

# The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!

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Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

## My Story

Hello, I am David Porter and I'd like to relate to you my situation and how God is working in my life. I pray that this will touch your heart in some way for Christ.

I am currently serving a 25 year sentence for the criminal transmission of HIV. My lifestyle of gang involvement included unprotected sex, drug usage, and drug dealing. My drug of choice was heroin. My primary motivation for using, was sexual abuse by cousins and a neighbor when I was a youth; I could not understand that and I was afraid to tell anyone about it, even my mother. The other gang members were more of a family to me than my real family. The drug usage provided escape from the painful memories of the abuse.

My father passed away when I was six years old. That caused my mother to go to work, so the home structure was disrupted, establishing the circumstances for abuse. I went to school as a way to get away; this allowed me to get an education. Junior high saw the start of drug experimentation. High school involved more drinking, drug usage, and eventually drug dealing. I lived with a constant element of fear and danger as a result of this lifestyle.

I had a few encounters with the police as a teenager, but Chicago is such a big place, that nothing really came from those encounters. I did get incarcerated at the age of 20. That was a direct result of the lifestyle—gang membership, drug usage, and drug dealing.

My life has been transformed through the power of Jesus Christ, since leaving Chicago, and coming to Iowa, as a result of this incarceration. I learned about the InnerChange Freedom Initiative program at

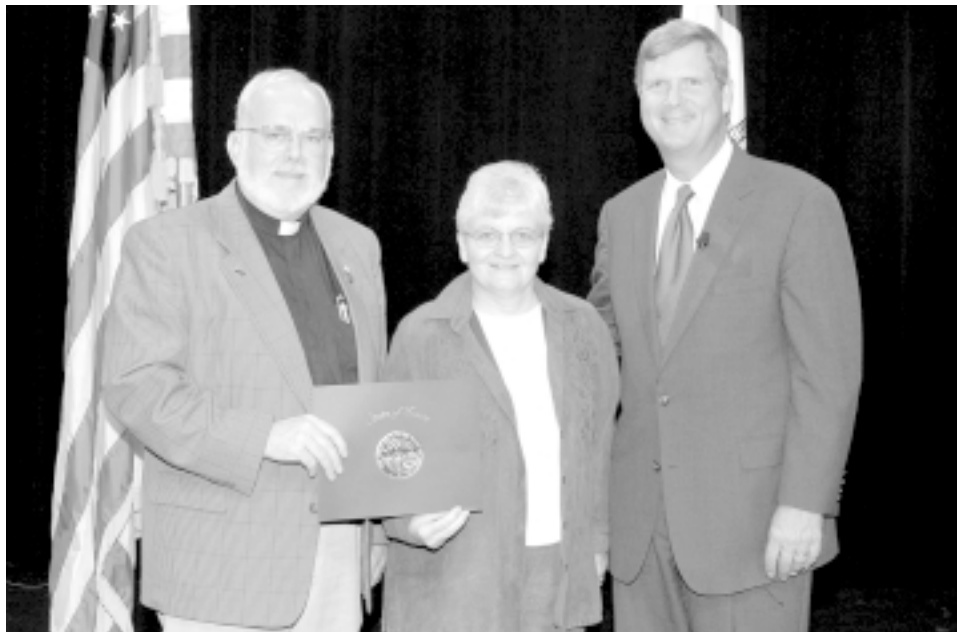
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## Group Award

## Governor's Volunteer Award for CoDR



*Pastor Carroll and Judy Lang, Governor Tom Vilsack*

The Church of the Damascus Road is the recipient of the Governor's Volunteer Service Award. Pastor Carroll and Judy Lang were present at Schaller Chapel on the Buena Vista University campus in Storm Lake on September 29, 2004 to receive the award on behalf of all the volunteers who participate in the life and ministry of CoDR. Governor Vilsack took a short rest during his Walk Iowa tour to give the award to 93 individuals and organizations, 50 were in attendance to receive them.

As each award recipient was called onto the stage, Governor Vilsack handed the certificate to the person receiving the award and their picture was taken. The Iowa Department of Corrections nominated CoDR for the award.

## Spiritual Discipline

How do you maintain your own spiritual disciplines? Billy Graham replied, "God makes it plain and simple in the Bible. We are to pray without ceasing and search the Scriptures. And I have prayed without ceasing nearly every waking moment since I received the Lord as a teenager. I'm praying right now that our conversation will bring glory to God and that this book project will be worthy of our efforts." And what form does your searching in the Scriptures take? "Wherever I am in the world, whether it be here or at home or in a hotel or at someone's house, I place my

open Bible where I will see it frequently. Whenever I notice it I stop and read a verse or two or a chapter or two or even for an hour or two. This is not for sermon preparation or study. This is just for my spiritual nourishment, my food." What do you do when you miss a day or two? "Oh, I don't think I've ever done that. I told you, it's my spiritual food. I don't miss meals." God tells us to pray without ceasing and to search the Scriptures... something we can all do, if we simply would.

— Jerry Jenkins visiting Billy Graham

*My Story, continued from page 1*

the Newton Correctional Facility. I have enjoyed reconciliation with my mother. I was able to confront the child abuse— she did not know anything about it. I have been released from that burden. That release has allowed me to participate in an institutional program for other inmates (not in the IFI program) that were abused as children. This group was facilitated by Martha and was coordinated by Betty Brown of Victim Impact. That experience and HIV have been opportunities for me to witness to other guys in the prison's general population.

My HIV transmission case was widely publicized. Last year, the Des Moines Register did a follow-up article (May 25, 2003). The contents were not encouraging or favorable. The article focused on my victim, Raelynn, who was my wife at the time. We divorced shortly after I accepted responsibility for the crime and pleaded guilty. About one week after that article came out, Raelynn came to visit. She was not pleased with the twists the reporter wrote! Rather than being the final point in our relationship, that article experience was used by God to bring us back together. I am happy to tell you that we are now reconciled. She also has accepted Christ into her life, by rededicating her life to Him. Raelynn is even talking about getting married to me again!

My progress in the IFI program has been good. I graduated on July 25, 2003. After completion of the IFI program I transferred to the North Central Correctional Facility, (NCCF). I am an active member of the Church of the Damascus Road. I enjoy the opportunity of participating as a leader in all Church functions, Inside Church Council, Brother's In Blue, Story Teller's, etc.

I would like to pursue further education because I feel the Lord is using my health condition and testimony to reach young adults, people in my situation physically, and to start an outreach ministry. I anticipate teaching Sunday school, organizing adult rallies, and teaching about the dangers of unprotected sex, drug, alcohol use, and a criminal lifestyle. Furthermore I will be available for youth counseling. Finally, I hope to contribute in marriage counseling for young adults.

Upon release, I anticipate being involved in adult ministry and with ministering to individuals having serious health difficulties. I will be able to share the experience I have had, including the hope that I have in Christ, our Lord and Savior. This will be a source of comfort, hope, and possibly salvation for these unfortunate people. I appreciate this opportunity to relate to you my situation and tell you of my activities. I pray that the Lord will allow you to share this with others and, through this sharing, to deter our youth, young adults, and adults from being

## Why Christmas?

There was once a man who didn't believe in God, and he didn't hesitate to let others know how he felt about religion and religious holidays, like Christmas. His wife, however, did believe, and she raised their children to also have faith in God and Jesus, despite his disparaging comments.

One snowy Christmas Eve, his wife was taking their children to a Christmas Eve service in the farm community in which they lived. She asked him to come, but he refused. "That story is nonsense!" he said.

"Why would God lower himself to come to Earth as a man? That's ridiculous!" So she and the children left, and he stayed home.

A while later, the winds grew stronger and the snow turned into a blizzard. As the man looked out the window, all he saw was a blinding snowstorm. He sat down to relax before the fire for the evening. Then he heard a loud thump. Something had hit the window. Then another thump. He looked out, but couldn't see more than a few feet.

When the snow let up a little, he ventured outside to see what could have been beating on his window. In the field near his house he saw a flock of wild geese. Apparently they had been flying south for the winter when they got caught in the snowstorm and couldn't go on. They were lost and stranded on his farm, with no food or shelter. They just flapped their wings and flew around the field in low circles, blindly and aimlessly. A couple of them had flown into his window, it seemed. The man felt sorry for the geese and wanted to help them. The barn would be a great place for them to stay, he thought. It's warm and safe; surely they could spend the night and wait out the storm. So he walked over to the barn and opened the doors wide, then watched and waited, hoping they would notice the open barn and go inside. But the geese just flut-

tered around aimlessly and didn't seem to notice the barn or realize what it could mean for them. The man tried to get their attention, but that just seemed to scare them and they moved further away. He went into the house and came with some bread, broke it up, and made a breadcrumb trail leading to the barn. They still didn't catch on.

Now he was getting frustrated. He got behind them and tried to shoo them toward the barn, but they only got more scared and scattered in every direction except toward the barn. Nothing he did could get them to go into the barn where they would be warm and safe. "Why don't they follow me?!" he exclaimed. "Can't they see this is the only place where they can survive the storm?" He thought for a moment and realized that they just wouldn't follow a human. "If only I were a goose, then I could save them," he said out loud. Then he had an idea. He went into barn, got one of his own geese, and carried it in his arms as he circled around behind the flock of wild geese. He then released it. His goose flew through the flock and straight into the barn—and one by one the other geese followed it to safety.

He stood silently for a moment as the words he had spoken a few minutes earlier replayed in his mind: "If only I were a goose, then I could save them!" Then he thought about what he had said to his wife earlier.

"Why would God want to be like us? That's ridiculous!" Suddenly it all made sense. That is what God had done. We were like the geese—blind, lost, perishing. God had his Son become like us so he could show us the way and save us. That was the meaning of Christmas, he realized. As the winds and blinding snow died down, his soul became quiet and pondered this wonderful thought. Suddenly he understood what Christmas was all about, why Christ had come. Years of doubt and disbelief vanished like the passing storm. He fell to his knees in the snow, and prayed his first prayer: "Thank you, God, for coming in human form to get me out of the storm!"

—Author unknown



involved in gangs and other unsafe activities- unprotected sex and drug usage. This is my work for the Lord. May the Lord bless you and your families.

—David L. Porter, NCCF

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

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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.

Rev. Carroll Lang, Pastor  
Albert Cooper, 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](mailto: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

# 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.

# 2004 CROP Walk



At NCCF thirteen persons participated in the Annual CROP Walk for world hunger.



Judy Lang & Terry Schoon, registrars.



Pastor Lang kept the pace.



92 Walkers finished nine laps around the yard at FDCF.



The walkers at both FDCF and NCCF stayed together as a witness that they cared.



Joel Segura Meza 2004 FDCF



Lyle Harris, NCCF 2003

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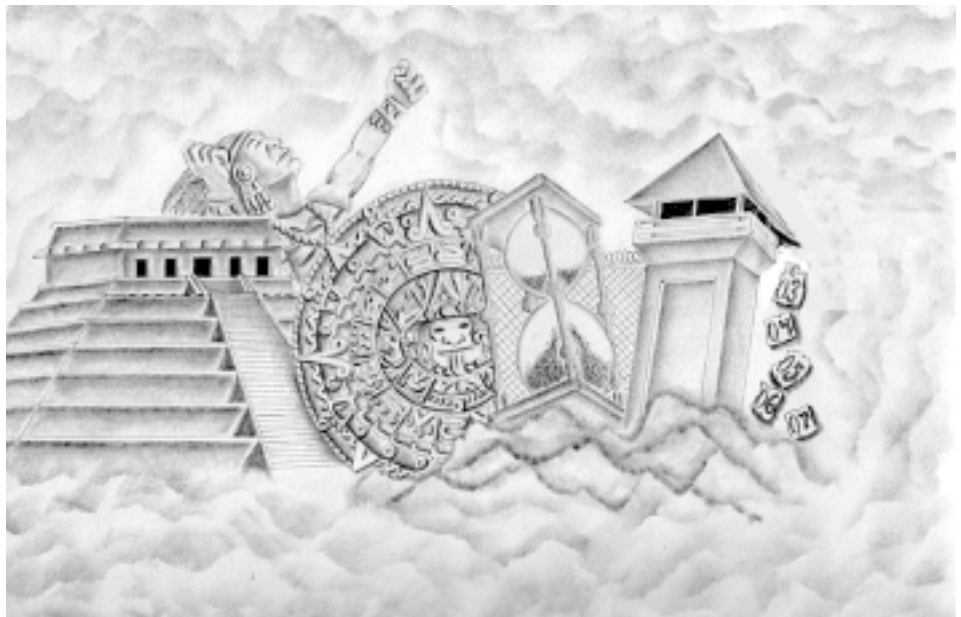
December 2004

### 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, Mennonite, Nazarene, and a host of other denominations, independent, and non-denominational, too.

### Artists' Corner



Jose Rivas, FDCF 2004



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

### 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.

### NCCF's Church Council

Marc Leonard ..... President  
 Dennis Kaplan ..... Vice President  
 David Hintz ..... Secretary  
 Gary LeCompte ..... Dennis Combs  
 David Porter ..... John Bothwell  
 Billy Lacy

### FDCF's Church Council

Terry Schoon, Pres ..... Randy Elliott, VP  
 Albert Cooper ..... Secretary  
 David Freeman ..... Librarian  
 Derek Griffith ..... Steven Stockbauer  
 Tony Halsrud ..... Phillip Wells  
 Craig Flataker

### 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

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