

# Church of the Damascus Road Prison Ministry

◆ ◆ ◆ Winter Newsletter ◆ ◆ ◆

## Happy New Year!

### IT'S BEEN ONE FULL YEAR! ◆ ◆

We had a great time at our Damascus House after Christmas Party! Thanks to all who helped us celebrate our first full year of owning the house. It doesn't seem like it was that long ago, but we closed in January 2025, started remodeling right away and had our first resident in February. Two more joined us in March and by April we were full. It's been a whirlwind but we've learned a lot and have seen God doing amazing things in the lives of our guys. Special thanks to all of our great community partners who make it all possible!



### NEW YEAR, NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE AND GROW! ◆ ◆ ◆

Starting the re-entry house was a big step for us last year, but God took great care of us and has put CODR in position to continue taking big steps in 2026. He tells us that if we keep emptying our cups, He'll keep filling them so that's what we're going to do! We're excited about the potential we see, so please join us as we pray for discernment on how best to grow the ministry moving forward.



### CHRISTMAS JOY! ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

We had the privilege of a lifetime last month as we partnered with Prison Fellowship to provide a very special Christmas Event at the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility. The guys were able to invite family members and enjoy an extended time of games, goodies and fellowship as a reward for the incredible work they're doing in our PF Grow program. Special thanks to Chris Walker from Walker's Bike Shop here in Fort Dodge for providing this wonderful raffle item for the children at the event. This girl's gonna have some fun!



We also want to thank the amazing staff at Fort Dodge Correctional Facility. The event would not have been possible without their enthusiastic support. We're fortunate to have such a dedicated and compassionate team out there!

## MINISTRY UPDATE FROM PASTOR KELLI

I'm checking the list and it's looking good! Lots of great things happened this last year. We are continually amazed at how God is moving in and through our re-entry house and the wider community. What began as a step of obedience has become a living testimony of redemption, restoration, and hope. Every day, we're reminded that God is still in the business of transforming lives, one heart at a time. Here are some highlights from the last 3 months.



We wanted to get some work done on the lawn before winter came so the good folks at Smitty's helped us completely replant our lawn and add landscaping rock around the outside of the house. It'll be a little sloppy for a while, but I can't wait for Spring to come and for the new grass to really get going.

We also had the honor of helping load several hundred quilts and hygiene supply packets for Lutheran World Relief, an organization that saves lives and improves living conditions all over the world. Many of these supplies go to help the victims of hurricanes here the United States as well so it was an honor to help out such a great cause. We had an awesome time and made some new friends in the process!



Finally this last October we were given the privilege of baptizing 55 guys between our Fort Dodge and Rockwell City services. God is really working in the lives of these men and we're seeing the changes not only on the inside but with the families outside. Several of the men have told me that their baptism has been the catalyst for family members to either begin or reignite their relationship with Christ. The ripple effects of what we do reach so many so thank you so much for your continued support!

We'll be doing baptisms again at Easter so I'm sure the blessings will keep on coming. If you'd like to get in on the action, please consider joining our amazing team of volunteers. It's an experience you'll cherish forever!



Thoughts from some of our guys along with some great pictures from our PFG Christmas Event:  
"What message would you like to give people this Christmas?"



- I am grateful for my family, this PFG group, the daily lessons that God is teaching me and my support system that is helping me to move on. I have felt God working in my life, in helping me to see that God is everywhere. There is a lesson to be learned from everyone and everything. I don't believe in coincidences. Most recently I have discovered that whenever I have pain or am struggling with something, to give it up to God. Take a step back and watch what he can do. Through others I have learned that, God can take your mess and turn it into a message! There is a reason for it all. What you consider a struggle could in fact be a blessing. Many times we focus only on what we want and neglect what we need. When you surrender to God and put him first, he will always give you what you need. And more often than not, what you need can in fact be better than what you originally wanted. The best advice I can give someone is to stop fighting with God. He is your best ally and sometimes your only true friend. You don't need to understand in the moment, just follow his will. In time you will find out that your will and his will align together.

- Let us always remember that Jesus our savior gave his life for us. The record against us was cancelled. We are loved and forgiven! I encourage everyone to let the anger and bitterness go. Forgive the ones you are holding a grudge against. Call them and make amends. Love your family, friends, and neighbors as Christ loved you. The love of God has been poured in your heart, so go and share with the world. The world needs you to share the Good News. We already have enough bad news. Start today! Love, forgive and share each other's burdens and build each other in Christ. God loved you first, now it is time to love one another first. You will be glad you did, love is contagious!

- I would like everyone reading or hearing this message to know that they / we have so much more value and influence than we know. Our very presence has the ability to comfort and reassure. without saying a word we can ease troubled hearts, calm stormy minds, strengthen shaky resolve, and encourage fearful steps. For most, this time of year is about family and celebration, about remembering that our lives are connected to something bigger. We are meant to be connected to our family, our community, our nation, and our world. You're a gift to a broken people and you have a purpose. Traditionally Christmas is about the birth of Jesus. God saw us and gave us himself, but his love was too much to contain to one region or era. He gave to us so we could also give ourselves away to others who struggle in the same way. Please don't forget to reach out to someone to honor the one who gave us this season.

- May God be your first solution not your last answer! Why do we go to man or things man has created before we go to God? He's the Creator and all-knowing one and yet still he's our last answer if even he comes to mind at all. I encourage everyone this season to be mindful of him more than before. He is a pursuer, chasing after us. He wants that relationship with each and every one of us to love us, help us, to heal us, to protect us, to give us all we need to get through this life and beyond. He has saved us from ourselves when we didn't even know we needed saving, thank God he did! He's the only one who has all the answers for any of our questions. He is the solution! May you all receive what he has for you all this holiday as well as the rest of your lives God bless!

- I am very grateful and fortunate for the family that I have left: my brother, mother and my step daughters. I have given myself to God and am attempting to live his will the best I can. I do see that he works in mysterious ways. Some good has come out of my incarceration. I believe in God's will for us and that we must participate in his will for it to become a reality for us. I pray for spiritual knowledge and goodwill to others and myself.



## A New Year, A New Beginning: Walking Together Into Hope

A new year always carries a sense of possibility. For many of us, it means fresh goals, renewed energy, and a chance to begin again. But for the men we serve, a new year represents something even deeper: the hope of a new life. Rehabilitation isn't a moment, it's a journey. It begins long before release and continues through all the daily choices and challenges of life. As CODR goes into this new year, our vision remains clear: to walk alongside returning citizens as they rebuild their lives with dignity, purpose, and hope.

### Why Our Mission Matters More Than Ever

The transition from incarceration back into the community can be overwhelming. Individuals face barriers to employment, housing, transportation, and healthy relationships. Many return carrying deep wounds—broken trust, lost time, and fear of failure. Without support, the odds are stacked against them. But we believe that no one is defined by their worst mistake. We believe transformation is possible. We know that when people are met with compassion, accountability, and consistent support, lives change.



### This past year, we witnessed powerful stories of hope:

- Individuals securing stable housing for the first time
- Men reconnecting with their families
- Participants finding employment and discovering purpose
- Lives redirected away from recidivism and toward restoration

These stories are reminders that hope is not abstract—it is being lived out in the lives of these individuals every day through action.



### Our Vision for the Year Ahead

As we look forward, our focus is not simply on doing more, but on going deeper. In the coming year, we are committed to:

- Strengthening reentry pathways by expanding our services inside and outside the fence
- Building community partnerships that open doors to employment, education, and housing
- Developing leaders among those we serve—empowering returning citizens to become mentors and role models themselves. These men love to serve and have much to give.

### You Are Part of This Story

This ministry does not happen in isolation. It happens because of faithful supporters, volunteers, and churches like you, who believe in salvation and second chances.

- When you give, you provide tangible resources and stability.
- When you volunteer, you offer presence, encouragement, and accountability.
- When you pray, you invite God's power into places that often feel forgotten.

### Moving Forward Together

As we enter this new year, we do so with gratitude for what has been accomplished and expectancy for what lies ahead. There will be challenges, but there will also be breakthroughs. There will be hard days, but there will also be moments of profound joy. We invite you to continue walking with us—believing in redemption, investing in restoration, and helping write new stories of hope.



# Support MENU

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Your generosity enables us to:

*Provide bibles, devotional and recovery literature, Christmas cards, communion supplies, musical equipment, DVD resources, coffee, bulletins, sheet music, baptism supplies and pastoral leadership for the Fort Dodge & Rockwell City prison church congregations*

*Provide bikes, bus passes, haircuts, gift cards, bibles, devotional and recovery literature, hygiene supplies, clothing and transportation assistance to the men at the Fort Dodge men's halfway house*

*Operate The Damascus House which provides the men in our reentry program with a safe and affordable place to live and a community of Christian support*

## VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Opportunities to serve:

**Prison worship services** – Worship with us at one of our amazing church services inside the prison. It's an experience you'll treasure!

**Prison Fellowship Academy** – Connect, encourage and grow with a group of amazing men as we journey together through the PF Grow reentry education program in partnership with Prison Fellowship.

**Connie's Closet** – Collect men's clothing and hygiene supplies for Fort Dodge Men's halfway house. Donations can be dropped off at Grace Lutheran or St. Olaf Lutheran churches in Fort Dodge or give us a call and we can pick them up!

**CODR Church Council** – Join our amazing team of volunteer leaders as we make decisions for the future of this exciting ministry!

## Giving Opportunities through Thrivent

thrivent

Thrivent  
Action Teams  
Generosity is meant to be shared.



Gather a volunteer team to put on a fundraiser, educational event or service activity—like landscaping, remodeling or painting at the Damascus House or hosting a CODR fundraiser. Thrivent will provide the resources you need to get started, including up to \$250 in seed money.



thrivent Choice®  
Making  
generosity easy

Through Thrivent Choice®, Thrivent clients with membership can contribute to organizations and causes they care about such as CODR—and influence how Thrivent distributes some of its charitable grant funding through Choice Dollars®.

**Contact your Thrivent agent or the CODR office with any questions you may have. We'll help you get started!**

**LIVE  
GENEROUSLY**

# Thank You So Much For Your Generosity!

1st Lutheran Church – Algona, 1st Presbyterian Fort Dodge  
1st Presbyterian Church – Jefferson, 1st Samuel Lutheran Church  
1st Samuel Lutheran Church – women,  
1st United Methodist Church – Fort Dodge, Adam Sanford, Alan Redenius,  
Anthony & Jodi Wiita, Augustana Lutheran Church, Barry Fisher,  
Becky Ostheimer, Bethany Lutheran – Emmetsburg,  
Bethany Lutheran – Laurens, Bethany Lutheran – Thompson,  
Brian Underwood, Brothers in Blue, Carroll & Martha Oskvig,  
Charles & Linda Danielson, Chris & Rebecca Worley,  
Conrad & Marlene Kleppe, Dale & Lisa Siebrecht, Dale & Nancy Bruns,  
Daniel & Colleen Goodwin, Darwin Lake, David & Luann Bohnet,  
Dennis & Candace Booth, Derald & Pamela Goetz,  
Eagle Grove Ev Lutheran Church, Ebenezer Lutheran Church Women,  
Faith Lutheran Church – Holstein, Fort Dodge Correctional Facility,  
Gail Boock, George Hedges, Georgia Hovde, Glen & Sharon Houts,  
Grace Lutheran Church – Fort Dodge, Harley & Susan Hett,  
Holmes Ev Lutheran Church – Clarion,  
Immanuel Lutheran Church – Waukee, Janet Bird, Jean & Daniel Holste  
Jim & Mindy McColley, John Erritt, Judith Walrod, Kelli & Leah Glasgo,  
Kim & Amy Courter, Larry & Karen Handy, Larry & Susan Legore,  
Larry Lubinus, Lee & Molly Gallentine, Lost Island Lutheran Church,  
Lyle & Hilda Hartling, Margaret Jackson, Mark & Connie Gustafson,  
Marlyce Hauge, Melba Shelby, Mike Cormack,  
New Covenant Christian Church – Fort Dodge, Noel & Linda Singer,  
Norman & Alice Nielsen, North Central Correctional Facility,  
Our Savior's Lutheran Church – Albert City, Our Savior's WOW – Callendar, Our  
Saviors Lutheran Church – Humboldt, Paul & Marge Fitzgerald,  
Paul & Noralyn Erickson, Paul Stone, Rev Darrel Gerrietts, Richard Houge,  
Sandra Mickelson, Scott & Solveig Lundgren,  
Spirit of Hope Church – Rockwell City, St John Lutheran Church WELCA –  
Cushing, St John Lutheran Church WELCA – Sac City,  
St Mark's Episcopal – Fort Dodge, St Pauls Lutheran Church – Rockwell City,  
Steve Licata, Steve Pederson, Trinity Lutheran Church – Linn Grove,  
Troy & Karyn Leininger, Wayne & Irene Pfannkuch  
Wheatland Presbyterian Church Women – Wall Lake,  
Women of ELCA – Eagle Grove, Women of ELCA – Exira  
Women of ELCA Trinity Lutheran Church – Webster City  
Zion / St John Lutheran Church Sheffield