

The Church of the Damascus Road *Flash!*

Volume 8
Issue No. 6
December, 2005
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

CoDR Annual Meeting

The Fourth Annual Meeting of the Church of the Damascus Road will be held on Sunday, January 22, 2006 at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 1007 First Avenue South, Fort Dodge, IA at 4pm (registration at 3:45pm) with a meal at 5:30pm. Notices with response cards will be sent out soon. This meeting is a lot more than reports and statistics, it is a reunion of volunteers, worship guests and former members. For more information, contact our office.

AfterCare Training

Training for the care of ex offenders will be offered on Saturday, March 25, 2006 from 9am to 3:30pm and on Sunday, March 26 from 2:30pm to 9pm at Bethlehem Lutheran in Cherokee, Iowa. \$10 per person includes a training manual and a meal. Application forms will be mailed to congregations in the area.

Friends and Enemies

Jesus is my friend.
I'll Love Him to the end.
Even though I cannot see
I know He's always there for me.

Oh I have friends on earth.
And I have family too.
I try to love them all the same.
That's very hard to do.

I hope I'm getting through.
But the hardest thing to do,
Is to love your enemies.
I pray for them every night;
All are precious in His sight.
And even this is hard to write.

Jack W. Hardcastle

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Snowy Christmas Eve

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 could not 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 is 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 fluttered around aimlessly and did not 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 back out 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

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SNOWY Continued from page one.

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, Jesus, for coming in human form to show me the way out of the storm!"



\$100-a-Month Club

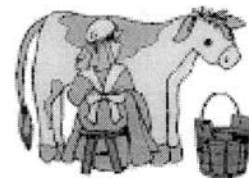
Donors of \$100 or More Per Month, both Churches & Individuals

- Emanuel-St. John Lutheran Ch, Lytton
- First Lutheran Ch, Algona
- First Lutheran Ch, Clarion
- First Presbyterian Ch, Fort Dodge
- Good Shepard Episcopal, Webster City
- Grace Lutheran Ch, Fort Dodge
- Hardy Trinity Lutheran Ch, Hardy
- Immanuel Luteran, Forest City
- Morningside Lutheran Ch, Sioux City
- New Covenant Christian Ch, Fort Dodge
- Our Saviour's Lutheran Ch, Callender
- St. John Lutheran Ch, Pomeroy
- St. John Lutheran, LeMars
- St. Mark Episcopal, Fort Dodge
- St. Paul Lutheran Ch, Palmer
- St. Paul Lutheran, Rockwell City
- St. Paul Lutheran, Treynor
- Trinity Lutheran, Spencer
- Trinity Lutheran, Webster City
- Zion St. John Lutheran, Sheffield
- ZionZJim & Marilyn Fevold, Humboldt
- Patricia Gohman, Monrovia CA
- Fr. Stepen & Roxanne Hall, Fort Dodge
- Rev. Carroll & Judy Lang, Fort Dodge
- Troy & Karyn Leininger, Spencer
- Noel & Linda Singer, Webster City
- Adam & Inga Sanford, Frisco TX
- Warren & Melba Shelby, Fort Dodge
- Rollin & Cleo Swanson, Fort Dodge

A Coded Christmas Carol

There is one Christmas Carol that has always baffled me. What in the world do leaping lords, french hens, swimming swans, and especially the partridge who won't come out of the pear tree have to do with Christmas?

From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism for young Catholics. It has two levels of meaning known only to members of the Church. Each element in the carol is a code word for a religious reality which the children could remember.



The eight maids a-milking are the eight beatitudes.



Nine ladies dancing are the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

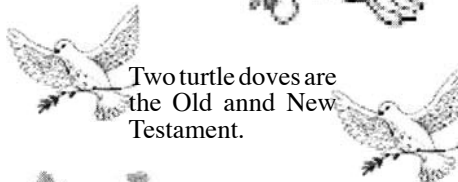
The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ.



The ten lords a-leaping are the Ten Commandments.



Two turtle doves are the Old and New Testament.



The eleven pipers standing for the eleven faithful disciples.



Three french hens stand for faith, hope, and love.



The twelve drummers drumming symbolize the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.



Four calling birds are the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.



So there is your history for today. Now you know how that strange song became a Christmas Carol. The Twelve Days are from December 25 through January 5.

Five gold rings recall the Torah, or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.



The six geese a-laying stand for the six days of creation.



Seven swans a-swimming represent the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit: prophecy, serving, teaching, exhortation, contributing, leadership, and mercy.



The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!

Volume 8.6

December, 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

How Did the CROP Walk Go?



They're off! Walkers in the Annual CROP Walk at the North Central Correctional Facility in Rockwell City begin their three-mile trek around the yard with the first step. Nine laps later they ended their walk together, a demonstration to the rest of the population that they were expressing solidarity with those in the world who have to walk miles just to get water for their families. Inmates at NCCF are allowed to solicit from other inmates, and they are generous!



Showing the rest of the population that they care about the hungry of the world, the walkers at the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility stayed together as a group for nine laps around the yard.

CROP Walk 2005

The annual CROP Walk was held October 8 in NCCF, Rockwell City and October 9 in FDCF, Fort Dodge. There were 14 who walked in Rockwell City and 35 in Fort Dodge. Oh, yes, Pastor Lang walked in both CROP Walks and Judy Lang walked in the Fort Dodge walk.

A total of \$147.25 was contributed to Church World Service from the two CROP Walks. Inmates make an average of 30 cents an hour. Most employees make more than \$8 per hour, so every dollar contributed by an inmate is the equivalent of over \$25, making their CROP Walk donation the equivalent of \$3,681.25. Great going men!



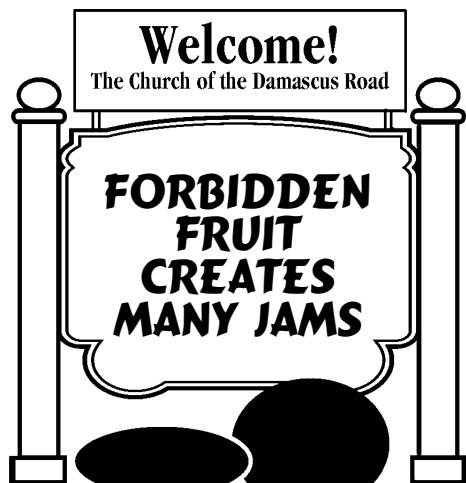
God Is More

That God is more near, more real and mighty, more full of love, and more ready to help every one of us than any one of us realizes, is the undying message of the Gospels.

— David Cairns



Nine laps later, we all posed for a group shot at the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility CROP Walk.



CoDR Art Contest

The Church of the Damascus Road is soliciting art entries for this year's Donor-Partner Print. Entries need to be submitted to Pastor Lang. The Outside Church Council will choose one to use and make arrangements with the winning artist to publish his artwork (unused artwork will be returned). The winner will receive a study bible.

Artists should develop their artwork to depict what The Church of the Damascus Road has meant to them or what CoDR can mean for others.

The winning artwork will be distributed as prints to donors who give \$100 or more to CoDR. It's a wonderful way for inmates to have an impact on how the people in Iowa view prison ministry.



Enter to win!

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

Non-Profit Org.
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Fort Dodge,
 Iowa
 Permit #4

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

December 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 to send in articles, poetry, art work, and opinions for the newsletter. So don't be bashful.

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.



Cross by
 Charles
 Miller II
 2005
 FDCF

NCCF's Church Council

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

FDCF's Church Council

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Randy Zimmerman.....	Vice President
Gene Cook, Jr.....	Secretary
Mike Smothers & Joe Kosiba.....	Librarians
Randy Elliott	Rodger Verch III

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 WednesdaysHoly Communion
 6:30pm FridaysPrayer Team
 7:00pm FridaysBible Study

NCCF Rockwell City

6:30pm TuesdaysBible Study
 6:30pm Thursdays.....Holy Communion