

The Church of the Damascus Road

Flash!

Volume 8
Issue No. 4
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Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA



Donate Your Work?

The Church of the Damascus Road is assembling a book of inmate poetry and art work. All inmates are encouraged to submit any religious and inspirational poetry, prose and art work.

The Church of the Damascus Road will be giving these books to people who donate money to the church. A complimentary copy will be given to each inmate whose work is accepted for this project.

All submissions must be original and unpublished. You can submit your work to Pastor Carroll Lang on Wednesday nights at church services, or Friday nights at the bible study, or if you see Pastor Lang elsewhere in the prison.

Thanks from CoDR

Jesus Does This for Me

Jesus is above and he has a great love. If you have trouble during the day, sit down and pray. His word is great and you cannot debate, sometimes sorrow is the key, greater wisdom for you and me. Amen.

— Albert Cooper, FDCF

Inside the Flash!

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Love Commandment

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved by my Father and I will love him, and and will manifest myself in him. Jesus answered and said unto him, "If a man loveth me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:21-23 KJV).

What are Jesus' commandments? That we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, body, and strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31).

The word of God says that love is fulfilling the law (Romans 13:10).

God is love! When we walk in love, we walk in his realm, his very nature compels him to care for us and protects us.

God is love! He knows how to give us the good things in life far better than we could for ourselves! All we have to do is ask (Matthew 7:11).

How many parents want their children to go through life poverty-stricken, nose to the grind stone, sick, afflicted, downtrodden, downcast, down and out?

That should make you excited! Know that God wants what is good for us; "**prosperity, health, wholeness**" And will give it if we ask!

— William E Bell, FDCF

And God Said

I said, "God, I hurt." And God said, "I know, that is why I gave you tears." I said, "God I am so depressed." And God said, "That is why I gave you sunshine." I said, "God, life is so hard." And God said, "That is why I gave you loved ones." I said, "God, my loved one died." And God said, "So did mine." I said, "God, it is such a loss." And God said, "I saw mine nailed to a cross." I said, "God, but your loved one lives." And God said, "So does yours." I said, "God, where are they now?" And God said, "Mine is on my right, and yours is in the light." I said, "God it hurts." And God said, "I know."

Posted on the wall at the Oklahoma City bombing site by K. C. and Myke Kuzmic, Stockton, CA

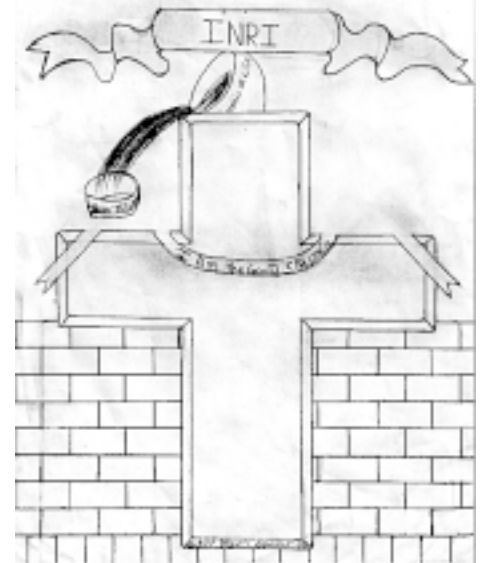


Special Fundraiser

The Church of the Damascus Road is developing a program called AfterCare which trains teams of 3 to 7 persons to help an ex offender return to a law-abiding life in the community. To provide this training, which we are planning to do in October 2005, will take extra funding for training manuals and related expenses.

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans (insurance company), Chapter 31175, is offering matching funds for regular or special gifts received from individuals during the month of September 2005.

— CoDR Thrivent Congregation Coordinators



Albert Cooper, FDCF 2005

Astray

Sometimes we go astray and we know that there is no other way, except sit down and pray. You have to stand behind the man and that man is Jesus Christ today. So when you fall on your face, get back up and take your place. Amen.

— Albert Cooper, FDCF

Savior

You'll never know what's happened to me,
It's too painful to tell you everything.
To talk about it hurts way too much,
But to think about it just isn't enough.
We ask for angels to watch over us,
But every night our prayers are crushed.
Why do people hate when it's easier to love?
Why does this life have to be so tough?
God, if you're out there, take me away,
Help end this life of mortal pain,
Push away the demons, send me an angel!

— Jonathan James Stewart, FDCF

Everyone Gets Chances

My life was once a nightmare that was a reality,
I traveled with broken wings unable to fly,
The devil, he had me, I was addicted to sin,
But despite all I did, I still had goo within,
I was spinning around slow, lost out of control,
My soul was sinking in the bottomless hole,
Everything was horrible, Then I came to prison,
And I realized saving my soul was my decision,
My time in here is not wasted, it's another dance,
Now my reality is a dream were I sing and dance,
I always pray, because now I know the way,
Accept Jesus, and let your anger drift away.

— Chris Mason, FDCF

Key to My Heart

I locked the door upon my heart and
wouldn't let anyone in. I had trusted and
loved only to be hurt but that would
never happen again. I threw the tiny key as
hard and as far as I could, love would never
entered there again, my heart was sealed for
good. Just when I thought that tiny key was
impossible to find, you came into my life
and made me change my mind. As you held
out your hand you had proven me wrong,
inside your palm was the key to my heart,
you had it all along.

— Phillip Wells, FDCF

Did God Create Evil?

Did God create Evil? This will make you think for a while. At a certain college, there was a professor with a reputation for being tough on Christians. At the first class every semester, he asked if anyone was a Christian and proceeded to degrade them and to mock their statement of faith.

One semester, he asked the question and a young man raised his hand when asked if anyone was a Christian. The professor asked, "Did God make everything, young man?" He replied, "Yes sir, he did!" The professor responded, "If God made everything, then he made evil." The student didn't have a response and the professor was happy to have once again proved the Christian faith to be a myth.

Then another man raised his hand and asked, "May I ask you something, sir?"

"Yes, you may," responded the professor. The young man stood up and said "Sir, is there such thing as cold?" "Of course there is, what kind of question is that? Haven't you ever been cold?"

The young man replied, "Actually, sir, cold doesn't exist. What we consider to be cold, is really an absence of heat. Absolute zero is when there is absolutely no heat, but cold does not really exist. We have only created that term to describe how we feel when heat is not there." The young man continued, "Sir, is there such a thing as dark?"

Once again, the professor responded "Of course there is." And once again, the student replied "Actually, sir, darkness does not exist. Darkness is really only the absence of light. Darkness is only a term man developed to describe what happens when there is no light present."

Finally, the young man asked, "Sir, is there such thing as evil?"

The professor responded, "Of course. We have rapes, and murders and violence everywhere in the world, those things are evil."

The student replied, "Actually, sir, evil does not exist. Evil is simply the absence of God. Evil is a term man developed to describe the absence of God. God did not create evil. It isn't like truth, or love, which exist as virtues like heat or light. Evil is simply the state where God is not present, like cold without heat or darkness without light." The professor had nothing to say.

Deliberate Happiness

The 92-year-old, petite, well-poised and proud lady, who is fully dressed each morning by eight o'clock, with her hair fashionably coifed and makeup perfectly applied, even though she is legally blind, moved to a nursing home today. Her husband of 70 years recently passed away, making the move necessary.

After many hours of waiting patiently in the lobby of the nursing home, she smiled sweetly when told her room was ready.

As she maneuvered her walker to the elevator, I provided a visual description of her tiny room, including the eyelet sheets that had been hung on her window.

"I love it," she stated with the enthusiasm of an eight-year-old having just been presented with a new puppy.

"Mrs. Jones — you haven't seen the room; just wait."

"That doesn't have anything to do with it," she replied, "happiness is something you decide on ahead of time. Whether I like my room or not doesn't depend on how the furniture is arranged, it's how I arrange my mind. I already decided to love it. It's a decision I make every morning when I wake up. I have a choice; I can spend the day in bed recounting the difficulty I have with the parts of my body that no longer work, or get out of bed and be thankful for the ones that do. Each day is a gift, and as long as my eyes open, I'll focus on the new day and all the happy memories I've stored away, just for this time in my life.

"Old age is like a bank account: you withdraw from what you've put in. So, my advice to you would be to deposit a lot of happiness in the Bank account of memories. Thank you for your part in filling my Memory bank. I am still depositing. Remember the five simple rules to be happy:

1. Free your heart from hatred. 2. Free your mind from worries. 3. Live simply. 4. Give more. 5. Expect less.

— author unknown

Jesus' Influence

This Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science, he shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, he spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, he set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times.

— Philip Schaff, FDCF

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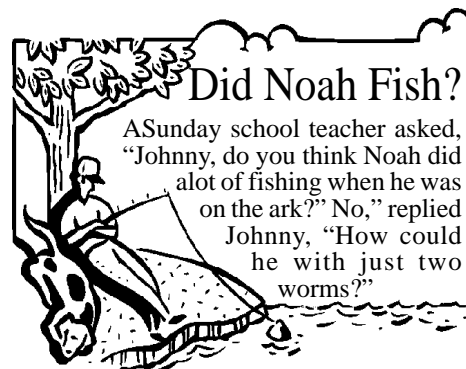
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The official publication of The Church of the Damascus Road, a Christian Community of Reconciliation, serving the inmate population of the correctional facilities at Rockwell City and Fort Dodge, Iowa.

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. The Flash will be sent directly to your home.

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



Heaven? No, Hell!

A man and his dog were walking along a road. The man was enjoying the scenery, when it suddenly occurred to him that he was dead. He remembered dying, and that the dog walking beside him had been dead for years. He wondered where the road was leading them. After a while, they came to a high, white stone wall along one side of the road.

It looked like fine marble. At the top of a long hill, it was broken by a tall arch that glowed in the sunlight. When he was standing before it he saw a magnificent gate in the arch that looked like Mother of Pearl, and the street that led to the gate looked like pure gold.

He and the dog walked toward the gate, and as he got closer, he saw a man at a desk to one side. When he was close enough, he called out, "Excuse me, where are we?" "This is Heaven, sir," the man answered. "Wow! Would you happen to have some water?" the man asked. "Of course, sir. Come right in, and I'll have some ice water brought right up." The man gestured, and the gate began to open. "Can my friend," gesturing toward his dog, "come in, too?" the traveler asked. "I'm sorry, sir, but we don't accept pets."

The man thought a moment and then turned back toward the road and continued the way he had been going with his dog. After another long walk, and at the top of another long hill, he came to a dirt road which led through a farm gate that looked as if it had never been closed. There was no fence.

As he approached the gate, he saw a man inside, leaning against a tree and reading a book. "Excuse me!" he called to the reader. "Do you have any water?" "Yeah, sure, there's a pump over there." The man pointed to a place that couldn't be seen from outside the gate. "Come on in." "How about my friend here?" the traveler gestured to the dog. "There should be a bowl by the pump." They went through the gate, and sure enough, there was an old fashioned hand pump with a bowl beside it. The traveler filled the bowl and took a long drink himself, then he gave some to the dog. When they were full, he and the dog walked back toward the man who was standing by the tree waiting for them.

"What do you call this place?" the traveler asked. "This is Heaven," was the answer. "Well, that's confusing," the traveler said. "The man down the road said that was Heaven, too." "Oh, you mean the place with the gold street and pearly gates? Nope. That's Hell." "Doesn't it make you mad for them to use your name like that?" "No. I can see how you might think so, but we're just happy that they screen out the folks who'll leave their best friends behind."

— author unknown



EXPLAIN GOD

One of God's main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die, so there will be enough people to take care of things on earth.

He doesn't make grown-ups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way he doesn't have to take up his valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.

God's second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times beside bedtime. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV because of this.

God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere which keeps him pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting his time by going over your Mom and Dad's head asking for something they said you couldn't have.

Atheists are people who don't believe in God. I don't think there are any here. At least there aren't any who come to our church.

Jesus is God's Son. He used to do all the hard work like walking on water and performing miracles and people finally got tired of him preaching to them and they crucified him. But he was good and kind, like his Father, and he told his Father that they didn't know what they were doing and to forgive them and God said "ok."

His dad (God) appreciated everything

Behind Walls

Our beds have been made, now on which we must lie. From a six by ten cell, we watch our freedom pass by. Every day it gets tougher, to hold your head up with pride. For they take away your dignity when they lock you inside. More often than not, there are those that deserve. But there's also those few who've been pitched a tough curve. Behind walls your not a person for rights they've taken away. To them you're just a number, in a system gone astray. Remember the person you were before you went in and hope your stay's not long, so you can be that same person again! Mistakes are like teachers, from them you must learn. For once behind prison walls, there's no passing grade you can earn!

— Dennis D. Schiltz, FDCP

Getting to Know God

The Christian life could be described as getting to know God better every day. A friendship which does not grow closer with the years tends to vanish with the years. And so it is with us and God.

— William Barclay

that he had done and all his hard work on earth so he told him he didn't have to go out on the road anymore. He could stay in heaven. So he did. And now he helps his dad out by listening to prayers and seeing things which are important for God to take care of and which ones he can take care of himself without having to bother God. Like a secretary, only more important.

You can pray anytime you want and they are sure to help you because they got it worked out so one of them is on duty all the time.

You should always go to church on Sunday because it makes God happy, and if there's anybody you want to make happy, it's God. Don't skip church to do something you think will be more fun like going to the beach. This is wrong. And besides the sun doesn't come out at the beach until noon anyway.

If you don't believe in God, besides being an atheist, you will be very lonely, because your parents can't go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can. It is good to know he's around you when you're scared in the dark or when you can't swim and you get thrown into real deep water by big kids.

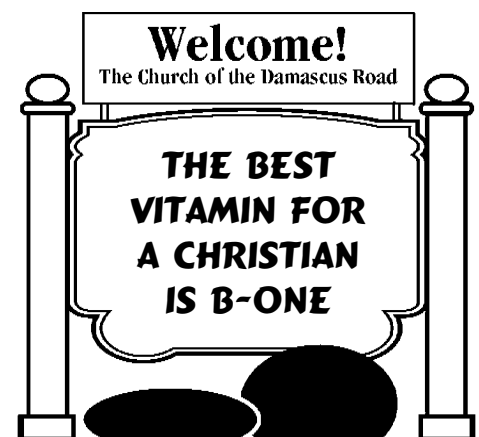
But...you shouldn't just always think of what God can do for you. I figure God put me here and he can take me back anytime he pleases.

And...that's why I believe in God.

—Ray Kerley

God Has Given

God has given us life. And God is here to help us return to life when we have suffered. God has given us a heart, and God is here to help us feel once more. God has given us a soul, and God is here to help us soar once more. God has given us courage, and God is here to help us fight once more. God has given us hope, and God is here to help us dream once more. God has given us this moment, and God is here to help us experience it in all its sacred glory.



The Church of the Damascus Road
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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

August 2005

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



Ramiro Liendo, FDCF 2005



<http://www.dodgenet.com/~cjang/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
Jasper Young	Vice President
Daniel Skalla	Secretary
David Porter	Anthony Bone
Robert Blau	Lyle Harris
Rick Kenney	Brandon Wickett
Millard Sanders	Randy Smith
	Paul Harrison

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

FDCF's Church Council

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Randy Zimmerman	Vice President
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Daniel Hicks	Librarian
Brian Ambrosio	Terry Simmons
Jeremiah Hemenway	Randy Elliott

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