

The Church of the Damascus Road

Flash!

Volume 1
Issue No. 4
August 1998
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Worship Day Changed

The attendance at worship at the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility has continued to grow. Shortly after we started worship services we had to go to two services per Friday evening because the Fire Marshall declared that only 36 persons may be in the chapel at one time.

This has only been a temporary fix to a growing problem (nice problem to have, though), and on Friday, August 21, we had three services! Clearly another "fix" is in order.

We have permission to switch the worship service to Wednesdays, using the empty visiting room. Effective September 2, 1998 we will worship in the Visiting Room on Wednesdays at 6:30pm.

The same schedule: be at the entrance before 6pm, worship at 6:30pm, fellowship at 7:30pm and depart the institution at 8pm will apply to Wednesdays now.

There will be a limit of 10 who can join us for worship on Wednesdays in Fort Dodge and 15 on Thursdays in Rockwell City.



CROP Walk inside both prisons

The members of The Church of the Damascus Road are planning to take part in the annual CROP Walk by walking around the prison yard on Sep-tember 26 at NCCF and September 27 at FDCF. That part will be easy for the ones who are fit, and a labor of love for the others of us who are not that fit. What they have difficulty doing is getting pledges for their efforts. Last year, in a hastily-planned walk at NCCF, the inmates raised just over \$300, most of which came from members of their own families.

This year they would like to expand their base of donors by calling on you who are in the support community to donate a pledged amount per kilometer in the ten kilometer walk.

Funds raised in the Church World Service sponsored CROP Walk are sent to third world communities to feed hungry people and also to provide programs to enable them to raise their own food. 25% of all donations sent into Church World Service through the CROP Walk are returned to the community to be used for local hunger needs, such as food pantries and assistance programs.

We need your help. Please use the enclosed Damascus Road remittance envelope to send in your donations (clearly marked for the CROP Walk). Send them in before September 15th. The walk is scheduled at the Rockwell City Prison for 9am Saturday, September 26th and at the Fort Dodge prison for 2pm Sunday, September 27. The members of the Church of the Damascus Road are eager to "walk because they walk" and are very appreciative of your help.

Inside the Flash

- Page 2 - Losing members
- Page 2 - Commitment to Partnership
- Page 3 - Blue Ribbon Clock
- Page 3 - Invite the pastor to worship
- Page 4 - Prayer - a dialogue

A note to secretaries and pastors—

Copy Me, Please!

Although there are many individuals included, our database primarily lists congregations, to which a copy of our newsletter is sent. It is printed on white paper so that (all or portions of) it can be copied into your newsletter or bulletin, or simply copied and made available to the members of the congregation.

Please make this newsletter available to the members of your congregation. If any of the members would like to be on our mailing list, have them send names, addresses, and phone numbers to The Church of the Damascus Road, PO Box 834, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834

-- Pastor Carroll Lang

Bible Study and Worship Schedules

NCCF
Rockwell City

FDCF
Fort Dodge

7pm Tuesdays Bible Study
6:30pm Thursdays Holy Communion

6:30pm Wednesdays Holy Communion
6:30 & 7:30pm Fridays Bible Study

Love to lose members

Recently, one of the members of The Church of the Damascus Road was released from prison. His son met him, loaded up the compact car and drove him away.

As you can see by the joy in his face, he was indeed happy to be out of prison.

It is a bitter-sweet sentiment when we say that we love to lose members, and we do rejoice when they leave us, but we also miss them in the worshipping community. Peace be with you, Ed.



Ed Olson expressing joy at his release from prison on a Sunday morning.



Ed Olson, with his son, Ed Olson.



Packing all of Ed's inmate property into the Escort.

A Commitment to Mission Partnership

between St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Church of the Damascus Road

Dear Friends in Christ,

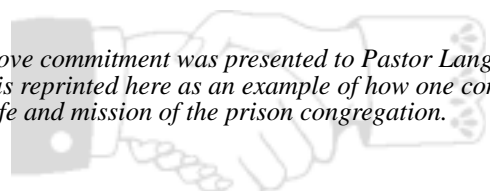
It is our desire to become a partner in mission with the leadership and members of the Church of the Damascus Road, a Mission Congregation of the ELCA located inside the North Central Correctional Facility at Rockwell City, Iowa, and the Fort Dodge Correctional Center in Ft. Dodge. Our goal is to share in this mission and ministry in, but not limited to, the following ways:

1. To establish an Ambassadors in Mission Team to connect with the leaders and pastor of these ministries to help explore and plan how our relationship with them will involve our and their members and the gifts we offer each other.
2. To visit and participate in the worship and other ministry activities of the Church of the Damascus as is possible and helpful.
3. To provide volunteer, supplies and materials support as our members experience the willingness in their hearts, according to the richness of their gifts and talents.
4. To provide congregation budgetary support according to a fixed dollar amount or percentage of offerings received each year for a minimum of three years, be-

ginning officially with the budget for 1999.

5. To pray often for this mission in the prayers of the Church and in our personal prayers, and to keep our members informed about the ministry happening in the Damascus Road Congregation.
6. To keep the congregation of St. Paul and the members informed of ministry developments, current needs, and the ways in which other congregations and individuals are supporting the ministry.
7. To share requests from St. Paul Lutheran Church for ways in which the members of the Church of the Damascus Road can serve us in witness, service, education, administration, etc.
8. To encourage you to pray regularly for our congregation and our members in the corporate prayers of the faith community.

Louis G. Hoger, Pastor, for the Social Concerns Committee, the Congregation Council, and the Membership of St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, Manson, Iowa.



Editor's note: The above commitment was presented to Pastor Lang when he preached at St. Paul Lutheran. It is reprinted here as an example of how one congregation committed itself to support the life and mission of the prison congregation.



After Ed changed into his Harley shirt he was ready to drive to Jefferson for church.

The Church of the Damascus Road *Flash!*

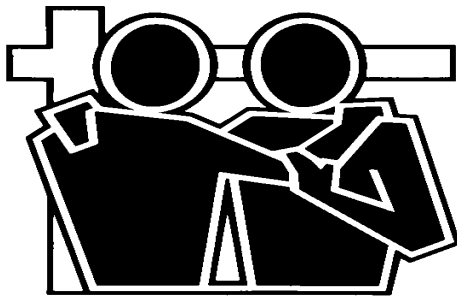
Volume 1.4

August 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



**SEND US, LORD,
TO CARE**
**SEND US, LORD,
TO SHARE**

Visitor Reaction

A few weeks ago I took advantage of an opportunity that presented itself. I had sent a proposal letter to Warden Thalacker at the new prison, requesting the formation of a prison chorus. In order to meet some of the men that would probably form the core of the ensemble, I went to the prison two Fridays in a row for the services that Pastor Lang offers.

I really didn't know what to expect; sullen, angry men, I suppose. What I found was a vibrant, alive, and *real* group of men that were inspiring in their worship of Christ. By the second week I was looking forward to seeing them again. Maybe I expected I would go there and offer something to them, but I think I received far more than I gave. I look forward to further services with the new Christian community in Fort Dodge.

And now a plea: these men also look forward to visitors at these services; it gives them a connection to the outside and other Christians that can strengthen them in a tough situation. I would encourage all of you to contact Pastor Lang about going with him to worship there. You will be richly blessed by doing so!

In Christ,
Robert G. Boer, Minister of Music
St. Olaf Lutheran Church, Fort Dodge, Iowa



Visitors to worship services meet at a restaurant afterwards. Discussion includes, L-R: Roger Natte, Fran and Andy Iversen.



Blue Ribbon Clock

Inmate George Fox constructed this covered bridge clock and then sent it to his sister, Georgia Campbell Herr. She entered it in the Iowa State Fair and that ribbon there on the left of the bridge is blue.

George also works in leather and has tooled wallets, book covers, vests and saddles.



Invite the Pastor to Worship

The worship services at The Church of the Damascus Road are scheduled on weeknights 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.

Volunteers

Many will be shocked to find
When the day of judgment nears
That there's a special place in heaven
Set aside for **VOLUNTEERS**
Furnished with big recliners
Satin couches and footstools
Where there's **NO** committee chairman
NO group leaders or car pools
NO eager team that needs a coach
NO bazaar and **NO** bake sale
There will be nothing to staple
Not one thing to fold or mail
Telephone lists will be outlawed...
But a finger-snap will bring
Cold drinks and gourmet dinners
and rare treats fit for a King.

You ask, who'll serve these privileged few
and work for all they're worth?
Why, all those who reaped the benefits
And not once volunteered on Earth.

1st St. John/Toledo newsletter



North Central Correctional Facility is ablaze with beautiful flower gardens.

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

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

Prayer

A Dialogue With Christ
Anywhere, U.S.A.

Think of Christ speaking to you and saying:

You do not have to be clever to please me. All you have to do is want to love me.

Just speak to me as you would to anyone of whom you are very fond. I long for your praise and adoration because then I know you love me.

What is it that you want today? Tell me, for I long to do you good. What are your plans? Tell me about them. Is there anyone you want to please? What do you want to do for them?

Tell me about the poor, the sick and the sinners, and if you have lost the friendship or affection of anyone tell me about that, too. Who has caused you pain? Tell me about it, and tell me that you will forgive and forget and I will bless you.

Are there any people you want to pray for? Say their names to me, and ask of me as much as you like. I am generous and know all their needs, but I want you to show your love for them and for me by trusting me to do what I know is best.

Is there anything you want in your heart that would make you a finer person? If you like, you may write out a list of all your needs, and come and read it to me.

Just tell me about your pride, your touchiness, self-centeredness, meanness, and laziness. Do not be ashamed: there are many Saints in Heaven who had the same faults



as you; they prayed to me, and little by little, their faults were corrected.

Do not hesitate to ask me for blessings for the body and mind, for health, memory, success. I can give everything needed to make a person holier, and I always do.

Tell me about your failures, and I will show you the cause of them. What are your worries? Are you afraid of anything? Have you any tormenting and unreasonable fears? Do trust yourself to me. I am here. I see everything. I will not leave you.

Have you no joys to tell me about? Why do you not share your happiness with me? Tell me what has happened since yesterday to cheer and comfort you. Whatever it was, however big, however small, just thank me, and then I will know you are grateful.

And do you want to do something for me? Would you speak in my behalf to those who perhaps have forgotten me or who have never known me?

Well, go along now. Get on with your work. Try and be quieter, humbler, more submissive, kinder, more loving, and come back soon and bring me a more devoted heart. Tomorrow I shall have more blessings for you.

Then you answer him

Amen