T	J	B	A	D	C
			F	O	T	H			
			E	H	M	E			
			I	S	N	O			
			H	E	H	T			
			E	R	E	R			
			H	S	R	E			
			A	I	S	N			

→ End

Luke 24:6

The stone was rolled away from the door. An angel said to them, "He is not here, he has risen"

Answer:

## Always There

I praise you dear Father  
I praise you so much  
I praise you dear father  
for your loving touch

You wipe away my tears  
when in times of sorrow  
You give me the strength  
I need to face tomorrow

Always there with me  
in your loving arms  
You shelter and comfort me  
safe from worldly harm

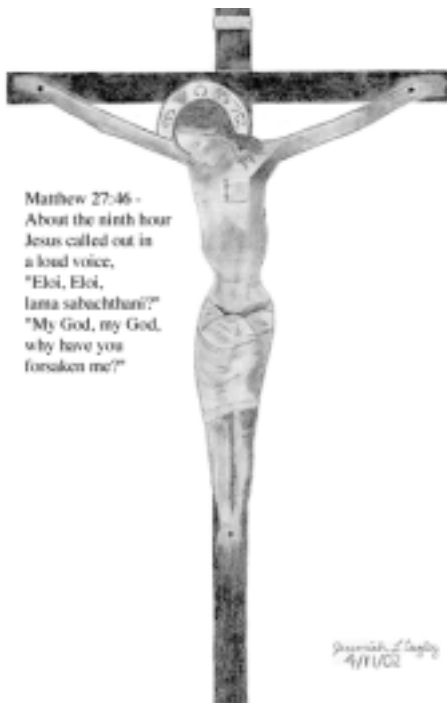
As I take each step  
it is you who lights my way  
I humbly open my heart  
every time I pray

It is only by your grace  
I know I will endure  
I will spend eternity with you  
this I know for sure.

Amen

Robert L. Johnson II

## Artist's Corner



Matthew 27:46 -  
About the ninth hour  
Jesus called out in  
a loud voice,  
"Eloi, Eloi,  
lama sabachthani?"  
"My God, my God,  
why have you  
forsaken me?"

Jeremiah L. Cagley  
4/11/02

by Jeremiah L Cagley, FDCF

## Glorifying God

Each and every thing that Jesus Christ did, he did so that the Father would be glorified. As with everything else he did, he was giving us a living illustration of how we are to live. Through his every action and word, he showed us what our entire purpose and our entire motivation must be here on earth: to glorify the Father. When we shift our motives, he shifts into high gear. Not only will he answer our prayers, but he will usually send us answers that are much better than what we thought we wanted. Pray that you will have the right motive for your prayers.

— Bonnie Ricks

## A Christian Walk

I was asked by a wonderful Christian brother to write this article. I feel it's more than a privilege to do so. It was suggested that I consider a title for the article, hence "A Christian Walk." I asked the Holy Spirit for guidance in what to write. The spirit is guiding me to introduce lessons from our Bible, write of blessings, and about "The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1, *i.e.* faith! For these works the Holy Spirit has prompted me to simply introduce myself.

I'm a year old baby in Christ. I'm a "born again" Christian! Jesus says, "verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." *John 3:3.* I believe salvation is of a two fold nature, Jeaua say's that "except ye repent, you shall all likewise perish." *Luke 13:13.*

My Christian walk is taken very seriously. My bible is taken equally as seriously and at it's word. I believe that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works" *II Timothy 3:16,17.* I did not always feel that way.

I spent many years fighting God and trying to prove that a person didn't need Jesus to enjoy life. I blurted out, "You can't have no fun when you 're a Christian," "The Christian life is boring," "There aint no such thing as heaven or hell"! I was a fool!!

I was robing myself. The Christian walk is the greatist experiance I've ever known! Salvation is God's perfect gift to a dirty, dispicable, selfish, ungrateful sinner! There is a heaven and a hell! I've spent a small share of time in grief that I hadn't come to good much, much sooner.

I understand perfectly and am a witness to a sentence written by Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians. "Therefore if any man but Christ



## He's What's Really Going On

In you, Lord, we take delight  
To do what's good and right  
for every need you supply  
on you, Lord, we rely.  
The hand of God extends  
and gives us peace within  
Trust in God's loving care  
and keep up the faithful prayer.

We thank you, Lord, for answered prayer  
and knowing you are always there.

We thank you, Lord, for hearing when we  
call and grateful for your care.

In God's word we will find  
What is in God's own mind.  
We read and learn God's word  
and firmly fix it in our hearts.

Then when we act upon his word,  
its truth will not depart

God uses critics in our lives  
to help us see our pride  
and teach us humility to  
change us from the inside.  
God may have to break us  
in order to make us.

He teaches us to be ever so kind  
with our Savior first in mind  
as we stay close to Jesus' side  
We know he will be our guide.

We praise you for the blessings you give  
and your son who died so we could live.

For the heartaches and tears  
and the gloomy days, months and years.

I do give thanks, for now I know  
these things helped make me grow  
thinking of the dear ones  
who have passed away  
just remember the wondrous  
joyful reunion some day.

Author unknown

## 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

7:00pm Fridays ..... Bible Study

NCCF Rockwell City

6:30pm Tuesdays ..... Bible Study

6:30pm Thursdays ..... Holy Communion