

# Church of the Damascus Road Spring 2026 Newsletter

## Because of You!



The Church of the Damascus Road Church Council:  
Front row - Rev. Kelli Glasgo, Lisa Scott, Candace Booth,  
President Diane Ohrtman, Treasurer Connie Gustafson  
Back row - Jim Willis, James Rainer, Jim McColley

I love this time of year! Spring is a season for planting and witnessing new life and at CODR, we are busy sowing seeds of hope through our ministries both inside and outside prison.

April is also volunteer appreciation month and one thing is for sure: none of this work happens without a great team! Because of faithful supporters like you, we get to see lives changed through the power of the Gospel. Your commitment to our ministry is amazing!

Special thanks go out to our wonderful CODR Church Council. Your guidance, wisdom, and steady commitment provide the foundation that allows this ministry to grow and thrive. Thank you for the hours spent in prayer, planning, service and decision-making.

I also want to thank the incredible staff at Fort Dodge Community Corrections (*men's halfway house*). You truly work on the front lines providing the support and direction returning citizens need as they transition out to the world.



This is a picture inside "Connie's Closet" at the men's halfway house where we store the donations of clothing and hygiene supplies that so many of you give. Connie Gustafson and I are pictured here with Karee Scherff who keeps us all in line:)



Here's a shot of one of our Thursday night volunteer teams (Dale & Nancy Bruns - left & Dennis & Candace Booth - right) going in for worship at the facility in Rockwell City.

Our primary mission has always been to share the transforming love of Jesus Christ inside the prison walls. This is how our ministry began, and it remains our foundation. Everything we achieve through our reentry programs outside the fence starts with the relationships built inside through our worship services. Our ministry is unique in this regard, and it stands as a testament to the quality of support we provide.

Thank you to all of our amazing worship team volunteers!

**Pastor Kelli would love to come to your church or community group and share about the wonderful work of CODR. Give us a call or email.**

# *A Special Thanks - Because of You!*

*I am filled with deep gratitude as I reflect on the opportunity to serve in prison ministry. It is a true privilege to bring hope, encouragement, and the message of God's love to those who are often forgotten. I am continually humbled and thankful that I have been entrusted with such a meaningful calling. I truly have the best job ever!*



*Scripture reminds us of the heart of this ministry in Hebrews 13:3: "Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison." This verse captures the compassion and purpose that drive all we do, and it is a calling we fulfill together. We receive God's freedom for the purpose of sharing it with others.*

*I am especially grateful for the incredible volunteers who make this ministry possible. Your willingness to show up, to listen, to pray, to give, and to love others so faithfully is a powerful reflection of Christ's hands and feet in action. As Galatians 6:9 encourages us, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Your faithfulness and dedication are producing fruit that matters for eternity, while also bringing real hope and change to our communities right now. We see it everyday in the lives of the guys at the Damascus House.*

*Because of you, lives are being touched, hearts are being softened, and hope is being restored. This ministry is not the work of one person, but of a faithful community united in purpose and love. Thank you for standing alongside me and for answering this call with such compassion and commitment. I am deeply grateful for each of you and the difference you continue to make. - Pastor Kelli Glasgo*



*We've been busy this last quarter as always. God blessed us with the opportunity to baptize 15 more men at the facility in Rockwell City and our service in Fort Dodge continues to grow. I was given the special privilege of leading Ash Wednesday and Easter services in Fort Dodge and was even able to provide the imposition of ashes for the men on the protective custody unit. Our Wednesday morning bible study has been going strong with members of the community joining. We're currently finishing up the book of John.*



# Celebrating Transformation: Our Latest PFG Cohort



Congratulations to our 2<sup>nd</sup> graduating class of Prison Fellowship Grow at the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility

They took greater responsibility for their actions, their attitudes, and their futures. These are not small victories—they are life-shaping changes that ripple far beyond the walls where they began. The graduation ceremony was a moving and unforgettable moment. One by one, the men shared their stories—testimonies of change, humility, and hope. Perhaps most powerful were the ways they spoke about their families. We heard how restored communication, renewed commitment, and healthier choices are already impacting relationships with spouses, children, parents and loved ones.

This past year, we had the incredible privilege of walking alongside a group of men participating in the Prison Fellowship Grow program—and what a journey it has been. As we reflect on this most recent cohort, one word rises above the rest: *transformation*. From the very beginning, these men committed themselves to growth, and it showed in powerful ways. ***Because of You***, we witnessed meaningful change not only in what they learned, but in who they are becoming. They developed stronger communication skills, learning how to express themselves with honesty, clarity, respect and love.



Special thanks to our Fort Dodge volunteers for PFG. Left to right: Scott Oswald, Connie Gustafson, Cathy Oswald, Solveig Lundgren, Chris Walker, Mark Blunt, Kelli Glasgo, Ted Huggins, Matt Fowler, Don Bergman, Bob Kersbergen



Congratulations to our 1st graduating class of Prison Fellowship Grow at the North Central Correctional Facility

As we celebrate what God has done over this past year, we are filled with hope for what lies ahead. Transformation is happening. Lives are changing. And together, we are witnessing the power of perseverance, accountability, and grace at work. Thank you for being part of this journey with us. We will be starting our 3<sup>rd</sup> cohort of Prison Fellowship Grow in May at FDCF and July at NCCF.

*Please prayerfully consider joining our amazing team of volunteers. I'm sure they would tell you that the experience has been just as transformational for them as it is for the guys!*

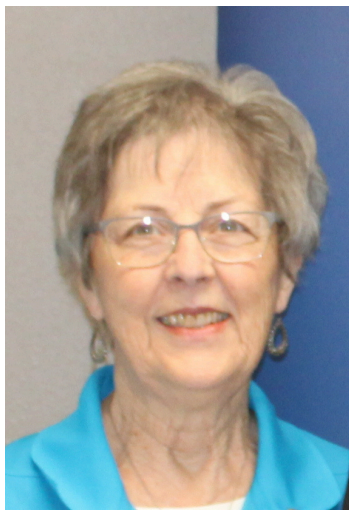
It was a reminder that transformation doesn't happen in isolation; it extends outward, bringing healing and hope to entire families and communities. None of this would have been possible without the faithful dedication of our volunteers. Week after week, you showed up with compassion, consistency, and a genuine belief in the potential of every man in the program. You listened, encouraged, challenged, and supported—and your investment made a lasting difference. We are deeply grateful for each volunteer who gave their time and heart to make this cohort such a success.



Special thanks to our Rockwell City volunteers for PFG. Left to right: Jean Matter, Candace Booth, Kelli Glasgo, George Hedges, Dennis Booth

## *Volunteers share what this experience has meant to them:*

*I became involved in ministry somewhat by accident. My wife introduced me to Kelli one Sunday after church. I knew he was involved in prison ministry and I said if he needed help with anything to let me know. Little did I know that I would end up at the prison sitting at a table surrounded by inmates. All I could think was what did I get myself into. What I got myself into was one of the best and most rewarding things I've ever been involved in. Most of the guys who had signed up for the program were completely committed to making themselves better men and committing themselves to God. I was very surprised at the knowledge some of these guys already had. We've been through several biblically based self-help programs and the Alpha series. It has been an amazing experience and I feel I get as much or more from the program as the inmates do. The most telling thing about how well the program works is that a few of the participants had the opportunity to get out on parole and asked if they could stay in and graduate. I would recommend to anyone to get involved. It will change your life, it did mine. - Don Bergman*



*Leap Leads to Strength - Nearly 27 years ago, God led Dennis and I to a mission way outside our comfort zone- The Church of the Damascus Road. The newly formed church was a leap of faith for us. We attended worship at NCCF. After a few visits, we became more comfortable and found the service to be full of joy and enthusiasm, completely Spirit-filled. We looked forward to each service with the guys, which included scripture, hymns of praise, prayer, and personal testimonies.*

*After about seven years of consistent attendance at worship, Brothers-in-Blue, Bible study inside, and Storytellers, we took a bigger leap as part of a reintegration team to mentor individual exoffenders. As expected, there were challenges but overall joy that lead us into a deeper dependence and trust in God's plan. There were twelve individuals that our team assisted, plus, many others we helped with transportation and housing furnishings.*

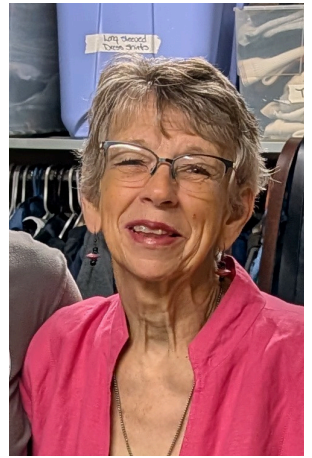
*During the pandemic we missed our connections with guys but were able to keep communications with some guys on the outside. We enjoyed the transitions from the small worship chapel to the new one and the creation of Damascus House. Dennis and I both felt God directing us to help in the leadership of CoDR through the Outside Church Council and, more recently, Prison Fellowship Grow.*

*There have been so many experiences through this prison ministry that have helped Dennis and me in our faith walk together and our married life. We give thanks to God for the opportunity and guiding us in this ministry. We pray His continual strength for us, other volunteers, Pr Kelli and pray for the change in the guys to be Godly men. We encourage others to take the leap and find God's strength. - Candace Booth*

*I am Jim McColley and a board member of The Church of the Damascus Road (CODR). My experience as a volunteer going into the correctional facilities of Fort Dodge and Rockwell City is the sincere welcome and appreciation that the guys have for us. I feel that I receive much more than what I give. It is so important that they feel the love of Jesus as we worship beside them and visit with them in a way that they feel valued. They are a blessing to me as I walk with them in their struggles. We have opened a reentry house for guys who are willing to abide by the rules of society as they walk a new way of life by faith in Jesus. It is refreshing to share a meal with them once per month and support them in their transition into life outside the walls. Letting them know they are not alone.*



*Definition of a Volunteer: an individual who freely offers their time, skills and energy to support causes, organizations or individuals without expectation of financial compensation. I have been so blessed in my life as God has given me many nudges as to the direction he has planned for my life. Prison ministry has given me that opportunity to serve our Lord! As a volunteer I try to look for the good in people and know that with God's guidance I find that. Being part of the lives of guys in our prisons gives me the chance to do just that. Before the pandemic my husband, Mark and I were very active in Fort Dodge and Rockwell City, visiting weekly for the CODR church services and did reentry teams including guys in our church lives. The pandemic hit hard and we and the guys in prison were hit very hard as we could only pray and had no visits. Finally Rockwell City opened up and we could do Brothers in Blue and worship again. Fort Dodge added the Prison Fellowship Growth program of which I just participated. It is the greatest program which we can help teach the guys how to use knowledge of God and learn new ways to cope in prison and upon their release. Opening up our Damascus House for guys entering society has been the answer to a dream of long ago. I've been honored to be part of "Connie's Closet" as one way to help. There are so many ways to get involved in this ministry and I would love to see new faces volunteering. - Connie Gustafson*



*Volunteering for CODR is a profound blessing and a source of deep gratitude. The opportunities, people, and fellowships have empowered me to continue on the path my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has purposed for me, sharing and spreading His truth. It continually reminds me to remain humble, grounded in faith, and to seek personal growth through introspection. Witnessing the transformative impact volunteers have on people's lives and seeing that ripple effect extend to their families and friends, is truly rewarding beyond measure. - Lisa Scott*

*CODR Ministry and Prison Fellowship Grow in Fort Dodge has redirected my Christian faith to be actionable, visible and cloaked with servanthood. The men "inside" are willing to learn new pathways along their Christian walk and are dedicated to being involved in regular conversation and sharing with men from "the outside" community. PFG grows hopeful men of integrity, to love our God. I am thankful for this opportunity to learn about God's work in experienced men, who have made choices which may stifle their Christian faith, yet they are ready to overcome. - Ted Huggins*



*I think of all the reasons I love volunteering with the Church of the Damascus Road ministry is hearing all the stories from the guys. I've learned so much from them, their struggles and victories, what they have accomplished and their goals.*

*Matthew 25: 39 is what catches my heart. I am doing my best to do what he wants! I want to volunteer where it's doing what needs to be done for these guys. We have raised enough to buy a house in Fort Dodge which we have named the Damascus house. The main goal is to give them a place after they come out of the halfway house. That is our biggest accomplishment for this year. - God bless you all - Diane Ohrtman*

As spring arrives, we're reminded that even in the most unlikely places, new life can begin. In our prison ministry, we see this truth every day—hope taking root, hearts softening, and lives beginning to change. God has blessed the ministry of CODR and is opening new doors for us inside and outside of the prisons.

### Because of You...

Because of you, men and women behind bars are reminded they are not forgotten. Because of you, words of encouragement and accountability reach those who need them most. Because of you, Bible studies are happening, conversations are opening up, and hope is being restored. Your willingness to show up—whether through prayer, your time, or financial support makes an eternal difference. Thank you for being the hands and feet of this ministry!

### A Story of Hope

Recently, one of our PFG graduates shared how important it was to have volunteers come into the facility on a regular basis. He wrote, "I didn't think anyone cared how I doing or paid any attention to the good things I was trying to do in my life. It just didn't seem like anything mattered. But the volunteers show up every week. They listen and they care. It makes all the difference in the world, I have hope!"

### Why We Need You

As we move into this new season, we are seeing more individuals asking for connection, mentorship, and spiritual guidance than ever before. The opportunity is great—and so is the need. You don't need to have all the answers. You don't need to be perfect. You simply need a willing heart. We provide training, support, and guidance every step of the way.

### Ways You Can Get Involved

There is a place for everyone to serve:

- **Join us for Worship:** We meet every Thursday night (7-8:15pm) at the facility in Rockwell City to sing loud and go deep into God's word. It is an amazing experience for all!
- **Join us for Prison Fellowship:** Our PFG groups are Tue 6-8pm & Thurs 2-4pm in Fort Dodge and Thurs 4-5:30 pm in Rockwell City.
- **Connie's Closet:** We collect donations of men's clothing and hygiene supplies for the Men's Halfway House in Fort Dodge. Pass the word at your church, collect donations and we'll pick them up!
- **Damascus House Support:** Help us provide mentoring and support for the men at our residential reentry facility. It's a great community of guys and a blessing to be a part of!
- **Financial Support:** We've been blessed with great support over the years and are committed to stewarding our resources responsibly. This year we will be putting a new porch, siding and windows on the Damascus House and will begin looking for a possible new facility to purchase that will accommodate families.

### Join Us This Spring

Please consider being part of our amazing team! This season is full of great new opportunities and we would love to share these blessings with you. If you're interested in volunteering or learning more, reach out to us at (515) 955-3579, email us at [codroffice23@gmail.com](mailto:codroffice23@gmail.com) or connect with us through our website at [www.codrcare.org](http://www.codrcare.org). We would love to hear your story!

Thank you for standing with us!



# Thank You So Much For Your Generosity!

1st Presbyterian – Lakota, Adam Sanford,  
Augusta Lutheran Church – Manson, Becky Ostheimer,  
Bethany Ext Ministries Endowment – Spencer  
Bethany Lutheran Church – Emmetsburg, Brian Underwood  
Charles & Linda Danielson, Darwin Lake, Dale & Lisa Siebrect  
Dave Bohnet, Dennis & Candace Booth, Gary & Linda Eichelberger  
Emanuel St John Lutheran Church – Lytton,  
Everette & Becky Jo Vardaman  
Faith Lutheran Church – Holstein, Fort Dodge Correctional Facility  
Gail Boock, George Hedges, Glen & Sharon Houts  
Grace Lutheran Church – Fort Dodge, Hope Lutheran Church – Everly  
IA Walk to Emmuas – Ankeny, Ida Grove Methodist Church  
Immanuel Lutheran Church – Waukee, Janet Bird,  
Jeremiah & Jenny Condon, Jim & Mindy McColley,  
Kanawha Lutheran Church, Kelli & Leah Glasgo,  
Kenneth & Linda Benson, Kim & Amy Courter, Laurel Palmer  
Larry Lubinus, Troy & Karyn Leininger, Lost Island Lutheran Church  
First Lutheran Church – Algona, Lyle & Hilda Hartling, Marlyce Hauge  
Margaret Jackson, Marilyn Sill, Mark & Connie Gustafson  
Mark Gustafson Memorial, Mark & Joy DeJong, Mark Ketchum  
Melby Shelby, North Central Correctional Facility  
Our Saviors Lutheran Church – Albert City,  
Rock Creek Lutheran Church,  
Rod Amlie, Spirit of Hope Church – Rockwell City,  
St John Lutheran Church Farm  
St Johns Lutheran Church – Corwith,  
St Olaf Lutheran Church – Fort Dodge  
St Paul Lutheran Church – Palmer, St Paul Lutheran Church – Treynor  
St Paul Lutheran Church – Rockwell City, Steve Licata, Steve Pederson  
William & Joann Robb, WIS – Melvin American

*If you've made a donation in this first quarter (January - March) and do not see your name listed here, please let us know. We want to make sure to thank you for your support!*



(515) 955-3579

codroffice23@gmail.com

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