

The Church of the Damascus Road

Flash!

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Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA



We Need Books

Our collection of children's story-books is nearly depleted. Inmate fathers are recorded while reading a book to their child, then the book and recording are sent to the child so he or she can hear Dad read to them.

The books have been gifts from churches and individuals who sent them to us, and we are very grateful for their generosity. At a Western Iowa Synod Women of the ELCA Convention, in-kind gifts of story books made for a large inventory of books for fathers to read. One church in rural Hardy, now closed, brought us a monthly sack or box full of books. Now, however, we find that all our story books are nearly gone.

If you or your congregation are willing to collect story books for young children and send them to us, we would be very grateful. This ministry reunites families.

What is my purpose?

I've lived a life that wasn't mine.
Stuck in a world between the light and the blind.
I bow my head and pray for my sin.
Renew my faith and bring me back to him.
I've fallen away so many times,
I've paid the debt for all my crimes.
What is my purpose? To live long and free?
Only time will tell what God has in store for me.

—Derek Argotsinger, NCCF April 2011

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THE RESURRECTION

Easter's Meaning

In a 2010 Barna Group survey, two-thirds of Americans knew that Easter is a religious holiday. But only 42 percent connected its meaning to Jesus' resurrection. And only two percent of adults said they would describe Easter as the most important holiday of their faith.

Not everyone who connects Easter to religion has the facts straight. Two percent of Americans said Easter is about Jesus' birth. Another two percent said it's about Jesus' "rebirth." And one percent said it's a celebration of his second coming. Another three percent described Easter as a celebration of spring or a pagan holiday.

In the same survey, 31 percent of active churchgoers said they'd definitely invite an unchurched friend to worship with them on Easter weekend.

During this Easter season, from April 24 through June 12, share the truth and joy with someone who doesn't know Jesus. News of the resurrection is too good to keep to ourselves!



A Dream Realized

Ever since I visited the Fort Madison Prison as a college criminology student, I have yearned to do prison ministry. That was 50 years ago this year — 2011! My dream has *finally* become a reality.

I nagged Pastor Paul until he said, "Well, if you can't come Wednesday nights for church (I sponsor a teen group at church then), would you want to come on Friday nights and help with Bible study?" **Would I?**

Every Friday night is an adventure. Church Bible studies can be rather quiet, but not this one. It is exciting and even feisty at times. I love it. These men make Bible study interesting and fun and Pastor Paul is great. They are very knowledgeable about scripture and they put me to shame weekly.

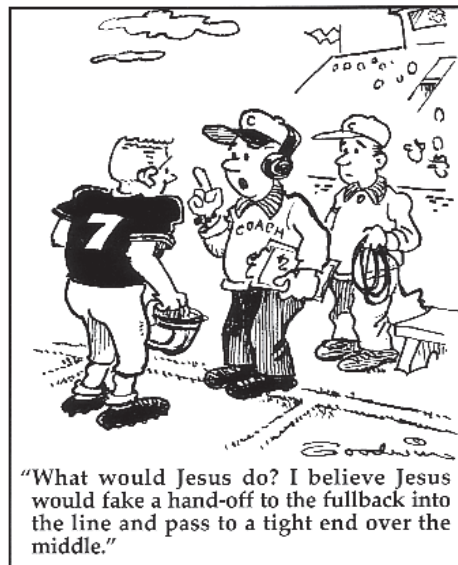
Every Friday night our numbers grow and we are growing right out of our room. When Pastor Paul said, in the last newsletter, that "the Spirit is alive and well at the Fort Dodge facility," he spoke an exciting truth. When my husband picks me up after Bible study he sees the glow in my eyes, so I imagine that's why he continues to haul me over there every Friday night.

I honestly don't feel like I "help" much at the Bible study. I go because I so badly want to encourage them, and, selfishly, because those young men definitely bless *me* every time.

I've had some rather serious surgery lately and missed seeing my "kids" (when you are 70 years old, everyone is a "kid") <grin>.

I'm back now and hope we can continue to share those "wonderful words of life."

—Maureen Cameron



"What would Jesus do? I believe Jesus would fake a hand-off to the fullback into the line and pass to a tight end over the middle."

from *The Joyful Noiseletter*
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Λόγος Knowledge

Logos: Word or Reason?

When we open our bibles to the first verse of the first chapter of John's Gospel, we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In this verse we read several truths unique to our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. His existence is eternal, having existed before time and matter. Since a true beginning from which God could have been created or formed does not exist, we can say God, therefore the Word, simply **is**.
2. Jesus is separate from God, a person with God, yet
3. Jesus **is** God. The Word is equal to God because he **is** God, yet he is the Son who respects and obeys his Father.

All of this is powerful the way it is. Still, have you ever wondered why the **Word** is a key to our understanding of the person we know as our Lord and Savior? Certainly all things came into existence by the Word of God. Accordingly, we can suppose this to mean that all things came into existence by Jesus, the Son of God, rather than as the actual spoken word of the Father.

Now consider, if you would, how the term "word" is translated from the Greek word "logos." We can read John 1:1 as, "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God."

With this in mind, consider how Logos also means "reason." Thus, John 1:1 could also be correctly translated as, "In the beginning was the Reason, and the Reason was with God, and the Reason was God."

Certainly the "Word" has much more appeal, more zing, than the bland and studious sounding "Reason." While neither would be wrong in place of logos, we do need to consider which of the two terms makes the most sense. Was John telling us that Jesus is the Word, as translators choose to translate logos? Or could it be that John was saying that Jesus is the Reason?

In closing, consider that both terms work well, though reason makes more sense. Consider too how John could have been implying both.

Also, in verse 9, John tells us Jesus is the Logos, is the light that enlightens the world. This expresses the fact that Jesus is the Reason, the Light (or, Knowledge) by which we exist. All who choose to reject Reason choose to live in darkness (ignorance).

If Jesus is your reason for existence, then you are his beacon of light. Are you shining your light in your little corner of the world? Or, is it time to spiritually recharge your batteries and bring a new age of Reason to the dark recesses of your world?

—Mike Downs



Yours

God, it's all yours, everything is yours from the stars in the sky to the depths of the ocean floor. You're the maker and keeper, Father and ruler of everything. For all creation, this is our Father's world. It's all yours, God, the glory, the honor, and the power. You're King of all kings and Lord of lords. Everything is yours, God, all the greatness and power and glory and splendor and majesty. My life is yours, my heart is yours, my feet are yours. All belongs to you. Our gifts, all our dreams and actions go out to you, God. All our plans are yours, and the whole earth is yours, Father God.

— Tony Steece, NCCF Feb 2011



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.

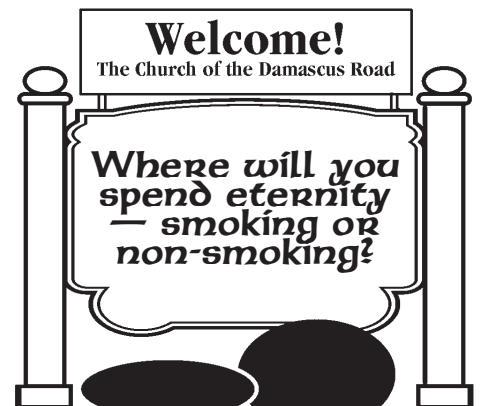
The OCC meets every third Wednesday of the month at 11:45am for a catered lunch followed by the business at hand.

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.

FDCF Brothers-in-Blue

The next weekend at FDCF is scheduled for June 9-12, 2011. 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 application deadline is June 1.

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



The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!
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 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



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RE-entry integration

"It's a Ministry, Not a Program"

Another Dream Realized

Pocahontas Baptist Church is forming a team in anticipation of helping a soon-to-be-released inmate, and we recently had a training session. They are planning to organize as a team with a meeting on May 21 at 3pm. This will fulfill a dream for Terry Schoon, an ex offender and former member of the Church of the Damascus Road Inside Church Council, who has been working hard for over a year to make this happen.



Reentry Reintegration's Mission Statment is to "Empower Christian communities to assist in the successful transition of ex offenders to society." Our Reentry Reintegration ministry will train and prepare you to welcome an ex offender back into society and help her or him make that successful transition, thus making him or her an EX ex offender.

Now, we're not saying it will be easy, but we know from experience that it is a rewarding ministry and, like any ministry, it is filled with sorrows and joys, hard work and feelings of success. Community size need not limit you. We have teams in communities both small and large and in-between.

There can be a vital ministry of reintegration in your area as well. We need your help in locating existing teams in parts of Iowa other than NW Iowa, 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

In Line With The Word Lonely

Stay in line with the Word
Put aside what you have heard
Put aside all religious needs
Planting only God's good seeds

All that is good is written there
The Bible is our Book
Revelation comes out of thin air
Don't let the devil set his hook

Don't forget what is written
In the Word from the beginning
Religion is just a trick
In the end it makes us sick

So keep our eyes on things above
Not words of man but Words of Love
He will be coming to catch away
All of us on that Glorious day.

Stand strong always in the Word
Forget about what you have heard
Religion, tradition, the devil's trick
Don't let him make your spirit sick
— William Bell FDCF

Are you lonely? Have our families deserted us? Have those old friends from the streets left us high and dry? If there's one thing in this world we can count on it's this: people will let us down. No matter how good our intentions are, we always end up disappointed at each other. It isn't on purpose, it just happens. Sooner or later someone ends up alone and forgotten. Maybe that someone is us.

Good news is the Bible talks about this in Proverbs 18:24 – "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Someone who never leaves or forsakes us. This friend is someone who is faithful and true and always has our best interest in mind. This friend is Jesus Christ. Having a relationship with him will change our whole outlook on life and will give us confidence and peace we have never known. He is not only a friend who can help us with our problems, but he is a friend who died for us. He even has the power to change who we are.

1 John 1:9 states, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Do we need a friend who will love us, help us, and never leave us?

Dear Lord, we are sinners and all alone. We turn from our past loneliness and reach toward a life-changing relationship with you. Please come into our hearts, clean us up, and make us the people you planned for us to be. I thank you, God, for your blood that makes us new. We invite you, O God, to be our friend and savior. In Jesus' name. Amen

—Tony Steece, NCCF 5-28-10



The Church of the Damascus Road
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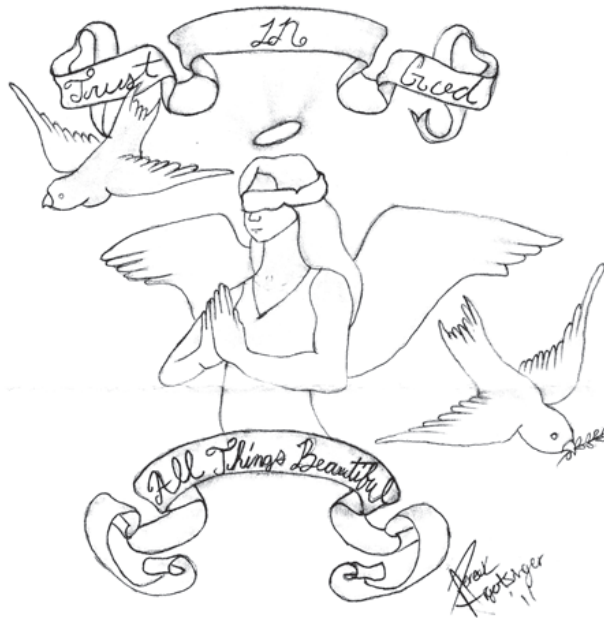
May 2011

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, 239 N 11th St, Fort Dodge, IA 50501, or by e-mail at <DamascusCh@aol.com> to arrange for a visit to your congregation. Pastor Paul 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



Derek Argotsinger, 2011



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