

The Church of the Damascus Road

Flash!

Volume 1
Issue No. 2
January 1998
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA



Pastor Carroll Lang is assisted with communion distribution by inmates who attend. Messenger Photo

In the News

The Church of the Damascus Road had visitors at its worship service last fall. Susan Stocum, from the Associated Press in Des Moines came up to Rockwell City with a photographer and covered one of our worship services.

A few weeks later the article was uploaded on the Associated Press network along with six of the photos taken that night.

Since then the item has appeared on the religion pages of newspapers across the U.S. The Chicago Tribune, The Omaha World Herald, Council Bluffs Nonpareil, Sioux City Journal, KWWL-TV in Waterloo, IA, Des Moines Register, Fort Dodge Messenger, newspapers in Ashville, NC, Ohio, Florida, Colorado, South Dakota, Texas and many more.

This happened because a Fort Dodge Messenger reporter, Barbara Wallace-Hughes, wrote an article earlier about the Church of the Damascus Road and uploaded it to the AP network. Barbara is now a member of the Outside Church Council.



This Messenger photo appeared with the story by Barbara Wallace-Hughes.



Fran Iverson, Melroy Johnson, Emanuel Reiford and Mary Ann Bousfield enjoy conversation after the worship service. This AP photo appeared in several newspapers across the country.

What's it take to run a prison congregation?

An accurate picture of financial needs is not available as yet because we're just starting. But after we get settled down we will have the usual congregational expenses: pastor's salary and benefits; travel; office equipment and supplies; worship materials, hymnals, bulletins, worship supplies; Bibles, study books; telephone; pulpit supply; conferencing, parsonage and utilities, and more.

Our present estimate of needs totals \$45,000.00. Of that, \$4,500.00 is for benevolence; \$3,000.00 is for Prison Congregations of America for consultation services; \$26,740.00 is for paying the ELCA our half of the pastor's compensation; \$4,260.00 for office supplies, printing, postage and equipment; \$900.00 for telephone; \$500.00 for pulpit supply and conferencing; \$5,000.00 for secretary; and \$100.00 for contingencies.

We have been given a folding altar for both prisons. We have communion ware for both prisons. We have an electronic keyboard for NCCF but not for FDCF. We are receiving the hymnal *With One Voice* for our worship services, and about 19 songbooks titled *The Other Songbook*. We will need at least 40 more of *The Other Songbook* when the Fort Dodge facility opens.

We will be needing a Macintosh computer for the office early in 1998. The Macintosh is preferred because of its desktop publishing ability, which is the primary use in this ministry.

Inside the Flash

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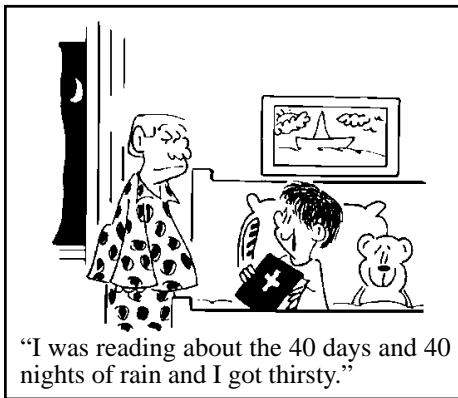
Come and Worship

We welcome you to schedule a visit to one of our worship services. We meet every Thursday evening starting at 6:30pm at the North Central Correctional Facility just east of Rockwell City.

After the worship service there will be a time of fellowship during which you can meet and converse with some of the inmates. Sometime after 8:00pm we will exit the prison and, if you would like, go to a nearby restaurant and discuss the experience.

Your visit will need to be planned ahead of time. A "Volunteer Approval" form will need to be submitted (it's painless to fill out). We'll send you a map with directions and some guidelines for your visit. Talk to your friends and/or fellow church members and schedule your visit together.

To schedule a visit, contact Pastor Carroll Lang, PO Box 834, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834 or call 515-955-3579.



Paul Burton (c)MMI

Outside Church Council is Formed

The original Prison Congregation Steering Committee, formed to organize and bring into existence a new mission start-up, officially ceased to exist on December 31, 1997.

A new group, called the Outside Church Council has been elected to support the ministry of The Church of the Damascus Road.

The new group had its first meeting on January 5, 1998 and elected officers as follows:

Lee Kuhrt, Pomeroy, Chair
 Guy Olson, Fort Dodge, Vice Chair
 Rev. Allen Hermeier, Ft Dodge, Sec'y
 Helen Hermeier, Ft Dodge, Treasurer

Other members of the Outside Church Council include: Rev. Ken Arnold (Rockwell City), Rev. Ken Greene (Fort Dodge), Jim Fevold (Humboldt), Rev. Ken Fogelman (Ft Dodge), Kathy Hansel (Badger), Rev. Kelly Moore (Ft Dodge), Paul Peterson (Callender), Rollin Swanson (Ft Dodge), Barbara Wallace-Hughes (Ft Dodge). Rev. Delwayne Hahn, ELCA Division for Outreach Liaison for the Western Iowa Synod is ex-officio a member of the council and our consultant, Rev. Ed

Intentions

Promissory notes, stating our intentions, making a pledge. All of us at some time or other make such statements. When we buy a car by making a loan, we state our intent to repay the bank or other lending institution. When we purchase a house, the mortgage is a promissory note to make payments for 10-30 years.

It's really no different when we pledge to our congregations to give a proportion of our income to the work of Christ in our community and the world.

In April 1997 a meeting was held at St. Olaf Lutheran Church in Fort Dodge, inviting the ecumenical community in western Iowa to hear about the plans to start a prison congregation. Each of the attending churches received a "Statement of Intent" on which to indicate willingness to support a prison congregation.

Many of you were at that meeting, but more of you were not. Enclosed in this newsletter is a "Statement of Intent" for you to share with your church council, vestry, governing board, etc.

A prison congregation cannot be wholly supported by the inmates who are its members. An inmate is paid an average of \$2.00 per day. Some of the inmate members give \$2.00 or more each week - that's a day's pay. But it would not support the present budget of \$45,000.00 per year.

Support will need to come from the surrounding congregations who place The Church of the Damascus Road on their annual budgets and send these contributions regularly to this ministry. This makes The Church of the Damascus Road an extension of the ministry of your congregation.

The Church of the Damascus Road provides your congregation with two special ministry opportunities. First, it gives your congregation the opportunity to *support* a prison ministry, a ministry vehicle few congregations have. The second opportunity gives your congregation a chance to "visit the imprisoned" as listed in Matthew 25, a vehicle for *participating* in a prison visitation ministry. We invite you to send several of your members to worship with The Church of the Damascus Road on Thursday evenings at the North Central Correctional Facility in Rockwell City.

The process is simple. Just send to Pastor Lang a list of the names, Social Security numbers and birth dates of all who wish to attend. Send this information one week before your intended visit. Then plan to be at the Control Center of the prison by 6pm. Pastor Lang will escort you from Control to the worship center. Worship is at 6:30pm. After the worship is a time of fellowship. After the men are escorted back to their units, we will all go to a local restaurant to share the experience.

Nesselhuf of Vermillion, South Dakota attends most of our meetings.

Each member of the Outside Church Council is asked to be a fund raiser, being responsible for generating \$1,000 personally or through his or her own congregation, and another \$750 from each of five other congregations in the 50-mile radius around both prisons.

This means many of you can expect to be contacted by one of these people to get your permission to tell the story of the Church of the Damascus Road and to ask your congregation to help financially.

In the near future, the inmates will also form church councils, the Rockwell City Church Council and the Fort Dodge Church Council. They will make decisions concerning the life and ministry of the congregation, worship services, bible studies, committees, and more, much like any congregation.

If things can be worked out, we may be able to have joint meetings of these three councils by using the Iowa Cable Network. Pray that this can happen. God bless you all in your varied ministries.

-- Rev. Carroll Lang, Pastor

News note -

Exceeding Expectations

On Thursday, January 22, 1998 25 inmates and 21 visitors and Pastor Lang totalled 47 persons in attendance at the worship service. The most inmates AND visitors ever!

The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!

Volume 1.2

January 1998

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.

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

How Can I Help?

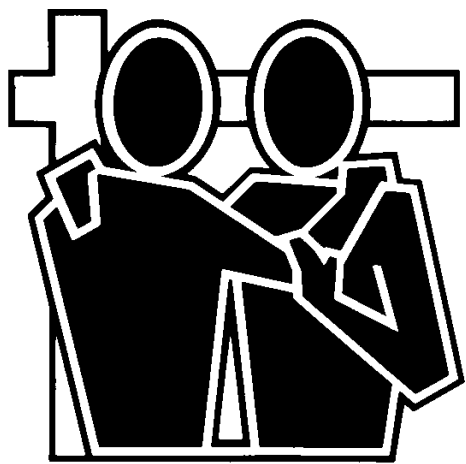
The most important way to support a prison ministry is with prayer. We ask for your daily prayer for this ministry. Prayer really does change things. It changes us. It changes attitudes. Prayer moves the heart of God and touches the hearts of people.

The next way to support this ministry is through your participation in the worship service inside the prison. Come and sit with the members of the congregation. Get acquainted with the men before and after the service. This connection is an important part of this ministry. Bridges are built when genuine love is shown. We are brothers and sisters in Christ no matter what sins we commit, and we show our "family ties" by our presence.

Volunteers will be needed from time to time to participate in Bible studies, direct a choir, play the keyboard for worship, or fill a position on the Outside Church Council.

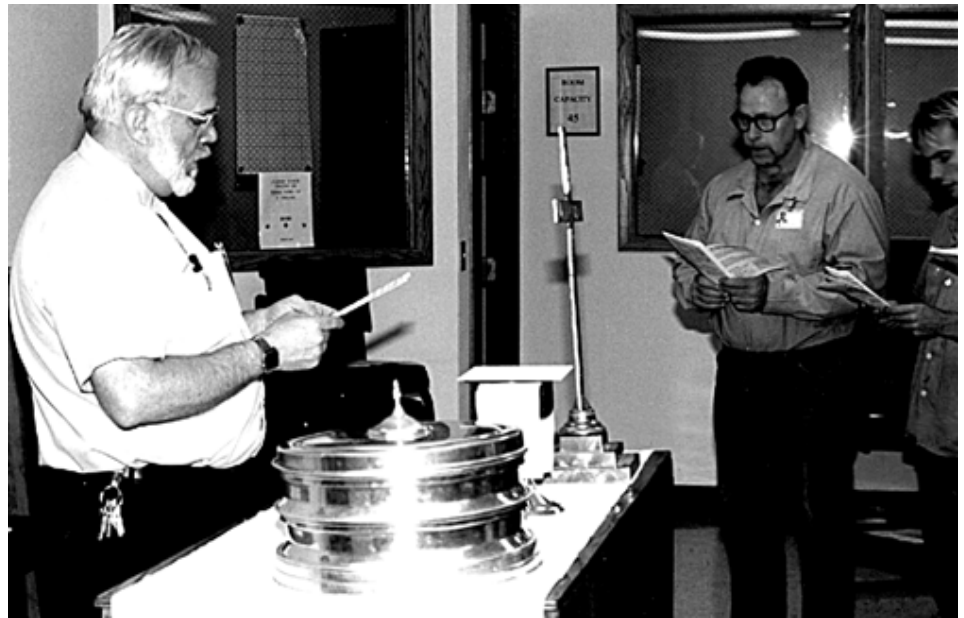
Yet another way to support the ministry of The Church of the Damascus Road is through your gifts of money. Individuals may support this ministry through regular donations directly or through their congregations. Congregations may elect to support this ministry by adding The Church of the Damascus Road to their annual budgets.

If you would like to help or set up a date to visit the worship service on a Thursday evening, call Pastor Lang at 515-955-3579. If he's not in, please leave a message and he'll get back to you.



SEND US, LORD,
TO CARE

SEND US, LORD,
TO SHARE



Pastor Carroll Lang reads the Gospel lesson during one of the worship services at the North Central Correctional Facility in Rockwell City. Inmates set up the room for worship and take it all down afterwards, read the First and Second Readings, lead the Psalm, offer the prayers, and assist with the distribution of communion during the worship services.

What's a Prison Congregation?

A prison congregation simply means a congregation inside a prison. The inmates are the members, and they have an annual meeting at which they set policy and elect officers, and volunteer to be members of boards and committees in the same manner as a normal congregation.

The big difference is that there are no children in Sunday school, and such a congregation can never be self-supporting (unless sweeping changes are made in paying inmates a living wage, but that's another issue).

The Church of the Damascus Road is a new congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that relates ecumenically to all Christian denominations.

So how is a congregation in a prison supported? By congregations like yours who form a partnership with the inside congregation and with 50-100 other congregations in the surrounding area. Together this coalition provides money to support the pastor, some secretarial help, operating costs and travel, just as in a regular congregation outside. The inmates will also contribute, but their income comes from an average of \$2.00 per day of pay for working inside the walls, so they cannot be self-supporting.

When Jesus told the parable of the last judgment in Matthew 25, he listed the primary ways we minister to the needs of people, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."



Most of us have had the opportunity to do five of the above, but visiting the imprisoned is something we probably don't have any idea how to do. Now we can.

The Church of the Damascus Road gives you the opportunity to not only support it through your prayers and gifts, but also through your presence as you enter the prison and worship right along with the inmates. Now, as in clothing the naked and feeding the hungry, you are not going to be forced to do something against your will. No, you will be asked to respond out of love, and when it is your congregation's turn to have visitors at The Church of the Damascus Road worship service, 5 to 10 from your congregation will have the privilege of sharing that time together in community with our brothers in blue.

You will be hearing a lot more about this in the future.

—Pastor Carroll Lang

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834

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The Church of the Damascus Road

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A Blessed New Year!

Invite the Pastor to Worship

The worship services at The Church of the Damascus Road are scheduled on week-nights for two reasons. One is to enable people on the outside to worship with the inmates and not miss worship in their own congregations. The second is to make the pastor of Damascus Road available to visit area congregations on Sunday mornings. The pastor can give a brief update on the ministry, sermon, children's sermon, adult forum, children's Sunday school opening or cross-generational class session, any or all of the above, and/or is open to suggestions. All that is asked is that there be time to prepare.

Call 515-955-3579 or write to: The Church of the Damascus Road, PO Box 834, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834 to arrange for a visit to your congregation. The pastor speaks Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist, United Church of Christ, Covenant, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Reorganized Latter Day Saints, Catholic, Evangelical, Reformed, Assembly of God, Nazarene, and a host of other denominations, independents, and non-denominations as well.

