

The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!

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Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Bright Orange Coveralls

by Edwin Allen Lee, aka Ken "Duke" Monse' Broten

Going to the funeral of someone you dearly love is a traumatic experience, no matter how you cut it. Going to a funeral as a prisoner is beyond traumatic.

The convict is taken in chains and stiff, bright orange coveralls, with no underwear, barefooted in rubber thongs, with a prison guard on each arm. Those bright orange coveralls seldom fit right. They tend to ride up in your crotch, being you have no underwear on, and they make you really stand out in the crowd. Your hands are chained securely to your waist by a belly chain with cuffs attached. But that's not the worst part.

Your feet can be moved only fourteen inches due to the leg irons on your ankles, so you will walk in short shuffling steps. Then your feet will sweat, causing them to slip in those rubber thongs. With your hands secured at your side these slipping thongs cause you to walk in a stumbling fashion, as the chains rattle. But that's not the worst part.

The chapel the funeral is held in is a quiet, reverent place. A place where people dress in dark mourning clothes and share their grief in silence. Entering that sanctum, in front of your friends and relatives, under armed guard, in rattling chains, shuffling in shame, is hard to do. But that's not the worst part.

The worst part comes when the prisoner is ushered to the front of the chapel, in front of everyone, to view the body of his loved one beside two uniformed prison guards. The prisoner can feel everyone staring at his shuffling form as he stands looking at the remains of his loved one. Then, when he turns to be led out of the chapel comes the worst part. The chains at the prisoner's waist stop his hands from even wiping the tears away. So he turns from the coffin, in tears, in front of everyone dear to him, and tries to hide his shame as he leaves.

Yes, that's the worst part of a visit to a funeral in bright orange coveralls.



A Follower of Christ

A good friend of mine helped inspire me to write this letter about my life in the ghetto. It's not an easy life, but when is life easy? I guess it all depends on what road you take. But still, either road you take, you're still going to run into obstacles along the way. There are two kinds of people: one is good and the other bad. One follows God, the other follows Satan. Any way, life for me wasn't good.

In the middle of 5th ward in downtown Houston, Texas, I have seen murders, rape, and robbery. I've seen it all. I've seen crackheads get their brains blown out for no reason. I've seen old ladies beaten, raped, and then robbed afterward. I couldn't, better yet, I wouldn't, tell for fear of getting my brains blown out as well. But at age six, I was helping my father sell crack, dope, and about anything else he could get his hands on. At the age of nine, my Mom and Dad were divorced. My Dad moved me and my brother to Waterloo, Iowa, and at the age of twelve I was busted for possession of five pounds of pot. The Black Hawk County judge put me in the Boy's State Training School in Eldora, Iowa, until I turned eighteen. From then on I have been living a life of sin.

I am presently locked up for violation of my parole. My Parole Officer made me drop a urine analysis and it came up dirty. I sat a month in the county jail before the judge gave me two years in prison. While at Mt. Pleasant doing drug treatment, I met some people that have been in the same situation that I have been in. They encouraged me to go to church. The next day I gave my life over to Jesus Christ, and today I am proud to say that I walk with Jesus every minute of my waking hours. I am also proud to say that next month I will be discharging and going home to Houston, Texas, to live with my wife and daughter. I'm happy to say I am a follower of Christ. AMEN.

— Lucas Lloyd 5-21-03

Fully Equipped

Throughout the Bible, when God asked a man to do something, the methods, means, materials and specific directions were always provided. The man had one thing to do: obey. — Elisabeth Elliott



Life's Storms

In the midst of a storm, clouds will break.

The sunlight streams in through.

It may be just a smile or touch
That someone shares with you.

But in that smile and in that touch
God makes his presence known,
To tell you as you walk this storm,
You do not walk alone.

For storms are not forever things,
In time they pass on by,
Yet even when the rainbow comes,
We still keep asking why.

Was there no other way to learn
Except by clouds and storm?
For trust and faith were easy friends
When we were safe and warm.

But God would ask for greater faith
And hope that reassures,
To teach that in the midst of storms,
His constant love endures.

By Lynn Essing

Inside the Flash!

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Never Too Late

I stand with arms outstretched to the Lord
 His word I read that makes me whole
 His blood for our sins off a cross did pour
 I lived in the flesh and not of the soul
 I only know now that he is the way
 I'll hope that I'll never stray from thee
 I'll love and I'll live for each and every day
 It's not too late because now
 I'm a Federal Detainee

David B. Hinders, FDCF Fed, 4-11-03

Outside Council Profile



Lee Kuhrt

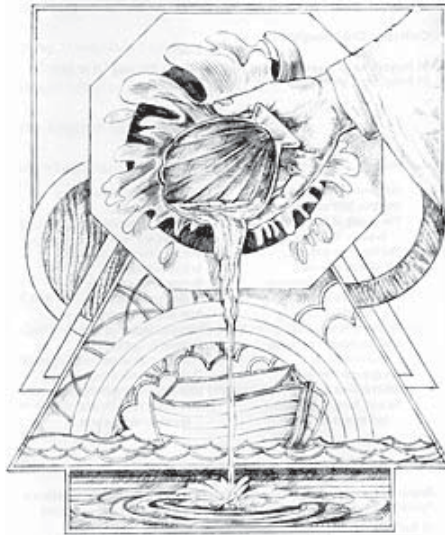
I have been on the Outside Council for five and one-half years and have been blessed by everything connected to it. I was confirmed in the Lutheran Church-Wisconsin Synod, so early in life I was trained in a very conservative culture.

I was born in 1934 in the very house I live in today. Those were days of economic depression and rural doctors delivered babies at the parents' home, believe it or not. The house was new in 1934 so it is exactly the same age that I am. You could say I am a genuine Iowan because I was born here. But I attended Jr. high and high school in Arizona, then returned to Iowa to spend most of my life here. I married a farm girl that lived just 2 miles down the road and we have been married for 48 years. Her name is Jeanie and we have five children and 7 grandchildren, which we enjoy. I farmed after returning from the military service until 1998 but feel like I am not fully retired as I still raise cattle.

I challenge anyone to show me in scripture a reference to retirement and until that happens I shall be spending my days no longer farming but being useful to my family and church and the prison ministry.

The Right Time

Your Father knows your gifts, your hindrances, and the condition you're in at every moment. And He also knows something you can't possibly know—every single person who's in desperate need of receiving his touch through you. God will bring you to that person at exactly the right time and in the right circumstances.
 — Dr. Bruce Wilkinson

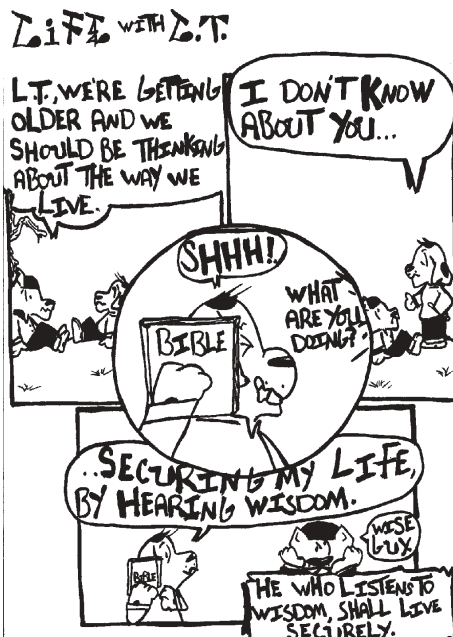


Holy Baptism

FDCF

September 10, 2003

Stephen Houghton



Our Sponsored Child

Dear sponsor,

I hope the present letter finds you and all your's fine. I'm just fine, and let me tell you that I passed into the next grade. I finished school. It didn't take me so much, but I made big effort, as to be able to pass, and I'm very happy because now, I can have a relax and fun, get out with my friends. I want you to know that I'm very grateful for your help and love. I say good-bye with a lot of love, and may God bless you.

Stephanie Reynalds Hernandez. M.S.D.

Stephanie is the child that we sponsor through Children International. She is ten years old and about 4 feet 2 inches tall. She lives with her father who is a daily worker and her mom who is a homemaker. She enjoys playing with dolls and with her friends. Her favorite subjects in school are Grammar and History. She and her family live in Valparaiso, Chile, in a small 2-bedroom home with a small dining room and kitchen. They all sleep on wooden beds, but are fortunate enough to have running water in their home and although electricity is available, they cannot afford to have it put in their house.

The Church of the **Damascus Road** *Flash!*

Volume 6.5

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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.

Charles West, Editor.

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.

Office at St. Olaf Lutheran Church
 239 North 11th Street, Fort Dodge, IA

A Day to Remember

I'm 43 years old. I've been incarcerated now for about two and a half years. I eventually discharged my state incarceration as I awaited trial on Federal charges.

I've become very spiritual over the last couple of years; reborn again, if you will.

I think sometimes people don't pay enough attention to God in their lives, and the subtle signs around them; those sometimes hard to see ways he works his will.

Now I've had plenty of reason to give up, but lately I've asked God for help, to reveal himself to me and to show me his will. You see, two days ago is a day I'll never forget, July 31, 2003. I was sentenced in Federal Court to 30 years in prison. That and the following day will also be unforgettable because of a few other things that happened. I believe I really started seeing the Holy Spirit begin working and God revealing himself to me. As you can imagine it was a very emotional day. My parents were there, and two of my sisters, and a few other people were there for various other reasons, thank you, God. However, as I expected, I was too overcome with emotion and my attorney ended up reading it to the court for me. Of course, I expressed my remorse, and explained to the judge a few ifs: if I could change things I would; if I could have this, or that. Then I went on to explain what I'd like to do with what one would think of as being the remainder of a worthless life. The courtroom was very somber and intent on listening to what I had to say. I closed my statement with this: "Charles Kettering an inventor said, 'Learn something from our defeats, don't ever let failure be an excuse not to try,'"

No matter how pitiful our lives may seem, if we ask God into it, asking him for his strength, we will always have hope we can always use something that may seem a failure and turn it into positive.

Judge Bennet said at my sentencing, "I'm sorry I have to sentence you to so many

years in prison, but until Congress changes this law and these sentencing guidelines which I am so openly opposed to, I have to impose on you a sentence which is bordering on cruel and unusual punishment." I pray with some help from others, things will change and maybe parole will be brought back to the Federal system. I may not be able to help myself much any more, I leave that up to God, but I can help others. I can maybe help them begin to lead better lives, certainly a better life than I have.

As the next day unfolded, the first person I met was Steve, a man of my age waiting to go to prison on a 5-year sentence. Steve had been in prison before, 12 years, that's a long time. I asked him for some advice, "How did you cope with being in prison so long?"

"God my friend, God, you must have spirituality and get closer to God or it's tough." Out of all those hundreds or so of people, Steve was the first person I met. Thank God.

A few minutes later I'm introduced to Loren, a nice guy, 38, he's here in Woodbury County finishing up a 20 thing. Later Loren and I were trying to impress on him the futility of drugs and the choices we make. The conversation ended up talking about religion. I asked him if he believed in God. Like most people he said he did but, had not been to church for a long time. I asked Loren when he got out of jail, surprisingly he said, "Sunday morning." Thank God. I had to jump on that!

"Hey Loren, when you get out Sunday morning forget what other people say, why don't you go straight to church?"

"I suppose I could" he said "I really want to get back into that, you know, quit using and do something with my life."

"Well," I said, "you can go and do something with your life, you can go and thank God."

Later that afternoon I was sitting there, aimlessly watching the pictures flash across

the TV screen, unable to hear the words because of the many voices bouncing and echoing off the block walls. A young black man named Willy came over and sat with me. He said he had been indicted and wasn't sure who he could talk to. He'd heard I'd gotten 30 years, so he figured I'd be OK and maybe I could give him some advice.

"Well," I said, "I just got 30 years. Sure, I'll try and help you out, but I'm not sure, because of obvious reasons, my advice will be all that good." We talked for some time and I noticed he kept saying, "I pray this and I pray that." So I asked him, "Do you pray a lot?"

"Well, no," he said. "Do you believe in God?"

"I'm not sure," he said.

I said, "Maybe you should really try it, I know it helps me."

"Maybe I will," he said.

Several hours later the guards came passing out property people had left for the inmates: t-shirts, socks, magazines, cards; and Willy got a book. His sister brought him a book — a Bible. "Hey, Bern," Willy said, "look what my sister brought me!"

"Check you out!" I said, "what do you think of that?"

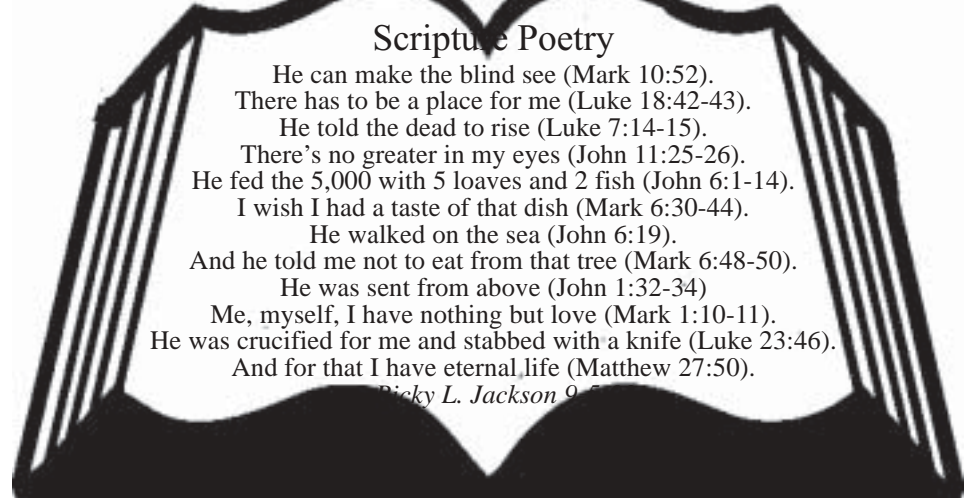
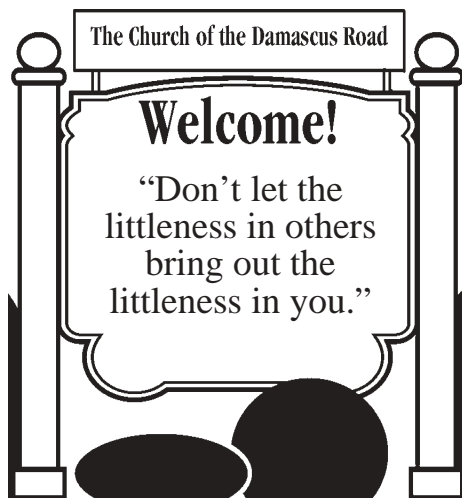
"Yeah," he said, "kinda strange, huh?"

Thank you, God, I thought. Maybe my life won't be a waste, all things considered. I didn't feel as bad, perhaps, as I should have or could have. Maybe I can't do much for my situation, and maybe I feel like "What's the use?" But God can always find something for you to do. Just ask him and then pay attention. What better place to find such a large number of people who need help and direction than in prison?

Remember, never let failure be an excuse for not trying again.

To all my friends in Spencer, Iowa, and my family, thank you for your prayers. As long as we have God in our lives we have hope. Thank God.

David Bern, Federal Detainee in FDCF.



The Church of the Damascus Road
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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

October, 2003



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Invite the Pastor to Worship

The worship services at The Church of the Damascus Road are scheduled on week-nights for two reasons. One is to enable people on the outside to worship with the inmates and not miss worship in their own congregations. The second is to make the pastor of Damascus Road available to visit area congregations on Sunday mornings. The pastor can give a brief update on the ministry, a sermon, a children's sermon, an adult forum, a children's Sunday school opening, a cross-generational class session, or any or all of the above, and is open to suggestions. All that is asked is that there be time to prepare.

Call 515-955-3579 or write to: The Church of the Damascus Road, PO Box 834, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834, or by e-mail at <DamascusCh@aol.com> to arrange for a visit to your congregation. The pastor speaks Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist, United Church of Christ, Covenant, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Catholic, Evangelical, Reformed, Assembly of God, Nazarene, and a host of other denominations, independent, and non-denominational as well.

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.

Artists' Corner



Drawing by Joel Segura Meza, FDCF FED Inmate

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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.

-- 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