

The Church of the Damascus Road

Flash!

Volume 2
Issue No. 6
December 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 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.

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. This is the first issue entirely edited by Jeff Swearingen.

Some Things I've Learned

by Jeff Swearingen

Patience is something we can all use a little more of. At least I know I can. There are a lot of times in my life I do things too fast. I don't have the patience to let things happen at their own speed. It seems I want to rush them along, and most times I end up slowing things down, or at least that's the way it seems to me. This holds true in our everyday dealings with other people as well as our spiritual life.

I don't have much patience when it comes to my children. I always want them to learn the very first time I tell them something. I also find myself lacking in patience in my spiritual life. I always want things done on my timetable. Instead of waiting patiently for the Lord, I look for ways to help do or get the things I ask for. And once again I usually end up slowing things down. I don't know if I really slow them down or if my impatience makes it seem as if it's taking a long time.

The Lord provides us with everything we need. And he gives us everything we ask for in prayer. It just may not be on our timetable. We have to remain patient and never give up. Although there are times when it seems like it's taking forever, be patient and never give up. Hold steadfast to the promise of the Lord. John 16:24, "Ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete."

One thing we do as we strive to become better Christians is to change our way of thinking. To become a Christian means to become Christ-like. To do this means we get rid of the evil that lurks in our hearts. We replace it with love and compassion for others. We keep the Word of God in our hearts, at all times. If we faithfully study the Word of God, he will reveal many wonderful things to us. We will not be kept in darkness because the Lord Jesus is the Light. Let him be the Light that guides your way.



We Need Your Help!

It seems that we are in need of articles for the Flash. It can be stories, poems or art work. I know that we have a lot of talented people in here. And we would like to hear from you. If you have something you would like to put in the Flash, you can either give it to Pastor Lang, or to one of the Church Council members.

I would like to take this one step farther. Because I know that a lot of you who receive the Flash have things to say, so I'm asking you to send your articles to Pastor Lang at PO Box 834, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834. We are looking forward to hearing from you!

Inside the Flash

Page 2 - Going to Prison
Page 2 - Failure
Page 3 - Our Sponsored Child
Page 3 - What Keeps Us Going
Page 4 - Where is God in Your Life

Now contact us by E-Mail at: 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.

Failure

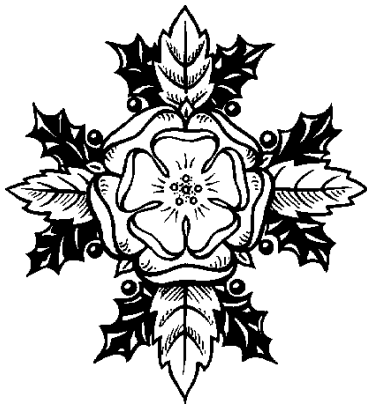
When do we become a failure in the sight of God? It took me forty some years to find the answer to that question.

One of the biggest problems I had while growing up was I felt I couldn't be a Christian, because I kept on sinning, so I always saw myself a failure.

It wasn't until recently that I realized that being a Christian isn't something that makes us perfect. In fact, even though we are a Christian, we are still a sinner. That is something we are going to have to work on for the rest of our life. But we don't have to do it alone. For we have the Holy Spirit to help us with the battle.

The answer to the question, "When do we become a failure?" When we stop trying to change, and let sin control us. Roman 6:12 tells us. "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey it's evil desires." We must use the power of God to change our life. If you feel yourself losing control, stop and talk to God. Tell him there and then you are feeling weak, and you need him to take control. Remember, it's when we are at our weakest that we can feel His Love the most!

by Jeffery Swearingen



Lingering

Watching the time linger,
it passes swiftly.

Knowing not when it will end,
waiting for it to begin.

Wanting to be part of it all,
knowing it can never be.

Lingering, not wanting to leave.

Memories are a hold.

Pictures are a grip.

To what once was,

but can never be again.

Lingering is appealing,
yet hopeless.

by John Hammers

Going To Prison

What possible good thing could come of you going to prison? They're all hardened criminals, there's no good that can come from that much bad. They deserve all they get.

It's not about us getting what we deserve. That's better left to God. However, a lot of you outside the walls have had the opportunity to actually go to prison and see first hand how "hardened" we really are.

For us to know that people are willing to sacrifice of themselves, if only for a few hours, does a lifetime of good in us.

When I first arrived here in Ft. Dodge Corr. Facility. I didn't have family or friends close by, so I was surrounded by people, but still very alone. I turned to God and the Church. The first service I attended I was confronted by a group of visitors all friendly, all joyful and all concerned for me!

As I sat through the service a gentleman sat next to me. He handed me a small Bible and told me he was sure I could use it. I thanked him and took the Bible. Now to those of you that read this you probably don't understand how important that was to me. But if you were reduced down to nothing, stripped of your dignity, belongings, family, and friends. God's word takes on a whole new importance in your life. To know that someone, a stranger, cared enough to give me the very best gift possible, that's an indescribable joy. So listen, we meet every Wednesday evening at 7:00 pm. Rockwell City meets on Thursday evening at 6:30 pm. So if you are even the least bit curious about us. Come on inside the walls and meet a few "hardened" Christians. We'd sure love to have you.

Glenn Wooten



About our Board Members

Pastor Allen Hermeier

Our Outside Council Secretary has been part of the process of the formation of the Church of the Damascus Road from the very beginning, when the Fort Dodge community leaders were bidding for the location of the new prison at Fort Dodge. That was 1996 and since then Pastor Hermeier has seen The Church of the Damascus Road grow from an idea to reality. Pastor Hermeier is married to Helen and they have four children, three living on this earth and one in heaven with the Lord. Their grandchildren are "perfect" according to Pastor Al. Allen and Helen are busy making plans to retire in July of 2000 in the Decorah, Iowa area, but The Church of the Damascus Road will always have a special place in their hearts, because while Pastor Al has served as secretary, Helen has faithfully served as treasurer.

I Can Say Yes

"I can say "yes" to God only if I can say "yes" to you, my brothers and sisters.



The Church of the
Damascus Road
Flash!

Volume 2.6

December 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

Beauty of Christmas

The beauty of Christmas rests in the hard, gritty truth of it: the story of God coming down to earth to meet you where you live and where obviously you need him most—in the ordinary humdrum dust and dirt of life.

Edmund Steimle



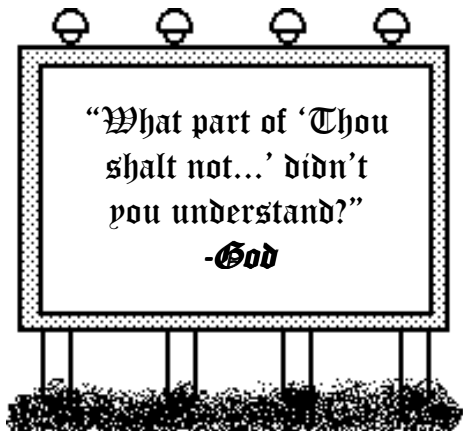
From the staff of FDCF

Thanks, Volunteers!

At this time of year we pause to thank the many people who have made our success possible. The Fort Dodge Correctional Facility thanks you for your friendship and goodwill during the past year.

We wish you a wonderful Holiday Season with happiness and prosperity throughout the coming year.

Warden John A. Thalacker
and all the FDCF Wolfpack



How far is it to Christmas?

How far is it to Christmas day?
The journey's just as long
As taking time to listen
To a joyful angel song.
It's just as far as one can go
In doing a loving deed
That helps someone feel better
Or that meets their special need.
For Christmas is a journey
That the heart makes every year.
It starts right with your family
And those you hold so dear.
It travels on to strangers
'Round the world to everyone
With the message that God loves us
And that's why he's sent his Son!

Peggy Ferrell



Our Sponsored Child

The Church Council at Fort Dodge voted to sponsor a child through Children International. I'm happy to announce that we are now parents. We have a little girl. Her name is Stefani A. Reinald Hernandez. Stefani is seven years old, born on Aug. 5 1992. She has brown hair and brown eyes, stands 3 feet 7 inches tall and weighs 55 lbs. Stefani lives with her parents in the city of Valparaiso, Chile. They live in a three room house made of wood. Her Father is a daily worker with a monthly income of \$169.00 The Council will be getting together and writing her a letter. We will give updates on Stefani as they come in.

What if?

If every deed of love I did
Were a crimson rose near the manger bed,
Would there be enough for a small bouquet
Or a carpet of color to brighten the hay?
If every prayer I prayed for others
Became one stitch in the Baby's covers,
When the north wind blew,
how warm would he be,
If wrapped in a blanket woven by me?

Phyllis Lee, Sebring, Ohio

What Keeps Us Going

Looking forward to a new century, the Church of the Damascus Road Outside Council is faced with the task of determining whether we are ready to charter the congregation. The model of a prison congregation is that it receives all of its support from area congregations of many denominations. This support includes prayers, presence, and financial support until the prison no longer exists.

Response from congregations is slowly growing, but one deadline has already passed and another looms ahead. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has been supporting half the cost of CODR since August 1997 and the original offer was to grant that support until July 31, 1999. An extension was requested and granted to July 31, 2000.

It has been a lot of hard work on the part of many people to form this congregation, but there are a number of things that keep us going: the prayers of Christian people and congregations supporting us, the presence of people from supporting congregations at the worship services at Rockwell City and Fort Dodge, and the growing financial support.

We are very grateful for the generosity of individuals and congregations as we continue this ministry. At present we are receiving just over 50% of a projected annual budget of \$85,000. Some congregations have pledged to support us with a monthly gift, while others send an annual amount. Individuals have committed themselves to sending us monthly donations. With seven months ahead of us it is our prayer and the prayer of many others that more individuals and congregations will be moved to increase support of this vital ministry to the "least of these," Jesus brothers in blue.

So, what keeps us going? It is your prayers and your presence and your presents. May God richly bless you and may his peace be with you always. Merry Christmas and a happy new century!

Rev. Carroll Lang, Pastor

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

J-E-S-U-S

- J** - ust when I'm at my breaking point and I think I'm gonna go insane, he takes away my darkness and clears my clouded brain.
- E** - verywhere I look and every which way I turn, I keep him close in my heart like a shadow so my soul will never burn.
- S** - in dwells deep inside us, it corrupts and envelops twisted minds, but don't give in to it, pick up the Bible and find love of all different kinds.
- U** - se your body as a temple and let the Holy Spirit intervene, you'll receive everlasting life as a free gift from God. Look in Revelations 22:17.
- S** - o there's no use to deny it, millions witnessed Jesus performing miracles, healing sick, blind, and crippled, resurrections from the dead, praise the Lord with all your heart and read Romans 3:25. I'll bet you'll love what was said!



*Our Savior
is Born*

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

L-O-R-D

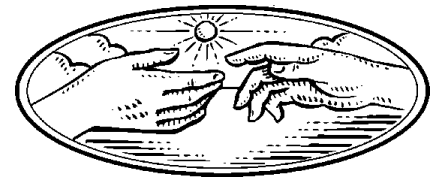
- L** - oving in ways that are too deep for the human mind to even comprehend.
- O** - verlooking our sins after we crucified his only son for teaching what was right.
- R** - evelations is a warning of what is to come, how it's all gonna end!
- D** - on't let your sinful nature outweigh the goodness in your soul, 'cause the maker sees all, and will cast you to darkness instead of light!

by Stanley Richard Davis Jr.



“...and his name shall be called **Emmanuel** (which means, God is with us)”

—Matthew 1:23



Where Is God In Your Life?

When you think of God, where do you see him? Do you think of him in the past or the future? That was the problem I always had. When I read the Bible I would see what God had done. And as I read on I would hear of things to come.

It was't until I read a little article written by Helen Mallicoat that I saw it differently. It's titled “My Name Is I Am”

I was regretting the past
And fearing the future.
Suddenly my Lord was speaking:
“My Name is I Am”
He paused.

I waited. He continued,
“When you live in the past
with it's mistakes and regrets,
it is hard. I am not there.
My name is not I was.

When you live in the future,
with it's problems and fears,
it is hard. I am not there.
My name is not I will be.

When you live in this moment,
it is not hard. I am here.
My name is I AM.”

I think if we could keep this thought fresh in our minds, our lives would be alot better. For it will put God where he belongs in our life—right there with us to help us deal with everything that is going on.

- Jeff Swearingen