

The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!

Volume 5
Issue No. 2
April 2002

Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

A Christian Walk

Perhaps one of the most intriguing feelings about this Christian walk is living from "Glory to Glory." *"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 3:18). The verse says we "are changed into the same image" of our Lord from "Glory to Glory." Do you suppose it's because Jesus was always giving glory to "His Father ? It was so much more.

Webster's Dictionary definition of glory says: 1) Great honor; renown 2) Adoration or praise 3) Magnificent splendor. Surely throughout the course of our Christian walk we've felt exhilarated and have come together in all of what Webster's Dictionary definition of the word glory defines.

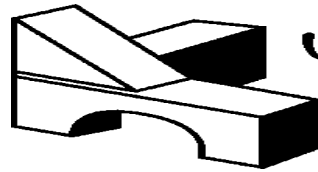
It's interesting to see how all that "glory to God" is brought about. I've lost my keys, and then I found them; glory to God! It's snowy and slippery. I need to drive to church, I made it; glory to God! The Lord has blessed you with needed money from an unknown source, Glory to God! I was slipping but didn't fall! Glory to God! Jesus has answered a prayer just the way you wanted it answered. Glory to God! This list is just absolutely endless.

How many of us have lived from pay-check to pay-check, day to day, or maybe fix to fix, i.e. the euphoric episode brought about through drug use.

It's absolutely awesome that we live from glory to glory! The verse says that by this we're changed into the same image of Jesus! Isn't that something? Living from glory to glory just feels good. It's nice to know I'm becoming more like my Lord.

Just this week a decision was received by me that was just the opposite of what I'd been praying for. Glory to God! You see? I know God has a perfect plan for me. God has a perfect plan for all of us. In all things give God the glory.

— A Christian Brother



WOOTEN'S KORNER

We read in 2 Corinthians 5:20, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be Reconciled to God" (NIV). The first time I read this was a few short years ago in county jail. I got hung up on being an ambassador. I couldn't comprehend the idea that God wanted me, of all people, to be an ambassador for him. That to me, should be left to those better qualified and of "higher" position, you know, the preachers and teachers. I didn't think I belonged in the company of people such as Chuck Swindoll, Charles Stanley, Billy Graham, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, St. Paul, and the like. Well, after a lot of prayer, fellowship and bible study, God persuaded me otherwise. He has a way of doing that, you know!



As of late I have become exited about the latter part of that sentence: God making his appeal to us through each other. Wow! Look at what God does to me! It's amazing! I'm sure it is to you, too. God earnestly seeks us out to be reconciled to him. He has taken every obstacle out of our way. He gave our sins to Jesus and told him to take them to calvary. So our sin

can't stop us. He gave us the spirit to guide us, to speak for us to God. so we can't get it wrong when we approach him. I don't picture God sitting on some high throne, richly dressed. At this moment, in my minds eye, I see him on bended knee, hands outstretched, eye's tear dimmed. He has given his all to reconcile us to him, but still we avoid him and all his blessings for gadgets and all too many things that keep us away from him. As my mother would say, "When you were young you stepped on my toes, now that you're older you step on my heart." Well, now that we're older we've all taken steps that landed squarely on God's love for us. We've got to stop being so stubborn and give up and give in; accept love over laziness, fellowship over folly, reconciliation over rebellion. Anything, anyone, or anyplace that keeps us from God is sin. It's that simple. In spite of all that we are, God still works through us and in us. It's amazing! I'm a tool in God's tool chest. Even if I'm a monkey wrench. I couldn't be in any better hands than his. God bless you all, Glenn Wooten

I Asked God

1. I asked God to send me his friends. He sent you.
2. I asked God to take away my pain. God said, "No. It is not for me to take away, but for you to give it up."
3. I asked God to make my handicapped child whole. God said, "No. His spirit is whole, his body is only temporary."
4. I asked God to grant me patience. God said, "No. Patience is a by-product of tribulations; it isn't granted, it is earned."
5. I asked God to give me happiness. God said, "No. I give you blessings. Happiness is up to you."
6. I asked God to spare me pain. God said, "No. Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares and brings you closer to me."
7. I asked God to make my spirit grow. God said, "No. You must grow on your own, but I will prune you to make you fruitful."
8. I asked for all things that I might enjoy life. God said, "No. I will give you life so that you may enjoy all things."
9. I asked God to help me love others as much as he loves me. God said, "Ahhh, you finally have the idea!"

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Dream Power

The "I Have a Dream" speech by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. still injects moral virtues of good counsel, good judgment, docility, truthfulness, zeal, patience, perseverance, temperance, meekness, and respect. That is to all races of mankind that we can live together in harmony and balance with each other. If each of us would see ourselves as a strange mixture of good and evil, hopes and fears, loves and animosities, prejudices and compulsions masquerading as convictions, and suppressed the desire and hidden motives. Only then can man see that there is a better and worse self than we think we are.



First, we have to exclude color watching. The relevancy of this is the reflection seen in the mirror. The deep-set desire of self-will to strip the self righteousness and pride trip we are on. All people are victims of circumstances of a social determinism.

Once we see others as they are and accept that there is nothing more that we can do except move forward and commit ourselves unconditionally to love our fellow brother or fellow sister in humility, asking, "Let's live together as family."

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., on a cool day of August 28, 1963, I can image his eyes glimpsing at the crowd with sadness, but some day that they would not shut the gates of love, but instead crush the breath of hate.

Let the dream vision come to pass. The relevance of the "I Have a Dream" speech effect today is in the homes of all men's dreams. A voice heard around the world, seeking to drive out all fears of the past, all fears of today, and all fears of the future, to say "we can." Let's join hands and continue to enter the new years to come with love, peace, and equality, singing in unity the old negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

May the world continue to see the changing power of the dream.

In brotherly love,
Victorio DeLance



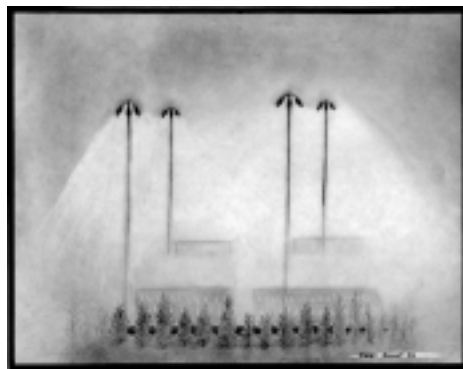
To the Editor

More on Joe Fender

Greetings—

I was perusing the February Flash! and noticed the death notice and tribute for Kemberly Joseph "Stand Up Joe" Fender. Joe was a classmate of mine in 5th grade at Macedonia, Iowa (we knew him as Kem in those days). He and his family moved to Council Bluffs not long thereafter. I don't know the circumstances under which he ended up in prison. But I am thankful that somewhere along the way he met the Lord, and that Church of the Damascus Road was an important part of his faith journey. And although we may never understand why he chose to take his own life, we can place hope in these words of the Apostle Paul: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

— Dale A. Schoening, Pastor
Calvary United Methodist Church, Stratford, IA
South Marion United Methodist Church, Stratford, IA
Homer United Methodist Church, Homer, IA
Duncombe United Methodist Church, Duncombe, IA
McGuire Bend United Brethren Church, Dayton, IA



Thank You

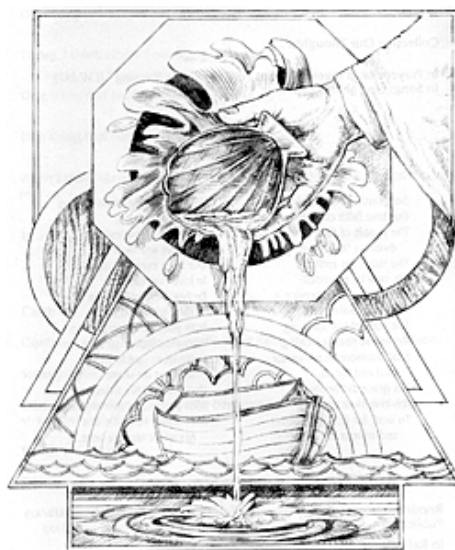
March 2, 2002

To staff and Christian inmates;

I really enjoyed the quartet concert at St. Olaf church last month and it was special because I had the joy of visiting with an "old" friend who came from Dows, bringing some young people from his congregation. I hadn't seen him for many years.

Then you should know that a dear Christian friend of mine appreciates the night light in her room at Friendship Heaven! Isn't that something?!! Light from prison!

Sincerely, Lois Craig



Holy Baptism

NCCF March 21, 2002
Jay R. Leach
Michael Patrick Younker

The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!

Volume 5.2

April 2002

The official publication of The Church of the Damascus Road, a Christian Community of Reconciliation, serving the inmate population of the correctional facilities at Rockwell City and Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Robert L. Johnson II, Editor.

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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239 North 11th Street, Fort Dodge
515-955-3579

How are things going? Ministry Update

The Church of the Damascus Road has been a part of prison life since August 1, 1997 at Rockwell City, and since April 24, 1998 in Fort Dodge. Participation membership has grown in both institutions and the real secret is in having outsiders come in and join the insiders for worship. Through our volunteer visitors the Holy Spirit is working a miracle, and you are all a part of that miracle.

In the first two years, congregational and individual support of the ministry grew steadily as more and more people attended worship and as congregations began remembering us in their gifts. We conducted a mailing campaign to solicit more gifts from congregations and were so blessed that we even established an "emergency fund" by depositing extra income in the ELCA's Mission Investment Fund, where our investment not only returns interest, but the deposits are used to help other congregations build, rebuild or remodel with low-interest loans. The third and fourth year, giving declined after leveling off and we have had to dip into the Mission Investment Fund to keep afloat.

You may ask, "Doesn't the ELCA or the Western Iowa Synod support the congregation?" The answer is "No." The first three years we received one half of the salary package, or approximately one fourth of our budget, from the ELCA Division for Outreach, but now we receive nothing. We are totally dependent on individuals and congregations to support this ministry, which is really an extension of *their* ministry to those who are in prison. Some congregations in the Western Iowa Synod ELCA donate their gifts through the Western Iowa Synod. These gifts are then forwarded to us and the congregation is given credit for mission partner support.

Congregations of other denominations, United Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopal, Lutheran, United Church of Christ, Catholic, Covenant, and several non-denominational, are supporting this vital ministry of Christ. We are truly grateful for all the support and we can't thank them enough.

So, where do we go from here? Now that the congregation will no longer be a mission development, we will have to buy the parsonage that up to now has been owned by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. That will mean an additional \$12,000 per year to purchase the house or to provide a housing allowance for the pastor to purchase the house. We do not as yet have enough support to be able to provide housing. Our deadline for purchasing the present parsonage is August 2002.

In addition, volunteers who get acquainted with inmate members of CoDR discover that their hearts go out to those who need help when they are released. This has

led us into the area of Reentry Aftercare, in which teams of 3-7 persons covenant with an ex-offender for up to a year to help the ex-offender get back on his or her feet after release. As this ministry grows, there is need of another staff member to oversee this important ministry. We do not as yet have enough support to provide an additional staff member, so this ministry is growing very slowly.

If you have never joined the members of the Church of the Damascus Road in worship, then you have missed out on one of the most joyous experiences one can have in worship. Please call our Secretary, Cynthia, at 1-515-955-3579 to make arrangements for a visit. Pastor Lang invites congregations of any denomination to invite him to a Sunday worship service to tell the congregation what Damascus Road is all about. He is willing to preach, give children's sermons, lead youth and adult forums, or all of the above. Just call Cynthia to extend the invitation.

Musings

As I was musing about what the year 2001 brought us, one thing stood out over all the rest; the terrorist attacks. As we began this year the farthest thing from our minds was an attack of such magnitude, on our soil. This became a wake up call showing us, one of the strongest nations in the world, that we are not untouchable. Even a nation such as ours needs to count its blessings and be thankful that this terrorist attack did not happen later in the day. It could very easily have taken many more lives. With so many other nations having the technology to create nuclear weapons, many nations will sell such technology to whoever has the wealth to spend.

Then I turned my focus on what the year to come has in store. As I thought about it, I became somewhat apprehensive. I prayed to the Lord that no more innocent lives be taken, and that all of the families of those who have lost a loved one in the senseless acts of terrorism will be able to receive comfort and acceptance that can only come from you.

I have trouble with the taking of even one life. I believe that the only one that has the right to take a life is the giver of life. This is the one and only true God, the creator of all. This is only his right. I feel that claiming this right would put me on the level

Council Elections

The Inside Church Councils at Fort Dodge and Rockwell City held elections for Church Council Officers. Please join me in welcoming the following officers:

Fort Dodge Correctional Facility

President: Tom Warner

Vice President: Robert L. Johnson II

Secretary: Victorio DeLance

Council Members: Richard Green, Frank Kinyon, Kevin Franklin, David Athey, Robert Walker, Joshua Bartenhagen, Chad Fogelman, Jeremy Swanson.

North Central Correctional Facility

President: Darrel Pennel

Vice President: Darwin VanHauen

Secretary: Donald Henrikus

Council Members: Shane Countryman, Robert Manke, Michael Geary, James Zimmerman, Mike Younker, Michael Berst, Marc Leonard, Ramon Valdez.

of God, with the authority of God, and that is far more than any man may claim.

I then asked the Lord that only good things would come to us: No more senseless killing of the innocent for any reason. Then the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and told me that we all must experience the good with the bad. By having the bad to measure along side of the good we are able to see how good the good things truly are. If all things were the same, we would not recognize our blessings and not know what to be thankful for. Then he spoke to my heart that trials and tribulations build character and facing the unknown helps to build our faith. So, whatever the coming year has for us, realize that we do not face it alone: the Holy Spirit is in our heart.

Be confident that the life of the righteous will have victory over what is of the world. We do not face death because by grace we have eternal life. No one can take away this God-given life from you. This is bought for us on that glorious day on Calvary. Be ready when Jesus comes back in all his glory. Remember that he who is in you is far greater than he who is in the world. Also remember that on that glorious day we will all join with the saints in heaven and rejoice that peace has finally come. Will you be ready? Go in peace serve the Lord.

— Robert L. Johnson II



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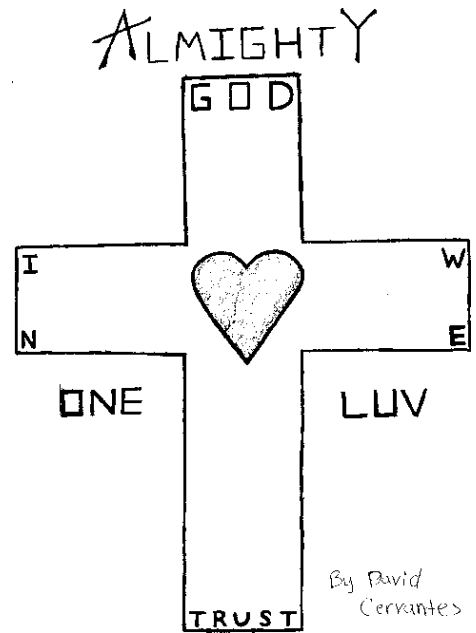


<http://www.dodgenet.com/~cjang/index.html>

Artists' Corner



James Jessup, FDCF 3-02



David Cervantes, FDCF 2002

The Question

The question remains, "How can God be just—that is, true to himself in nature and true to himself in holiness, and yet justify the sinner?" The only solution was for an innocent party to volunteer to die physically and spiritually as a substitution before God. There was only one possibility. God's own Son was the only personality in the universe who had the capacity to bear in his own body the sins of the world.

— Billy Graham

Memories

Memories of days gone by
Can warm a cold, cold heart.
Reminding us of those we miss
Can tear a heart apart.
When I miss my loved ones
I take it to God in prayer
That He will watch over them
As I cannot be there.
Someday in the future
When God blesses me so.
Back to the arms of my family
Praising Him I shall go.
Robert L. Johnson II
12-15-2001

A note to secretaries and pastors—

Copy Me, Please!

We send our newsletter primarily to congregations. It's printed on white paper so it can be copied to include all or portions of it in your newsletter or bulletin, or simply made available to members of your congregation.

Anyone wishing to be on our mailing list may send name, address, and phone numbers to The Church of the Damascus Road, PO Box 834, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834, or by e-mail at: DamascusCh@aol.com. The Flash will be sent directly to your home.

-- Pastor Carroll Lang

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

All Readers: Send Contributions

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