

The Church of the Damascus Road

Flash!

Volume 10
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May, 2007
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA



Women's Worth

A woman's worth is a fire that can't be extinguished, with a gift from God, blessed with the necessity to deliver something so precious in a world so reckless.

With words from the Big Book that are often overlooked. If Judas betrayed a man that lent the whole world a helping hand, does that make him a crook for the thirty coins that he took?

A kiss as a death wish, the regret that he hung himself with.

So everything does happen for a reason, like the change of the four seasons. Everyone that doesn't believe him is a heathen, ok, I've done my share of thievin'.

Now I'm on my knees, "Dear Lord, forgive me for my sins that I have committed. I am a grown man, yes, at times I am tired and stressed, but with your help I've become thankful and blessed; cleansed by the blood, my hands have no more dirty mess. These are just our trials and tribulations" he said. "One more test. So keep your head up, stick your chest out, and I'll do the rest."

Because to die with everything means nothing, but to die for a reason you believe in is worth more than any diamond or pearl found in this world, especially if I was conceived by a woman named MARY.

—Anthony Goodshield, FDCF 2007

God Said, "No!"

I asked God to take away my habit. God said, "No! It is not for me to take away, but for you to give it up."

I asked God to make my handicapped child whole. God said, "No! His spirit is whole, his body is only temporary."

I asked God to grant me patience. God said, "No! Patience is a byproduct of tribulations. It isn't granted, it is learned."

I asked God to give me happiness. God said, "No! I give you blessings; happiness is up to you."

I asked God to spare me pain. God said, "No! Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares. And brings you closer to me."

I asked God to make my spirit grow. God said, "No! You must grow on your own!"

But I will prune you to make you fruitful."

I asked God for all things that I might enjoy life. God said, "No! I will give you life, so that you may enjoy all things."

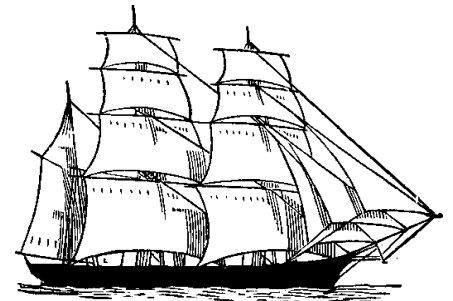
I asked God to help me LOVE others, as much as He loves me. God said.. "Ahhhh, finally you have the idea."

—Anonymous

Jesus

Jesus-the most precious name
Jesus-the most precious name
Through your name salvation came to me
Thankful to you I will forever be
Jesus-the most precious name
Jesus-the most precious name
Through your name I came to believe
Through your name a new life I did receive
Salvation, healing, deliverance all come
through your precious name only
And I rejoice always because of this you do
because you love me

—Dwight Vermeer Pella, IA



A Note From Abroad

We would like to give our best wishes to Pastor Lang and Judy. We were thinking about them and those at FDCF while in Singapore. We were invited to listen to Tony Anthony, who was a Kung Fu world champion who, after falling apart when his fiancée was killed in a traffic accident, ended up in prison in Cyprus. He was befriended by a prison visitor who showed him the way of Christ. Through the years he turned to Christianity and after several ups and downs, now preaches about his conversion. He has written a book called Taming the Tiger, which tells his story. However, he stressed how important visits are to those in prison, and this took me back to what one of the inmates at FDCF said; "You do not know what your visit means to me" while I was in the Visiting Room.

—Alan & Sylvia Morley



Endless

Endless
Endless
Is the love of Jesus Christ
Every day it is touching my life
Endless
Endless

Is God's great love for me
Every day His love for me I see
This great and precious love
will carry me through daily
Because never failing is the love
He gives to me

—Dwight Vermeer Pella, IA

Inside the Flash!

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Prison Congregations of America

Dear Friend,
I was just listening to a song by a group called "Mended Heart;

Life is easy when you're up on the mountain
And you've got peace of mind like you've never known
But then things change and you're down in the valley
Oh, don't lose faith for you're never alone.

For the God on the mountain is still God in the valley
When things go wrong, he'll make them right
And the God of the good times is still God in the bad times
The God of the day is still God in the night.

An inmate in ancient Israel, being executed, put this theory to the test when he turned to the criminal on the cross next to him and asked, "Remember me when you come into your Kingdom." Jesus, with one of his last breaths, replied, "Today, you will be with me in Paradise."

When a life "in the valley" approaches God, God is to be found to be faithful, present, and encouraging. In contemporary America, one of the deep valleys in our society is to be incarcerated and cut off, isolated and lonely. A prison congregation helps to remind members that the God of the good times is still God in the bad times and is actively working to redeem and restore his children, regardless of the current situation.

Prison Congregation of America (PCA) has worked with six denominations to establish 12 congregations in 17 prisons in 8 different states. The ELCA leads the pack! Seven of the twelve are ELCA congregations. We expect the Disciples of Christ to initiate their first one this summer in LaGrange, Kentucky!

The nature of this work is to maintain a steady, deliberate pace that doesn't always produce results as quickly as most of us would like. But...the end result is often stable, permanent, and effective because it was built slowly! Planting a congregation is akin to planting an acorn...once it has taken root and takes on a life of its own, eventually a massive "oak tree of ministry" spreads out with roots and limbs and shade affecting life in all directions. We want to keep planting acorns.

To all who have been a part of this effort, THANK YOU for helping this to happen! I invite you to help us continue by becoming a PCA "partner" in 2007. When you send your gift, you'll receive a brochure describing the partners and introducing the new inmate art with we provide to all who support PCA by a gift of \$100 or more during 2007. Gifts may be sent to Prison Congregations of America, PO Box 415, Vermillion, SD 57069-0415

Thanks for considering this request. This is critical work for the good and growth of the Kingdom of God. Both on the mountain and in the valley.

Peace to You and Yours,
Pr. Ed Nesselhuf, Exec. Dir.

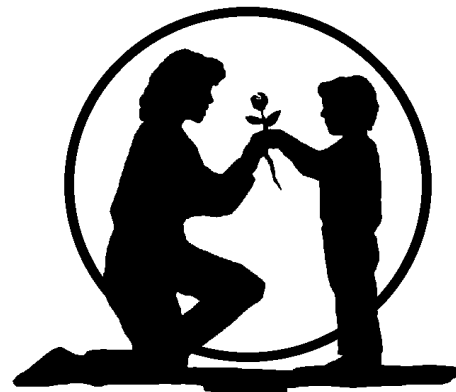


StoryTellers

Along with my significant other, Peggy, I would like to thank everyone involved with the StoryTellers here at FDCF. We have an eleven month old son together, his name is Alex. I love my son very much and want to do anything I can for him. StoryTellers allows me to read a book, be recorded, then send the book and recording home to Alex. This makes me feel like I am part of the family. When Alex gets cranky sometimes, Peggy puts in the tapes and Alex will actually stop and listen. He knows my voice and hears his name as I read to him. Through StoryTellers I feel I can reach out to them and be a part of their lives and even have a positive impact on them. Thanks, StoryTellers!

—Gary Ritt, FDCF 2007

Mother's Day May 13, 2007



2007 Winning Art by Lacey
of New Beginnings Church

Welcome!
The Church of the Damascus Road

**May is God's
apology for
February.**

Memory Verses May

But whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm (Proverbs 1:33).

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self discipline (2Timothy 1:7).

God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1).
Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe (Proverbs 29:25).

The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!

Issue 10.3

May 2007

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.

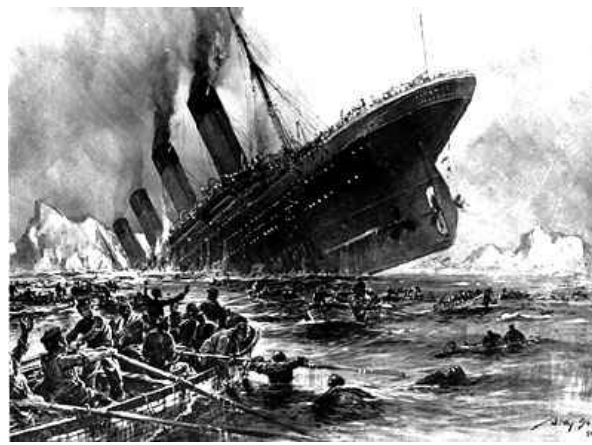
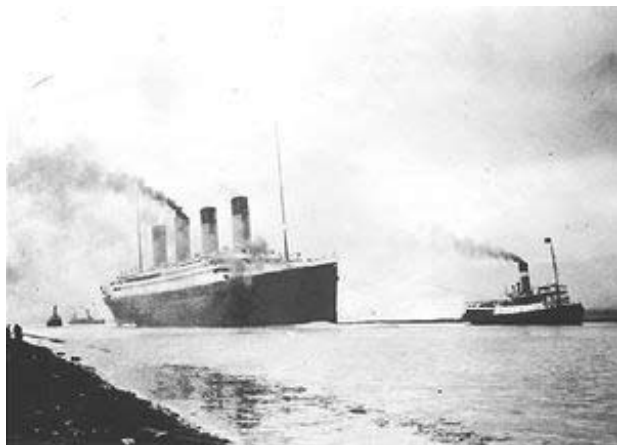
Rev. Carroll Lang, Pastor
Kyle W. McMenamin, Editor

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 50501

Reentry AFTERCARE!

It's a Ministry, Not a Program



The Power of a Mindset

Proof of the power of a mindset is evident when we reflect on the ninety-five year anniversary of a huge object made of steel that sank. That's right steel will sink, we all know that! But when you label the huge object made from steel as "unsinkable", use logistical explanations to convince the public that it is in fact, "unsinkable" a mindset is born. On April 15, 1912 a huge object made from steel sank, along with the lives of over 1500 people who held the mindset that The Titanic was unsinkable. The Captain was operating the vessel full speed ahead, as though it were unsinkable in waters known for icebergs that sank ships in the past, believing that Titanic would not sink. The proper amount of life rafts were deemed unnecessary and even more shocking was the fact that the available life rafts were half full. People refused to believe that the unsinkable would sink, and sank with that mindset!

Today, we have been told by numerous elected officials that "Tough on Crime Laws" keep us safe. We are to believe that a "trouble maker", will get convicted and sent away to prison. This is a mindset that gives the public a false sense of security. What we don't hear is that in most cases, this convicted "offender" will be released back to society in a few months, more often than not "bitter" instead of "better".

Here are the Facts; Steel will sink, and over 95% of the approximately nine thousand men and women who are incarcerated in Iowa will return to society. Less than five percent of the total prison population will remain incarcerated for "life." To prove the rate of release, there are over 29,000 people on Parole/Probation. Without help, over half will return to prison as a result of attempting to survive in a world where the mindset ignores the truth! The Truth is after these people pay their "debt to society" delegated by the court; the reentry process has a number of obstacles created by the mindsets of not only the public, but the person reentering society as well. Often these mindsets create obstacles larger than the ex-offender can overcome alone.

The cost to the tax payer for housing alone is an average of \$30,000 per year; this does not include societal cost. In one year, in one Iowa county, 8016 inmates left behind 8200 children in households where these children are 82% more likely to become incarcerated themselves. How do you possibly calculate the societal cost of recidivism? Society needs to overcome the mindsets created by our elected officials, and the so called "news media". Our news today comes to us in the form of competitive releases, owned and motivated by the entertainment industry. We need less entertainment and more truth.

If the truth were reported we would not only hear that most people only reside in prison for a period of a year, we would get to hear some of the great things that happen inside a prison made from fences and walls, walls and fences that God makes non-existent. Inmates who belong to civic groups like the "Insiders" at Rockwell City would get recognition for raising over four hundred dollars for the victims of Hurricane Katrina, sponsoring after-prom parties, building tree houses in city parks, and projects of all kinds funded by men who make a few cents an hour. A class called Young Men's Awareness would be a model for all correctional facilities. It's taught by an inmate who has volunteered his time teaching life skills and communication for thirteen years. While reporting the truth may change the dynamics of the evening news and shows like Prison Break, it would at least be true. Truth that could alter the mindsets that create reentry obstacles for offenders who have paid their debt to society, and are an economic drain on, and moral deterioration of our communities.

The Church of the Damascus Road Reentry AfterCare, and its supportive teams networked with Community-based organizations, has succeeded in assisting over thirty individuals to reclaim their independence in the past year alone. By raising awareness, embedding the need, and empowering Christian Communities to aid in the transition from prison to society, our capacity to serve will triple in the next year. This credible success of fulfilling the sixth ministry clearly spelled out in Matthew 25, has allowed us to recreate this model of AfterCare in communities throughout Iowa and now spreading into SD, MD, KY, and CO.

A few more facts, the thirty success stories that CoDR Reentry AfterCare has been blessed with has saved the tax payer over 900,000 dollars. Although the cost of incarceration is reduced, there may still be societal costs from families left behind, who need assistance for food, clothing, medical, shelter, transportation, etc. Nor does it include the cost of jail while awaiting trial, court costs, fines, restitution, etc. Let's continue to serve the Lord and our brothers and sisters while making our world a better place of truth!

For more information, and upcoming training dates contact:

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CoDR AfterCare Coordinator
P.O. Box # 1613
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515-230-8815
aftercare@mchsi.com

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

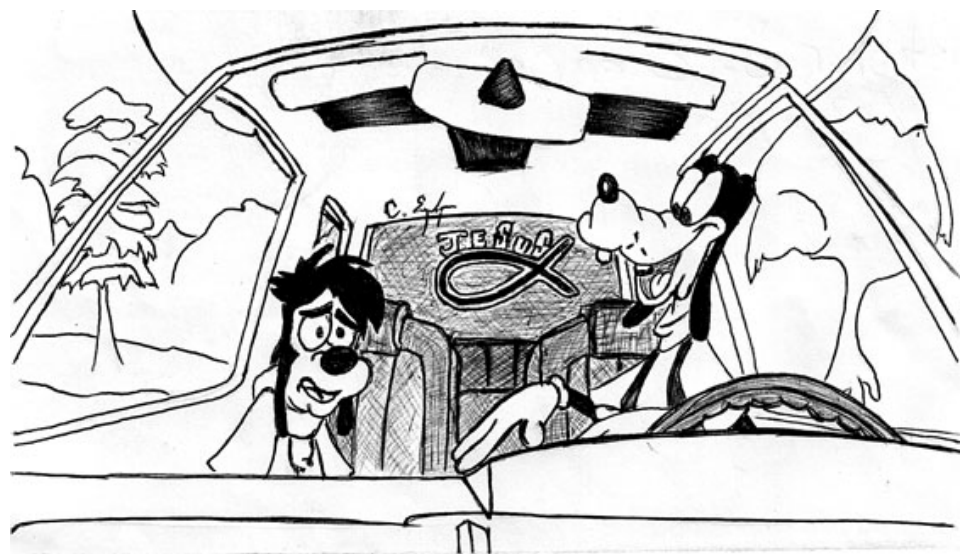
May 2007

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



Christopher Egenburger FDCF 2007



<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

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Daniel Skalla	Vice President
None	Secretary
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Randy Elliott	Story Tellers Chairman
Christopher Egenberger	Librarian
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	Jadrian Manning

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
 6:45pm 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