

# The Church of the Damascus Road Echo!

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Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

## A Prayer for the 4th

Lord God Almighty, in whose name the founders of this country won liberty for themselves and for us, and lit the torch of freedom for nations then unborn:

Grant, we beseech thee, that we and all the people of this land may have the grace to maintain these liberties in righteousness and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God,

for ever and ever. Amen.

-An Episcopal Church prayer book



## Set Free

You freed me from the chains  
Of boundary,  
You allowed my soul to roam  
Free,  
Now I don't feel captive since  
I know you set me free.  
I know it was your tender  
Love and mercy,  
That has finally set me free,  
For I was blind, but now I see.  
I walked alone,  
Now I walk with thee,  
Now God is my master and  
Christ my King.  
And there's nothing in between.

Written By: T. Rada



Stephanie A. Reynald Hernandez 574518 D

## From Stephanie

Dear Sponsor:

I hope you and your family are fine when you receive this letter. I'm doing great. I can see the ocean from my house. I like playing with my siblings and cousins. I'm not doing so well in school. I'm in the 6th grade. I like going to the park. My family is fine and they are very supportive. I want to say thanks for all your help. It's really important to me.

I'd like you to send me a picture. I say good-bye with kisses and hugs.

Stephanie Alejandra Reynalds Hernandez

## America's Powerful Document

One of the few remaining copies of the Declaration of Independence was put on display last October in Phoenix. A reporter for *The Arizona Republic* asked 11 citizens why the document was still relevant today. Here is a summary of their comments:

"It is like a Bible that has been in the family for generations."

"It is one of the world's most precious documents."

"It is a living breathing document with basic values underlying it."

"It began with some rabble-rousers who believed we should be free, that we should be able to choose our own destiny."

"The document is very much alive. It's organic. It is not archival material. It's real."

"I think the overwhelming message of the declaration is that it's okay to disagree with the government."

A pastor, Dr. William H. Stewart Sr., of the First Institutional Baptist Church, summarized the general consensus with these words: "It is one of the greatest documents that has ever been written about people seeking freedom from an oppressive power."

While political and personal freedoms are not the equivalent of spiritual freedom in Christ, they are blessings that should be available to all. Jesus, after all, identified himself as one coming to "proclaim release to the captives." (Luke 4:18)

— Newsletter Newsletter, July 2004



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The people walking  
in darkness have  
seen a great light ....

Isaiah 9:2

## Encouragement

Hello, I am David Porter and I'd like to tell you about my situation and how God is working in my life. God is also working in the lives of those around me. I pray that this will touch your heart in some way for Christ.

I am currently serving a 25 year sentence for the criminal transmission of HIV. My lifestyle of gang involvement included unprotected sex, drug usage, and drug dealing. My drug of choice was heroin. My primary motivation for using, was sexual abuse by cousins and a neighbor when I was a youth; I could not understand that and I was afraid to tell anyone about it, even my mother. The other gang members were more of a family to me than my real family. The drug usage provided escape from the painful memories of the abuse.

My father passed away when I was six years old. That caused my mother to go to work, so the home structure was disrupted, establishing the circumstances for abuse. I went to school as a way to get away; this allowed me to get an education. Junior high saw the start of drug experimentation. High school involved more drinking, drug usage, and eventually drug dealing. I lived with a constant element of fear and danger as a result of this lifestyle.

I had a few encounters with the police as a teenager, but Chicago is such a big place, that nothing really came from those encounters. I was incarcerated at the age of 20. That was a direct result of the lifestyle—gang membership, drug usage, and drug dealing.

My life has been transformed through the power of Jesus Christ. I have enjoyed reconciliation with my mother. I was able to confront the child abuse—she did not know anything about it. I have been released from that burden. That release has allowed me to participate in an institutional program for other inmates (not in the IFI program) that were abused as children. This group was facilitated by Martha and was coordinated by Betty Brown of Victim Impact. That experience and HIV have been opportunities for me to witness to other guys in the prison's general population.

My HIV transmission case was widely publicized. Last year, the Des Moines Register did a follow-up article (May 25, 2003). The contents were not encouraging or favorable. The article focused on my victim, Raelynn, who was my wife at the time. We divorced shortly after I accepted responsibility for the crime and pleaded guilty. About one week after that article came out, Raelynn came to visit. She was not pleased with the twists the reporter wrote! Rather than being the final point in our relationship, that article experience was used by God to bring us back together. I am happy to tell you that we are now reconciled. She also has accepted Christ into her life, by rededicating her life to Him. Raelynn is even talking about getting married again!

I have taken Bible study courses through the Shalom Bible College & Seminary. Those studies have resulted in a Bachelor's Degree in Divinity. I am currently pursuing a Master's degree in Christian Education.

I would like to pursue further education because I feel the Lord is using my health condition and testimony to reach young adults, people in my situation physically, and to start an outreach ministry. I anticipate teaching Sunday school, organizing adult rallies, and teaching about the dangers of unprotected sex, drug, alcohol use, and a criminal lifestyle. Finally, I hope to contribute in marriage counseling for young adults.

Upon release, I anticipate being involved in adult ministry and with ministering to individuals having serious health difficulties. I will be able to share the experience I have had, including the hope that I have in Christ, our Lord and Savior. This will be a source of comfort, hope, and possibly salvation for these unfortunate people. I appreciate this opportunity to tell you my situation and of my activities. I pray that the Lord will allow you to share this with others and, through this sharing, to deter our youth, young adults, and adults from being involved in gangs and other unsafe activities, such as unprotected sex and drug usage. This is my work for the Lord. May the Lord bless you and your families.

— Sincerely, David L. Porter NCCF

## Water-Driven Preacher

The new preacher, at this first service, had a pitcher of water and a glass on the pulpit. As he preached, he drank until the pitcher of water was completely gone.

After the service, someone asked an old woman of the church, "How did you like the new pastor?"

"Fine," she said, "but he's the first windmill I ever saw that was run by water."

— Ray Kerley



Art by Joey Gott, FDCF, 5-12-04

## Here We Go Again

You're whispering in my ear,  
I can feel it in my heart,  
The knocking on my brain,  
It's driving me insane.  
Your love is so deep,  
It gives me peace.  
My faith is so strong,  
You're singing me a song.  
I've set you free,  
Just believe in me.

Amen

by Finus Atwood 3-13-04

## BC — Hart



## The Church of the Damascus Road Echo!

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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.

Nathan Bell, 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





Matthew Clark, FDCF, 5-2-04

## The Holy Alphabet

Although things are not perfect  
 Because of trial or pain  
 Continue in thanksgiving  
 Do not begin to blame  
 Even when the times are hard  
 Fierce winds are bound to blow  
 God is forever able  
 Hold on to what you know  
 Imagine life without His love  
 Joy would cease to be  
 Keep thanking Him for all the things  
 Love imparts to thee  
 Move out of "Camp Complaining"  
 No weapon that is known  
 On earth can yield the power  
 Praise can do alone  
 Quit looking at the future  
 Redeem the time at hand  
 Start every day with worship  
 To "thank" is a command  
 Until we see Him coming  
 Victorious in the sky  
 We'll run the race with gratitude  
 Xalting God most high  
 Yes, there'll be good times & some bad, but...  
 Zion waits in glory...where none are ever sad!

## A New Life

After a life of trouble and grief,  
 I got down on my knees and made the prayer brief:  
 "Lord, take my life and do what you feel fit,  
 For I no longer can control it, that I do admit.  
 Be my light in this world of darkness  
 To show me the way to a new life of bliss.  
 From here on out, give me strength  
 And let me be your anointed,  
 And I promise you'll, in your own eyes,  
 Not be disappointed. Amen"  
 "The Lord is their strength and he is the saving  
 strength of his anointed" (Psalm 28:8).  
*by Anthony Castro, Sr. 7-23-03*

## Your Assignment

**O**ur assignment from Jesus Christ is to be His representative in all of our relationships- to be "Jesus" to each and every person we encounter- each and every day. We should build up, not tear down. We must be an encouragement, not a hindrance. This pretty effectively eliminates griping, complaining, belly-aching, cursing, arguing, gossiping, ridiculing, criticizing and manipulating. That eliminates putting our own needs and desires first. In other words, that eliminates doing what comes naturally.  
 — Bonnie Ricks

## Judgment Day

Patience is a virtue  
 or they seem to say  
 patiently awaiting  
 until the judgment day

Jesus is coming  
 to judge the living and the dead  
 to the right of God the Father  
 a crown of glory on his head

It is through his precious blood  
 a sinner is not the same  
 for to glorify God the Father  
 we praise Jesus name

When all is said and done  
 I know where I will be  
 in the arms of Jesus  
 -Robert L. Johnson II

## Laughter

**L**aughter brightens the eye, increases the perspiration, expands the chest, forces the poisoned air from the least-used cells, and tends to restore that exquisite poise or balance which we call health.  
 — O. S. Marden



Cardenas, FDCF

## Contributions invited

**T**he 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

## One Big Happy



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