

The Church of the Damascus Road *Flash!*

Volume 13

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September 2010

Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA



Mark Your Calendar

The Church of the Damascus Road Annual Meeting will be Sunday, November 14, 2010 at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Storm Lake, IA. Reservation postcards will be sent to all congregations and persons in our mailing list.

At 3pm Reentry Reintegration teams and interested persons will meet for "continuing education" and to compare notes on team activity.

At 5:30pm we will enjoy a catered dinner and fellowship and begin the "business session" of the meeting.

We invite all of you to attend, all we need to know is how many will be there so the caterer can prepare enough food. See you there!

2010 Country Gospel Concert

For this year's concert we tried something new — we scheduled it for two days instead of one. The food sales on Saturday went to CoDR (\$1,019) and sales on Sunday went to Prison Congregations of America (\$612). We had fewer attendees, but generosity was high, raising a total for CoDR of \$3,528 in admissions and donations.

Sponsorships totaling \$2,675 covered all expenses (entertainers, advertising, food costs, etc.), and we wish to express our appreciation to all sponsors for their generous support.

Be sure to mark your calendars for July 9-10, 2011 for the next Country Gospel Concert in the grove on the Mark and Cheryl Juhl farm NW of Remsen. See you there!

Inside the Flash!

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Youth put the final piece of tin on the science laboratory roof!



The Igumbilo Girls School in Tanzania is one of the recipients of microscopes.

Being Ready When God Acts

The Church of the Damascus Road is a unique Western Iowa Synod congregation because the members are inmates at the Fort Dodge and Rockwell City prisons. Even though these men live behind razor wire, they are free in Christ—and they show it! Always looking for ways to share in God's work, members of The Church of the Damascus Road give generously out of the miniscule amount they are able to earn in prison. The congregation is consistently a mission support leader in the Western Iowa Synod.

Members support many charities, including CROP Walk, Habitat for Humanity, Haiti relief, the Center for Agricultural Development in Tanzania, missionary Patricia Bentsen and more.

In May, Bishop Michael A. Last, Cindy Wells and Gayle Henderson visited the prison congregation and gave a presentation on the partner projects the Western Iowa Synod shares with its companion synod, the Southern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Among the many partner projects is one to provide microscopes for use in health facilities and the Igumbilo Lutheran Girls Secondary School in the Southern Diocese. Microscopes are needed to help analyze, diagnose and treat illness, and to use in the new science building at the girls school. Definitely a worthwhile project, but possibly not the most exciting!

At this point in the story, we see God taking over. Three days after hearing the presentation, Thomas Tymkowicz, an offender in the Rockwell City prison, was chosen to be part of a work crew on the Iowa Central Community College campus in Fort Dodge. Most of the crew were assigned to grounds maintenance, but Tymkowicz was picked to help with the remodeling of the college science building. While working on that project, he discovered that several older, working, microscopes were slated for the dumpster.

Tymkowicz saw God's direction clearly, and he didn't hesitate. He told the remodeling project supervisor how valuable those microscopes would be for our brothers and sisters in the Southern Diocese and how they could bring vital improvement in their health care and education.

After learning about the project to provide microscopes to health facilities and the girls secondary school in the diocese, college officials approved the donation of 24 used microscopes. They were checked over, cleaned and refurbished. Then the microscopes traveled to Tanzania with Western Iowa Synod members visiting the Southern Diocese this summer. Mission accomplished!

God's Work. Our Hands. *(From the Western Iowa Synod ELCA insert in The Lutheran magazine)*

Young People's Views

How do you view the organized church today? Do churches seem not welcoming or too welcoming in a creepy sort of way? Are some churches too political, boring, or judgmental? Listening to young people today, one can hear many of the statements found in Barna Group research regarding "Words or phrases that people outside of church (ages 16-29) used to describe a religious faith":

- 66% - antihomosexual
- 57% - judgmental
- 54% - hypocritical, saying one thing, doing another
- 46% - too involved in politics
- 37% - out of touch with reality
- 28% - old-fashioned
- 27% - insensitive to others
- 27% - boring
- 22% - not accepting of other faiths
- 19% - confusing

Is this how you see congregations today? If you do, then you need to know one very important fact: congregations are made up of sinners in need of God's grace. The members are far from perfect and have tendencies to express many of the attitudes listed above, but they are all loved by Christ who died for every one of them, and who also died for you. The church is a hospital for sinners, not a haven for saintly, perfect people. If **you are not** antihomosexual, judgmental, hypocritical, political, out of touch, insensitive, accepting or confusing, then the rest of the church needs your witness and leadership, so get yourself to one of these sin-filled congregations and let your light shine!

—Statistics from *The Lutheran March*/ April 2010

Join Outside Council

You are invited to consider being a member of The Church of the Damascus Road's Outside Church Council. The OCC is responsible for the financial support of the congregation, and the management of the church office, while the Inside Church Councils, made up of inmates, are responsible for the life, worship and ministry of CoDR in the prison.

The OCC meets every third Wednesday of the month at 11:45am for a catered lunch followed by the business at hand.

Terms of office are 3 years in rotation. If you feel called to this special ministry, please call 515-955-3579 or email DamascusCh@aol.com.



In Memoriam

Charles Moyer, a former member of CoDR in Rockwell City, died March 4, 2010. He was almost 75. Charles was a regular participant in worship and bible study and appears on our video. A dear friend of his sent his obituary and service folder along with a note:

"Pastor Paul Stone:

"I am sending this obituary of Charles Moyer so you could pass it on to Pastor Carroll Lang. He was a great encouragement to Charles when he was at Rockwell City. We attended his retirement party last May. He was diagnosed with kidney cancer and passed away on March 4, 2010. He never lost his faith or his smile, but I do know he thought a lot of Carroll.

"So, it was through Charles' connection with Damascus Road I received it (CoDR Newsletter).... I have been blessed by Charles' faith.

"Thank you and God bless you,"
Marlene Carter



A Wire of Razor

A wire of razor that coils and snares,
A menace of metal that no one dares,
To keep me here both night and day,
To keep me here, my time to stay.

The Lord has said to me, "You're free,"
Yet in this place I remain, you see.
But I look real close at the wire all around
And I see that it only settles here on the ground.

Yes, I cannot go left, I cannot go right,
But the path above is clear and bright,
'Cause the wire of razor is from man alone;
It cannot cover the way to God's home.

—Art Tiber 11-2-08 Kairos



Somewhere over the rainbow . . .



NCCF Brothers-in-Blue

The 26th Brothers in Blue weekend at NCCF will be October 7-10, 2010. Applications will be available soon, and the deadline is September 30. Even if you are not sure you'll still be here by then, sign up anyway just in case. This renewal ministry has been an awakening for many.

—Pastor Carroll Lang

Welcome!
The Church of the Damascus Road

**Adam blamed Eve,
Eve blamed the snake,
and the snake
didn't have a leg
to stand on.**

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

Issue 13.5 September 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



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

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RE-entry integration

"It's a Ministry,
Not a Program"

Getting into Action

Now that summer is over (almost) we need to be thinking about how people in our communities in Iowa can prepare to form teams, be trained and start assisting ex offenders to make successful transitions back into society. This vital reentry ministry will always need your help and willingness to serve.



There are more applicants at this time than there are teams. Will you step up to the plate? It is said that if we only help one person to stay out of prison we can count that as success. Well I say if we can help all who apply for Reentry Reintegration to stay out of prison, we could put some of our prisons out of business! It's certainly a worthwhile goal.

No community is too small, it turns out, to offer this ministry to an ex offender. Lytton is a town of 255 population and has already covenanted with two ex offenders and is preparing for a third. In Sioux City, where there are more resources, the team is working with five or six ex offenders. In Humboldt there are often four, and in Fort Dodge the team is working with three to five. Some towns are large enough to have several teams.

Part of this ministry is mentoring, helping the ex offender to manage his income, pay his rent, food, bills, etc. One important element is expecting the ex offender to join a congregation and participate. Prison Congregation of America has gathered statistics: 60% of released prisoners go back to prison within three years; if an inmate participates in a prison congregation such as CoDR, only 15% return; and if they are active in a congregation when released, only 2% return. Isn't that a goal worth repeating? You, along with some of your friends in your community can help. Talk to some of them, and if they are interested, give me a call to set up training.

I've said this before—we need your help in locating existing teams in parts of Iowa other than NW Iowa as well as developing 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

Fourth Annual Golf Benefit

This was not a good year for our golf tournament. First off, we got postponed because the course was under water, so we rescheduled and it was hotter than Hades. Because of the change in dates we lost at least 8 golfers.



But, everyone was a good sport about it. At least we only golfed in the morning... except for 2 brave souls! Yes, we had a special guest from Minnesota. We only had 11 golfers, but they had a good time. Our winners were Mark and Austin Zylstra from Humboldt, a father and son team. This was their first time, and they said they were looking forward to next year.

We had several people that came to share in the lunch and fellowship. I forgot my camera and no one else had one with them, so you will have to take our word that we really were there!

After expenses, we made a donation of \$355.00 to CoDR. We had tremendous prizes given to us this year, and we had some new contributors! I hope they will follow through again next year.

That's right, I booked us for next year again. The date is June 18, 2011. So, please put that on your calendars. I want to thank Rollin for all the hard work he did in helping to get prizes for us.

Thanks for your support.

Kathy Hansel

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

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Thanks for
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September 2010

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

Drawing by
 Russ Klein
 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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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 Wednesdays Holy Communion
 6:00pm Fridays Prayer Team
 6:30pm Fridays Bible Study

NCCF Rockwell City

6:30pm Tuesdays Bible Study
 6:30pm Thursdays Holy Communion