

The Church of the Damascus Road

Flash!

Volume 3
Issue No. 2
April 2000
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Opportunities to Serve Story Tellers

Although the details are yet to be worked out, permission has been granted to The Church of the Damascus Road at both Fort Dodge and Rockwell City to sponsor a program now being done at the women's facility in Mitchellville, called "Storybook," in which mothers read to their children on a cassette tape.

Here's how the program works: volunteers from the outside come to the institution, bringing with them age-appropriate books for children, a tape recorder, and a blank tape. Inmates who have signed up, meet them for the recording sessions. When the taping is done, the tape and the book are sent home to the children of the inmate. The children then play the tape and look at the book as Mommy reads it to them.

Here at Fort Dodge and Rockwell City we will involve the dads in the nurturing process and have them do the same in Mitchellville, only we will call it "Story Tellers."

We are now looking for people and groups to provide these books, and we are also looking for volunteers from the outside who would help with the recording sessions. A training session will be offered for these volunteers. If you are interested in serving as a volunteer, or if you or your group are interested in donating children's books for this project, contact us at 515-955-3579, or write us at The Church of the Damascus Road, PO Box 834, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834, or e-mail us at

DamascusCh@aol.com.

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Brothers in Blue

Since 1974, the Iowa Lutheran Secretariat for Via de Cristo (Cursillo©) has sponsored prison renewal weekends using the Cursillo© method. Now a new council has been formed with representation from movements in several other denominations. The new council is called Brothers in Blue Prison Ministry Council and weekends sponsored through this council are called Brothers in Blue.

The first two weekends held since forming this council were in January and February at the InnerChange Freedom Initiative (IFI) unit at the Newton Correctional Facility south of Newton. In March the third weekend was held at Mount Pleasant Correctional Facility. In April, the fourth weekend will be held at the North Central Correctional Facility in Rockwell City. In May we will conduct the first one held at the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility. In June another weekend will be held at Newton. In the fall, weekends will be held in each of the institutions again.

Brothers in Blue uses the Cursillo© method, one of the best tools of renewal in the Christian Church today. Chances are you know someone who has already attended one of these weekends. Ask him about his experience, and then, when the application forms are distributed, make plans to attend.

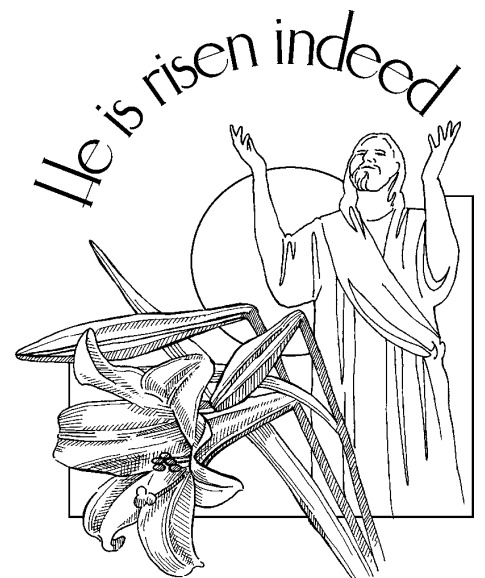
You readers on the outside who have had experience as team members are needed to help conduct these weekends. If you are interested, contact The Church of the Damascus Road, PO Box 834, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834; or call 515-955-3579, or e-mail us at DamascusCh@aol.com.

Some Things I've Learned

by Jeff Swearingen

As Christians we need to take a stand against injustice in the world. We can no longer just stand by and watch as our brothers and sisters in Christ are mistreated. Somewhere along the way we lost sight of what it really means to be a Christian. We are content to turn our backs on injustice, if it doesn't directly affect us.

As long as we are predisposed to treat others as inferior just because of their class, race, or even their physical appearance, there are going to be problems in this world. For this is one of Satan's tools. We as Christians have to overcome this. It is time for us to wake up to the fact that an injustice done to any brother or sister is done to a member of our family—the family of God.

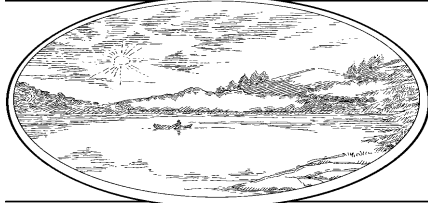


Easter Day Worship

April 23, 2000

7:30am at FDCF in Visiting Room
9:30am at NCCF in Treatment Center

IN LOVING



MEMORY

Memorials received by The Church of The Damascus Road:

- Scott H. Fishel - Fort Dodge - In memory of Leona Fishel
- Bruce and Kathleen Hansel - Badger -In memory of Lawrence Fevold
- Ed and Eleanor Hansen - Audubon - In memory of Fran Warren
- St. John Lutheran Church - Palmer - In memory of Gerhard Poppen
- Bruce and Kathleen Hansel - Badger - In memory of Faith Wendorf
- Marcella Kolb - Lytton - In memory of Robert Sturdevant
- Lorraine Halsrud - Bode - In memory of Carlisle (Crocky) Halsrud. With her memorial for Carlisle Halsrud, Lorraine writes:

Dear Fellow Christians,

I give this money in memory of my late husband, Carlisle, who passed away on September 27, 1999 at the age of 81.

I hope and pray God will bless my gift, and bless the Church of the Damascus Road. To God be the glory always.

My dear husband, lovingly known to all as "Crocky" suffered from Alzheimer's Disease. Even though the illness robbed him of many memories, he never lost touch with his family.

Love in Christ, Lorraine Halsrud

Baptism
Timothy Sharp, March 23, 2000

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.

Mother's Tears

Tomorrow will mark, another long day
And from my mother I've been locked away....

In my pain I recall our last embrace
And the trail of tears on my mothers face....
Though I never meant, to make her cry
On the awful day I said good-bye....
I'm so sorry I had to slip away
Leaving her there in sad dismay....
Breaking her heart yet another time
Creating her tears for my stupid crime....
And still her tears, they fall and stream
Whenever I close my eyes to dream....
A mother's tears are the hardest to mend
For they are the tears of my dearest friend....
And tomorrow I know while thinking of me
She'll cry those tears, I can not see....
So tonight I wish I could just wipe away
The tears which will fall because of me everyday!!!

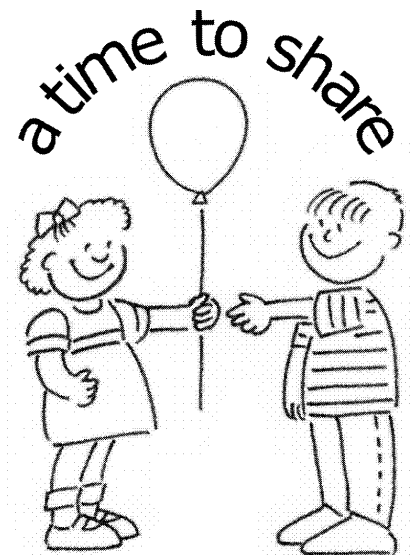
By Michael Scott



Asking Him from Within

As I entered alone in this tiny cell,
I felt as though I was headed for hell.
With walls cold and damp, and the door made of steel
The only thing left to do was drop and kneel.
If I wanted to be free and filled with love,
I had to get in touch with the man above.
Only he can open my eyes and make me see,
Lift my spirits and set my soul free.
As I leave this tiny cell,
I know I will have escaped the bonds of hell.
Because I opened the book and read within,
I went to him and confessed my sins.
I knew if I wanted this new start,
I had to ask him into my heart.
He is the only one who holds the key,
To grant me "Life in Eternity."

By Chris Egenberger



News of Our Daughter

Dear Sponsor,

I hope the present one finds you and yours fine. Well let me introduce myself. I'm Fabiola Hernández Avila, Stephanie's mother as she can't write because she is very little. I would like to tell you that Stephanie is studying and she is doing fine at school. She has many classmates and they play a lot together. She also has a little brother named Alejandro and she loves he very much. She loves to sing and play with him. I thank you very much for the help you send me, as it's very useful for my daughter. I would like you to send me a picture of you so that we can get to know you. Once again let me say thank you for your help, and may God bless you.

Fabiola, Stephanie's mother

The Church of the Damascus Road *Flash!*

Volume 3.2

April 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.
Andrew Hellvig, Assistant
Dennis Beaman, Assistant

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

Faith

A young man who had been raised as an atheist was training to be an olympic diver. The only religious influence in his life came from his outspoken Christian friend. The young diver never really paid much attention to his friend's sermons, but he heard them often.

One night the diver went to the indoor pool at the college he attended. The lights were all off, but as the pool had big skylights and the moon was bright, there was plenty of light to practice by.

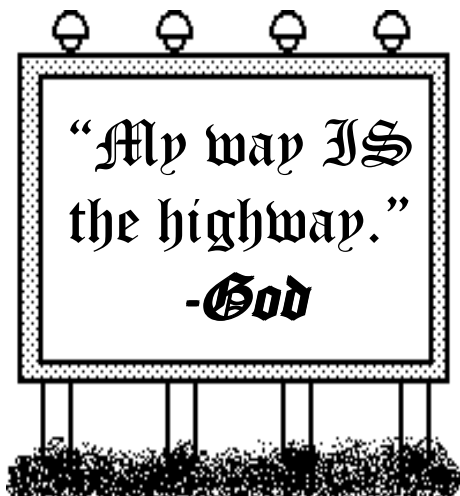
The young man climbed up to the highest diving board and as he turned his back to the pool on the edge of the board and extended his arms out, he saw his shadow on the wall. The shadow of his body, was in the shape of a cross. Instead of diving, he knelt down and finally asked God to come into his life. As the young man stood, a maintenance man walked in and turned on the lights.

The pool had been drained for repairs.

Drivers Licences

A young boy had just gotten his driver license. He asked his dad, who was a minister, if they could discuss his use of the car. His father said to him, "I'll make a deal with you. You bring your grades up, study your Bible more, and get your hair cut, then we will talk about it."

A month later the boy came back again and asked his dad if they could discuss his use of the car. His dad said "Son, I'm real proud of you. You have brought your grades up, You've studied your Bible diligently, but you didn't get a hair cut!" The young man waited a moment and replied, "you know Dad, I've been thinking about that. You know Samson had long hair, Moses had long hair, Noah had long hair, and even Jesus had long hair." His father replied, "Yes, Son, and they walked every where they went.



Post Release Support

Prison Congregations of America, the parent organization that organizes congregations like The Church of the Damascus Road, has received a grant to provide training for what is commonly called "Aftercare."

One way to ensure that inmates who are released to our communities stay in our communities and do not return to prison is for the Christian community to offer its support. When an ex-offender comes to your community and starts worshiping with you, how do you welcome him and offer support?

If you're not sure what to do, then we can help. In the near future, a mailing will go out to all congregations on our mailing list to offer training in aftercare. You will be invited to send one to three members of your congregation to attend the training event and those persons will be able to help the rest of the congregation provide the kind of support that will get the ex-offender back on his feet and on his way to being a productive law-abiding citizen in your community.

We hope to have more information in the June 2000 edition of the Flash. Meanwhile, start thinking about who in your congregation might attend.

Something Wonderful

I received a letter a few days ago from a good friend of mine and with it was a story that made me think about why God does the things he does and I'd like to share this story with everyone I can so here it is.

A little boy is telling his grandma how everything is going wrong, school, family problems, severe health problems, ect...

Meanwhile, grandma is baking a cake. She asks the child if he would like a snack, which of course he does. "Here have some cooking oil." "Yuck" says the boy. "How about a couple of raw eggs?" "Gross Grandma" "Would you like some flour then? or maybe some baking soda?" "Grandma, those are all yucky." To which the grandma replies "Yes, all those things are yucky all by themselves. But put them together in the right way, they make a wonderful delicious cake! God works the same way. Many times we wonder why he would let us go through bad and difficult times. But God knows that when he puts these things all in His order, they always work for good! We just have to trust Him and eventually they will all make something wonderful."

That may not seem true or very likely, but God does things the way he does to make us strong, and to make our lives better. It is all part of the plan he has for each and everyone of us. So the next time something bad happens in your life, remember God loves you and has a purpose for you. That is something truly wonderful to think about.

by Brandon Richard Halsne



And the winner is...

CODR Member Wins PCoA Art Contest

Recently, W.J. Traywick, a member of The Church of the Damascus Road in Rockwell City, entered a drawing in the Prison Congregations of America annual art contest and his drawing was chosen as the artwork to be matted and framed and given to people and groups who gave \$100 or more to PCoA. That means W.J.'s drawing will adorn the walls of over 230 places. The framed drawing is on display at Rockwell City CODR.

Another version of his drawing is on the front cover of the 2000 Lenten devotional book, which contains devotions written entirely by inmates. For all this, Mr. Traywick received two cash prizes. Congrats, W.J.!

Now, are there any others of you who would like to enter your artwork for next year? No time like the present to enter next year's contest.

Judge Ye Not!

I dreamt of heaven the other night
And the Pearly gates opened wide
An Angel with halo bright
Ushered me inside.
And there to my surprise
Stood folks I'd judged and labeled
As quite unfit, of little worth
And spiritually disabled.
Indignant words rose to my lips
But were never set free
For every face showed surprise
No one expected me!
-Glenn Wooten-

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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

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Word Search

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 P Z S U C S A M A D R S
 R N M Z B L E M J U V A
 N T T O O S W M L C S B
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 P Z J T S E N B H D E O
 F S A M O H T R R A N S
 E N I N O R B A Y D R A

Find these words in the above word search.
 Andrew Bartholomew CODR
 James James John
 Judas Matthew Peter
 Philip Simon Thaddaeus
 Thomas

This search was created by Ricardo Ocacio and Dennis Beaman



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

Contact us by E-Mail: 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 and let you know whether there's enough space left for your visit.

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.

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.

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 for faster communication.

-- Pastor Carroll Lang

THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL



Have you wondered?

Read Acts 9 to see how we got our name. Saul, a vengeful, murderous man threatening to do harm to the "Followers of the Way" is chosen by God to be his instrument, and he became the best preacher ever!