

The Church of the Damascus Road

Damascus Road

Flash!

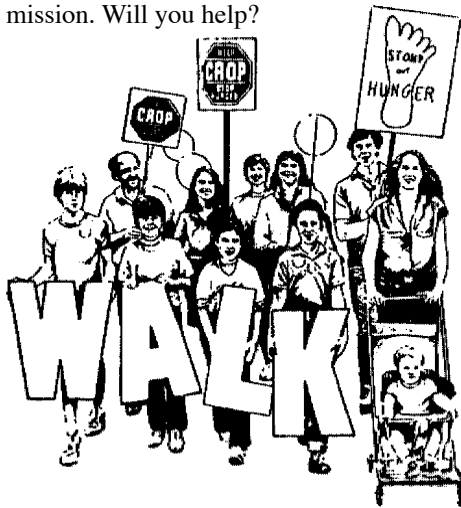
Volume 8
Issue No. 5
October, 2005
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Like to help?

Annual CROP Walk

The annual CROP Walk for world hunger will be held on October 8 at NCCF in Rockwell City and October 9 at FDCF in Fort Dodge. We walk because they walk. In third world countries many people have to walk many miles just to get water, firewood and food for their families. We walk in solidarity with those who walk and we send our gifts to help. Inmates at each institution will walk together as a group to show the rest of the inmates that they care about alleviating world hunger.

You who are not incarcerated can help increase the amount of funds raised for world hunger by sending your gifts, marked for CROP, to: The Church of the Damascus Road, PO Box 834, Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834. The CROP Walk is sponsored by Church World Service, which uses our gifts not only to feed people, but to teach them how to raise the most nutritious food for their area. Your gifts will be responsibly used in the most effective way to help carry out this mission. Will you help?



Inside the Flash!

Page 2 - CoDR Support
Page 2 - How to Forgive
Page 3 - Alternatives to Complaining
Page 3 - Pessimism-Not!
Page 3 - Fallen Angels
Page 3 - Leader Dogs & More
Page 4 - Artworks



Maryn Olson

David Porter recorded his testimony regarding his HIV, what he is going through, and how people can avoid spreading this terrible disease. He donated a copy to Maryn to share with the people she works with in Namibia.

Many inmates have commented how impressed they were with Maryn and how proud they are to be sponsoring her with their offerings. One asked Pastor Lang when she was coming back, and was told, "About three years, but we will be receiving regular correspondence meanwhile."

We look forward to a long and fruitful relationship with Maryn Olson.

— Pastor Lang

Our Sponsored Missionary

Maryn Olson

Last spring the Church of the Damascus Road at the North Central Correctional Facility decided to sponsor a missionary. Coincidentally, Pastor Lang had just received a mailing from the ELCA Department of Missions, promoting such sponsorships. The Inside Church Council decided that the work Maryn Olson is doing, working with HIV/AIDS in Namibia, was just what they wanted to support. The Department of Missions was contacted and an application to sponsor filled out and our first support was sent in.

One month later we found out that Maryn was coming home on furlough and looking for places to visit to tell about the work she is doing. So in July, Maryn and her sister, Amy, visited our worship service in Rockwell City and told us all about her work in educating the citizens of Namibia to increase awareness of HIV/AIDS and how to prevent its spread.

Volunteer for Story Tellers

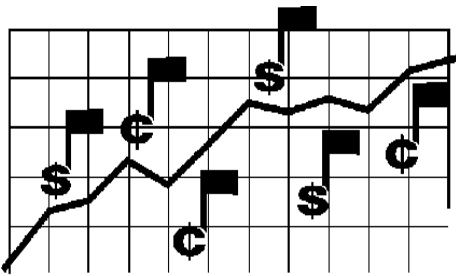
The Story Tellers program enables inmate dads to read story books to their small children by recording their voice on cassette. Then the book and cassette are sent home to the child who can now hear Daddy read a book. We are very appreciative of the volunteers who have and are helping with this program.

Inmates are not allowed to operate a cassette recorder, so recordings must be done by volunteers. In order to accommodate inmates at NCCF who work outside the institution during the week day, we moved the Story Teller program to Saturdays from 12-3pm. At Fort Dodge the program is on Fridays from 1-4pm.

If you are willing to volunteer for this program, contact our Story Teller Coordi-



Inmate's child listening to Daddy read a book.



Financial NOTES

How're We Doing Dept.

CoDR Support

Many people ask how we are doing in terms of financial support. I tell them that we are about at the 90% level of support, but perhaps I should explain what that means. It means that eventually our reserves will be gone and support will continue to shrink our ability to provide this ministry.

We are seeking donor congregations and individuals who will commit to supporting CoDR at the \$100 per month level in perpetuity. If 100 such donors join the \$100-a-Month Club, we will reach not only the 100% level of support, but also be able to provide a ministry of reentry aftercare for ex offenders.

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans sponsors a program called "Simply Giving" in which Thrivent provides for both the debit and transfer of funds from the donor's account to CoDR's at no cost to the donor. If you are interested in taking part in Simply Giving, contact our Office Manager, Cynthia Hanks, at 515-955-3579 and she will help you get set up.

We are truly grateful to all the individuals and congregations who have supported us for these past eight years. Their support has been faithful and generous, especially in those times when our reserves were nearly depleted. Thank God for all of you.

— Pastor Carroll Lang

Thanks for Supporting

Our Church



One day a while back, a man, his heart heavy with grief, was walking in the woods. As he thought about the day, he knew many things were not right. He thought about those who had lied about him back when he had a job. His thoughts turned to those who had stolen his things and cheated him. He remembered family that had passed on. His mind turned to the illness he had that no one could cure. His very soul was filled with anger, resentment and frustration.

Standing there this day, searching for answers he could not find, knowing all else had failed him, he knelt at the base of an old oak tree to seek the One he knew would always be there. And with tears in his eyes, he prayed: "Lord-You have done wonderful things for me in this life. You have told me to do many things for You, and I happily obeyed. Today, You have told me to forgive. I am sad, Lord, because I cannot. I do not know how! It is not fair Lord! I didn't deserve these wrongs that were done against me! I shouldn't have to forgive!

As perfect as Your way is Lord, this one thing I cannot do, for I do not know how to forgive. My anger is so deep Lord, I may not hear You, but I pray that You teach me to do this one thing I cannot do-Teach me to forgive."

As he knelt there in the quiet shade of that old oak tree, he felt something fall onto his shoulder. He opened his eyes. Out of the corner of one eye, he saw something red on his shirt. He could not turn to see what it was because where the oak tree had been was a large square piece of wood in the ground. He raised his head and saw two feet held to the wood with a large spike through them. He raised his head more, and tears came to his eyes as he saw Jesus hanging on a cross.

He saw spikes in His hands, a gash in His side, His torn and battered body, deep thorns sunk into His head. Finally he saw the suffering and pain on His precious face. As their eyes met, the man's tears turned to sobbing, and Jesus began to speak.

"Have you ever told a lie?" he asked. The man answered — "Yes, Lord."

"Have you ever been given too much change and kept it?"

How to Forgive

The man answered, "Yes Lord."

And the man sobbed more and more.

"Have you ever taken something from work that wasn't yours?" —The man answered "Yes Lord."

"Have you ever sworn, using my Father's name in vain?" —The man, crying now, answered, — "Yes, Lord."

As Jesus asked many more times, "Have you ever...?"

The man's crying became uncontrollable, for he could only answer, "Yes, Lord."

Then Jesus turned His head from one side to the other, and the man felt something fall on his other shoulder. He looked and saw that it was the Blood of Jesus. When he looked back up, his eyes met those of Jesus, and saw a look of love the man had never seen or known before.

Jesus said, "I didn't deserve this either, but I forgive you."

It may be hard to see how you're going to get through something, but when

you look back in life, you realize how true this statement is. Read the following slowly and let it sink in! This is simple and important!

If God brings you to it—He will bring you through it! Lord, I love you, and I need you, come into my heart today! For without

**Forgive us our debts,
as we forgive
our debtors.**



Matthew 6:12

The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!

Volume 8.5

October, 2005

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
Gene Cook, Jr., 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

Alternatives to Complaining

Paul taught that life's predicaments can produce godly character in us. Our complaining hinders God's work. Here are some suggestions for overcoming a complaining attitude:

1. Remember that your troubles did not take God by surprise. He is still in control.
2. Believe that God has a solution, a provision, or a gift of wisdom to match your difficulty.
3. Pray, affirming your faith in God and expressing your confidence in His loving purpose for you.
4. Wait with expectancy and availability, trusting God to work out His perfect will.
5. Praise Him- even before He acts.

This alternative to complaining gives God an opportunity to work creatively, both in us and in our circumstances. Best of all,

Pessimism—Not!

There is not a single pessimistic note anywhere in the New Testament after the resurrection.

— Andrew Blackwood

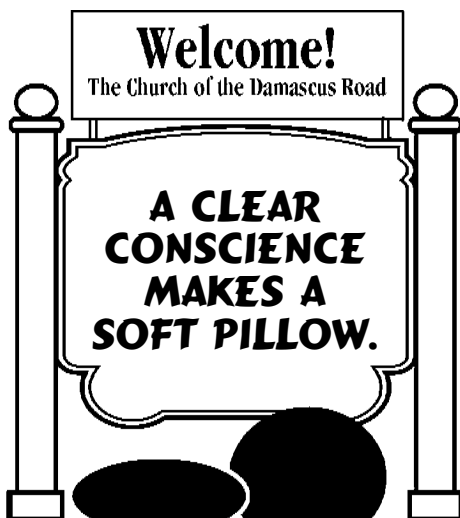
Fallen Angels

From birth to death we go through this life
Against time, authorities, and all kinds of
strife

"Leave us alone", we holler and say,
"Let me do everything that i want today."
Expect others to do things, to say, and to
think

Nothing good for us, 'cuz they all are a fink!

A kind word from others is all that we need
Now to change our lives is so good indeed
Glow like a light in this world so dark
Expect the best in others to make their mark
Live right and wholesome and don't pull a



Dave Porter with his new future leader dog puppy, Buster, in March 2005.

Leader Dogs & More

Four years ago, the North Central Correctional Facility, through the efforts of the local Lions Club, became the first (and so far only) prison in America to provide initial training for future leader dogs for the blind. Soon there were nine puppies delivered to NCCF and nine inmates selected to provide 24/7 care and training for their newfound friend. The trainers are themselves trained on a regular basis by representatives of the Michigan-based Leader Dog organization. They are, of course, taught to be house broken, to obey certain commands, to lay quietly at the trainer's feet during meals, and much, much more.

It has turned out to be a perfect match and has transformed the entire institution into dog lovers. In fact, the presence of the leader dog puppies (mostly Labrador Retrievers) has led to another program of bringing in dogs from the animal shelters of Rockwell City and Fort Dodge. This has presented another special challenge to those who work with the animal shelter dogs, because many of those dogs have been abused and their new friends have to work diligently to gain the trust of the abused canines.

Naturally, those who have leader puppies and shelter dogs become attached and when it is time to leave, the inmates become very aware of the pain of separation. Warden Jim McKinney says that this is good, because two things have happened - the inmate has cared for something or someone other than himself, and the pain of separation has made them aware of how their families must feel when they were incarcerated.

The 4th Annual Puppy Days event drew crowds from all over the area. There is no way to adequately describe the proud look on a new puppy trainer's face as he walks around the yard with his puppy on a leash. Sometimes one wonders who is leading whom?



The 4th Annual Puppy Days event drew crowds from miles away.

The Church of the Damascus Road
 PO Box 834
 Fort Dodge, IA 50501-0834

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

October 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.



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

All Readers: Send Contributions

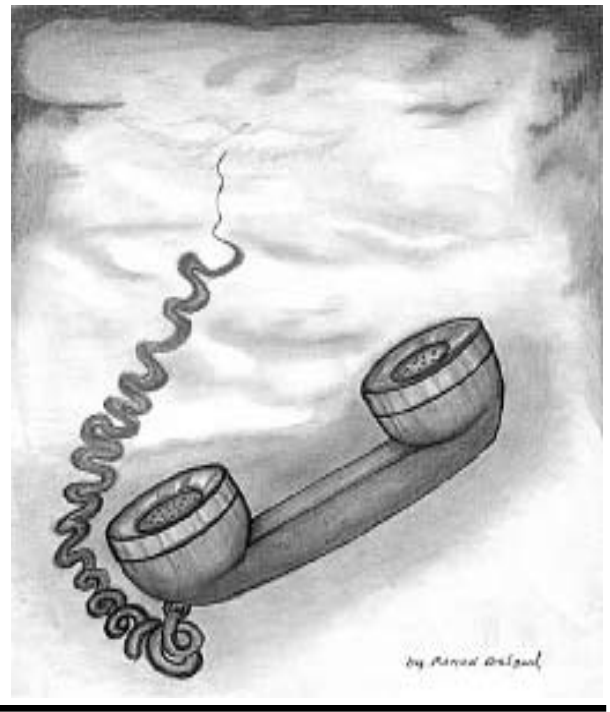
The editor of this newsletter is inviting ALL READERS, inside and outside

Artists' Corner

If you would like to see your original art work featured here, just give it to Pastor Lang when he's at your institution. Please make sure that you do not include any symbolism that can be taken as a gang symbol—this will eliminate your artwork from publication.

Your original artwork will be returned to you. Please include your name, institution, and the month and year you created it.

Marion Breland's drawing is based on Jeremiah 33 v. 3: "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know,"



Marion Breland NCCF '05

NCCF's Church Council

- Marc Leonard..... President
- David Porter..... Vice President
- Rick Kenney..... Secretary
- Daniel Skalla..... Anthony Bone
- Paul Harrison..... Lyle Harris
- Brandon Wickett..... Millard Sanders
- Randy Smith..... Jamodd Sallis
- John Simpson

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

- Tony Halsrud..... President
- Randy Zimmerman..... Vice President
- Gene Cook, Jr..... Secretary

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