

# The Church of the Damascus Road Echo!

Volume 12  
Issue No. 5b  
October 2009  
Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

## Wasted Days

Wasted days, wasted mind  
Just looking for another time  
Wasted world, going down,  
How long will we be around?

People looking to and fro,  
Seeking for a place to go.  
Wasted world, going down,  
How long will they be around?

Have a son, can't quite say  
The world will be here all his days.  
Confusing world, going down  
How long will it still be around?

They walked through the desert  
Should take eleven days  
Walked forty years, mostly  
Because of what they said

Angered God who sees all  
Thus everyone would fall  
Walked round and round for forty years  
Then they all were gone.

Wasted words, so absurd.  
One day they will all be heard.  
Wasted words, all going down,  
God warned that they would be found.

Wishing I, for one, a long time ago,  
With eyes wide open eleven days would go,  
But around in the desert with new clothes,  
How long will I keep going around?

Wasted days, wasted mind,  
Always looking for another line.  
Wasted world, going down,  
How long will I be around?

—Bill Bell 4-18-09

## Let's Leave Our Weapons Behind

As I stared at the television screen, I have to admit I was shocked - shocked to see a man in a public crowd near where President Obama would soon be speaking, silently holding a sign about freedom in his hands while wearing a loaded gun in a holster strapped to his upper leg. The man was within his legal rights to carry this unconcealed weapon, which was the point he was trying to make, but given the history of gun violence used against American Presidents, I could hardly believe my eyes. I thought to myself, "How have we come to a place in our society where someone, when wishing to express a point of view, would go to such extreme lengths to do so?"

Fact is, polarization has a grip on this country and our politics. Instead of having a reasoned debate, we fight for 51% of the vote, winner take all. Or we take flight, refuse to participate, take our ball and go home. It's a culture war, with neither side able to even comprehend the world-view of the other. I heard one commentator say "it was the greatest divide since the Civil War."

Who among us has not done this on a personal level? Who among us has not complained about other people without trying to talk to them? "Oh, there's no use," we say, "they won't listen to me." We'd rather carry around our precious indignation, like a hand gun strapped to our leg, than risk the conflict and the possibility that we might have to look at ourselves when we actually communicate. It's more comfortable, and self-justifying to stand at a distance and complain. We become fixed in our opinions about people, blindly self-righteous and contemptuous.

And, in so doing, we contribute to the destructive polarization of our world.

Polarization is a luxury we can no longer afford. There has been and is too much violence done to God's intended harmony. The time is getting late. Our world urgently needs a united America, using our tremendous resources to work with other nations towards peace, health, and prosperity for all God's children on this planet.

You and I can't bring together a divided country on our own. But we can, in a fashion consistent with our sacred scriptures, approach our brother and sister in humility and mutual respect, and even when there are stark differences present, we can listen for the voice of God in the wisdom that sometimes emerges between us. We can bring together people in our family, in our parish and diocese, in our community, looking for wisdom to emerge out of the group. When we do so, we not only create a practical, concrete harmony between us. We also help build spiritual harmony that ripples out into all humanity, into creation, into heaven itself.

For as Jesus liked to say, "When you are gathered together, I will be among you!" We can trust in this promise. We can trust God will show us the way forward, we can find acceptable (if not perfect) solutions to our problems, and we will be given the privilege of participating in God's reconciliation of the world.

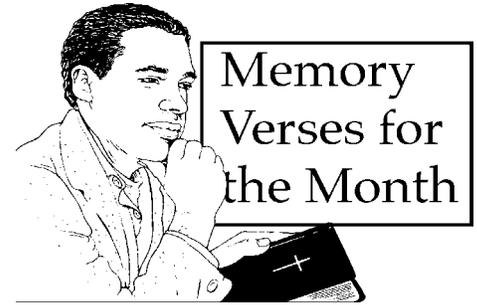
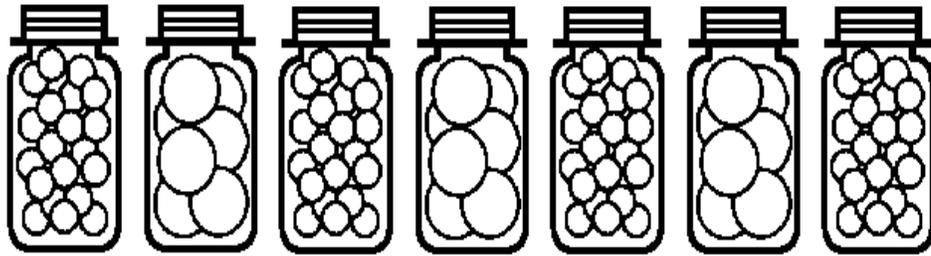
As Christians, let's remember when we gather together to address issues of common concern, we need only to bring faith, and leave weapons behind.

—Fr. Richard Graves +  
St. Mark's Episcopal, Fort Dodge, IA



## Inside the Echo!

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## The Pickle Jar

The pickle jar, as far back as I can remember, sat on the floor beside the dresser in my parents' bedroom. When he got ready for bed, Dad would empty his pockets and toss his coins into the jar. As a small boy I was always fascinated at the sounds the coins made as they were dropped into the jar. They landed with a merry jingle when the jar was almost empty. Then the tones gradually muted to a dull thud as the jar was filled. I used to squat on the floor in front of the jar and admire the copper and silver circles that glistened like a pirate's treasure when the sun poured through the bedroom window. When the jar was filled, Dad would sit at the kitchen table and roll the coins before taking them to the bank.

Taking the coins to the bank was always a big production. Stacked neatly in a small cardboard box, the coins were placed between Dad and me on the seat of his old truck.

Each and every time, as we drove to the bank, Dad would look at me hopefully. 'Those coins are going to keep you out of the textile mill, son. You're going to do better than me. This old mill town's not going to hold you back.' Also, each and every time, as he slid the box of rolled coins across the counter at the bank toward the cashier, he would grin proudly, 'These are for my son's college fund. He'll never work at the mill all his life like me.' We would always celebrate each deposit by stopping for an ice cream cone. I always got chocolate. Dad always got vanilla. When the clerk at the ice cream parlor handed Dad his change, he would show me the few coins nestled in his palm. 'When we get home, we'll start filling the jar again.' He always let me drop the first coins into the empty jar. As they rattled around with a brief, happy jingle, we grinned at each other. 'You'll get to college on pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters,' he said. 'But you'll get there. I'll see to that'

The years passed, and I finished college and took a job in another town. Once, while visiting my parents, I used the phone in their bedroom, and noticed that the pickle jar was gone. It had served its purpose and had been removed. A lump rose in my throat as I stared at the spot beside the dresser where the jar had always stood. My dad was a man of few words, and never lectured me on the values of determination, perseverance, and faith. The pickle jar had taught me all these virtues far more eloquently than the most flowery of words could have done. When I married, I told my wife Susan about the significant part the lowly pickle jar had played in my life as a boy. In my mind, it defined, more than anything else, how much my dad had loved me. No matter how rough things got at home, Dad continued to doggedly drop his coins into the jar. Even the summer when Dad got laid off from the mill, and Mama had to serve dried beans several times a week, not a single dime was taken from the jar. To the contrary, as Dad looked across the table at me, pouring catsup over my beans to make them more palatable, he became more determined than ever to make a way out for me. 'When you finish college, Son,' he told me, his eyes glistening, 'you'll never have to eat beans again - unless you want to.'

The first Christmas after our daughter Jessica was born, we spent the holiday with my parents. After dinner, Mom and Dad sat next to each other on the sofa, taking turns cuddling their first grandchild. Jessica began to whimper softly, and Susan took her from Dad's arms. 'She probably needs to be changed,' she said, carrying the baby into my parents' bedroom to diaper her. When Susan came back into the living room, there was a strange mist in her eyes. She handed Jessica back to Dad before taking my hand and leading me into the room. Look, she said softly, her eyes directing me to a spot on the floor beside the dresser. To my amazement, there, as if it had never been removed, stood the old pickle jar, the bottom already covered with coins. I walked over to the pickle jar, dug down into my pocket, and pulled out a fistful of coins. With a gamut of emotions choking me, I dropped the coins into the jar. I looked up and saw that Dad, carrying Jessica, had slipped quietly into the room. Our eyes locked, and I knew he was feeling the same emotions I felt. Neither one of us could speak. This truly touched my heart.

*"Sometimes we are so busy adding up our troubles that we forget to count our blessings. Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life, for better or for worse. God puts us all in each other's lives to impact one another in some way.. Look for Good in others. The best and most beautiful things cannot be seen or touched - they must be felt with the heart," ~ Helen Keller*

— Author Unknown

"But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:14).  
 The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously (Psalm 37:21).  
 Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God. I am the Lord your God (Leviticus 25:17).  
 Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice (Proverbs 16:8).



## Story Tellers

Story Tellers is the third Friday of every month at FDCF and the third Saturday at NCCF unless a scheduling problem arises. You can read a book to your child on tape, and then send the book and audio cassette tape home for your child to listen to you read to them, and read along with you. The tape, and book are free to you. You just pay regular mail home to your child, or, at FDCF, you can send them out on a visit like regular property through R&D. Sign up with Pastor Stone, or at our regular worship service, or with any Inside Church Council member.

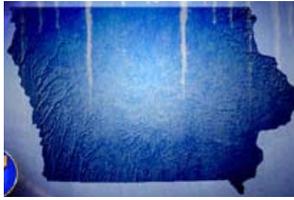
**The Church of the Damascus Road Echo!**

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 Rev. Paul E. Stone, Pastor  
 Rev. Carroll Lang, Editor

# Iowa

According to Jeff Foxworthy



- If you're proud that your region makes the national news at least 96 times each year because it's the hottest or the coldest spot in the nation, you might live in Spirit Lake Iowa.
- If your dad's suntan stops at a line curving around the middle of his forehead, you might farm in Iowa.
- If you have worn shorts and a parka at the same time, you might live in Des Moines, Iowa.
- If your town has an equal number of bars and churches, you might live in Russell, Iowa.
- If you have had a lengthy telephone conversation with someone who dialed a wrong number, you might live in Iowa.
- You know you are a true Iowan when 'vacation' means going east or west on I-80 for the weekend.
- If you measure distance in hours, you might live in Iowa.
- If you know several people who have hit a deer more than once, you might live in Iowa.
- If you often switch from 'Heat' to 'A/C' in the same day and back again, you might live in Iowa.
- If you can drive 65 mph through 2 feet of snow during a raging blizzard, without flinching, you might live in Iowa.
- If you see people wearing camouflage at social events (including weddings), you might live in Iowa.
- If you install security lights on your house and garage and leave both unlocked, you might live in Iowa.
- If you carry jumper cables in your car and your girlfriend knows how to use them, you might live in Iowa.
- If you design your kid's Halloween costume to fit over a snowsuit, you might live in Northern Iowa.
- If driving is better in the winter because the potholes are filled with snow, you might live in Iowa.
- If you know all 4 seasons: almost winter, winter, still winter and road construction, you might live in Iowa.
- If your idea of creative landscaping is a statue of a deer next to your blue spruce, you might live in Iowa.
- If you were unaware that there is a legal drinking age, you might live in Iowa City Iowa.
- If Going Down South means Missouri, you might live in Iowa.
- If your neighbor throws a party to celebrate his new pole shed, you might live in Iowa.
- If your idea of going out to eat is a tailgate party every Saturday, you definitely live in Iowa.
- If you have more miles on your snow blower than your car; you might live in Iowa.
- If you find 0 degrees to be 'a little chilly', you might live in Iowa.
- If you actually understand these jokes — you DO live in Iowa.



## GOOD MEDICINE

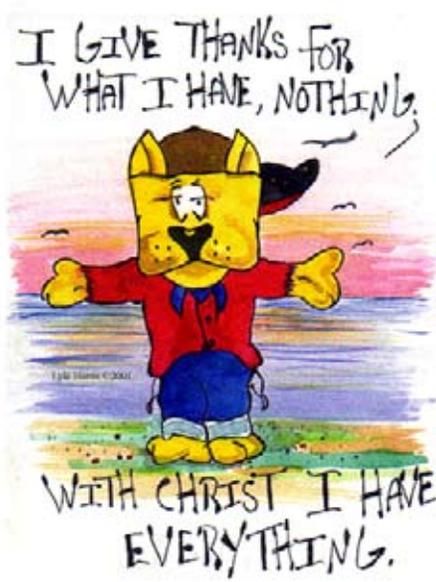
During this time of year many people get a cold or the flu. Doctors can give medicine to help those people feel better. The Bible suggests something that we can give to make someone feel better anytime of the year. Proverbs 17:22 says, "A cheerful heart is good medicine ...." What is the best way to show our cheerfulness?

Connect the numbered dots to find out!

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- Start > 4 > 5 > 16 > 27 > 26 > 15 > 4 > Stop
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- Start > 94 > 95 > 84 > 73 > 62 > Stop
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## Inmate Artwork



Cartoon drawings by Lyle Harris, NCCF

## A Matter of Choice

Michael is the kind of guy you love to hate. He is always in a good mood and always has something positive to say. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, "If I were any better, I would be twins!" He was a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day, Michael was there telling the employee how to look on the positive side of the situation. Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day I went up to Michael and asked him, "I don't get it! You can't be a positive person all of the time. How do you do it?" Michael replied, "Each morning I wake up and say to myself, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or ... you can choose to be in a bad mood. I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or...I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it. Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or...I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life.

"Yeah, right, it's not that easy," I protested. "Yes, it is," Michael said. "Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. The bottom line: It's your choice how you live your life."

I reflected on what Michael said. Soon thereafter, I left the Tower Industry to start my own business. We lost touch, but I often thought about him when I made a choice about life instead of reacting to it. Several years later, I heard that Michael was involved in a serious accident, falling some 60 feet from a communications tower. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Michael was released from the hospital with rods placed in his back. I saw Michael about six months after the accident. When I asked him how he was, he replied, "If I were any better, I'd be twins. Want to see my scars?" I declined to see his wounds, but I did ask him what had gone through his mind as the accident took place. "The first thing that went through my mind was the well-being of my soon to be born daughter," Michael replied. "Then, as I lay on the ground, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live or I could choose to die. I chose to live." "Weren't you scared? Did you lose consciousness?" I asked. Michael continued, "The paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine, but when they wheeled me into the ER and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes, I read, 'he's a dead man.' I knew I needed to take action."

"What did you do?" I asked. "Well, there was a big burly nurse shouting questions at me," said Michael. "She asked if I was allergic to anything. 'Yes,' I replied. The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled, 'Gravity.' Over their laughter, I told them, 'I am choosing to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead.'" Michael lived, thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully. Attitude, after all, is everything. "Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" Matthew 6:34. After all, today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday.

—Unknown

## Worship Opportunities

Worship & Bible Study  
 FDCF Fort Dodge  
 6:30pm Wednesdays .....Holy Communion  
 6:30pm Fridays ..... Prayer & Bible Study

### FDCF Pastor Contact Hours

2:00pm - Count Wednesday  
 2:00pm - Count Friday

### NCCF Rockwell City

6:30pm Tuesdays .... Prayer & Bible Study  
 6:30pm Thursdays .....Holy Communion

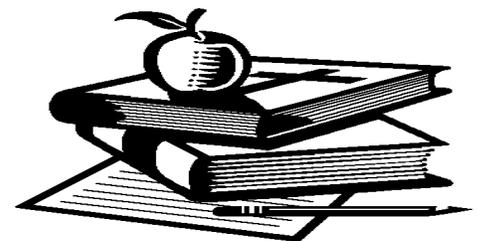
### NCCF Pastor Contact Hours

2:00pm - Count Tuesday  
 2:00pm - Count Thursday



## Articles Invited

The editor of this newsletter is inviting **all readers** to contribute articles, poetry, art work, and opinions for the newsletter. So don't be bashful. Give all your newsletter submissions to Pastor Stone.



## Check Them Out!

The Church of the Damascus Road Librarians are inviting you to come to the chapel (MPR 23 in FDCF H Building; Treatment Center Room A in NCCF), and "check out" the books, tapes and compact discs in our library! There are many genres of books to choose from! We hope to see you there!

### Answer to "Just for Fun" puzzle

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