

The Church of the Damascus Road *Flash!*

Volume 13
Issue No. 2
March 2010

Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Morning Prayer

As I woke up this morning
and climbed out of bed
I had a long talk with Jesus
this is what I said

Even though I am not worthy
worthy of your love
you still have a place for me
in heaven above

As I begin each day
you are the light upon my path
never to forsake me
your love shall always last

You are the spark
that ignites the eternal fire
to serve you Lord Jesus
is your will I desire

I shall spread the gospel
for everyone to hear
how wonderful life is
when you are always near

I praise you Jesus
always there for me
no longer a life of bondage
my soul has been set free!

Amen
-Robert L. Johnson II



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New Council Member



Diane Vavak

Hi, everyone! I am honored to be a new member to the outside council. I live outside of Rockwell City and have been coming to the Church of the Damascas Road for about the last two years. I am married and have three children and four grandchildren and a dog Missy. My husband, Tim, and I are starting a Ceramic Business this fall. Currently we have around 35,000 molds to choose from. We will also have many other types of arts. I'll teach classes in painting, scrapbooking, knitting, crocheting, quilting, sewing and crafts for kids on Saturdays. I have painted murals for the community and love to give my talents so others can enjoy them.

I am very involved at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Rockwell City. I am on their worship committee, started their Prayer Shawl Ministry, cook desserts every week for a Mom's group that meets at our church and I am the church janitor. I am also the Cluster Coordinator for the Women of the ELCA.

When I first came to worship services, I was unsure of what to expect. I thought I would do all the "giving" but ended up being on the "receiving" end of learning about Christ's love to all his people. I think that is what got me coming back for more. I enjoy working with Story tellers also.

I will do my best, with the help of God, to serve the Church of Damascas Road and spread the word of God to others.

Blessings,
Diane Vavak

Faithful Servants

Luke 16 is about the faithful and unfaithful servants. In verse 1 & 2: *'Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.'*

We will all have to give an account of our own stewardship. Have we been good and faithful servants? Have we been using what God has given us to the best of our abilities?

The Bible says that to whom much is given, much is expected. Spiritually we have been given much. God miraculously revealed himself to me right from the beginning.

When I asked Jesus to forgive and to save me in a small jail cell in Los Cruces, New Mexico, over 20 years ago, I had a physical manifestation. It felt like warm oil was poured over my body, starting at my head and ending at the tips of my fingers and toes. A peace came over me supernaturally and in very adverse conditions.

But I, like the Jews in the desert, have wandered around and around in the desert of my own hard-headedness and rebellion. I have hurt my family, and grieved my God, and the spirit within me.

I was saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit, spoke in other tongues with prophetic utterances. The Spirit inspired in me songs, poems, and proverbs, and gave revelation (insight) in the Word. I have experienced the divine gift of preaching under the anointing, far beyond any natural ability. I've said these things not to seek glory, but to my own shame, because of my failure to live up to what was expected of me.

The struggle with sin is a daily occurrence with me. Struggle with being a good steward of the gifts God has given me has not yet escaped me. To whom much is given, much is expected.

"Lord God, please forgive me. Please make me once again sensitive to the promptings of your Holy Spirit. Take the hardness away. Please give me grace and have mercy on me." Amen

—William E. Bell, NCCF 2/6/10



The Song that silenced the Cappuccino Machine

It was chilly in Manhattan but warm inside the Starbucks shop on 51st Street and Broadway, just a skip up from Times Square. Early November weather in New York City holds only the slightest hint of the bitter chill of late December and January, but it's enough to send the masses crowding indoors to vie for available space and warmth.

For a musician, I'm told, it's the most lucrative Starbucks location in the world, and consequently the tips can be substantial if you play your tunes right. Apparently, we were striking all the right chords that night, because our basket was almost overflowing.

It was a fun, low pressure gig. I was playing keyboard and singing backup for my friend who also added rhythm with an arsenal of percussion instruments. We mostly did pop songs from the '40s to the '90s with a few original tunes thrown in. During our emotional rendition of the classic "If You Don't Know Me by Now," I noticed a lady sitting in one of the lounge chairs across from me. She was swaying to the beat and singing along. After the tune was over, she approached me. "I apologize for singing along on that song. Did it bother you?" She asked.

"No," I replied. "We love it when the audience joins in. Would you like to sing up front on the next selection?"

To my delight, she accepted my invitation. "You choose," I said. "What are you in the mood to sing?"

"Well... do you know any hymns?"

Hymns? This woman didn't know who she was dealing with. I cut my teeth on hymns. Before I was even born, I was going to church. I gave our guest singer a knowing look. "Name one."

"Oh, I don't know. There are so many good ones. You pick one."

"Okay," I replied, "how about 'His Eye is on the Sparrow'?"

My new friend was silent, her eyes averted. Then she fixed her eyes on mine again and said, "Yeah, let's do that one."

She slowly nodded her head, put down her purse, straightened her jacket and faced the center of the shop. With my two-bar setup, she began to sing.

Why should I be discouraged? Why should the shadows come?

The audience of coffee drinkers was transfixed. Even the gurgling noises of the cappuccino machine ceased as the employees stopped what they were doing to listen.

The song rose to its conclusion.

I Sing because I'm Happy; I sing because I'm free. For His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.



When the last note was sung, the applause crescendoed to a deafening roar that would have rivaled a sold-out crowd at Carnegie Hall. Embarrassed, the woman tried to shout over the din, "Oh, y'all go back to your coffee! I didn't come in here to do a concert! I just came in here to get something to drink, just like you!" But the ovation continued.. I embraced my new friend. "You, my dear,

have made my whole year! That was beautiful!"

"Well, it's funny that you picked that particular hymn," she said.

"Why is that?"

"Well..." she hesitated again, "that was my daughter's favorite song."

"Really!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," she said, and then grabbed my hands. By this time, the applause had subsided and it was business as usual. "She was 16. She died of a brain tumor last week."

I said the first thing that found its way through my stunned silence, "Are you going to be okay?"

She smiled through tear-filled eyes and squeezed my hands. "I'm gonna be okay. I've just got to keep trusting the Lord and singing his songs, and everything's gonna be just fine." She picked up her bag, gave me her card, and then she was gone.

Was it just a coincidence that we happened to be singing in that particular coffee shop on that particular November night? Coincidence that this wonderful lady just happened to walk into that particular shop? Coincidence that of all the hymns to choose from, I just happened to pick the very hymn that was the favorite of her daughter, who had died just the week before? I refuse to believe it. God has been arranging encounters in human history since the beginning of time, and it's no stretch for me to imagine that he could reach into a coffee shop in midtown Manhattan and turn an ordinary gig into a revival. It was a great reminder that if we keep trusting him and singing his songs, everything's gonna be okay.

— Source unknown



NCCF Brothers-in-Blue

The 25th Brothers in Blue weekend at NCCF was March 4-7, 2010. 20 first timers attended the weekend. Team, Palanca, and candidates were deeply touched by the Spirit throughout the weekend. Your prayers helped to support this tool of renewal. To God be the glory.

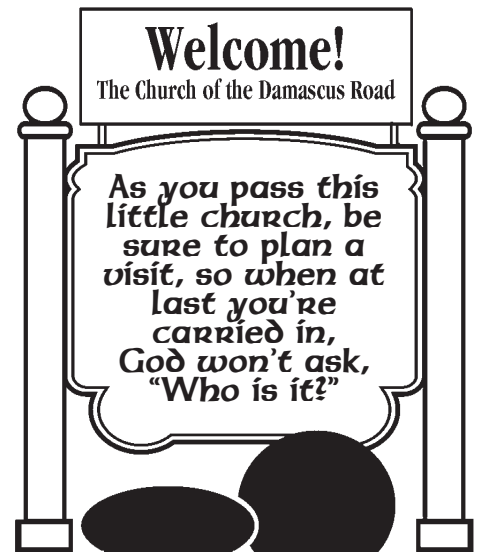
—Pastor Carroll Lang

FDCF Brothers-in-Blue

The next weekend at FDCF is scheduled for June 10-13, 2010. See Pastor Stone in the Chapel for applications. Please note that visits are not allowed, so be sure to notify those on your visiting list not to visit on that weekend. The deadline for applications is May 27.

Prayer in support of the weekend is one way persons on the 'outside' can support this renewal activity.

—Pastor Carroll Lang



The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!

Issue 13.2 March 2010

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

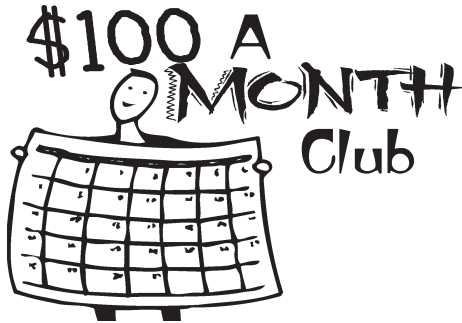
Anyone wishing to be on our mailing list may send name, address, and phone numbers to the address below, or by e-mail at: DamascusCh@aol.com. The Flash will be sent directly to your home. Our office is at St. Olaf Lutheran Church.

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 2009, is 239 North 11th Street, Fort Dodge, IA 50501. Please make changes in your address books and databases.

RE-entry integration



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

- Bethany Lutheran, Emmetsburg
- Bethany Lutheran, Spencer
- Emanuel-St. John Lutheran, Lytton
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- Hardy Trinity Lutheran, Hardy
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- St. Mark's Episcopal, Fort Dodge
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- Rev. Paul Stone, Eagle Grove
- Sukup Family Foundation, Hampton
- Rollin & Cleo Swanson, Fort Dodge

There's a Great Need for More Reentry Teams

We need willing persons in more communities around Iowa. Hopefully, people who hear Pastor Arnette Pint or Pastor Paul Stone when they visit various congregations on Sundays will respond. Larger communities, such as Sioux City, Davenport, Fort Dodge, etc., can easily support more than one team, thus increasing places for ex offenders to locate.



We have heard of teams in larger communities such as Ottumwa, Davenport, Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Waterloo and Council Bluffs, but we have no contact information. If you would like to decrease prison costs by assisting an ex offender in making a successful transition back into society and not recidivate, then there's no time like the present to talk to some friends, form a team and contact us for the training.

A team consists of 5-8 trained persons who form a covenant for up to a year or more with an ex offender, partnering with him or her, providing the support and mentoring needed to get started after leaving prison. Some have no place to go, no family support, and many have never learned how to manage money or time. Some have never had a job for any length of time. Prisons are trying to provide reentry education in these areas before release, but without support after release, many often revert to former habits, turning to those activities that wind them back in prison at a huge cost to taxpayers estimated annually at \$30,000 to \$85,000 per person returned to prison. Just helping one person stay out not only saves that amount, but a productive, employed, law-abiding ex offender is good for the local economy, too.

We need your help in locating existing teams as well as finding more teams around the state. Please give me a call at 515-571-6566 or email me at CDLNg@aol.com.

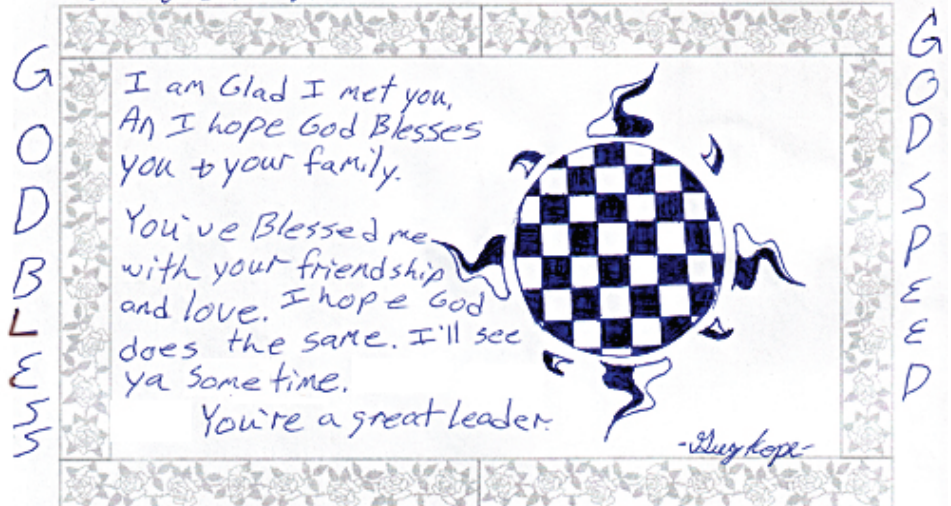
-Rev. Carroll Lang, NW IA Director



Matthew 25:36

It's a Ministry, Not a Program

To A Good Friend of Mine



To honest hard working Brother of mine



Be a cheerful giver

The Church of the Damascus Road
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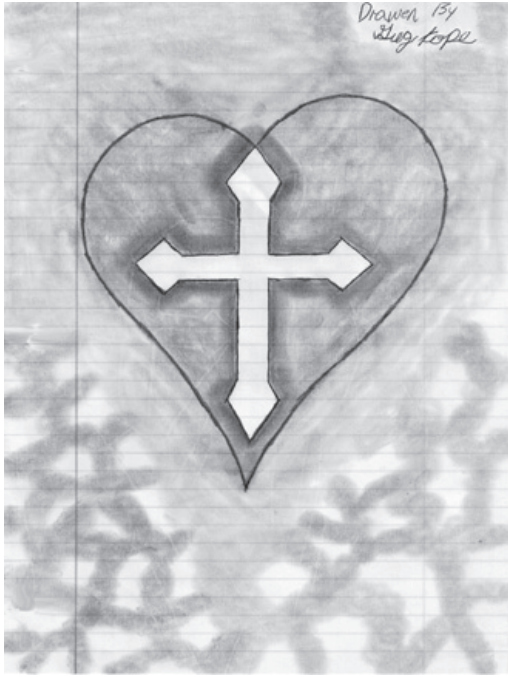
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Invite the Pastor

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 enable the pastor of Damascus Road 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



Artwork by
 Gregery
 Kope, NCCF,
 2010

Inmates:
 You, too, can have your artwork displayed in the Flash! and the Echo! Simply hand your art to Pastor Stone. It will be scanned and then returned to you.



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.

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| <p>NCCF Church Council Jason Smith President Arthur Bennett Vice President William Stark Sec'y/Story Tellers Lyle Harris Everett Graham Rex Arrowsmith Michael Downs Thomas Tymkowicz Marcos Vargas Charles Schauf Chester Polk Gregery Kope Justin Frank</p> | <p>FDCF Church Council Paul Abbott President Justin Welsch Vice President Cody Anderson Secretary Jeffrey Hillman Story Tellers Raymond Reynolds Jacob Chiwengo Brandon Walstrom Nicholas Lytle Douglas Oberly Nathan Herron Nathan Merrill</p> |
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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 Paul Stone

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