

# The Church of the Damascus Road

# Flash!

Volume 6  
Issue No. 6  
December 2003  
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA



## Letter from Stephanie

Dear Sponsor,

I hope you're all right there in your country.

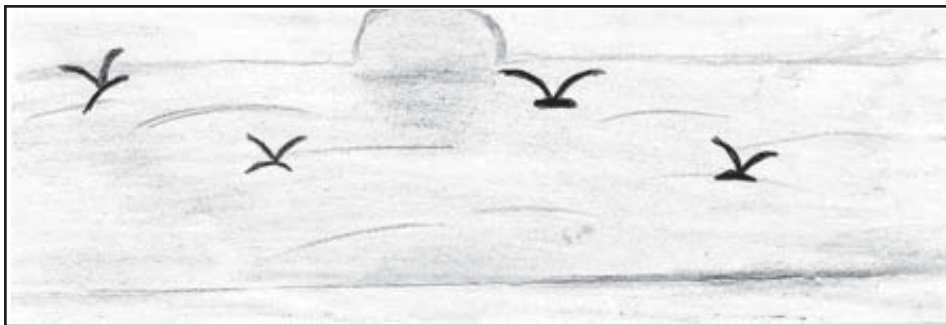
I passed into the next grade, the 5th grade A. I've played hide-and-seek a lot and, with my classmates, I like to go to the square.

From my house we see the port. We see the boats sailing. I'd like you to send me a picture. I want to thank you for your benefits. May God bless you and all your family.

Yours,

Stephanie Alejandra Reynald Hernandez  
M.S.D.

**Editor's Note:** Stephanie is our "adopted" child through Children International, supported by our offerings. Below is a drawing she sent with her letter, the photo on the left is the latest she sent in the same letter, and below her drawing is a photo of some of her "Dads," members of CoDR.



## Christmas Program

Inmates at the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility and at the North Central Correctional Facility will present a Christmas program, "The Manger Seen" in which a family tells the story of Jesus' birth while adding the individual figurines to the family creche and at the same time they form a human manger scene.

The members of the congregation invite you to join us for worship on Christmas Eve at Fort Dodge and on Christmas Day at Rockwell City. Help the members of the Church of the Damascus Road celebrate the birth of Christ by worshiping with them.

Just call 515-955-3579 between the hours of 8am to 12pm Monday through Friday to reserve a space for you.

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### Because...

I feel like crying and with a sigh  
I hold my arms up to the sky  
hurt and anger, like a disease  
seeped into my soul, as it begins to freeze  
cold hearted, I cry inside  
the pain I've caused, I can't hide.

And...

I know from heaven above  
Jesus Christ has shown me love  
The words I say and the things I do  
reflect a man who is completely new  
and like the people and places I went before...

All we wanted was more and more  
feeling empty and alone again this day  
is a life lived that doesn't have to stay that way  
If....

you open your arms and close your eyes  
lift your prayers up to the sky  
ask God to forgive your sins  
Let your words ride the wind  
He gave his son to die for you  
God wants you to start a life anew  
Now stand up and kneel down  
You have the truth  
You are no longer bound

Daniel Skalla, 0014666

### The "W" in Christmas

Each December, I vowed to make Christmas a calm and peaceful experience. I had cut back on nonessential obligations - extensive card writing, endless baking, decorating, and even overspending. Yet still, I found myself exhausted, unable to appreciate the precious family moments, and of course, the true meaning of Christmas.

My son, Nicholas, was in kindergarten that year. It was an exciting season for a six year old. For weeks, he'd been memorizing songs for his school's "Winter Pageant." I didn't have the heart to tell him I'd be working the night of the production. Unwilling to miss his shining moment, I spoke with his teacher. She assured me there'd be a dress rehearsal the morning of the presentation. All parents unable to attend that evening were welcome to come then. Fortunately, Nicholas seemed happy with the compromise.

So, the morning of the dress rehearsal, I filed in ten minutes early, found a spot on the cafeteria floor and sat down. Around the room, I saw several other parents scampering to their seats. As I waited, the students were led into the room. Each class, accompanied by their teacher, sat cross-legged on the floor. Then, each group rose to perform their song.

Because the public school system had long stopped referring to the holiday as "Christmas," I didn't expect anything other than fun, commercial entertainment - songs of reindeer, Santa Claus, snowflakes and good cheer. So, when my son's class rose to sing, "Christmas Love," I was slightly taken back by its bold title.

Nicholas was aglow, as were all of his classmates, adorned in fuzzy mittens, red sweaters, and bright snowcaps on their heads.

Those in the front row held up large letters, one by one, to spell out the title of the song. As the class would sing "C is for Christmas," a child would hold up the letter C. Then, "H is for Happy," and on and on, until each child had presented the complete message, "Christmas Love."

The performance was going smoothly, until suddenly, we noticed her; a small, quiet, girl in the front row holding the letter "M" upside down; totally unaware her letter "M" appeared as a "W".

The audience of 1st through 6th graders snickered at this little one's mistake, but she had no idea they were laughing at her. She just stood tall, proudly held her "W".

Though the teachers tried to shush the children, laughter continued until the last letter was raised, and we all saw it together. A hush came over the audience and eyes began to widen. In that instant, we understood the reason we were there, why we celebrated the holiday in the first place, why even in the chaos, there was a purpose for our festivities.

For when the last letter was held high, the message read loud and clear: "ChristWas Love";

I believe He still is.

### Musings

I can not imagine how I would be able to make it through each day if it wasn't for the ability to be able to lay my pain and worries at the feet of the Lord. I can't think of a better place to do this than at The Church of the Damascus Road.

I have been told that I will be leaving soon to attend the Innerchange Freedom Initiative program in Newton. It is going to be very hard saying good bye to all of my brothers and sisters at the Church of the Damascus Road. I have grown to love Pastor Lang, Judy, as well as everyone that comes to our weekly service. They will always be a part of me and will occupy a special part in my heart.



Robert L. Johnson II

I remember the first time that I attended the CoDR. I had just reached GP status and came to my first service. I can remember as if it was yesterday. I chose a seat a little half way back from the front row so that I would not stand out to those attending the service. No sooner then I sat down a little old lady (forgive me Cleo) with a great smile and a twinkle in her eyes sat down beside me.

She made me feel welcome and I knew in my heart that I found my home, a church that I could call my own. A place where the love of Jesus is so thick you can literally be cut with a knife. A place that I not only could feel welcome but also a place that I could grow in my relationship with Jesus. I can not praise Him enough for the CoDR. After all it made the unbearable time of my incarceration bearable. I pray that it will do the same for you. Go in peace, serve the Lord.

-Robert L. Johnson II

### Holy Baptism



FDCF

November 19, 2003

Larry Eugene Armstrong

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

Volume 6.6

December 2003

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.

Christopher W. Hoover, 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

## Since You Came

You came into my world when I needed you most,  
you gave me a lift when my soul was cast down,  
you breathe into my life a fresh inspiration,  
gave me new hope to strive for the crown.

You inspired me to press on in the battle of life  
when the going was rough and skies were gray;  
I was faltering and reeling under assaults by the foe.  
When you came into my world that day.

I will never know why you came to me then  
with the courage and strength you gave,  
except that I know God sent you to me  
to help me in my trials to be brave.

Though the years since then have slipped by  
when you cheered me along life's way,  
the memory of you shall never grow dim  
since you came into my world that day.

Thank you Jesus! I love you!  
*Author unknown*

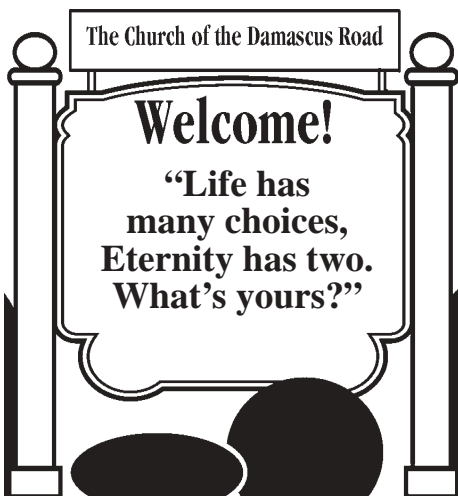
## 20-20 Vision

Life is an endless series of choices,  
epiphanies, if you will. If at one time  
or another a person would have made  
a different choice, that single choice would  
have changed the outcome, or place, one's  
life is at today.

Of course, a person sees his past life with  
20-20 vision and, unfortunately, can't change  
the past. However, one can use that 20-20  
vision to change or guide his and another's  
future.

I think the best thing a person can do is  
use his or her past to try and guide young  
people who haven't yet had a chance to ex-  
perience that perfect 20-20 hindsight like we  
have. To lead them down the right path.  
During our course of leading these young  
people, share and teach our wisdom as Jesus  
did. Don't ever neglect one's spirituality, for  
Jesus is the mortar that holds life together,  
and wisdom is meant to be shared.

*David Bern, 7/4/03 (FED detainee FDCF)*



O come,  
let us  
adore  
him



## 2nd Annual Meeting

The second annual meeting of The Church of the Damascus Road will take place at 6:00pm on Saturday, January 24, 2004, at St. Mark's Episcopal Church at First Avenue South and Tenth Street in Fort Dodge, IA.

Representatives from supporting congregations, individuals who support the ministry, and former members are invited to attend. If you do not receive an invitation with a reply card, you can call 515-955-3579 and make reservations. The cost of the meal is \$5.00 and a freewill offering will be received for support of St. Mark's Human Needs Committee and The Church of the Damascus Road.

## The Calling

I beseech you, brethren, be worthy  
of the calling you have received.  
Be completely humble and gentle,  
Ever true to what you've believed.

Put away all your anger and bitterness,  
Let all your arguments cease.  
Strive to keep the Spirit's unity,  
In the holy bond of peace.

Don't hide your light under a bushel,  
But let it so shine before men.  
That your Father may be glorified,  
Through your deeds again and again.

Respect those who are over you in the Lord,  
Esteem them for their work's sake.  
Warn the unruly, support the weak,  
Do not sleep, but be ever awake.

No one should evil for evil repay,  
But ever follow that which is good.  
Be joyful always and continually pray,  
Always give thanks as Christ would.

Hold fast the form of sound doctrine,  
Everything false you must quell.  
Keep your faith in Christ through the Spirit,  
Who in each believe does dwell.

Do all these things, and may God himself  
sanctify you through and through.  
May you be kept blameless until Christ's coming.  
For he who calls you is faithful and true. D.L.  
*Victorio Delance 3/20/03*

## An Inescapable Date

We celebrate Christ's birth by referring to it in the date placed on all our coins, civil records and vital documents. It is inscribed upon metal and written on parchment and engraved on the cornerstones of great buildings. It is on every newspaper, every check, every deed, and it is universally acknowledged at the beginning of a new life.

Every human transaction is related to the birth of Christ. It cannot be avoided or evaded. God has seen to it that this event is more widely advertised than anything on earth that is or that ever has been.

— *Dr. Walter Wilson*

## LIFE WITH L.T.



## Life

Sometimes life can be so rough  
I never know what to do.  
It is at these difficult times, Jesus,  
I know I can count on You.

To strengthen and guide me,  
to help me make it through.  
All I desire, Lord, is  
To be all I can in You.

To spread the Gospel  
For all the world to see  
The gracious love of Jesus  
I have inside of me.

*Robert L. Johnson II 3-25-2003*

MERRY  
CHRISTMAS

The Church of the Damascus Road  
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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

December, 2003



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

### Invite the Pastor to Worship

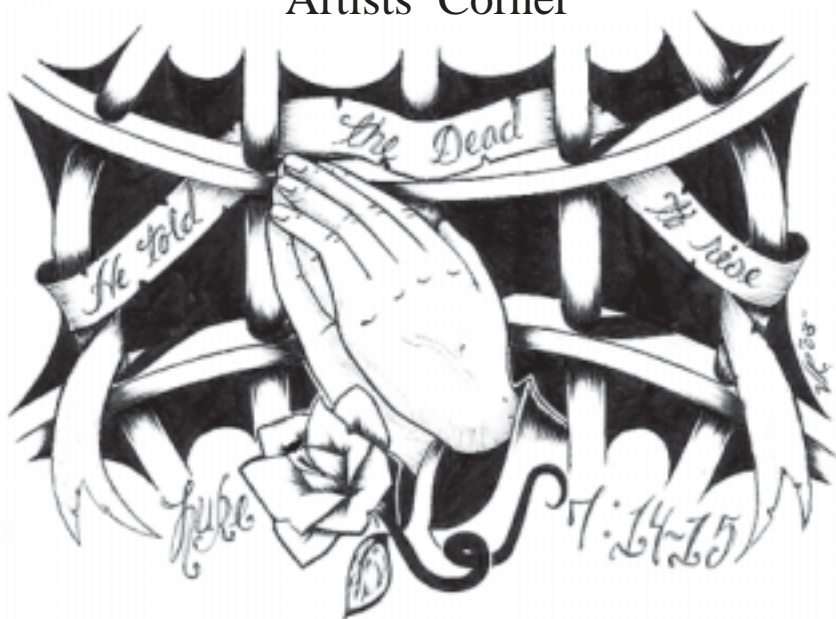
The worship services at The Church of the Damascus Road are scheduled on week-nights for two reasons. One is to enable people on the outside to worship with the inmates and not miss worship in their own congregations. The second is to make the pastor of Damascus Road available to visit area congregations 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



Vincent Ralph, FDCF 03

### NCCF's Church Council

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Jeffrey Roberts	Charles West
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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  
 6:30pm Fridays ..... Prayer Team  
 7:00pm Fridays ..... Bible Study

#### NCCF Rockwell City

6:30pm Tuesdays ..... Bible Study  
 6:30pm Thursdays ..... Holy Communion