

The Church of the Damascus Road

Flash!

Volume 2
Issue No. 1
February 1999
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Worship and Bible Study Schedules

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

Visitors Being Scheduled

Visitors for The Church of the Damascus Road worship services at the North Central Correctional Facility, Rockwell City, and at the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility, Fort Dodge, are being booked for future worship opportunities. Services are held Wednesdays at Fort Dodge, 6:30-8:30pm, and Thursdays at Rockwell City, 6-8pm. If you would like to make one or more visits to either the Fort Dodge or the Rockwell City services, reservations need to be made soon to insure the date you would like. Contact Rosemarie at the Church of the Damascus Road office, 515-955-3579 to schedule a time. The necessary forms and information will then be sent to you prior to your visit.

From the Members

This issue features several contributions from inmates who are members of The Church of the Damascus Road. In the future we hope to have more such contributions of poetry, prose and art. If you would like to contribute, don't put it off, do so right away and submit your work to Pastor Lang for inclusion in the Flash.

Inside the Flash

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Some Things I've Learned

by Jeff Swearingen

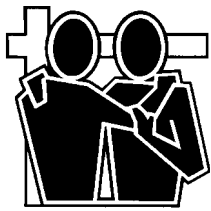
Who's in control? Now there's a good question. In your life, have you ever taken the time to notice who's really in control? Doesn't it seem that the more we try to control things the more we mess up? It reminds me of a time I was running a bobcat. I was moving some barrels and the load became unbalanced. The bobcat started to rock back and forth, to the point it almost tipped over. The more I tried to correct it, the worse things got. It wasn't until I let go of the controls that it straightened out! Does that sound like your life? When things start to go bad, do they only get worse if we try to control them? Well, maybe we should turn over control to the Lord. Put him in charge of our life. In Proverbs 16:3 it says, "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed." If the Lord is in control, things will work out according to his will.

Nowadays we are too busy with other things to see what's going on around us! We don't take the time to share with others, so we lose a chance to bring a blessing to God. When we open our hearts and share with others, it brings happiness both into their lives and into ours. It also brings praise to God for the happiness we're both sharing, and this kind of happiness will spread. It will radiate out to other people who will in turn share with others.

The problem is, as I see it, we turned away from God. We have this great thing called "separation of church and state" and all it really does is to separate God from our lives. We have to bring God back into our daily lives. We have to bring back families! Families aren't what they used to be. Now it's more like a group of people sharing a house! We need to bring God back into the home, because God is love, and if you teach love at home, your family will share this love with others outside of the home. And when you share love, it grows, and it brings a blessing to the one you share it with. When you share love and happiness it can spread like wildfire. If there is love, pretty soon hate is pushed out! And that means Satan is pushed a little further from our lives, leaving us to enjoy the wonderful things that our heavenly Father gives us!

When someone mentions sharing, the first thing most people think of is money, but sharing can be so much more, such as a kind word, a helpful hand, or a smile. There are so many ways to share that don't involve money, so look around you today and see if you can bring a little happiness to someone.

When we are little we are taught to share with others, but as we grow older we lose this, and we begin to say things like, "I don't have enough," or, "I might need that," instead of understanding that while we give to others God will take care of our needs. He will make sure we have what we need when we need it, so open your hearts to others and our Heavenly Father will make our lives full.



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

10 Ways to Share Faith in the Workplace

To help your members "let their light shine" in their workplaces, try the following creative ideas used by members of Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Chagrin Falls, Ohio.

- Decorate your workspace with symbols that demonstrate faith and invite conversation.
- Affirm your colleagues for work well done; share how thankful you are to God for their gifts.
- Carry your faith into the workplace by insisting on fair prices, good products and just treatment of customers and employees.
- Remember birthdays and job transitions with notes of encouragement.
- Be courteous and helpful in all public transactions; find ways to give a verbal and positive witness to the hope within you.
- Share with colleagues things you are involved with at church.
- Host a lunch time Bible study.
- Pray before a meal.
- When someone shares an uplifting story, respond with "Thank God" or "God is good."
- Invite a co-worker to come with you to worship or to a church-related activity.
- Say "I will pray for you" when someone shares a personal concern or difficulty with you.

The tips were adapted from faith sharing suggestions found in the 1996 Evangelism Packet, Reach!

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

God's World

O world, I cannot hold thee close enough!
Thy winds, thy wide gray skies!
Thy mists, that roll and rise!
Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache and sag
And all but cry with color! That gaunt crag
To crush! To lift the lean of the black bluff!
World, world! I cannot get thee close enough!

Edna St. Vincent Millay



Coping with Stress

A recent study of 1,092 women found that those who felt a deep sense of religious faith coped with stress better than those who were less religious.

Women's Day December 16, 1997

New Secretary

Rosemarie Prochelo is our new office secretary. She is the mother of two young girls, Cristina (9) and Alexandria (7). The three of them attend Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church. Rosemarie is taking accounting courses on the Iowa Central Community College campus, and also delivers Messengers to persons who were missed in regular delivery. All this and a super mom, too.

Her considerable experience with computers has made her seem like an experienced hand around the office. Welcome to the ministry, Rosemarie!



About our Board 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.

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Damascus Road
Flash!

Volume 2.1

February 1999

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

-- Pastor Carroll Lang

It's Confusing

Being a Christian in prison can be really confusing. After all, the Bible tells us we are supposed to treat each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. But in prison you see people who claim they are Christians treating fellow Christians as if they are dirt.

Yes, we are in here for a wrong we have done, but does that give fellow Christians the right to turn their backs on us? I believe that my Bible tells me it's God's place to judge. The biggest problem is that it turns some young believers away from the Lord. We as Christians should do everything we can to encourage new believers. But how do we as prisoners tell the ones who are in charge of us that they are in fact turning people away from our Lord? For if we try to confront them, we take the chance of being placed in the hole and losing precious good time.

So I would like to take the time to say, if you read this and you are one of the people who have charge over us, I ask you to search your heart, and ask yourself, if Jesus were here, What would he say? Let's work together to change the way we as Christians look at each other.

Jeff Swearingen

Ministry to the World

The Church of the Damascus Road Fort Dodge Council has voted to send \$500.00 of the offerings received from worshiping inmates to help people near and far. They selected Church World Service (CROP), Domestic/Sexual Assault Outreach Center (in Fort Dodge), Fort Dodge Area Inter-Faith Forum Transient Fund, AIDS Foundation, Make-a-Wish Foundation and to Prison Congregations of America.

Memorial Given

Pastor Carroll Lang
Church of the Damascus Road
PO Box 834
Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834
1-9-99

Dear Pastor and Congregation,
Greetings in Christ's name. May you be blest in your service to our Lord in 1999!

Here is a little check for your use in memory of a dear friend who loved our Lord and his children here on earth, particularly an inmate in Georgia. Through her persistent intervention he was saved from the death penalty.

Please accept this memorial for Fran Warren, but send the acknowledgement to John and Ann Herrick, close friends of Fran Warren.

Thank you,
Blessings and Peace
Ed and Eleanor Hansen

CROP Walk at Fort Dodge Correctional Facility



Nine CROP Walkers converse as they walk for world hunger in the 1998 Church World Service CROP Walk.



The group that showed up to begin the CROP Walk had their pictures taken by the area CROP Director, Juanita Scriven. A total of 40 inmates joined the walk.

CROP Walkers at both facilities

Inmates in both the North Central Correctional Facility in Rockwell City and the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility walked because hungry people around the world walk to get water and food. The inmates solicited donations at NCCF and personally donated at FDCF. Forty walkers joined in the event.

Over \$130 was raised at NCCF, while about \$11 was raised at FDCF. These may

seem like small figures until one realizes that the average inmates makes \$2 per day and must pay for his own soap, deoderant, toothpaste, etc.

The Church of the Damascus Road Fort Dodge Church Council, at its February meeting, voted to donate, out of their offerings, enough to Church World Service to raise their sum to \$1 per walker.

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.

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Giving in Prison

Give to others and God will give to you. Indeed, you will receive a full measure, a generous helping, poured into your hands, all that you can hold. The measure you use for others is the one that God will use for you (Luke 6:38(TEV).

Quoting from Rishard Carlson's book, *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*, "When we share our own niceness or generosity with someone else, it makes us feel like we are thoughtful people, it reminds us of how nice we are and how deserving we are of kindness . . . it's really true that one should give for the sake of giving, not to receive something in return. This is precisely what we are doing we don't mention our kindness to others, our rewards are the warm feelings that come from the act of giving. The next time you do something really nice for someone else, keep it to yourself and revel in the abundant joy of giving."

The essence of God's kind of life is that of giving. "For God so loved the world that he gave . . ." People are taught to be "Givers" instead of "Takers." An alcoholic summarizing his fifth step said, "All my life I have been a "Taker" and I didn't care who I hurt in order to get what I wanted." But that's not what God wants for us.

I find it very difficult to tell others not to be givers. I know that you learn about giving here and you like to thank visitors and volunteers for coming and being part of this ministry. A token of that appreciation has sometimes been given: a painting, a drawing, a poem, or some craft work. Those expressions of gratitude have been accepted and gratefully appreciated. However, the reality is that this is a prison and volunteers and visitors are not allowed to accept gifts from inmates. While volunteers would like to accept, they cannot.

But please continue to give your heartfelt thanks for coming to be with us, for volunteering their time, for providing financial support and prayers, for sharing musical talents with us.

And something else — the greatest gift you can give to visitors and volunteers is to make a positive commitment regarding your spiritual life, stay out of trouble and put your life in order, live the way God intended and be contributors to society and faithful to the church. With thanks such as that, they could ask for nothing more!

by Rev. Leroy Iseminger, Pastor
St. Dymas of South Dakota
Prison Congregation



• the road, and how he was •
known to them in the breaking of bread.
• Luke 24:35 •

Inmate Art

The cross, above, was rendered in colored pencil by Ryan Thomas Reece. The black and white scan does not show that the cross is gold, the leaves green and the flowers pink on a gray background. Thanks, Ryan.

