

The Church of the Damascus Road

Flash!

Volume 1
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May 1998
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Sleeping on it..

First Hand Experience

On March 28 and 29 about 420 adults and youth were locked into the new Fort Dodge Correctional Facility for the night. The event was planned by the Fort Dodge Chamber of Commerce, the Webster County Development Corporation and the Church of the Damascus Road.

Two pods of the new facility were filled to capacity. 220 youth and adults were housed in Unit B and 200 adults were housed in United C (now known as Cedar Unit),

After the "inmates" were "booked" on Saturday afternoon they followed the signs for a self-guided tour of the new facility. A lasagna supper was served in the two pods. The "inmates" were entertained by the Iowa Central drama students. A panel, with DOC Director Kip Kautsky, Warden John Thalacker, Deputy Warden Jerry Burt, Fort Dodge Police Chief Ivan Metzgar, former inmate Ralph Parrot, Webster County Attorney ???, and Pastor Carroll Lang. Each told about prison from his perspective and then questions from the audience were directed to them by Dr. David Haggard, Superintendent of Fort Dodge Schools.

A time for recreation followed and then most of the "inmates" crawled into their shelf beds for the forty winks. Next morning breakfast was served and the event was capped off with a church service led by Pastor Lang with the help of several "inmates" who read scripture and prayed.

The "inmates" were "Paroled" around 9am Sunday and wasted no time leaving the institution. In general the event was well received. The youth found out fast that prison is not fun, and the skeptical adults decided that prison is definitely NOT like staying in a Holiday Inn.

From the outside

Assembly Fun!

On April 18, 1998 I had the pleasure of speaking at the Western Iowa Synod Assembly about the work the Church of the Damascus Road is doing for the men at NCCF, Rockwell City. I was honored to be able to speak on how the Church of the Damascus Road helped to get my life back on track and to place God first in my life, and how it is working for the men still residing there. The support from the community has been terrific and I pray it will continue through the years to come.

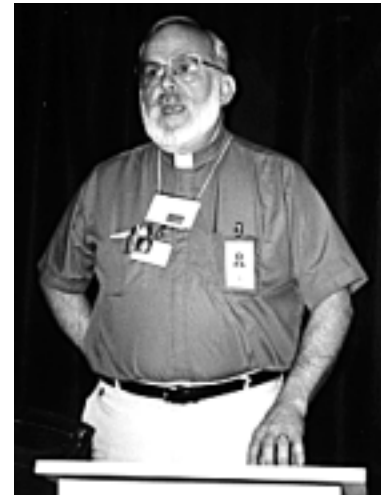
— Paul Rueter



Paul Rueter and his friend Rose Gabel visited the Western Iowa Synod Assembly on Saturday, April 18.



Paul Rueter telling of his experiences.



Pastor Lang leading the forum.

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Bible Study and Worship Schedules

NCCF
Rockwell City

FDCF
Fort Dodge

- | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| 7pm Tuesdays | Bible Study | 6:30pm Wednesdays | Bible Study |
| 6:30pm Thursdays | Holy Communion | 6:30pm Fridays | Holy Communion |



Ed Olson and Walt Smith move the piano in from the hallway.

Preparing for Worship



Darrel Pinnel unfolds and sets up the altar.



Ed Olson filling the communion trays with grape juice.

Setting up.. The W-Team

The room in which we have our Thursday evening worship services is a multi-purpose room, so the altar, chairs and worship appointments have to be set up every time we meet. Several of the inmates have volunteered to do this each week, and they are a well-oiled team.

Not only do the chairs need setting in place, but the piano is moved into the room, the altar is set up, the communion tray cups are filled, the table is set, the worship folders are folded and the hymnals are distributed.

Then, when everything is set up, Pastor Lang walks to the gate and greets the visitors to escort them to the chapel room. When the guests arrive they are heartily greeted at the door by the inmates and invited in to worship.

After some getting-acquainted conversation, worship begins. The room fills with spirited singing, the lessons are read by volunteers, the prayers are begun by one and petitions are shared by several others in the room. The bread is broken and the drink is shared. After the service is ended the visitors and inmates engage in conversation until it is time to leave the institution.

After the visitors leave the institution, they go to a local restaurant and share their experiences and then travel home.

Worship inside the prison is an experience you are invited to try. Just contact Pastor Lang at 515-955-3579 and give him or secretary Gail Lund your name, Social Security number, your birthdate and the service you wish to attend. This information is due one week or more before you plan to attend.

Then, be at the gate of the prison you are attending by 6:00pm on Thursdays at Rockwell City and Fridays in Fort Dodge.



Judy Lang is greeted with a hug from member George Fox.



Art Greve greets Wes Thompson before the service begins.

The Church of the Damascus Road *Flash!*

Volume 1.3

May 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



Robert Harrison

Just Sharing

Pastor Lang:

I'm in discipline detention right now. But, I'm looking forward to Thursday night's meeting.

I've been in the "hole" two weeks now, & I've heard you call services both times. I personally feel I'm letting you down, by not being there. I've come to trust you & would like to say thank you.

I know it's hard & unless someone tells you. You might get discouraged. Mostly because of you & a friend that encouraged me to come. I've been reading my Daily Bread every day & enjoying a new feeling. For life in general..

I got a parole, so I don't know how many meetings I have left. But, you can count me in every one of them.

I told you I go to the Monday night meeting & it's good to. But, the fact is that God's word period, is good.

I fully intend in continuing a personal relationship with Him, & would surely have to wonder what us boys would do without your care, & guidance.

Respectfully yours, Robert Harrison

About our Council Members

Kathy Hansel

I was baptized and confirmed at Lake Lutheran Church at rural Goldfield and I am still a member there.

I own a beauty salon in Vincent, Iowa and have been there since September 1993.

I live in Badger and am married to Bruce Hansel. Bruce is an over-the-road driver for B.T.I. out of Des Moines. He gets to see the country and gets paid for it, too.

My extra curricular activities include secretary of Lake Lutheran Church, Treasurer for the Webster County Republican Central Committee and a member of the Vincent Lions Club.

We have no children, but I am an avid cat fancier. I have two cats and their names are Buzzard and Prudy. In my spare time I love to watch ice skating and movies.

On Fire for Christ

On February 26, 1998, I went to my very first prison worship service . . . ever. Was I nervous. (I was nervous.) Matter of fact, I was so nervous, I decided to take with me my friend, Pat who had visited a prison before and was, therefore, relatively calm.

We parked the car at the designated spot (visitors); made our way to the appropriate building (Control) where Pastor Lang met us. We showed our IDs, "lockered" our purses, found our way to a room where we left our coats, and then went into the worship service.

I really enjoyed the service, the sermon and especially the communion, which was particularly meaningful to me, since the actual unleavened bread was offered along with the wine (grape juice).

Then it was visiting time.

Since Kris (the inmate sitting next to me) had helped me out at different points of my confusion in the service, I decided to start the visiting time with him.

Kris and I talked, generally, and I volunteered the information that at least part of the difficulty I had during the service was due to the fact that I was hearing impaired (I wear a hearing aid in my right ear and my left one is deaf). He said he understood the problem, as he has a brother who is completely deaf. Kris told me he signs for his brother. Since I had taken a signing class, we got into a discussion on the subject and



he commenced to show me some signing. It is a beautiful language and I enjoyed watching him. I was unable to *join* him, since I knew hardly any signing, but it surely would have been fun to do so.

As Kris and I were talking, Ed came over and joined us.

Ed mentioned that Kris is like a brother to him and he really enjoys looking after him.

The three of us started discussing the service and how much we enjoyed it. Then Ed mentioned excitedly that, while in prison, he had found the Lord, and what a wonderful thing *that* was. We talked about what a change it can make in a person's life and how much hope and peace can be gained from knowing our Savior. Ed is really *on fire for our Lord*.

After visiting with Kris and Ed, I walked over to Lester. and I discovered *another* inmate on fire for Christ. Lester had also found the Lord while in prison. He is also very excited about it and about the remarkable difference it's made in his life. Lester mentioned that he's been doing a lot of historical reading while at NCCF and is also busy getting his GED. He was pretty excited about this.

All too soon, it was time to leave. We all said good-bye for now. The inmates made it a special point to shake our hands and tell us they appreciated us coming. We thanked them for having us and expressed how much we enjoyed it.

Afterwards, six of us, including Pastor and Judy Lang went over to the local Dairy Time for coffee, pop and eats and to discuss our visiting experiences.

We all had different experiences, of course, but we all enjoyed it and plan to come back again, as soon as time and energy permit.

Gail Lund, Secretary
The Church of the Damascus Road

What's Still Needed to Help Damascus Road Get Started?

At the Congregations Together in Mission Event in November, Pastor Del Hahn invited the Congregations if the Western Iowa Synod, ELCA to send a startup gift of \$100 and a copy of *With One Voice* to help us get started in our worship services. The Church of the Damascus Road has received 45 copies of WOV and about \$4,200. We are very grateful for these gifts and some of the members of the congregation took time to personally thank each congregation for presenting us with a book.

The local Lutheran Brotherhood Branch #8639 donated two folding altars, two fair linens, and communion ware.

The congregation received communion ware and paraments from a congregation that

closed, and an altar cross and offering plates were loaned to us by St. Mark's Episcopal of Fort Dodge.

St. Olaf youth in Bode donated 19 copies of *The Other Song Book*.

We are still in need of 75 copies of WOV (\$8.50 each, plus shipping), 95 copies of *The Other Song Book* (\$10.50 each, plus shipping), and a set of communion linens (veil, purificators, etc.).

We will be needing a MIDI keyboard to accompany our singing (\$750 - \$1,250).

We are always in need of the *Contemporary English Version* of the bible from the American Bible Society to give to inmates needing bibles.

And...placing us on your annual budget.

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

The Church of the Damascus Road
PO Box 834
Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834

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, independent, and non-denominational as well.

