Health Update

Just to keep you posted, I have been back at work full time for just over 21/2 months. It’s really good to be “home.” I think I am doing pretty well. I’ll do better if I avoid Butter Brickle ice cream.

Both congregations’ leadership teams continue to guide their members on paths they think Jesus wants them to walk. We hope and pray that each Bible study, each worship service, and each opportunity for fellowship make his Way more clear and his grace more experienced.

Please continue to support CoDR’s ministries with your prayers, presence (as you can), and financial donations. Like in most other congregations, summer is a slowwww time of year. Don’t forget us.

God bless you and God bless CoDR and its guys.

—Pastor Paul

Topsy-Turvy World

We are living in a creative topsy-turvy world, where all is confusion. But you may be sure that it is confusion with a plan – the Devil’s plan!

The Bible tells of that old great deceiver the Devil, and that he has devoted himself to the cause of our great self-deception and to the deceptions that lie between nations all over the world. He has led us to believe that things were getting better, when they are really getting worse.

We all recognize that the world has changed radically since the beginning of this century. We are aware of it’s increased tempo, of the spirit of revolution that is sweeping away the established landmarks and traditions; of the speed with which language, fashions, customs, housing, and our way of living and thinking are being altered and changed.

Some years ago children were delighted at the prospect of a trip to the train station to watch the trains come in. We who once marveled at the telegraph now take the miracle of television for granted.

Today children are all about “give me, give me,” and take all they can get for themselves and not give to others.

Not so long ago many of man’s physical diseases were termed hopeless and incurable. Today, we have drugs so effective that many age-old diseases are disappearing.

We have accomplished much of that, there is no doubt, but in all this, man has not

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CoDR Foundation

The CoDR Foundation thanks the Emanuel-St. John endowment committee for approving a grant request in the amount of $2500 for 2018 in support of the CoDR Foundation fund-building project.

The Western Iowa Synod (WIS) Assembly met June 8-10 in Sioux City. Delegates had the opportunity to learn from Pastor Stone what’s new at CoDR at a Saturday forum entitled “From Bondage to Freedom.” Likewise, Pastor Lang presented an update on Reentry Reintegration. Other highlights of this forum included reports by Brian Underwood and Victor Scalco on their transforming experiences with CoDR while incarcerated and during reintegration.

Diane Vavak, Vice President of the Outside Church Council and co-Treasurer/Secretary of the CoDR Foundation, gave a short presentation to the Assembly caucus. She urged congregational leaders to go back to their church councils to not only continue (or start) regular giving to CoDR operations, but to increase benevolences by 10-20% to build the CoDR Foundation Fund.

The Assembly provided an opportunity for CoDR and the Foundation to provide brochures, pledge cards, newsletters, etc. at an 8 foot long table in the display area during the assembly. Assembly members tour the displays during breaks to enhance their assembly experience and as a form of continuing education about the various missions of the WIS.

Bishop Rodger Prois, representing the WIS Endowment Committee, presented a check for $1,000 to Diane Vavak as a positive response to the grant request submitted by Pastor Jim Davis, President of the CoDR Foundation Board.

I am pleased to report that at midyear we are very close to being on target to raise at least $25,000 in 2018. When we reach that 2018 goal we will open an account with the ELCA Endowed Pooled Trust Fund.

—Jim Willis, VP CoDR Foundation board

Foundation Board of Directors
Positions approved by the CoDR Outside Church Council on August 21, 2017:

Ongoing Term — CoDR Vice President (presently Diane Vavak)

4 year term —.......................... James Willis
4 year term —.......................... Pastor Jim Davis
2 year term —.......................... Connie Gustafson
1 year term —.......................... Pastor Paul E. Stone

Henceforth, terms will be for four years, one Board Member elected each year.

Serve God Willingly

Willingly or Willfully?

That is the question. In today’s religious community, much is made of theology and rite, but very little of substance. In the song, “O, O God, Forgive Us,” by the group King & Country, one of the lines is that we spend our time doing the work of God, but we have forgotten that what we do is for God. It is not what we profess or do out of rote, but how we receive it internally and project it externally. For those who believe that we only need faith, and works play no part, you have been sadly deceived by false teachers, what the apostle Paul calls Satan’s ministers of righteousness (2 Cor 11:14-15). Even Messiah Himself warned us that we are to do the will of the Father (Matt 7:21). Yet, what I see most often is finger-pointing and excuses.

To do is to act, and to act is our “work” This is why James tells us that faith without works is death (James 2). When St. Thérèse of Lisieux created what she called her “Science of Love,” she broke it down into 6 parts. One of those parts was about “willingness,” and she talks about the difference between willfully seeking God and willingly seeking God. Most Christians willfully seek God, which means they strive to appease God in their own strength.

To be willful, according to Merriam-Webster, is a trait of someone who is prone to disobedience; i.e. it’s about the self doing what it wants by its’ own design. Christians often seek Scripture to justify what they believe and say, without willingly accepting what the Scripture tells us, that is, without any transformation of self.

Messiah spoke out about how the people perceived love and their works. “This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Matt 15:18). The apostle Paul tells us we can perform acts of love, yet have no love in our hearts (cf. Rom 7:15; 1 Cor 13:1-3).

And therein lies the heart of the problem (pun intended): willingly do I follow God, or willfully do I follow God? The willful believer relies on the self: what ‘I’ have done. The willing believer transforms himself into a servant who willingly follows the guidance of his heavenly Father through His Word, without recognition for it. Willful people see the faults of others; however, willing people seek God to help them overcome their own faults. Believing is a case of transformation, by willingly accepting the will of the Father and by our willing acceptance of His precepts of living rightly!

—Your Servant, Michael Alkire FDCF

Welcome!
The Church of the Damascus Road

Forgive your enemies—it messes with their heads.

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To receive the Flash! electronically as a .pdf, just send us your email address (include your name and address so we can stop sending by mail) to cdng@aol.com. Thanks!

—Carroll Lang, Editor

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
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Parent-Child Separation

I received an article by Sheaila Dewan from a federal inmate with a different perspective on parent-child separation we’ve been hearing about in the news lately.

In May, when the outrage over the separation of migrant children from their parents was beginning to boil, President Trump’s Secretary for Homeland Security shrugged off accusations that it was a “form of state terror.” After all, she said, “We do it every day in every part of the country.” Think about it, family separation is a fact of life here, happening hundreds - if not thousands - of times a day. “In the United States,” she said, “we call it law enforcement.”

“Advocates for criminal justice reform have argued that Americans appalled at the treatment of immigrant families at the border should realize that prosecutors and the police routinely separate children from their parents. It happens when parents or children are arrested, it happens when incarcerated women give birth - it can even be triggered when a pregnant woman fails a mandatory drug test, or when a child skips school. It comes with no warning, sometimes in the middle of the night.”

Laws are necessary for an orderly society, but the consequences of enforcement often seem contrary to a just and peaceful society when families are separated.

Reentry Reintegration teams, obeying Christ’s command, extend his love to returning citizens, often helping them reunite with their families. On many occasions when a reentry reintegration team tries to help a returning citizen, the returning citizen ends up violating parole or getting into more trouble and winding up back in prison. The problem, all too often, is because of addiction. It is a disease of epidemic proportions that is sweeping our nation and swelling prison populations. Christ is calling returning citizens to set boundaries so that they obey Christ’s command, too.

Something needs to be done to provide treatment rather than punishment, because punishment does not deter addiction or committing crimes to feed the addiction. It’s time to express our anger regarding this, and at the same time, show compassion for those who are caught in the grip of addiction.

More compassionate teams are needed in order to assist returning citizens to reintegrate into our communities by breaking the chain of addiction.

If you and others in your community are willing to form a team for this vital ministry, contact Pastor Carroll Lang, CDLng@aol.com or call 515-571-6566(C).

God bless your ministry of Reentry Reintegration.

—Pastor Carroll Lang, Reentry Reintegration Coordinator

Topsy-Turvy World

solved the basic problem of the human race.

We can build the highest buildings, the fastest planes, and the longest bridges. We have successfully probed the far reaches of space and conquered the unknown, but we still can’t govern ourselves or live together in equality and peace!

We may create great schools of art and music, we may discover newer and better things in life, but there is nothing new about the troubles. They are the same old ones that man has always had. They may come upon us in new ways, they may seem to give sharper pains and deeper anguish, but fundamentally we are facing the same temptations, the same trials, and the same testings that have always confronted humankind.

Forever, since that tragic moment in the Garden of Eden, when man gave up God’s will for his own will, man has been plagued by the same problems. Their cause is stated in the third chapter of Genesis. The terrible conditions that produced them are related in the first chapter of Romans. It is man’s depraved and sinful nature that fills him with hate, envy, greed, and jealousy. The curse of sin is upon his body, and he is forever haunted by the fear of death. And the gospel of Jesus Christ gives us the remedy.

Man’s inventive genius has enabled him to change everything but himself. For man, in spite of the loudly acclaimed “progress” of our time, remains just as he was in the beginning. Living in a creative topsy-turvy world.

—Written by Billy Graham
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.

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

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

All Readers: Send Contributions

The editor of this newsletter is inviting ALL READERS, inside and outside to send in articles, poetry, artwork, and opinions for the newsletter. So don’t be bashful.

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

NCCF Church Council
Kline Goeders-Pres ...............Dustin Doyl-ST
Terence Walker-ST/VP/P&W ...... Matt Miller
Christopher McCoy-Mus/ST ...... Caleb Rutan
Patrill Ellis-P&W ......Michael Forester-ST/Lib
Josh Alfredson-ST ......Carolyn Smith-Lib
Shean Holmes .................. Tom Reisch

Weekly Schedule
6:30pm Tuesdays .................Bible Study
6:30pm Thursdays ............. Holy Communion

Reintegration Steering Committee
Dennis Booth-Pres ............. Judy Lang-VP/Treas
Barb Rosbach-Sec ................ Diane Vavak
Mark Juhl ...... Doug Rosbach ...... Mike Malvesti
Pastor Kim Wills ............... Pastor Jeff Ungs
Pastor Paul Stone .......... Carroll Lang-Dir

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Judy Lang-Treas ............... Doug Rosbach-Sec
Dennis Booth ...... Mike Malvesti ...... Barb Rosbach
Pastor Jeff Ungs ............. Pastor Paul Stone
Carroll Lang ................. Pastor Kim Wills

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Chad Burmester-Sec/ST ........ Johnnie Tharp
Jamod Sallis ................... Michael Benson
David Robbins ............... Terry King
Nathanael Matlock .......... Keith Taylor

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