

The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!

Volume 9
Issue No. 6
December, 2006
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

There is Hope

I thought that I could handle things on my own. I was proven wrong when my actions were shown. There is a spirit inside of me that dwells deep within. The unfound barrier that has no end. I'm talking about the guy that chooses to sin. He's not aware of what he's got, Allowing himself to be fooled by the devil's plots. Take a shot, experience and explore, 'till you finally can't seem to take any more. You still don't know what life has in store, Until you let the guy in that's knocking at the door. You do your part, He does His, Jesus Christ loves his kids!

— Nathan D. McLaughlin, FDCF



Wise Men and Women Still Seek Him

Christmas Cards



Giveaway

Through the generosity of many people, CoDR continues its tradition of giving away Christmas cards to inmates and providing the postage to send them home.

The cards will be given away at NCCF on Tuesday, December 12 in rooms A and B of the Treatment Center and at FDCF on Friday, December 15 in the Gym

Inside the Flash!

Page 2 - CROP Walk photos
Page 2 - This Day's Smile
Page 2 - It Was a Draw
Page 3 - Matching Fundraiser
Page 3 - AfterCare Facility
Page 3 - Fund Raiser Report
Page 3 - So, What Is AfterCare?
Page 4 - Artworks

Santa's Unlikely Helpers

An article appeared in The Saginaw News, requesting clothing for dozens of families who had lost everything in a recent flood. These unfortunate, displaced people were reduced to living in evacuation shelters. Only the most insensitive beast would not respond generously to such a plea for help.

At the Saginaw prison, three of us decided to find some way to provide assistance to these victims. But the challenges of trying to gain the prison administration's approval seemed insurmountable. Even worse, we wondered how our idea would be received by hundreds of alleged hardened criminals. Despite these worries, we began to plan.

After one quick meeting, we convinced the administration that we weren't trying to pull something mischievous, and they gave us the green light to proceed with our clothing drive. Convincing our peers to part with what little they had was, by far, our most difficult task.

To publicize our upcoming event, we posted flyers all over the compound. To our disappointment, most of the inmates remained oblivious. In an act born of desperation, we chose to announce our presence in a flamboyant way that no one could ignore—by becoming Santa's little elves.

We managed to get our hands on an old Santa suit, several bags of fabric scraps, and plenty of wrapping paper. With these odds and ends and a rickety sewing machine, we created elfin outfits, complete with pointy hats for our two convicts-turned-Santas. Finally out of two extra cartons, we made a huge donation box that resembled a wrapped gift.

On the day of our event, we had snow well up to our knees. We donned our outfits and stood on the sidewalk outside, begging for donations. As fellow inmates walked by, they started getting into the act. Soon cries of, "Ho, Ho, Ho!" rang out across the prison.

One of our teachers gave us a bell to ring. Someone else brought out a cassette player with Christmas songs set to a rap-beat. Soon we had an entire cast of impromptu dancers and more donations than our bags could hold.

By day's end, besides turning blue from the cold, we counted nearly a thousand useable items that we could donate to the flood victims. As we bagged the shirts and shoes, pants and hats, we commented on the success of our project. Those who scoffed at the notion of giving to a stranger eventually turned up to give something.

The highlight came when one man said to his friend, "It's the right thing to do. When I was between jobs and penniless, I lived in a shelter. The Salvation Army gave me this coat. Now I'm returning the favor." His friend left. Ten minutes later, he came back to donate his own bag of clothes.

Santa's Unlikely Helpers. Reprinted by permission of Douglas Burgess. ©2000 Douglas Burgess from "Serving Time, Serving Others: Acts of Kindness by Inmates, Prison Staff, Victims, and Volunteers."

Dear God,

Please forgive me, for this I humbly pray. My ways are forever filled with darkness. Please Lord guide my way. For Jesus is my savior. Through Him I confess my sin. No longer afraid of this spiritual battle. My Savior will always win. As I bow my head and close my eyes. A tear slides down my cheek. Remembering all the times he's made me strong when I was feeling weak. Please God forgive me for the pain that I've caused to the ones that I love. I know my savior has forgiven me. He sent me a blessing today. A mother's unconditional love.

— Bobby Dixon FDCF

In God We Trust

When rumors of war are in the air
All the more important that we all declare
That Lord Jesus is on the Throne
And in the end we're all going home

With famine and pestilence so common today
And political ramblings in our way
With men and women given to unnatural lusts
So important, In God We Trust

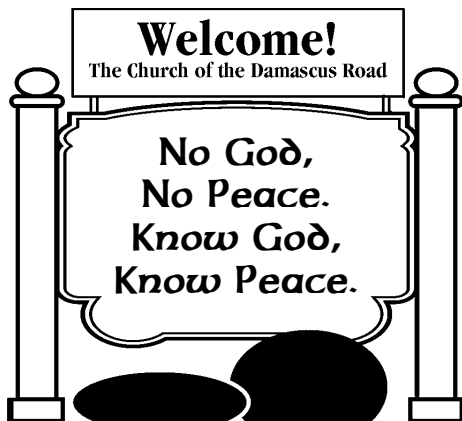
All this learning, but never the truth
Churches with godliness, yet denying His power
From all this we must turn away
And trust in Him these final hours

Inspired by: 2 Timothy Chapter 3
— William Bell, 2/22/03

This Day's Smile

A young Christian, packing his bag for a journey, said to a friend, "I have nearly finished packing. All I have to put in the bag yet are a guide book, a lamp, a mirror, a microscope, a telescope, a volume of fine poetry, a few biographies, a book of songs, a sword, a hammer, and a set of books I have been studying." Then he placed his Bible in a corner of the suitcase and closed it.

— C. Norman Bartlett



CROP Walk, October 7 & 8, 2006



At NCCF, 13 walkers and a couple of dogs walked together to witness to others that they walk because they



At FDCF, CROP Walkers registered and wrote "Store Orders" to contribute and witness by walking.



About 63 CROP Walkers circled the yard sidewalk nine times at FDCF.

It Was a Draw

In the past, the CROP Walk at NCCF has had few walkers and large donations while FDCF has had many walkers and few donations. This year the donations from each institution were close to equal, although the number of walkers remained the same.

However, the spirit of the walkers was a dead heat as they "walked because they walk." People in Third World countries often have to walk five miles or more just to get water for cooking and drinking.

Our donations are sent to Church World Service to help alleviate world hunger and then 25% is returned to the local community to be used in food assistance.

The Church of the Damascus Road
Flash!

Issue 9.6 December, 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
Rev. Carroll Lang, Editor pro tem
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.

Reentry AfterCare

It's a Ministry, Not a Program

Aftercare Facility

In 2005 I wrote a paper about a man that was in my New Frontiers Substance Abuse Treatment class at the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility where I was working at the time. He had graduated full treatment and was about to leave on parole.

It would seem to most everyone that he had everything going for him. His father-in-law, who is a Pastor of a church, had been bringing his infant daughter to see Doug for over a year, and had agreed to let him parole to his home. They were very caring people with a heart to do as they believe the Lord would want them too.

Doug had every intention of getting out and doing well in his responsibilities to both them and his child, but as the time approached he was getting very nervous. He had never done things the right way in his life and coming from a somewhat dysfunctional family he didn't have a role model for an example.

The wonderful family that was inviting him into their home didn't have any idea of what to expect, or how to deal with this damaged person that was soon going to be a part of their family. Doug even told me that he was afraid that he might do something bad, and didn't want to. He was afraid and had tears in his eyes.

This is the story played over and over again with much the same outcome. There is a need for a place for these damaged children, no matter what their age, to learn how to function. To transition from life in prison, crime, and mental anguish, to a society with a whole new set of rules of which they are not accustomed to. They need an oasis where the people around them know what they are going through and have a better chance at teaching them the basics of life in the real world.

This is my intention, to put my time and money where my mouth is and promote just such a place. An Aftercare Facility to help a number of people, just like Doug, who want to do good, but just don't know how. Staffed by people who have been where they have been and by the grace of God have made it out of that hole. It takes people like me, who can help them out of the hole they have dug for themselves, because I know the way out. I know this to be true and it is time to do something about it. Who will join me?

Doug got out, messed up once again, and is back at FDCF with a new sentence, and he will be there for a while. But when he gets out I hope that you will join me in



Thirty persons participated in an AfterCare training event on October 29, 2006 at Bethany Lutheran Church in Spencer, led by Linda Schroeder, former Director of COPE (Congregation Offender Partnership Enterprise) in St. Louis, MO. The CoDR Reentry AfterCare is modeled after COPE.

raising up a new and better place to receive him. Doug won't listen to most people, but he will be more likely to listen to me. We speak the same language and have been to many of the same places. He can't trick me easily, and I will hold him accountable and make sure he does as well as can be expected considering the circumstances. It would give him a fighting chance in a community with like-minded people that have the same goals to depend on and pray with.

It won't take much to help a few people that don't have a chance to make it without our help. It's much cheaper to help them do well now than to deal with the aftermath if they don't (not to mention the fact that it is our God-given calling to do what we can for those that can't do for themselves).

If this has interested you, please feel free to **contact Pastor Don Payer concerning the Matthew 25 House in Ames Iowa. (515)232-4115.** He has donated a house and has filed for tax exempt status, but is in need of the help of caring Christian people to help in a variety of ways. You will be surprised in how much difference you could make in someone's life with little effort, and how good it will make you feel.

Or, as always, you may contact **Pastor Carroll Lang, Church of the Damascus Road (515)955-3579**, or online at CDLng@aol.com about Re-entry Aftercare. Thank you all for your consideration and ... **God bless.**

— Bill Bell, 11-21-06



Fund Raiser a Success

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, Chapter 31175 matched all donations up to \$1,300 given by individuals between October 15 and November 15 designated for the AfterCare Assistance Fund. This fund will be used when an AfterCare team encounters unexpected expenses and does not have sufficient funds to meet the emergency.

Thank you to all whose donations made this fundraiser a success.

— CoDR Thrivent Congregation Coordinators

So, What Is AfterCare?

It is a ministry of the Church of the Damascus Road helping inmates stay out when they are released. Teams of three to seven persons in a community form a covenant of friendship together with an ex-offender for up to a year to help the ex-offender adjust to life on the outside, be part of a Christian community, stay employed, and make a new life for him or herself. The Christian community is the best environment in which to help the ex offender maintain a law-abiding lifestyle.

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

December 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



Frank Alloway FDCF 2006



Rodger Verch III FDCF 2006



<http://www.frontiernet.net/~codr/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

David Porter President
 JoRay Dale Vice President
 Daniel Skalla Secretary
 James Pospisil Lyle Harris
 Dennis Kaplan Kristian Beranc
 Britton Anderson Eric Mullinex

FDCF Church Council

Tony Halsrud President
 Dustin Lear Vice Pres/Library
 Jeffery Verschuure Secretary
 Joe Kosiba Librarian
 Randy Elliott Story Tellers
 Kyle McMenamain Justin Brady

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