

The Church of the Damascus Road

Flash!

Volume 12
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September 2009
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

How Can I Help?

When people get involved in The Church of the Damascus Road activities, especially worship, they wonder what they can do to support and take more part in this vitally important ministry. There are several ways:

Prayer: There is great power in prayer and prayer changes things. We can never have too much of prayer and we are grateful for individuals and congregations that have included us in their regular petitions in prayer. Don't stop, please.

Participation: The importance of being a part of the life and mission of CoDR cannot be stressed enough. Worshiping with our incarcerated brothers and sisters inside lets them know that they (and we) are part of a greater Church, the great family of God.

Support: CoDR does not exist on the support of its inside members, it thrives on the support of individuals and congregations who remember us with regular giving. We are seeking 100 donors who will give \$100.00 or more on a monthly basis. Could that be you or your congregation? Why not talk to members of your church council and ask to have CoDR put on your congregation's budget at \$100 or more?

Help start a Foundation: As any congregation knows, there are lean times during the year. When those times happen, a congregation puts out the word and members come to the "rescue." Since we can't get such instant results, a foundation would provide support for the CoDR ministry during those lean times. Are you able, or do you know someone who is able, to make a large donation to enable CoDR to form a foundation for the future?

These days we hear of financial institutions "too big to fail," but CoDR is just too important to be allowed to fail for lack of support. "As you did it to the least of these, you did it to me" Matthew 25:40.

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Are You the Salt of the Earth?

Jesus once said, "You are the salt of the world; but if salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men" (Matthew 5:13 NKJV).

Naturally, most of us understand that this means 'we,' the body of believers, are the salt of the world. By this we can say that the world is the 'meat.' Therefore, if we don't use *enough* salt, the meat will decay. Likewise, if the salt loses its flavor, its saltiness, due to chemical impurities or whatever, this would also cause the meat to go bad. In fact, it would cause us to throw out the bad salt along with the bad meat!



SALT OF THE EARTH
MATT. 5:13

reflection of the Church's failure as a preservative.

Prison is an example of extreme failure, extreme decay. This does not mean the inmates are without hope. Quite the contrary, many of them simply need a certain something in their lives, something beyond the lure of worldliness, of materialism, and of the artificial pleasures so often associated with ungodliness.

Without the help and support of the Church, of men and women like you, prison (the Devil's playground) becomes nothing more than a warehouse of angry, bitter inmates, and people whom the Lord knows and loves, as well as many others, will probably return to society even more angry and bitter.

Without men and women like you, prison ministries are slowly losing their effectiveness, their ability to reach souls and stop the decay *before* it reaches more victims, *before* it affects families and the children of the offenders (as it so often does), not just turning them from God, but also creating new generations of offenders.

Think about it. Think about what Jesus said: "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world; for... I was in prison and you came to me" (Matthew 25:34, 36).

Are you the **salt of the earth?** Or will you one day look to our Lord with puzzled expressions and ask, "When did I see you in prison?"

—Michael Downs 7-9-09 NCCF

CoDR Eighth Annual Meeting

Saturday, November 14, 2009, will mark CoDR's 8th Annual Meeting to be held at St. Olaf Lutheran Church, 239 North 11th Street in Fort Dodge. The day will begin at 10am with a gathering of NW Iowa Reentry Aftercare Teams and all who are interested in learning more about this ministry.

A catered dinner will be served at Noon, followed by the Annual Meeting at 1:30pm. All are invited to celebrate CoDR's ministry. Please send a list of attendees to our office manager, Joyce Phelps at DamascusCh@aol.com, so we know how many to expect.

My Encounter

God has really blessed my life and has carried me through so much! I want to share my experiences so that they may help others. I know there is a God, no one has to tell me that. I want to share with you my personal encounter. It has changed my life and maybe will bless yours.

It happened the night of my accident on November 13, 2007. It is difficult to think about, and I still endure vivid flashbacks and nightmares. But the part I want to share with you happened right after I hit the tree. I remember the impact like it was last night. I remember the broken glass and blood, fear and pain. I came to after I blacked out, which seemed like many minutes, but was only seconds. The first thing I remember is seeing the broken truck around me and calling out for Darwin, who did not answer me at first. I called and called, and finally a response... the sound still bothers me today... it was the sound of someone dying, letting go of life. At that moment, I watched and heard my best friend die. I still feel it today... how sorry, how hurt, and how beside myself I am.

I proceeded to call my grandmother to try to get help, but the connection kept breaking up until I finally lost signal. I remember looking down at my cell phone and trying to figure out why I couldn't see a picture. I realized that I was losing so much blood from my head that the phone had literally drowned. At that moment I tried to exit my truck but the door handle was broken (prior to the accident). The window was shut and, surprisingly, not broken. I tried my best to knock out the window with my fists, but I failed. I realized at that moment that my life was over. At first I was scared, as I actually saw parts of my life flash before my eyes. And then I started to pray.

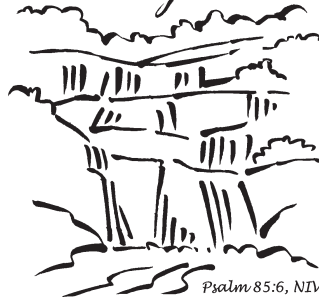
I told the Lord I was sorry for the sin in my life, that I was scared, and that I loved Him.

Now, let me pause for just a second and tell you something. At this moment, I have a big smile on my face. I can cry my eyes out, and I do, through the whole story until I get to this part, and every single time, I begin to smile. What happened next, is what I call my own personal vision of the "white light." It was truly awesome. Not only did I "see," but I felt the Lord's presence. I can't even begin to tell how that felt! The only thing that comes close is "ultimate and complete peace." No pain, no worries, no stress, just the Lord's perfect peace.

My memory blacks out after that experience. I just remember regaining consciousness, reaching back with my arm under the back seat, and grabbing a hammer that I didn't know was there. I was able to break the window with hammer, crawl out, and walk a 1/4 mile to a house to get help.

I believe I was dead that night. I believe the Lord revived me and sent me back. I believe I felt the love that only a few have felt that still walk on the earth today. I am here for a reason, and I want to share God's love through my experience so that more can ultimately feel what I have felt. How little time we have on this earth and how narrow the road we must choose to walk. Please believe me when I say, "God is love, God is peace." He will touch your life as He has touched mine, and continues to, even though I am in prison. Sometimes it takes a place like this to humble a person. I consider this time in my life to be a learning experience with the Lord as my Teacher. Sincerely,

Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?



— Paul Abbott, FDCF 2008

A Covenant of Grace

A Covenant of Grace
Has been made for all of us
So that every race
Could be blessed from God above.

This is what He's planned for us
A never-ending love
Compassion from the beginning
For once and for all.

So don't believe for hardship
And don't believe for pain
Just speak unto the mountains
And believe in what you say.

In our words there is power
Over sin and death
That's how God ordained it
So enter in His rest.
— William Bell FDCF



Practice

Getting over the fear of rejection is much like getting over the fear of public speaking. You do it with practice. Rejection is a necessary companion to success. Don't let it hurt and stop you (from *Fail Proof Your Business* by Paul E. Adams)

During my incarceration I have been rejected numerous times by many people. I'm sure it won't stop when I'm finally released from prison. When you find out who your true friends really are, capitalize on that knowledge, and allow it to work to your advantage. When someone can put a smile on your face with just a smile from theirs, these are people we need in our lives.

We need to constantly seek out all of the positive things in our lives and shut out negativity. This makes us a better person, even if it's only our perception of ourselves.

Be that better person on purpose, everyday. Take the first step. Do it with practice.
— Tony Halsrud, MPCF 2009

Welcome!
The Church of the Damascus Road

**God is perfect...
only man
makes
mistakes.**



Brothers in Blue

Brothers in Blue is scheduled for October 8-11 at NCCF. The teams are being assembled, and will be ready to conduct the weekends.

To attend the weekend, see Pastor Stone for an application. The deadline is October 1 at NCCF, no exceptions.

The next Brothers in Blue at FDCF will be December 10-13. Applications will begin in September, and the deadline will be November 27.

The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!

Issue 12.5 September 2009

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. Paul Stone, Pastor
Carroll Lang, Editor

Anyone wishing to be on our mailing list may send name, address, and phone numbers to the address below, or by e-mail at: DamascusCh@aol.com. The Flash will be sent directly to your home. Our office is at St. Olaf Lutheran Church.

The Church of the Damascus Road
239 North 11th Street
Fort Dodge, IA 50501

Please Note:
Our mailing address for The Church of the Damascus Road no longer uses a Post Office Box - our address, as of August, is 239 North 11th Street, Fort Dodge, IA 50501. Please make changes in your address books and databases.



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

- Augustana Lutheran, Manson
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- Grace Lutheran, Fort Dodge
- New Covenant Christian, Fort Dodge
- Our Saviour's Lutheran, Callender
- Our Saviour's Lutheran, Humboldt
- St. John Lutheran, LeMars
- St. Mark's Episcopal, Fort Dodge
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- St. Paul Lutheran, Palmer
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- Rollin & Cleo Swanson, Fort Dodge
- Mary Wilkins, Fort Dodge
- Leila Wilson, Fort Dodge

Wrong and Right

Wrong is wrong, even if everyone is doing it. Right is right, even if no one else does it.
 —Unknown

Reentry After CARE!

Training Development

CoDR is joining forces with The Women at the Well (United Methodist prison congregation in ICIW in Mitchellville) to develop new training materials and techniques. There have been two meetings so far with Rev. Jim Davis, retired UMC pastor in Ames, and Gerry Kennedy, retired government training developer also from Ames, Judy Lang and me. This collaboration will result in a cooperative Reentry Aftercare ministry between both prison congregations.



In the past our training varied from 4 to 6 hours all in one day. Plans now are for a two-stage training: the first part is an hour and a half to give interested persons an overview of the ministry process, and the second part will be a more intensive training for those who have committed themselves to be a member of a team.

Another part of our plans is to find ways to identify willing persons in more communities around Iowa. Hopefully, people who hear Pastors Arnette Pint or Paul Stone when they visit various congregations on Sunday will respond with interest. We now know of teams in Sioux City, Holstein, Spirit Lake, Spencer, Lytton, Fort Dodge, Humboldt, Forest City, Webster City, Nevada, Ames, Boone, and Pocahontas.

We have heard of teams in Ottumwa, Davenport, Des Moines, Cedar Rapids and Council Bluffs, but we have no contact information.

We need your help in locating existing teams as well as finding more teams around the state. If you know of any or have an interest in this vital ministry, please Give me a call at 515-571-6566 or email me at CDLng@aol.com.

—Rev. Carroll Lang, NW IA Director



CROP Walk 2009

The 2009 Annual CoDR CROP Walk at NCCF will be on Saturday, October 3 at 8:30am (meet in front of the Treatment Center) and at FDCF on Sunday, October 4 at 12:30pm and 3:00pm (register at the slab in front of Control).

The purpose of a CROP Walk is to not only raise money to be used to alleviate world hunger, but also to raise awareness of all the people in poverty in Third World countries (and even here in the USA) who must often walk several miles just to get water and even farther to get food for their families. "We walk because they walk," showing our solidarity with those who have so much less than we do.

Not only do inmates contribute generously, but **all you readers "outside the fence" are invited to contribute to the CoDR CROP Walk** by sending donations to The Church of the Damascus Road, 239 North 11th Street, Fort Dodge, IA 50501. Make checks out to CoDR and put 'CROP Walk' in the memo.

Half Time

I have been pastor of CoDR for about 6 months now. After two weeks training in Des Moines at DOC headquarters and 2 ½ weeks of shadowing retiring Pastor Carroll Lang in the office and at each prison.



Pastor Paul E Stone

His knowledge and expertise have been invaluable for me. As he has primarily moved on to coordinating the Aftercare work of CoDR for Northwest Iowa, I have been learning, getting to know offenders and staff, and just plain having fun. The Bible studies at each facility are highlights. The worship services are uplifting, especially for me. And the times just talking to one of more guys are hope-building.

I'm honored to serve as CoDR's pastor. I'd love to meet more of CoDR's supporters in area congregations, either at one of the worship services or on a week end in your congregation. Call me and I guarantee we can find a time. Please keep us in prayer and support this ministry financially as you are able.

CoDR is truly about God's Work using Our Hands.

—Pastor Paul

The Church of the Damascus Road
 239 North 11th Street
 Fort Dodge, IA 50501

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Our Church

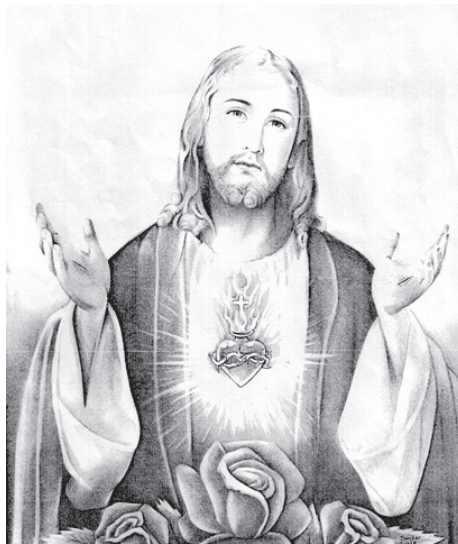
September 2009

Invite the Pastor

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, Fort Dodge, IA 50501, 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



Sammy Snyder FDCF 2009



Seth Hilton FDCF 2009



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.

NCCF Church Council

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Christopher Reyes	Michael Downs
Travis Fugere	Evan Peterson

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 Paul Stone

FDCF Church Council

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Grant Adams	Jeffrey Hillman
Thomas Johnson	Terry Schoon

Worship & Bible Study

FDCF Fort Dodge
 6:30pm WednesdaysHoly Communion
 6:00pm FridaysPrayer Team
 6:30pm FridaysBible Study

NCCF Rockwell City
 6:30pm TuesdaysBible Study
 6:30pm ThursdaysHoly Communion