

# The Church of the Damascus Road

# Flash!

Volume 3  
Issue No. 1  
February 2000  
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

## Worship & Bible Study

### 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 (see schedule above). 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 or e-mail to "DamascusCh@aol.com" to schedule a time. The necessary forms and information will then be sent to you prior to your visit.

## Inside the Flash

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## 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.

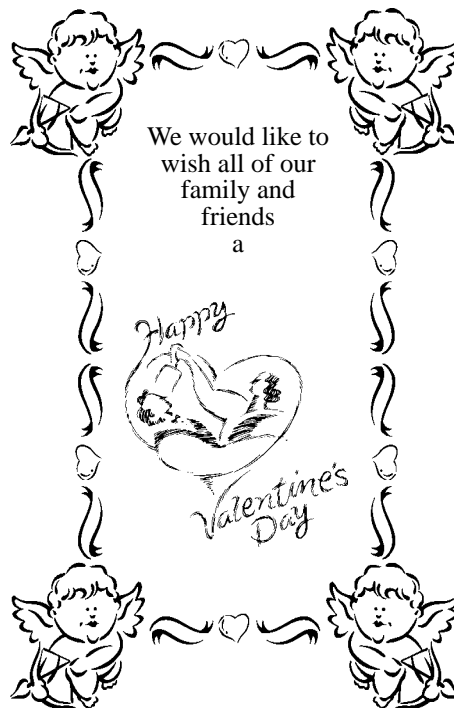
## Some Things I've Learned

by Jeff Swearingen

**W**e as Christians have to be very careful in the things we do. For what we do is a reflection of who we are. Many of us don't think before we act, and therefore we cause others to question our belief.

Is being a Christian confusing? I know at times it is to me. There are times when it's hard to figure out what is expected of me. When I see people who claim that they are Christians doing things that aren't very Christ-like, it makes it even harder for me to understand what it is that a Christian should or shouldn't do. At times this gets really confusing to me.

I was watching a TV show the other day and they had members of the KKK on the show. That wasn't the interesting part. They brought out a guest to counter what the KKK was saying. She came out in a shirt with the letters WWJD. Now we as Christians know this to mean, "What Would Jesus Do." But, instead of spreading love as Jesus would have done, she got into an argument with the Klan members. To me this did not show a very good example. I think if people are going to go so far as to put themselves in the spot light, they should live up to what they are claiming, and we know that Jesus would have showed love and prayed for them.



<http://www.dodgenet.com/~cjlang/index.html>

Contact us by E-Mail:  
DamascusCh@aol.com

**T**he 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 and let you know whether there's enough space left for your visit.

## Contributions invited from Readers "on the Streets"

The editor of this newsletter is inviting ALL READERS on the streets to send in articles, poetry, art work, and opinions for the newsletter. So don't be bashful.

## Office Secretary

Cynthia Hanks has been with us for only a few short months, but already she is making the position her own as she gets the “hang of things.” Cynthia grew up on a farm that was homesteaded in 1866 and because the family name was Henn, it could be said that Cynthia grew up in the Henn House.

She received her primary and secondary education in Manson, Iowa and is a graduate of Iowa State University. She hasn't



Cynthia Hanks

stopped there, though, and includes Toastmasters International among her learning experiences. Included in her duties as secretary is that of financial secretary, keeping track of all donations made to support this ministry. She is an active member of Our Savior United Methodist Church, Grace Center, Manson, where she attends and sometimes even teaches the adult Sunday school class, and sings in the choir.

Cynthia is the mother of a son and a daughter and she has a granddaughter and a grandson and four step-grandchildren and a step great grandchild! She has a brother who is a pastor whose wife is a former nurse.

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There is something you can do—

## Be Human

What I have learned about morals strikes me as particularly applicable to the American consciousness, which is insulated from much painful reality, and further, because it relates to a process of indifference that puts us all at risk.

When the tragedies of others become for us diversions—sad stories with which to enthrall our friends, interesting bits of data to toss out at cocktail parties, a means of presenting a bit of political concern, or whatever—we commit the gravest of sins, condemn ourselves to ignominy and, therefore, consign the world to a dangerous course.

We justify our casual view of pain and suffering by portraying ourselves as do-gooders who are incapacitated by the inexorable forces of poverty, famine, war, or just plain bad luck. “What can I do?” we say. “I am only one person, and these things are beyond my control. I care about the world’s troubles, but there are no solutions.”

Yet no matter how accurate this assessment, most of us are relying on it to be true. We use this assessment to mask our indulgence, our deep seated lack of concern, our pathological self-involvement or interests. By adopting this attitude, we delimit possibilities for action by letting events progress to the point in which, indeed, action becomes impossible, at which time we “righteously” say that nothing can be done. And so we are born, we breed, we laugh, we cry, we are happy, sad, we are angry, we are vengeful, we die, we deal with inconsequential problems of our own, we get cancer, have a car crash, and at the end our actions prove insignificant.

Some people will try to tell you that to feel guilt or remorse over the vast inaction

of our society is utter foolishness. Life, they insist, is patently unfair, and all anyone can do is to look out for one’s own self-interests. Perhaps they are right; perhaps we are so mired down in our own self-conceptualizations, that we can change nothing. Perhaps this is the way of the world, but for the sake of my soul and because I no longer wish to hide my sins behind a guise of mortal incapacity, I tell you that it’s not right.

Luke 10:22, the parable speaks of a man who was robbed, beaten, and left for dead. A priest walked by him and left him there. A Levite walked by him and left him there. A Samaritan walked by and helped this man, even paid the innkeeper to house the man. He didn’t know him. He didn’t ask for payment. He didn’t ask for anything, he just acted with integrity and humanity.

Christmas is right around the corner. I, too, will be here away from my family. Remember this: there are over 700 guys in here who will feel the pain of being away from their families. You are not the only one. Be a neighbor and a brother in Christ, even if you don’t like them—they are human, also.

The moral of this is simple: there is something you can do—be human. Share with others how you feel—you are not alone. Tempers will be short around here this month, yet if you “deal” with how you feel, and confess how you feel with our Saviour Jesus Christ and the fellowship we have in him, it won’t be so bad. So, if you happen to see a guy crying, don’t spout off at the mouth over what you saw, because you know you yourself want to cry for the same reason. Give him a hug as a human being.

Dominick Marcott (Scooter)

*Editor’s note: this message was delivered during the December 15, 1999 worship service of the Church of the Damascus Road at the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility.*

## God’s Love In Action

Sometimes in prison it’s hard to see God’s love in action. There’s a lot of negativity, anger, and hostility. But as believers we must rely on God’s love. A member of the congregation recently lost a loved one; for that I ask that God grant him and his family peace in their hearts and the knowledge that their loved one has gone to be with God. God blessed the inmate enough to help him go to the funeral. The point I’m trying to make is that I have seen God’s love here in prison through other inmates, some by offering their condolences, others by a handshake or a hug, some by offering talents, such as ironing his clothes. One inmate loaned him his boots so he would have clean boots to wear. Another made a cross for him. It’s truly amazing how God’s love works and where it works. It’s even been a blessing for me to just see God’s love in action.

Glenn Wooten



“I still love my enemy, but he’s pushing his luck.”

## The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!

Volume 3.1

February 2000

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.

Jeff Swearingen, Editor.  
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If you are reading a copy of this letter that is not yours, you can subscribe and receive your own copy by writing to:

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515-955-3579

We are too Blessed to be Stressed . . .  
**If I Had My Life to Live Over**

by Erma Bombeck

(Written after she found out she was dying from cancer.)

I would have gone to bed when I was sick instead of pretending the earth would go into a holding pattern if I weren't there for the day.

I would have burned the pink candle sculpted like a rose before it melted in storage.

I would have talked less and listened more.

I would have invited friends over to dinner even if the carpet was stained, or the sofa faded.

I would have eaten the popcorn in the 'good' living room and worried much less about the dirt when someone wanted to light a fire in the fireplace.

I would have taken the time to listen to my grandfather ramble about his youth.

I would have shared more of the responsibility carried by my husband.

I would never have insisted the car windows be rolled up on a summer day because my hair had just been teased and sprayed.

I would have sat on the lawn with my children and not worried about grass stains.

I would have cried and laughed less while watching television and more while watching life.

I would never have bought anything just because it was practical, wouldn't show soil, or was guaranteed to last a lifetime.

Instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy, I'd have cherished every moment and realized that the wonderment growing inside me was the only chance in life to assist God in a miracle.

When my kids kissed me impetuously, I would never have said, "Later. Now go get washed up for dinner."

There would have been more "I love you's." More "I'm sorry's" ..But mostly, given another shot at life, I would seize every minute...look at it and really see it ... live it...and never give it back.

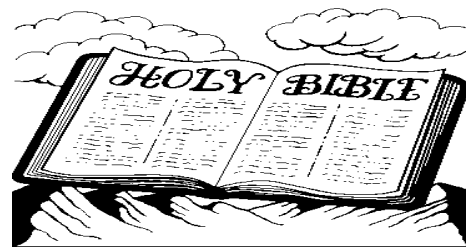
Stop sweating the small stuff. Don't worry about who doesn't like you, who has more, or who's doing what. Instead, let's cherish the relationships we have with those who Do love us. Let's think about what God HAS blessed us with. And what we are doing each day to promote ourselves mentally, physically, emotionally, as well as spiritually.

Life is too short to let it pass you by. We only have one shot at this and then it's gone.

I hope you all have a blessed day.

In memory of Erma Bombeck who lost her fight with cancer. Here is an angel sent to watch over you... Pass this on to the people you want watched over....

*PS: There's no catch to this one!!*



## Rachel's Faith

It's sad to think that somebody had to die to show us that we have a problem. If you think I am talking about our Lord you are wrong. I'm talking about Rachel Scott, the young girl who gave her life because of her belief in God.

Now it's up to each and everyone of us who call ourselves Christians to make sure that Rachel and the other victims did not die in vain.

I do agree with the families that the release of the tapes should have been handled in a better manner; however, maybe it took something like the inconsiderate release of the tapes to the press, rather than to the families of the victims, to bring attention to the fact that news of the victims was being overshadowed by news of the killers. If we are going to fill the news with articles about Columbine, let it be about the victims. Let's fill the news with stories of Rachel, a young woman who's life was taken because of her faith in God. Satan must have had a great fear of Rachel to have gone to such lengths to take her from this world, but once again Satan messed up. For what he took was her mortal body, not her Spirit! And it is our place as Christians to keep her Spirit alive. We can do this by telling others of her faith, and by keeping her always in our hearts.

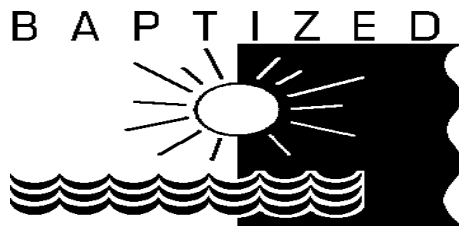
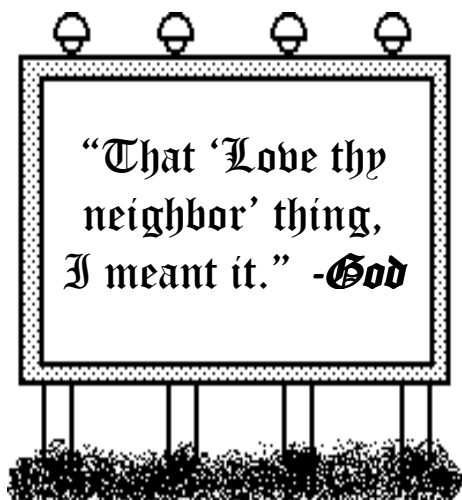
I think Romans 8:28-30 speaks of Rachel. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified" (NIV).

It saddens me to know that someone who was so full of hate could rob the world of one who loved our Lord so much! Although I never met this exceptional young lady, my life will not be the same because of her. For in her I have seen the faith that we should all strive for.

If I'm out of line in this statement, then I apologize. But I don't think Rachel would want her memorial to be one of hatred. Rather, she would want us to reach out even more to the ones who don't know God, so that something like this might never happen again!

It's time we welcome God back into our lives!

Jeffery Swearingen



The following people were brought into the family of our Lord.

**Michael Scott**

January 5, 2000

**Bernie Arterberry**

January 19, 2000

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## Sense of Reality Rules for the Young

Charles Sykes is the author of *Dumbing Down Our Kids*. He recently gave high school and college graduates a list of eleven things they did not learn in school. In his book, he talks about how feel good, politically correct teaching has created a generation of kids with no concept of reality and set them up for failure in the real world. You may want to share this list with kids and parents you know...

**Rule 1:** Life is not fair; get used to it.

**Rule 2:** The world won't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something *before* you feel good about yourself.

**Rule 3:** You will *not* make 40 thousand dollars a year right out of high school. You won't be a vice president with a car phone until you earn both.

**Rule 4:** If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss. A boss doesn't have tenure and couldn't care less about expanding your mind.

**Rule 5:** Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your grandparents had a different word for burger flipping; they called it opportunity.

**Rule 6:** If you mess up, it's not your parents' fault or society's fault, so don't whine about your mistakes, learn from them.

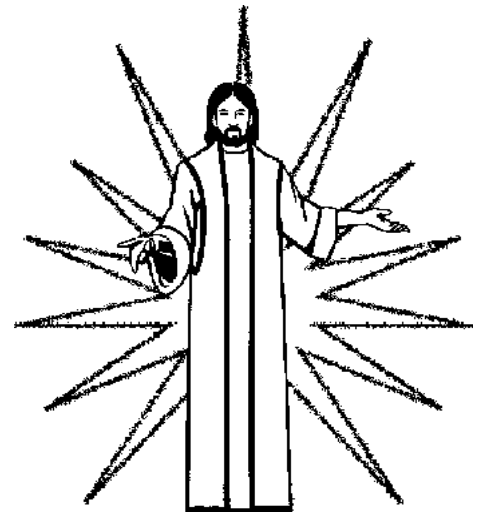
**Rule 7:** Before you were born, your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way from paying *your* bills, cleaning *your* clothes, smoothing out *your* messes, and listening to *you* talk about how cool you are. So before you save the rain forest from the parasites of your parents' generation, try delousing the closet in your own room.

**Rule 8:** Your school may have done away with winners and losers, since they don't want you to feel bad about yourself, but life has not. In some schools they have abolished failing grades; they'll give you as many times as you want to get the right answer. This, of course, doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to anything in real life.

**Rule 9:** Life is not divided into semesters which allow you to start fresh. You don't get summers off, and very few employers are interested in helping you find yourself. What you worked on today will haunt you tomorrow. You get one, maybe two weeks off a year, and find yourself on your own time.

**Rule 10:** Television is *not* real life. In real life people actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to jobs.

**Rule 11:** Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.



### Savior

Coming down to save His children,  
Removing every blemish,  
Inside and out,  
He brings us unto Himself.  
The only sounds to be heard are of  
Laughter,  
Rejoicing,  
and Love.

To take part in this wonderful rejoicing,  
You need only do but one thing...

ASK!

by John Hammers

*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 your congregation.

Anyone who would like to be on our mailing list should 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](mailto:DamascusCh@aol.com) for faster communication.

-- Pastor Carroll Lang

*Thank You!*

We would like to thank Paul Peterson of Callender for the donation of the new Yamaha electronic piano. It was given in memory of his wife Arlien