

The Church of the Damascus Road

Flash!

Volume 9
Issue No. 1
February, 2006
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

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 were mailed out, but if you did not get one, contact Cynthia at 515-955-3579 for details.

Heart-Felt Encouragement

by William (Joe) Schwerdtfeger

I recently received a letter from my 9-year-old daughter. Along with the letter, she sent me a poem that I would like to share with all you other dads. To me it is the heart-felt encouragement that should lead us all home.

I Thank the Lord for You

Dear Dad,

You are so special
You are a gift of love
And sent to fill my life with joy
From Heaven up above
You bring me so much happiness
By little things you do
I thank the Lord for sending me
A dad as dear as you!

by Kayla Schwerdtfeger

Lot's Wife!

The Sunday school teacher was describing how Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt. When little Johnny interrupted, "My mommy looked back once, while she was driving," he announced triumphantly, "and she turned into a telephone pole!"

Inside the Flash!

Page 2 - Forgiveness in Marriage
Page 2 - Words of Encouragement
Page 2 - The Letter
Page 3 - Praise God for Job Done
Page 3 - Which Direction
Page 3 - CoDR Art Contest
Page 4 - Artworks



Prayer of a Lonely Heart

I cry out to you, Lord
Missing my family,
A lonely heart is hard to bear.
It is You who can comfort me.

So many mistakes of my past;
I wasn't who I should have been.
Not there for my family.
Caught up in addictive sin.

It's been so long, will they remember me?
How can I show I care,
To let them know I love them?
Will they still want me there?

Will I have a place to lay my head?
A place I may call home?
Will we be together again,
Or will I be alone?

As I ponder these questions,
This I know for sure.
With You beside me,
By faith I will endure!
Amen

Robert L. Johnson II (11-19-2002)

Thank You

Thank you for your continued support financially and spiritually of our congregations at Fort Dodge Correctional Facility and North Central Correctional Facility in Fort Dodge and Rockwell City, IA. Thank you for supporting Pastor Lang to be here for us in our shared ministry so that God's will can be done in these two institutions.

Thank you for supporting our Christmas card giveaway. I feel that it was a huge success. Without your financial support of the postage, some inmates, probably most of us would not have had the opportunity to send Christmas cards to our family or friends.

I feel privileged and honored to be on the Inside Church Council here at FDCF, a first for me. Also it is a great honor to be able to play guitar with Judy Lang every Wednesday night and to be the Altar Guild for the past few months.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In His Love,

— Tony Halsrud #6784588 FDCF

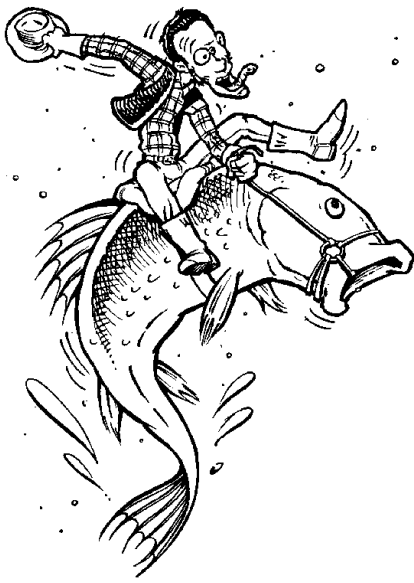
YOU MAKE ME SO MAD!



Anger is a Deadly Sin

Of the seven deadly sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back- in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you.

— Frederick Buechner



Fishing with Jesus

Moses and Jesus were in a boat fishing on the sea talking about things they've done in the past. Jesus asked Moses what one of the best things he's done in the past. Moses was thinking for awhile and said, "I haven't parted the sea for awhile." So Moses raised up his hands and the sea began to separate itself. Jesus said, "That is pretty good." Moses asked Jesus what one of his best things he's done. Jesus said, "I haven't walked on water for awhile." So, Jesus stood up and went over the side of the boat, bloop-bloop-bloop, down went Jesus. Moses reeled him up, Jesus said, "I don't understand." So, Jesus tried again, and then...bloop-bloop-bloop, down went Jesus again! "I don't know what I am doing wrong" said Jesus. So He tried a third time...bloop-bloop-bloop, down went Jesus! So, one more time Moses reeled Him up. "I can't do it anymore! Then Moses replied, "The last time I saw you walk on water, you didn't have those holes in your feet.

— Jeffrey Roberts-FDCF

Words of Encouragement

Dear brothers in Christ,

Thanks for the Damascus Road Flash. It is always interesting. I read with great interest about your decision to support Maryn Olson in Namibia. That's GREAT! You are doing a wonderful thing. The congregation to which I belong, Trinity Lutheran here in Lanark, IL, also supports a missionary, a family from Madagascar serving in Kenya, name of Ranaivoson, also working to serve people who have the HIV virus.

We, my family and I, were missionaries to Japan for 40 years, and we had supporting congregations like yours. That support is a strength and comfort to Maryn. I know. These days, in retirement, my wife and I are going to a correctional facility in Dixon, IL to take part in "Storybook," I suppose much the same as your "Story Tellers." Keep that contact with families, good people! The Dixon prison—we might as well call it by its real name—was, years ago, a state-supported hospital. I do hope and pray now as I write, that all over America prisons will be converted to hospitals, and that our whole society learns that throwing people into prisons often solves nothing. May God's blessings continue to be with your fellowship!

— Yours and His, Peter Rasmussen

Forgiveness in Marriage

The imperishable gift: praying for others, penetrates the heart we cannot open, shields those whom we cannot guard, teaches where we cannot speak, comforts where our hearts have no power to soothe, follows our best beloved through the trials and perplexities of the day, warding off the blindness with an unseen hand.

Recovery is not here just to make us feel better or live a happier life. It's here to destroy your idols and make us God's child. We can make it through these crises with God's help; we will come out strong in the end. I've seen it happen many times over the years. Quite the contrary! God breaks the odds. With him, all things are possible, as he says in his word. We'll discuss ways to enhance our ability to weather life's storms and stay in love.

I just want you to know one thing: we will both have to apply disciplined effort in our relationship to overcome the obstacles, and here's why: first, marriage partners tend to neglect time together during painful crises, eventually they end up as strangers. Furthermore, we attack each other instead of the problem. We forget that we belong on the same team. We both have strong feelings—helplessness, anger, fear, and sorrow—of the unforeseen twists of life. But we fail to admit this to each other. Instead, we criticize and blame and alienate. I'm not dogmatic on the issue. While anger is expected, and even acceptable on occasion, venting it all at will is rarely the best approach.

Second, compatibility: growing for a great marriage. 1) Don't sweat the small stuff; 2) It's all small stuff. Own up to the anger, first of all, instead of just letting 'er rip, as they say. Admit when your motives are sinful. Ask for forgiveness and learn to diffuse negative emotions in a harmless way. Ephesians 4:26 gives sound advice: "Be angry but yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger." In other words, don't lash out at others when you're upset. And conversely, don't harbor hostility in your heart, letting it fester until it becomes a cancer of bitterness.

The Letter

How are you? I just had to send you a note to tell you how much I care about you. I saw you yesterday as you were talking with your friends. I waited all day hoping you would want to talk with me. I gave you a sunset to close your day and a cool breeze to rest you, and I waited. You never came, it hurt me, but I still love you because I am your friend.

I saw you sleeping last night and I longed to touch your brow so I spilled moonlight upon your face. Again, I waited, wanting to rush down so we could talk. I have so many gifts for you! You awoke and rushed off to work.

My tears were in the rain. If you would only listen to me, I love you. I try to tell you in blue skies and in the quiet green grass. I whisper it in the leaves on the trees and breathe it in the colors of the flowers. I shout it to you in the mountain streams, and give the birds love song to sing. I clothe you with nature's scents. My love for you is deeper than the ocean and bigger than the biggest need in your heart. Ask me! Talk with me! Please do not forget me. I have so much to share with you! I will not hassle you any further. It is your decision. I have chosen you and I will wait. I love you.

Your friend,

— Jesus Christ



God Comes Running

For every step you take toward God, God takes two steps toward you; and if you come to God walking, God comes to you running. — James Martin

The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!

Volume 9.1

February, 2006

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

Praise God for a Job Well Done

I thank you Lord for a job well done,
 I thank you, Lord, to allow me in life the things I've done.
 Yes, Lord, I thank you for a job well done.
 For in my heart I was falling apart,
 I felt my life was as a rusty old cart.
 I was led astray, far away, by the evil one,
 For it was your will and a job well done,
 Yes, a job well done.

I praise you for the things in my life that've happened to me,
 The good, the bad, and now I see.
 For it was your will the things that happened to me.
 I was once at a time in my life, where I thought I had so much,
 But what I needed most of all was your wonderful touch.
 But now I see you were never far from me,
 I was blinded by the world and could not see.
 The harder I tried, the further I fell behind,
 I felt as if I'd surely lose my mind.

Then one day I felt as if I'd come to the end of my rope.
 I was hanging on by a thread, and then you gave me hope.
 For I know you were always within my reach,
 But instead I listened to the world and man and to what they had to preach,
 For I ignored the blessings, the love and the word you teach.
 You've blessed me with wonderful kids, and a good life in short,
 Now I stand to confess to you in your court.
 For I turned away from you and went astray
 And found myself chasing man's evil ways.
 I've confessed my sins and I know that they are forgiven,
 And you've given me a new life, one that's worth livin'.

For I owe it all to you, the Lord my God.
 I praise you now for chastening me with your rod.
 The rod of discipline, of hope and love from the Lord our God.
 I give praise and thanks to you, my Lord,
 And I offer you this poem of my own accord.
 Amen, Father! Thank you, Amen!
 —by Lloyd Abbey, NCCF



Which Direction

Time is on your side right now,
 an opportunity to think.
 What lies ahead of me
 which direction shall I take?
 Shall I repeat
 the mistakes of my past?
 Will the decision
 ultimately be my last?
 God's Word tells us
 He has plans for you and me.
 He does not want us to perish,
 but live for eternity.

The question is my brother,
 which direction will you choose?
 When you have all to gain
 and all too much to lose.
 Will you choose to seek Him,
 or serve in worldly sin?
 Ultimately bringing you
 back to prison again.
 Repeating the same mistakes
 over and over again.
 Expecting things to change,
 is insanity my friend!
 My advice to you,
 is to choose the one above.
 Open up your heart
 to our Saviors love.
 He will strengthen and guide you
 each and everyday.
 Never to forsake you
 take the time to pray.
 For He loves you dearly.
 He gave His life for you!
 Dying on the cross that day,
 for you to know the truth.
 That God really loves you,
 one and all the same.
 Raise your arms and worship Him.
 Praise our Jesus name.
 Nothing can ever take away
 what Jesus did for you and me,
 that wondrous blessed day
 on that cross on Calvary.
 Give your heart to Jesus.
 Receive your blessings from above.
 All you have to do is
 accept this gift of love.

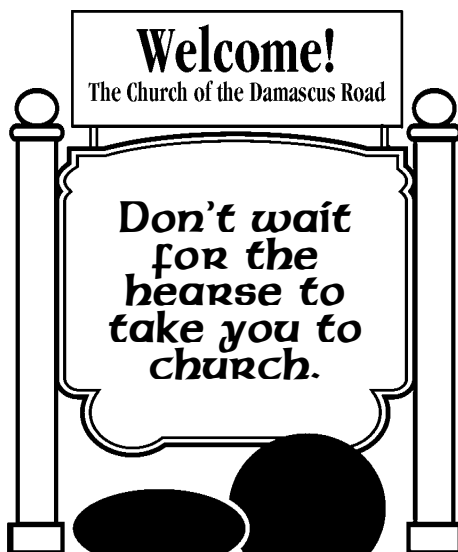
Robert L. Johnson II 9-16-2005

Achieving Justice

Justice will only be achieved when those
 who are not injured by crime feel as
 indignant as those who are.
 — Solomon

God's Counsel

The church as a whole must be con-
 cerned with both evangelism and so-
 cial action. It is not a case of either-
 or; it is both-and. Anything less is only a
 partial Gospel, not the whole counsel of
 God.
 — Robert De Haan



CoDR Art Contest

The Church of the Damascus Road is
 soliciting art entries for this year's Do-
 nor-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 (un-
 used artwork will be returned). Enter to win



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.

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

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

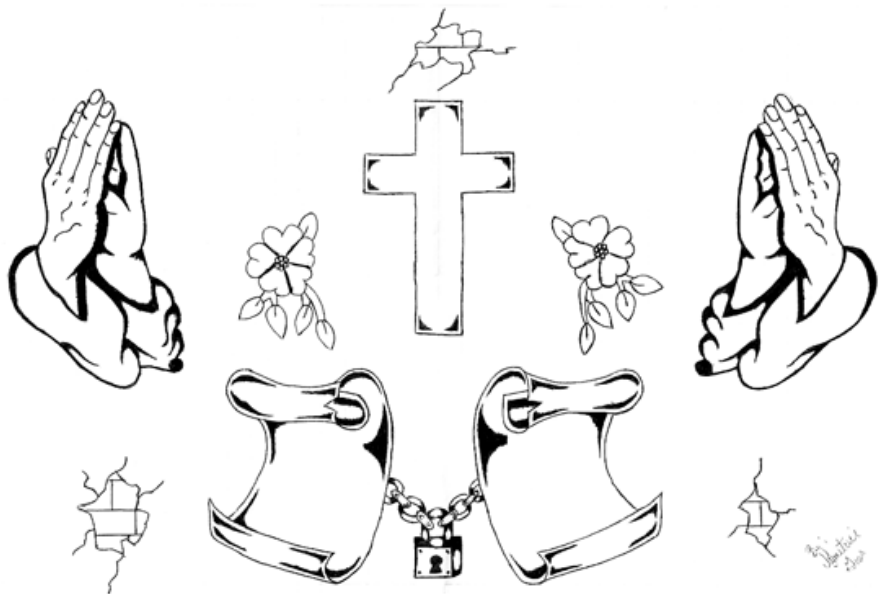
February 2006

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



Demetrice Gosa 12/21/05 (FDCF)



<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 Church Council

Marc Leonard..... President
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 William Schwerdtfeger..... Chris Stein
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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