

The Church of the Damascus Road

Flash!

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Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Battling Against Ourselves

As I sit nowhere in time, and meditate within my Father's Spirit, I find myself at odds with the thoughts and words of my brethren. The words of Yehshua (Jesus) harken to me, "love your enemies..." These words begin to resound within me as a bright light, that I cannot shake from my Spirit. Those of us that profess to have "faith" in the God of Abraham, must learn to walk in that faith as well, or as the apostle Paul tells us, we become as those who do evil.

In a world where intolerance is the norm, I hear my brethren speak out against other people. Some call those who believe differently than ourselves pagans, holding themselves as something higher than others. Whether talking with Muslims, Catholics, or even Christians, I hear the same themes again and again. Believe what I believe, or be a pagan, an unbeliever. Is that what our Savior and Messiah taught us in His words?

The deeper I am transformed by the Holy Spirit, the more difficult I find it to live among those who profess any specific religion, even Christians. I find myself drawn to those who are broken or without hope, rather than those who stand upon pride to exalt themselves above another. Yehshua, Paul in his letters, and even Jude in his letter, all spoke of separating oneself out from among sinners. Is that what I am being driven toward? Is my Spirit turning me against a world filled with intolerance?

As I studied on this word, "pagan," I found that the same synonyms kept popping up with regard to the word pagan; infidel, heathen, and gentile. And all of them served the same definitions: a person who does not acknowledge your god. And if you take an overall view of this concept of paganism, you could easily conclude that a pagan opposes what another person believes. And if you oppose, you are an enemy. To call someone a pagan, is to call them an enemy; one who does not believe like you.

We see these scenarios played out every day in the news. Islamic extremists attacking infidels, Christians attacking pagans, and the whole world in turmoil. It's a vicious cycle that can only be conquered by tolerance of those who believe differently. Cries from governments and pundits seek "one world order," and one world religion. That's what the Greeks were after, until it erupted into the Maccabean Revolt around 165BC, wherein the Jewish people sought only to worship the God of Abraham, and separate themselves from everyone else.

Before Yehshua ascended the last time, He told us to be witnesses of Him. Martus, in the Greek, where we get the English word martyr: "to witness." Martus is to record, or show evidence. Too often, we fail to realize that Yehshua was calling us to each become living records of Him, even unto death. Not that we believe in this or believe that, but that we become "like" Him, living our lives as He lived His. Becoming living evidence, or living stones as it were, to what it means to believe; even when faced with our own death because of it. Peter said, "He was without sin."

Yehshua proclaimed in Matt 5:44 "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; transform yourselves beyond fleshly thinking. Many Christians jump on this bandwagon of "all we need is love!" Wasn't that a Beatles song, who by their own admission were unbelievers? And the people walk around fawning over one another, "Oh, I have love in my heart." But it's all just empty words, they mean nothing. Love is an action that cannot exist without forgiveness. And if there is no forgiveness, then love cannot manifest itself into action. How do we love an enemy we do not forgive? Did not Yehshua warn us of those people who profess with their mouths, but their hearts were far from Him?

To call someone a pagan, is to proclaim them as an enemy. And if we have an enemy, and do not show love toward them, then we become the pagan ourselves. "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom 12:2). Love your enemy, and walk as your Savior walked.

—Michael Alkzre, Dec 2015



Reentry Gathering

On June 4, 2017 from 2:30 to 5pm, we are having a gathering of Reentry Re-integration Teams and returning citizens. Purpose is to share and discuss ways to help returning citizens to handle money, budget time and resources and be involved in religious and community activities. We will meet in the Western Iowa Synod Office, 318 East Fifth Street, Storm Lake.



Brothers in Blue meets in the FDCF Gym

FDCF Brothers-in-Blue

The 36th weekend at FDCF is scheduled for June 8-11, 2017. 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 Friday, June 2.

Prayer in support of the weekend is one way persons on the 'outside' can support this renewal ministry, or mail letters of encouragement to CoDR (address on page 4).

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Shoes in Church

I showered and shaved, I adjusted my tie.
 I got there and sat in a pew just in time.
 Bowing my head in prayer. As I closed my eyes,
 I saw the shoe of the man next to me touching my own. I sighed.
 With plenty of room on either side, I thought, 'Why must our soles touch?'
 It bothered me, his shoe touching mine. But it didn't bother him much.
 A prayer began: 'Our Father,' I thought, 'This man with the shoes, has no pride.
 They're dusty, worn, and scratched. Even worse, there are holes on the side!'
 'Thank You for blessings,' the prayer went on. The shoe man said a quiet 'Amen.'
 I tried to focus on the prayer, but my thoughts were on his shoes again.
 Aren't we supposed to look our best when walking through that door?
 'Well, this certainly isn't it,' I thought, Glancing toward the floor.
 Then the prayer was ended, and the songs of praise began.
 The shoe man was certainly loud, sounding proud as he sang.
 His voice lifted the rafters, his hands were raised high.
 The Lord could surely hear the shoe man's voice from the sky.
 It was time for the offering, and what I threw in was steep.
 I watched as the shoe man reached into his pockets so deep.
 I saw what was pulled out, what the shoe man put in.
 Then I heard a soft 'clink' as when silver hits tin.
 The sermon really bored me..... to tears, and that's no lie..
 It was the same for the shoe man, for tears fell from his eyes.
 At the end of the service, as is the custom here,
 We must greet new visitors, and show them all good cheer.
 But I felt moved somehow, and wanted to meet the shoe man.
 So after the closing prayer I reached over and shook his hand.
 He was old and his skin was dark and his hair was truly a mess.
 But I thanked him for coming, for being our guest.
 He said, 'My name's Charlie, I'm glad to meet you, my friend.'
 There were tears in his eyes, but he had a large, wide grin.
 'Let me explain,' he said, wiping tears from his eyes.
 'I've been coming here for months and you're the first to say 'Hi.'
 'I know that my appearance is not like all the rest.
 'But I really do try to always look my best.'
 'I always clean and polish my shoes before my very long walk.
 'But by the time I get here they're dirty and dusty, like chalk.'
 My heart filled with pain, and I swallowed to hide my tears.
 As he continued to apologize for daring to sit so near.
 He said, 'When I get here I know I must look a sight.
 'But I thought if I could touch you, then maybe our souls might unite.'
 I was silent for a moment, knowing whatever was said
 Would pale in comparison... I spoke from my heart, not my head.
 'Oh, you've touched me,' I said, 'and taught me, in part;
 'That the best of any man is what is found in his heart.'
 The rest, I thought, this shoe man will never know.
 Like just how thankful I really am... that his dirty old shoe touched my soul.

— Unknown



Get the Flash in a Flash

We now send the Flash! electronically as a .pdf to those who request to get it via the web. Not only do we save paper, ink and printing costs, but you will get your newsletter in a flash, and you can also see photos in color. Just send us your email address (include your name and address so we can stop sending by mail) to cdlng@aol.com.

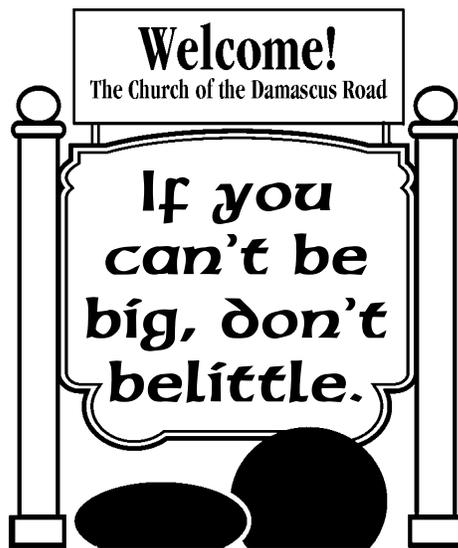
Thanks!

— Carroll Lang, Editor

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"I was going to wake up early to go jogging,
 but my toes voted against me 10 to 1."



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

Judy Lang, Proofreader

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 can also be sent to your email address. Our office is at St. Olaf Lutheran Church.

The Church of the Damascus Road

239 North 11th Street

Fort Dodge, IA 50501

Phone: 515-955-3579



Call Me Old School

I don't write much poetry
Mostly just write a few rhymes
One thing I do while,
Doing time for my crimes
Running the streets
Someone dropped a dime
As always I take the heat
Those I love get a free ride

Some call me Old School
Some just call me lame
But all I got in this world
Is my name, yeah, just my name
It's the code where I come from
My word I can't break
No matter what I have done
Or how much I ache

My world may be broken
May be a bit strained
No words will be spoken
I won't place no blame
Can take the trouble
Can stand in the rain
But in my people's faces
Can't bear one ounce of pain

—William E. Bell

Eternal Life

Over the years, we will come to see all the good that we can be. But first we must lay down our life. To live my life for Jesus Christ, the Son of our almighty God, that came to earth to save this world.

He laid down his life and paid the bill to free my soul of sinful will. My Father sent him and he came at once, knowing that Calvary's hill would come, and yet, and still, he came in faith to let us know his love was great! But when he came they mocked and scorned and filled his head with sticky thorns. Hung him up upon the cross in hopes that, yes, his life was lost, but on the third day he rose again to let us know we were free of sin.

So just remember, this "great day," to live your life in a righteous way, for Jesus laid down his precious life so the Father would give us eternal life.

"God loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten son, so that whoever believes in him will not die, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

—Author Unknown

REentry integration

"It's a Ministry,
Not a Program"

First Chance or Second Chance?

Reading my emails the other day I came across the following from: "Envisioning a First Chance Society" - by Jeff Grant, JD, M Div & Sarah Diamond, PhD. They have an idea that intrigued me: "Supporting a Second Chance Society with First Chance Opportunities." "Nobody knows the failures of our criminal justice system better than the individuals and families impacted by incarceration and the community-based organizations which serve them."



We hear of giving returning citizens a 'second chance' to become a contributing productive member of society, but their criminal past is a big barrier, because employers are often reluctant to give them a chance to prove themselves. What would it mean to be a society with first chance opportunities for returning citizens? It certainly sparks the imagination, doesn't it?

That's where we all can help. As a caring part of a Reentry Reintegration team you may need to help a returning citizen maintain a positive attitude and approach to living "on the outside." You may also have to provide food and drink for this 'stranger,' help him find clothes to wear and assist him to make the transition back into society by helping him find a job and a congregation and realize his niche in your community. When you do, you will have been part of bringing about a miracle in which they can feel 'normal' almost like a "first chance." You may have to help others in the community love them as God loves them and encourage them to succeed. Caring, trained reentry teams are needed now more than ever.

If you are interested in reading more, here's a link: <https://mail.aol.com/webmail-std/en-us/suite>

If you are willing to form a Reentry Reintegration team in your area, contact me by phone or email below and we will set a date for a training session.

We also need help to form new teams in western Iowa, developing more teams around the state (and the USA). Please give me a call at 515-571-6566 or email me at CDLNg@aol.com.

—Rev. Carroll Lang, NW IA Director

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

Invite the Pastor

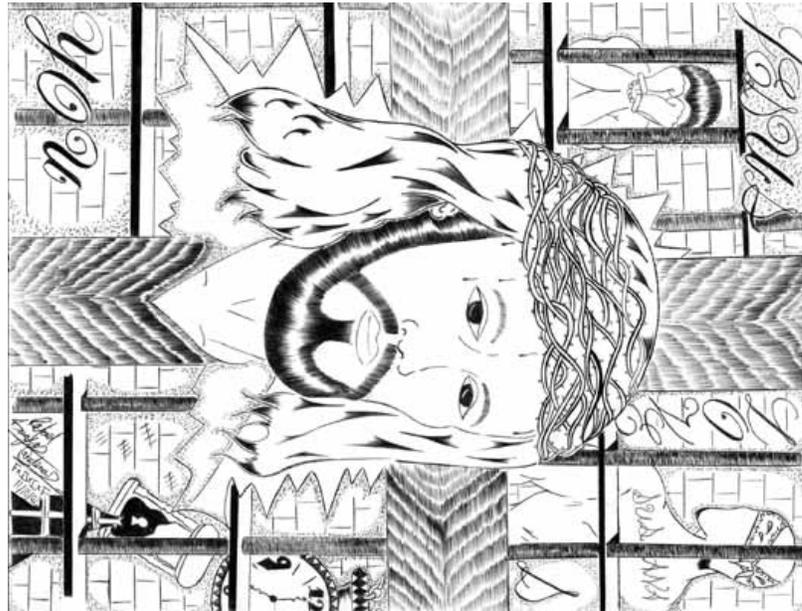
Our worship services are on weeknights so that people on the outside can worship with the inmates and not miss worship in their own congregations. And this enables the pastor to visit congregations on Sundays. He can give a brief update on the ministry, a sermon, a children's sermon, an adult forum, a cross-generational class session, or any or all of the above, and is open to suggestions. Just needs 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 email <DamascusCh@aol.com> to arrange for a visit.

Inmates:

You can have your original artwork in this space in the Flash; simply hand your art to Pastor Stone. It will be scanned and then returned to you.

Jess Loves You by Rafael Cardenas



Artists' Corner

The Church of the Damascus Road
239 North 11th Street
Fort Dodge, IA 50501
515-955-3579

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Thanks for
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May 2017

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.



CoDR on FaceBook

The Church of Damascus Road is now on Facebook. There are currently a few videos and pictures and will be updated when more are available. Also check for updates for upcoming events. To LIKE us, log into Facebook with the link <https://www.facebook.com/thechurchofthedamascusroad>

NCCF Church Council

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Mark Leeper Jesse Muga
Derrick Roberts Terence Walker
Brad Osborne Patrill Ellis
Charles Foster Rick Young/Lib

Weekly Schedule

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

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Christopher McCoy-VP/Choir .. Terry King
Chad Burmester-Sec/ST Jeremey Littrel
Michael Goehring Kelton Houts
Lamont Prince James Rainer
Richard Dodd Bradley Baumann

Weekly Schedule

6:30pm Wednesdays Holy Communion
6:30pm Fridays Bible Study

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.

Thank you for your support.

— Pastor Paul Stone