

The Church of the Damascus Road

Flash!

Volume 3
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August 2000
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Some Things I've Learned

by Jeff Swearingen

Have we Christians today lost sight of the truth? Are we so comfortable with today's world that we no longer speak out against evil? Somewhere along the line we have lost sight of the word of God. We place the opinion of others above that of God. We as children of God need to rethink our place in this world. For as children of God we are not of this world. The world no longer persecutes Christians because we do not fight against the evils of this world. Instead of speaking out, we just close our eyes to it. It's time we wake up and bring about a change. Satan is at work in the world today, in ways the Apostles never even dreamed of. We as Christians have to stand up to evil wherever it shows its head. Whether it be the drug dealers down the block, or the Christian next door who turns his back on others. I realize that many won't like my opinion, but maybe it's time we worry about God's opinion!

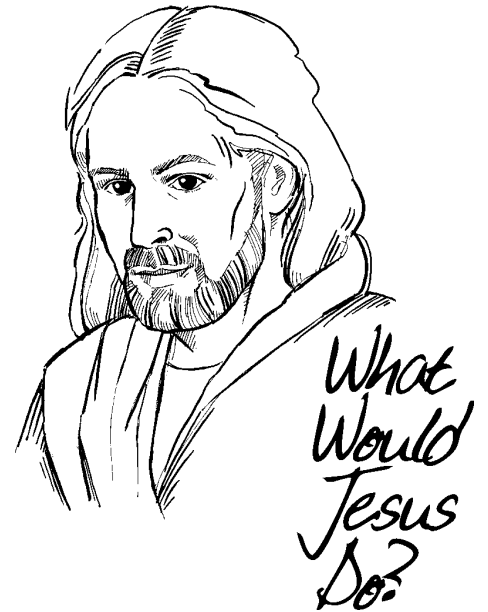


Aftercare-You Can Help

I'd like to tell you a little about the Church of the Damascus Road. We're a new kind of congregation that is made up of inmates in the Iowa prison system. We are located in the Correctional Facilities of Rockwell City and Fort Dodge.

We are trying to set up a support system on the outside. What we need are Churches who are willing to welcome someone who is being released from prison. Many of the men leaving here are new to the faith and will be in deep need of Christian fellowship to keep them on the right path. If you are willing to be involved in this, we will put the name of your church in our files and when one of the men is close to being released to your area, we would send a letter of introduction, letting you know when he will be getting out.

To prepare you to help, we are providing two Aftercare Training Events in September. One is Saturday, September 23rd, from 9am to 4pm. The second is Sunday, September 24th from 2-9pm. The events will be at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, 1212 Sumner Avenue, Humboldt, Iowa. There will be no charge except for the food. A special mailing with registration will be sent to all churches on our mailing list.



The Biggest Gamble

I used to watch football and basketball games, you know, when they're going for the winning field goal and they show the goal posts and in the crowd, you see a sign that says John 3:16; or when you're watching basketball and they're going for the big freethrow, you see a sign in the audience that says John 3:16.

Well, I know about the bible, so I looked that up and it says, "for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." I thought about that scripture and I looked at it with a gambler's perspective and I figured if you went through your whole life and you believed in that scripture and you died and that sentence was true what would you gain? Everlasting life—great!!

But, still looking at that with a gambler's perspective, I figured if you believed in that scripture and you went through your whole life and you died and that scripture was a lie, what would you lose? Nothing, you'd be dead anyway. So there it is! The biggest gamble! You have nothing to lose! You can only gain everlasting life! Now there's a sure bet for me. How about you? I wonder what kind of odds Vegas would give on that?

-- Nick Clark



Storyteller

Storyteller is about to get underway. We are seeking donations of children's books for the program. Anyone that is interested in either donating books or volunteering, please contact Pastor Lang at The Church of the Damascus Road, PO Box 834, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834. Phone Number 515-955-3579.

Inside the Flash

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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. See address information in lower right corner of page two

Healthy Competition

Once upon a time long, long ago there was a season when neither the Packers nor the Vikings made a post season playoffs. It seemed so unusual that the management of both teams got together and decided that there should be some sort of competition between the two teams, because of their long rivalry. So, they decided on a week long ice fishing competition the team that catches the most fish at the end of the week wins.

So, on a cold northern Wisconsin lake (we'll give them the benefit of the doubt or they'll whine about home field advantage). They began their contest.

The first day after 8 hours of fishing the Vikings had caught 100 fish and the Packers had 0. At the of the 2nd day the Vikings had caught 200 fish and the Packers 0.

That evening the Packers coach got his team together and said, "I suspect some kind of cheating is taking place." So the next morning he dressed one of his players in purple and gold and sent him over to the Viking camp to act as a spy. At the end of the day he came back to report to the coach. The coach asked, "well, how about it, are they cheating?" "They sure are!" the player reported, "they're cutting holes in the ice."

Don't Wish—Unless

Don't wish yourself in the other fellow's place because he has a better job, makes more money, lives in a finer house, drives a better car, dresses better, and has better food than you, unless his inner life is better than yours.

The Presence

When Diane Johnson was 13 her mother dropped her off for the confirmation class at their church. Diane arrived early and, not knowing where to wait for class to begin, she wandered into the sanctuary. She did not have good eyes, but she saw a stained glass window through which the sun was casting a lovely light into the room. She felt the warm rays surrounding her body. Suddenly, she felt a distinct presence. She had the feeling most of us get when another person is nearby. She called out, "Is anyone here?" No answer came.

Still, she was absolutely certain that she was not alone. Furthermore, the certainty of the presence of someone else grew stronger and stronger. Her spirit began to discern that she was experiencing the awesome presence of God. Diane, who is now officially blind, considers that memorable occasion when she felt the loving presence of the Holy Spirit to be the time of her conversion experience. Furthermore, she soon came to understand that God was calling her into the ministry. Today she serves a church in Wooster, Ohio.

Thinking about that unique day in the sanctuary so long ago, Diane says that some may think the experience of a 13-year-old girl sounds silly. But, she goes on to say, "The experience was real to me. My future and destiny changed in that moment in time."

— East Ohio Today

The Signs of Life

There are three signs of old age. The first is the loss of memory, I can't remember the other two.

Friars

Two cannibals meet one day. The first cannibal says, "you know, I just can't seem to get a tender missionary. I've baked them, I've roasted them, I've stewed them, I've barbecued them, I've tried every sort of marinade. I just cannot seem to get them tender." The second cannibal asks, "what kind of missionary do you use?" The other replied, "you know, the ones that hang out at that place at the bend of the river. They have these brown cloaks with a rope around the waist and their sort of bald on top with a funny ring of hair on their heads." "Ah ha!" The second cannibal replies. "No wonder those are Friars!"

Faith = Eternal Life

He's that avalanche flowing down the mountain, all the water of life, do you want a drink from his fountain? Believing in the Son, Jesus Christ, is the only price you have to pay, so get down on your knees and bow your head and mean it from your heart when you turn to God and pray.

Then you'll feel those healing pains, it's his loving heat running through your liquid veins. He's that volcano pressure that you keep deep inside your soul, there's nothing you can hide from him he knows all even who was in the Grassy knoll.

When the sky starts to ramble clouds roll and tears begin to fall, he sends his S.O.S. through lightning bolts for us all. You may have missed the message so I'll repeat it one more time for you to hear, worship the Lord with all your heart so you can live forever because the end is near!

by Stanley R. Davis, Jr.



The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!

Volume 3.4

August 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.

Glenn Wooten, Editor.
Harvey Fluker, Assistant

If you wish to submit original prose, poetry, humor or artwork, or to receive this newsletter yourself, write 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

Thank You

On behalf of myself, and my family, I would like to thank the members of the Church for their support and understanding during this hardest of times. On July 3, 2000, my identical twin brother, Kevin, committed suicide, and the loss is still a very heavy burden to bear for all of us.

It was with the heaviest of hearts that I called Pastor Lang to seek some comfort for myself and my parents when I was given the news, and I am so very thankful that he was there for me, and was able to phone Canada to comfort my mother, who has not taken the loss of her eldest son well at all.

Members of the Church Council have been through all of the tears and all of the confusion and sadness that this death has brought for me, and I am very thankful for their time and their devotion to helping someone whom they saw needed it.

The prayers that the church has offered for my family have been noticed, and my mother and father have both asked me to express their thanks and appreciation for this. I know that God will bless the members of the church for their compassion and their willingness to be there for my family in prayer and spirit.

Kevin never had the opportunity to meet anybody like the people I have, but I am sure that if he had, it would have made a difference in his life. I can only hope that now, as he is with the Lord that he will have the chance, and be happy in the fellowship that he finds there.

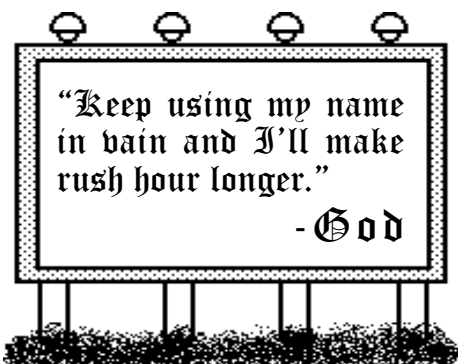
Kevin spent a good part of his life working as a search and rescue volunteer, and always had time to help anyone whom he felt was in need.

While we may never know why my brother did what he did, we are trying to take comfort in the belief that he is now with the Lord, and in a place where there is no more rescues to go on, and no further alert klaxons signaling that somebody is in peril and needing him to suit up and go off on a search and rescue mission.

Now it is Kevin's time to rest, and to look upon those whom he saved in life with a sense of joy that he made a difference while he was here with us.

We shall miss you, Kevin.

Charles Parent-Quinn



The Faith of a Child

Sally was only eight years old when she heard Mommy and Daddy talking about her little brother, Georgi. He was very sick and they had done everything they could afford to save his life. Only a very expensive surgery could help him now . . . and that was out of the financial question.

She heard Daddy say with a whispered desperation, Only a miracle can save him now.

Sally went to her bedroom and pulled her piggy bank from its hiding place in the closet. She shook all the change out on the floor and counted it carefully. Three times. The total had to be exactly perfect. No chance here for mistakes.

Tying the coins up in a cold-weather-kerchief, she slipped out of the apartment and made her way to the corner drug store. She waited patiently for the pharmacist to give her attention . . .

But he seemed too busy talking to another man to be bothered by an eight-year-old child. Sally twisted her feet to make a scuffing noise. She cleared her throat. No good. Finally she took a quarter from its hiding place and banged it on the glass counter.

That did it!

And what do you want? The pharmacist asked in an annoyed tone of voice. I'm talking to my brother. Well, I want to talk to you about my brother, Sally answered back in the same annoyed tone. He's sick and I want to buy a miracle.

I beg your pardon, said the pharmacist.

My Daddy says only a miracle can save him now . . . so how much does a miracle cost?

We don't sell miracles here, little girl. I can't help you.

Listen, I have the money to pay for it. Just tell me how much it costs.

The well-dressed man stooped down and asked, What kind of a miracle does your brother need?

I don't know, Sally answered. A tear started down her cheek. I just know he's really sick and Mommy says he needs an operation. But my folks can't pay for it . . . so I have my money.

How much do you have? Asked the well-dressed man.

A dollar and eleven cents, Sally answered. And it's all the money I have in the world.

Well, what a coincidence, smiled the well-dressed man. A dollar and eleven cents . . . The exact price of a miracle to save a little brother.

He took her money in one hand and with the other hand he grasped her mitten and said Take me to where you live - I want to see your brother and meet your parents.

That well-dressed man was Dr. Carlton Armstrong, a renowned surgeon, who specialized in solving Georgi's malady. The operation was completed without charge and it wasn't long until Georgi was home again and doing well. Mommy and Daddy were happily talking about the chain of events that had led them to this place.

That surgery, Mommy whispered . . . It's like a miracle. I wonder how much it would have cost?

Sally smiled to herself. She knew exactly how much a miracle cost

One dollar and eleven cents . . . and the faith of a little child.

Would that we could all believe like children! We'd send the devil back to his hell, and learn to live in joy and peace again!

Would someone lend me a dollar and eleven cents . . . please?

The Gospel—the Good News. Might we share it always.

And live. Amen.

Letter to the Editor

Concerning *Periodical Flash!*, Volume 3, #2, April 2000:

Firstly, I have to confess I couldn't understand why that "ugly long-haired boy" was again on the first page and I was repentant after I read his article on being "of the family of God." You should definitely not judge because of physical appearance: I did this yesterday when I watched professional ice-skating. The winner (whom I judged because he had long hair) got the first place.

Congratulations, W. J. on your artwork!

Has Chris Egenberger, who wrote the nice poem, "Asking Him from Within," been released or something?

Congratulations on Tim's Baptism.

How does one get to be a sponsor for a little girl like Stephanie?

God bless you!

— Linn E.

Dear Linn,

I must admit that I was a little bothered when I first read your letter concerning the April Flash, as I am the ugly, long-haired boy whose picture is on the front page. But just knowing that someone had taken the time to read our newsletter made me feel better, so I would like to take the time to thank you for your comments.

As for how one goes about becoming a sponsor of a child, we went through Children International. The toll free number is 1-800-888-3089, or you can write them at Children International, PO Box 419055, Kansas City, MO 64141. Online they can be reached at children@cikc.org.

Yes, Chris has been released. We are one of the few churches that can honestly say we are glad to lose members.

Once again, let me thank you for taking the time to write us.

Yours in the Lord,
Jeffery Swearingen

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The Church of the Damascus Road

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The Pope's Arthritis

A man who reeked of alcohol flopped on a subway seat next to a Priest. The man's tie was stained, his face was plastered with red lipstick, and a half empty bottle of rum was sticking out of his ripped jacket pocket.

He opened his newspaper and started reading. After a few minutes, the disheveled guy turned to the priest and asked "Say Father, do you know what causes arthritis?"

The Priest, disgusted by the man's appearance and behavior snapped. "It's caused by loose living, being with cheap, wicked women, too much alcohol and a contempt for your fellow man!" "Well I'll be." The man muttered and returned to his newspaper.

The Priest, thinking about what he said, nudged the man and apologized, "I'm sorry to have come on so strong — I didn't mean it. How long have you been suffering from arthritis? The man replied "I don't have it Father. I was just reading here that the Pope does."



<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.



My Oath to You...

When you are sad,
I will dry your tears.
When you are scared,
I will comfort your fears.
When you are worried,
I will give you hope.
When you are confused,
I will help you cope.
And when you are lost,
And can't see the light,
I shall be your beacon
Shining ever so bright.
This is my oath
I pledge till the end.
Why you may ask?
Because you're my friend.

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

Worship & Bible Study

FDCF Fort Dodge

7:00pm WednesdaysHoly Communion
7:00pm FridaysBible Study

NCCF Rockwell City

6:30pm TuesdaysBible Study
6:30pm ThursdaysHoly 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.

