

# The Church of the Damascus Road *Flash!*

Volume 12  
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Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

## Office Manager Profile



Joyce Phelps  
CoDR's Office Manager

I am a Mother of 4 grown children and Grandmother of 12 and Great Grandmother of 4. Have been married to my husband Robert for 41 years. I was raised on a farm 10 miles North of Humboldt. Graduated from Humboldt High School and took one year of college at Eagle Grove Junior College which is now Iowa Central Community College. I then worked for Fort Dodge Labs for 3-1/2 years. After our daughter was born, I went to work for Iowa Central Community College as the Coordinator of Housing and remained employed there for 32 years. I retired from Iowa Central in June of 2001. Since then I have worked part-time for Central Iowa Distributing, Maschhoff Family Farms at Land O Lakes, National Gypsum and now am at Church of the Damascus Road. I truly have been blessed and can look back at my life and see the Lord had plans for my life as I walk with him daily.

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## 7th Annual Meeting of CoDR

Emmanuel-St. John Lutheran Church in Lytton hosted our 7th Annual Meeting of CoDR on November 8, 2008. The members served up a delicious meal and fellowship occurred at every table. Volunteers for worship and Story Tellers were recognized, annual reports were given to all in attendance and briefly explained. Those in attendance were given the opportunity to tell the rest what being part of CoDR meant to them. Former members, Robert L. Johnson II, Jim Wicker, and Paul Harrison addressed the group.

Before the Annual Meeting began, Paul Harrison told attendees what is happening now and what is projected for the future of Reentry AfterCare.

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Ruth Younie, Marulyn Nielsen, Jean and Lee Kuhrt, Paul Harrison and Doc Anneberg, and Dale and Nancy Bruns having a lively conversation before the meal is served.



Cleo and Rollin Swanson and Robert L Johnson II line up to load their plates at the dinner being served by Candace Booth and Ron Matter.



Robert L Johnson II, Cleo and Rollin Swanson, Bub Gleason and Christine Johnson shared experiences.



Dorothy Zehr, story Teller volunteer at FDCF and Ruth Younie, Story Teller volunteer at NCCF spoke of their pleasure in participating in that special ministry.



Dennis Booth, President of the CoDR Outside Church Council, presided over the CoDR Annual Meeting.



Isabelle Benjamin is the volunteer coordinator for the Story Teller Ministry at both FDCF and NCCF and is a volunteer herself at FDCF.

Cynthia Hanks, who recently resigned as CoDR Office Manager after 9 years of faithful service, was honored at the Annual Meeting and reflected on her experiences and that she hopes to visit a worship service in prison soon.



## Worship Me

I am the darkness, I am the broken  
 I am empty and all alone  
 You showed me kindness, he gives me mercy  
 Because of all the love he's shown  
 You are the light of the world  
 He makes everything complete  
 He will never leave me now  
 For the grace he's shown to me  
 You left your home and you left you family  
 You put your life in front of me  
 I saw the love of the one that made us  
 Shining in your eyes clearly  
 You are the salt of the earth  
 Your flavor is so sweet  
 You show me Jesus now  
 And we are equal at his feet  
 I learned to worship, I learned to praise him  
 I see the sacrifice and might  
 He gives us freedom, he sent his spirit  
 We walk in his holy light  
 You are the light of the world,  
 He makes everything complete,  
 He will never leave me now  
 He died so we could meet  
 I told you everything you'd need  
 would come from me  
 If not I wouldn't have died to make you free  
 I try each day to show so you can see  
 That all I ask is you to worship me  
 Just worship me, just worship me  
*Written by Raymond Reynolds*

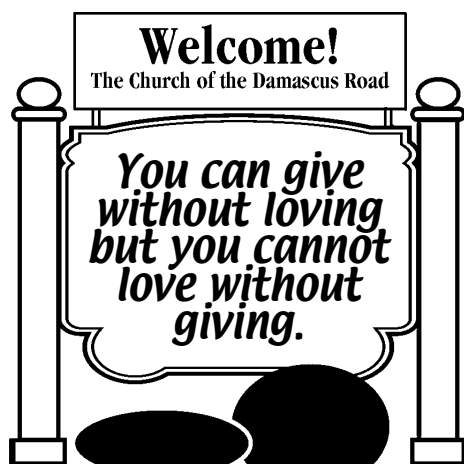
## Boasting

The person who has the right to boast, doesn't have to do it. *—Unknown*

YouTube must-see!

## Lifhouse Skit

A dramatic story of losing our childhood innocence. Of having a close relationship with Christ as a child, but then outside influences coming between us and him, meanwhile Christ is always being there, waiting for us to turn back to him. Then, of Christ interceding on our behalf and helping to protect us and bring us back to the path he has chosen for us.



## Wordless Sermon

A member of a certain church, who previously had been attending services regularly, stopped going. After a few weeks, the preacher decided to visit him. It was a chilly evening. The preacher found the man at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for his preachers visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a comfortable chair near the fireplace and waited.

The preacher made himself at home but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the dance of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the preacher took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone then he sat back in his chair, still silent.

The host watched all this in quiet contemplation. As the one lone ember's flame flickered and diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and dead.

Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. The preacher glanced at his watch and realized it was time to leave. He slowly stood up, picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it.

As the preacher reached the door to leave, his host said with a tear running down his cheek, 'Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I shall be back in church next Sunday.'

We live in a world today, which tries to say too much with too little. Consequently, few listen. Sometimes the best sermons are the ones left unspoken.

*—Author Unknown*

## Re-mem-bering

Because memos used in prison are called "kites," the paper kite flown in the wind has long been a symbol of prison ministry in the Prison Congregations of America model, under which CoDR was formed. We now have quilts with the kite symbol sewn on them, that inmates can arrange to have delivered to a family member as a reminder not only that you are thinking of them, but that they are supported by God through a loving church family.

Quilters in our support area have donated their time and materials to lovingly make these quilts available to you. If you wish to have a quilt delivered for you, please complete the form (at our worship service) and return it to the pastor of CoDR. A clergy person, either from the church you note on this form, or one we locate in your family member's area, will be contacted to bless and deliver the quilt to your family member.



## I am thankful:

- for the teenager who is not doing dishes but is watching TV, because that means he is at home and not on the streets.
- for the taxes that I pay, because it means that I am employed.
- for the mess to clean after a party, because it means that I have been surrounded by friends.
- for the clothes that fit a little too snug, because it means I have enough to eat.
- for my shadow that watches me work, because it means I am out in the sunshine.
- for a lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning, and gutters that need fixing, because it means I have a home.
- for all the complaining I hear about the government, because it means that we have freedom of speech.
- for the parking spot I find at the far end of the parking lot, because it means I am capable of walking and that I have been blessed with transportation.
- for my huge heating bill, because it means I am warm.
- for the lady behind me in church that sings off key, because it means that I can hear.
- for the pile of laundry and ironing, because it means I have clothes to wear.
- for weariness and aching muscles at the end of the day, because it means I have been capable of working hard.
- for the alarm that goes off in the early morning hours, because it means that I am alive.

*—Source Unknown*

**The Church of the Damascus Road**  
*Flash!*

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Rev. Carroll Lang, Pastor  
 Gene D. Cook, Jr., Editor  
 Chad Bechtel, 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.

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 239 North 11th Street  
 Fort Dodge, IA 50501

## What CoDR Means to Me

I attended the Church of the Damascus Road every Thursday evening for nearly twelve months (while I was incarcerated at Rockwell City). I looked forward to every Thursday evenings' Church of Damascus Road services: for the message that Pastor Lang preached, and fellowship with the volunteers that came into the facility from the surrounding communities, and their congregations.

Several of the other inmates and I would get together, outside of the formal Thursday evening fellowship, to encourage and provide spiritual support for one another. Without the Church of Damascus Road these inmates and I may never have had the opportunity to meet. That, in a nutshell, is what the Church of Damascus Road initiates: fellowship and spiritual guidance for those who many never have had spiritual counsel.

I am grateful to Pastor Lang, and Judy, for their commitment (by faith), and obedience to the Lord (Genesis 12:1-5) in fulfilling God's will to spread the message of His Almighty Word, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Pastor Lang and his wife did not allow the razor wire, or the bureaucratic red tape of the Department of Corrections, to divert them from their mission field.

I was recently at a Church service where the Pastor was reading from the 25th Chapter of Matthew, "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me,'" however, this is where the Pastor stopped his sermon on this teaching by Jesus!

This Pastor stood before the congregation of the Lord and left out a portion of the Lord's Written Word, "I was in prison and you came to Me" (Matthew 25:36), a portion of the Scripture that this Pastor felt was unworthy of speaking before God's children.

Some Ministers that I have met, and many members of Church congregations that I have been in contact with throughout my life, feel that this is an unnecessary endeavor—ministering saving grace to inmates in prisons. These blind leaders of the blind falsely believe in their own righteousness while standing in judgment of those who have been convicted of temporal violations of the law (Matthew 7:2). From their self-exalted pedestals of righteousness they condemn by blinded minds (II Corinthians 3:14-15) as stewards of the father of lies (John 8:44). They falsely believe that inmates in prisons are beyond contempt, and

deserving of nothing but punishment and persecution. I have experienced that contempt and disdain, but the Lord has provided me with the discernment to know the fruits of the Spirit, and recognition of those who are being led astray by the adversary of the Lord (I Peter 5:8). I can now see them as lost sheep wandering aimlessly in the darkness in need of the Shepherd and the Light.

The paradox of God is His supernatural power of releasing those who are slaves to sin and bound by sins guilt (confined to literal prisons as well as spiritual prisons of self-righteousness) through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

I experienced that supernatural transformation personally, and I witnessed the same transformation in the lives of many, many other inmates.

There is a fire raging within the walls and razor wire of prisons everywhere that only the Lord Himself can be responsible for igniting, "So I said: 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.'" Then one of the seraphs flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar, and he touched my mouth with it, and said: 'behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged'" (Isaiah 6:5-7).

While we (the other inmates, and I, whose sins God had mercifully purged) were confined for our sinfulness, the Lord blessed us with a time of sanctuary where we had the opportunity to be immersed in the Lord's Written and Living Word. The Lord used a period of temporal discipline for His divine sanctification and divine preparation (Exodus 2:15-25; 3:1-12; John 16:13).

I, and many, many, many other inmates, have been blessed by the mercy and grace of the Lord with the fellowship of Pastor Lang, and Judy Lang. Each of these servants of the Lord have followed the prompting of the Holy Spirit and visited those of us in prison that were in need of being fed, thirst quenched, clothed, and comforted.

I now volunteer with the Reentry Aftercare program to help other inmates reacclimatize to a life outside of the walls and razor wire. My family is involved as well, my wife currently writes to 15 Christian inmates with spiritual devotions and God-ordained fellowship. My wife and other family members have been advocates of the Ministry of the Church of the Damascus Road, and the efforts of the Reentry Aftercare program.

I have been released from confinement for fifteen months; no longer bound by the literal prison of the Department of Corrections. However, I was released from the bondage of sin and guilt that held me captive for more than three decades by the

love, mercy, grace and forgiveness of the Lord. This supernatural transformation took place long before I exited the gates of the penal system.

My wife and I are spiritually united, and now physically united through the blessing of the Lord who provided me spiritual and physical release from bondage.

Four weeks after my release I was hired as a Design Engineer for an Agricultural Manufacturer here in Northwest Iowa. There can be no mistaking the work of the Lord in this employer-employee relationship. The employer is well aware of the history and willing to be faithful and obedient to the Lord in forgiving me of my past mistakes; willing to provide me with a vocational opportunity that many other employers may never have provided.

I speak to congregations all around Iowa (specifically Northwest Iowa, and South Central Iowa where I was raised) advocating Prison Ministry for those who hunger and thirst for the Word of the Lord behind the walls and razor wire of prisons throughout the country—throughout the world.

This is a Mission Field that is ripe for the harvest, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labors into His harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38). In His Service!

*Sincerely, Matt Hayes*

## Dreaming of Golf

Here I sit, wrapped in a blanket, drinking hot chocolate and watching the snow fall. What a pretty sight. But all I can think about is the green. Yes, I am dreaming about the greens of the golf course during our annual golf tourney held for Church of the Damascus Road. We hold this golf tournament each year to help raise funds to help us spread the word of God to our fellow men who happen to be incarcerated. I am hoping that people are planning ahead to help us with this project. We ask for sponsors and people to offer gifts for the winners. I can just see me trying to hit that ball across the pond. Oooopppssss! In it went again.

Back to the reality of the weather outside. I would just like to ask that all who read this will plan to attend our annual tournament on June 27, 2009 at Oakridge Recreation in Goldfield, Iowa. I would like for anyone who would like to help us plan this event to give either Pastor Lang or me a call. Now, on with "whose turn is it to shovel the walks this time?"



*Kathy Hansel  
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January 2009

### 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.



www.codrcare.org

### 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



Joshua Watson, FDCF 2008

### Bored at Church or Focusing on Jesus?

When you have spare time, what do you do with it? Do you focus on Jesus, or do you daydream about something else? This drawing took Joshua Watson only a matter of seconds with just a Sharpie Marker. I know, I was sitting beside him at Bible study. My point here is this: although Joshua thought that it was maybe an insignificant act, or that it may be less than pleasing quality to Jesus himself or others, it at least shows what he was thinking about at the time.

Do people know what you're thinking about by what you do, or how you do it? Can others see Jesus in you or through you? We don't all have the same gifts, but we can all use what God gave us to honor and glorify him. So I encourage you all to use your gifts for God. It will please him.

— Tony Halsrud

### NCCF Church Council

Robert Stokes ..... President  
 Robert Fry ..... Vice President  
 Daniel Skalla ..... Secretary  
 Lyle Harris ..... Jehoshua Dillinger  
 Luke Snyder ..... Story Tellers Chairman  
 Keith Headley ..... John Cole

### FDCF Church Council

Tony Halsrud ..... President  
 Chad Bechtel ..... VP/Story Tellers  
 Alex Nolan ..... Secretary  
 Raymond Reynolds ..... Gene D.Cook, Jr.  
 Larry Maxwell ..... Andrew Gourd  
 Joshua Watson ..... Cody Anderson  
 Eric McDanel ..... Mark Nichols

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