

# The Church of the Damascus Road

# Flash!

Volume 2  
Issue No. 5  
October 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

## CROP Walk a success!



*Inmates at the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility turned out in large numbers for the October 17, 1999 CROP Walk sponsored by The Church of the Damascus Road and Church World Service. 123 walkers turned out this year.*

## 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 ensure the date you would like. Contact Cynthia 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.



*Eleven walkers joined the CROP Walk, having raised over \$111.00 from inmates at the North Central Correctional Facility. More photos of both walks on page three.*

## 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.

## Some Things I've Learned

by Jeff Swearingen

Are our eyes really open? Do we really see? I looked out my window this morning and the sky was gray. Then I looked again and saw the birds flying. I opened my ears and heard them singing. I went outside and began to look at things around me. I saw the trees, only this time I really looked. I saw the colors that make up the tree. I looked at the clouds, how the light changes them.

Right then I began to see that it's the light that changes things. It brings out the colors. When the light begins to shine the birds begin to sing. I finally realize that the sun light is like Jesus.

When he comes into our lives, others can see the changes that the light makes. The one thing I didn't notice this morning was the chain link fence with the razor wire that surrounds this prison. If God is able to show me such beauty in a place like this, imagine the things he could light up in your life.



## Inside the Flash

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Now contact us by E-Mail at: [DamascusCh@aol.com](mailto:DamascusCh@aol.com)

The Church of the Damascus Road now has a dedicated E-Mail address which is checked every day. Just type your names, addresses, phones, Social Security numbers and birthdates right into the message box and we'll get right back to you via "reply" and let you know whether there's enough space left for your visit.

## Five Finger Prayer

1. Your thumb is nearest you, so begin your prayers by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest to remember.
2. The next finger is the pointing finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct and heal. This includes teachers, doctors and ministers. They need support and wisdom in pointing others in the right direction. Keep them in your prayers.
3. The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for the president, leaders in business and industry, those in authority over us, and administrators.
4. The fourth finger is our ring finger. Surprising to many is the fact that this is our weakest finger, as any piano teacher will testify. It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble, or in pain. They need our prayers day and night. You cannot pray too much for them.
5. Lastly comes our little finger, the smallest finger of all, which is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. As the Bible says, "the least shall be the greatest among you." Your pinky should remind you to pray for yourself. By the time you have prayed for the other four groups, your own needs will be put into proper perspective and you will be able to pray for yourself more effectively.

—from the *Lighthouse Beacon*, Florida



The Fort Dodge Inside Church Council

## Inside Church Council

Each inmate congregation of the Church of the Damascus Road, in Fort Dodge and Rockwell City, has an Inside Church Council.

The Council is responsible for the life and mission of the congregation. They set up and tear down for worship, assign worship assistants for reading the lessons, leading the prayers, distributing communion, and allocating offerings to charities.

The members of the two councils take their servanthood very seriously, and are constantly coming up with ways to improve the life and mission of the congregation.

## Forgiveness

Is it important for us to feel forgiven for what we've done? The simple answer would be, "Yes." But a more pertinent question would be, "Why is it important to feel forgiven for what you've done?" Outwardly, our attitude can be, "I don't care what they think about me," but inside your heart is laying a burden of guilt and condemnation on you daily.

At first these 'bricks' are easily carried throughout your day. Sometimes you even 'rent a U-Haul' through drugs or alcohol to carry your burden, and you may be able to forget or misplace this burden for quite a long time—years, maybe.

Then one day, doing anything from sleeping to eating, the burden is too much. It crushes you with such a force that you are buried with your guilt and desperate for relief, but nothing helps, not drugs, not alcohol, not work, not family, not anything. You need forgiveness, the kind of complete, totally encompassing, life-giving forgiveness that only God gives. As it says in Isaiah 43:25, "I am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."

What a wonderful thought: in confessing our sins, we know God forgives and forgets. The crushing weight of the "bricks" of guilt are lifted. You feel no pressure or pain, only love and mercy. You can confess your sins and ask for forgiveness anywhere or anytime, at work, in bed, in the chow line, at pill line, in the yard. Just ask from your heart, and full, complete forgiveness is yours, no matter what your transgression is, from lying to murder, God forgives you. Once this burden is lifted, you feel refreshed and eager for others to feel the same. It's a joy that is so glorious that one you start sharing it, you can't help but feel it yourself, so why not forgive someone today, and let your joy show?

—Glenn Wooten



Ft. Dodge Inside Church Council Officers  
Jeff Swearingen, VP; Glenn Wooten, President; and Robert Thompson, Secretary.

## Lament

My soul cries out in twisted anguish to the God of my salvation for release from the oppression that tethers me so.

Oh, how I long to taste of his mercy once again; to savor the sweetness of his love.

I hunger to feast on his knowledge; his word; starving for the wisdom that only he can serve.

Oh, to drink in the coolness of his rest. To once again feel the comfort of his sweet caress.

[Anonymous author's note: I wrote this at a time I felt very distant from God. I just felt God was a million miles from me, and wondered if he'd ever return. Guess what?! It was me who had to return. When I looked around, he was right there with me!]



Pastor DelWayne Hahn

Pastor DelWayne Hahn, now serving as interim pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Fort Dodge, was vital to the startup of the Church of the Damascus Road while he was serving the Western Iowa Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We are grateful for the support he has given us and wish him well as he moves on in his ministry.

## The Church of the Damascus Road *Flash!*

Volume 2.3

July 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



*Walkers at NCCF, Rockwell City, posed for a picture before they started their walk on October 16, 1999*

# CROP Walkers

had fun walking  
fed the hungry  
felt renewed



*Pastor Lang's cap*



*Ardent walkers slowed only long enough to snap this picture. They all went the whole 18 laps (6 miles).*



*Some of the walkers in Fort Dodge were hard to keep up with.*



*Even though the weather was a bit cool, spirits remained high in the Rockwell City CROP Walk.*

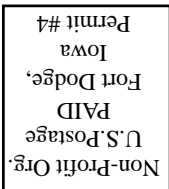


*Before the walk on October 17, CROP Walkers in Fort Dodge viewed the video about the miracle tree used by third world people for food and health products.*



*Good fellowship, a good cause, lots of smiles over the miles.*

## Let's do it again next year!



CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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

## What if God Had an Answering Machine?

I have learned to live with answering machines as a necessary part of modernization. But I have often wondered, "What if God decided to install an automated answering machine?"

Imagine praying and hearing this: "Thank you for calling My Father's House. Please select one of the following four options: Press 1 for requests. Press 2 for a thanksgiving. Press 3 for complaints. For all other inquiries, press 4."

What if God used the familiar excuse: "All the angels are helping other customers right now. Please stay on the line. Your call will be answered in the order it was received."

Can you imagine getting these kinds of responses as you call on God in prayer?

"If you'd like to speak with Gabriel, press 1. For Michael, press 2. For any other angel, press 3. If you'd like King David to sing a psalm for you, press 6. To find out if your relative is here, enter his/her date of death and listen for the list that follows. For reservations at My Father's House, simply press the letters J-O-H-N, followed by the numbers 3-1-6. For answers to nagging questions about dinosaurs, the age of the earth, and where Noah's ark is, wait till you get here! Our computers show that you have called once today already. Please hang up immediately. This office is closed for the weekend, Please call again Monday."

Thank God you can't call Him too often! You only need to ring once, and God hears you. Because of Jesus, you never get a busy signal. God takes each call and knows each caller personally.

*Then you will call and the Lord will answer; you will cry to help, and he will say: Here am I.* (Isaiah 58:9 NIV).  
- Author Unknown

## Prayer

It's when you feel you can't keep on, you, to yourself, should say:

There is no care too big for prayer, no load which day by day with God I cannot wholly share, no fear of which he's unaware.

## What Is Charity?

It's silence when your words would hurt.

It's patience when your neighbor's hurt.

It's deafness when some scandal flows.

It's thoughtfulness for others' woes.

It's promptness when stern duty calls.

It's courage when misfortune falls.

*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, or E-Mail us at: DamascusCh@aol.com for faster communication.

-- Pastor Carroll Lang

## In the Neck

The doctor went to see him,  
But the pastor didn't go.  
The doctor had been called for,  
And the pastor didn't know.

The doctor, for his going,  
Got a fancy little check;  
But the pastor, for not knowing,  
Only got it in the neck.

## God Gives Us Plenty

We've come a long way from the old days when government and its institutions openly admitted that we needed to have this nation work.

In our public life, we either ignore God or are openly hostile to him. Symbols that remind us of God are not allowed in public places. Our teachers may not say his name. Television names him frequently, but usually in ridicule or as a curse.

It is not unusual for a nation to ignore God. Then, as bad times fall on them, people return to God for help. We ignore God and his commandments, so families, institutions and whole cultures crumble. Our whole world suffers with complex problems of crime, drug abuse, broken homes, hunger, teenage pregnancy, AIDs, abortion, child abuse, homelessness, wars, and many others. In fact, the list seems to never end.

Remember this: God will always have the last word. God is able to let us live, or to destroy us, if we continue to ignore him. We must truly trust God's saving mercy and repent. God has, in is mercy, given his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to come and die for our sins so we might be forgiven and adopted as a member of his family. Do you know the Lord's Prayer? Say it with your whole heart, mind and soul, and he is just and will wash away your sin. Give God a chance. He gives you plenty, doesn't he?

— Mike Pritchett