

The Church of the Damascus Road *Flash!*

Volume 24
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Fort Dodge & Rockwell City, IA

Emerging Parish

The Church of the Damascus Road, Fulton Lutheran Church, St. Paul's Lutheran and Presbyterian Church, and Zion Lutheran Church, have all discerned that God is calling us into a shared or parish ministry in which we work together as the body of Christ in this place we call home. While this will be a significant change to the way all these congregations do ministry, it will be especially significant for St. Paul's.



Rev. Jim Davis

Zion has been part of Countryside Ministry for 20 years. Countryside Ministry was originally comprised of six congregations: Calvary Presbyterian Church, Barnum; Fulton Lutheran Church, Roelyn; United Church of Christ/Congregational Church, Moorland; Zion Lutheran Church, Gowrie; Faith Lutheran Church, Harcourt; and Trinity Lutheran Church, Boxholm. Faith and Trinity eventually left Countryside Ministry to become a two-point parish and Calvary and UCC/Congregational eventually decided they were being called to dissolve their congregations to join other congregations. Zion and Fulton continue to do ministry together. While the emerging parish will be a change for these congregations, they have twenty years of experience with shared/parish ministry.

The Church of the Damascus Road is technically one congregation, but it has members of its congregation in the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility and North Central Correctional Facility in Rockwell City. While CoDR is a single congregation, it certainly looks like a two-point parish. Due to the unique nature of

being a congregation in two prisons and the nature of its ministry, the transition to becoming part the emerging parish should not be too great for CoDR.

Obviously, the greatest change will be for St. Paul's. To the best of my knowledge, St. Paul's has never been part of a parish/shared ministry. Being part of the emerging parish will be a significant change for St. Paul's.

The reason we're creating this parish is because of the challenges demographic and cultural issues have created for congregations. I wanted to write "rural congregations", but congregations in our cities are experiencing similar changes. The loss of population is a major issue for rural congregations, but the cultural changes may be even more challenging for those in cities. Regardless of whether congregations are rural or urban, ministry in our culture is a challenge.

Two of the greatest challenges are maintaining aging buildings and supporting pastoral leadership in congregations with diminishing resources. These challenges will likely not change in the future.

The parish will allow us to share pastoral staff, ensuring we have access to pastoral staff to support the ministry to which we're called. However, the majority of the ministry will happen through members of congregations who are willing to share their gifts with their congregations and communities. While this might seem like a change, the majority of life-changing ministry has always happened primarily through members of congregations sharing their gifts with others.

Transitioning to this model for ministry will be a big change; however, I believe it's in the best interest of the ministry to which we're called. If you see a viable option for ministry other than the parish model, please call me and let me know your ideas.

If we're going to make this work, we all need to be open and honest with each other and engage in conversations that focus on how we can be faithful to what we're called to do as God's people in this place. If you have concerns or questions about what's happening, I want to hear from you. Please contact me so we can appropriately address whatever your concerns or questions are. You can reach me at 515-351-0822.

Finally, please pray often for me, the rest of your staff, all who are part of this parish, and all those we are called to serve. Prayer may be the most important thing all of us can do. My experience has been that prayer not only reduces our anxiety, but often blesses us with a clearer sense of what God is calling us to do.

May God bless all of us as we continue to strive to be faithful in a challenging time.

—Pastor Jim Davis

My Walk with God



What does it mean?

What does it cost?

I know He did it for me

But I am still lost

In a world of money and lust

I've got to find an answer

Of why He valued me so much

That He bore my cross

I am forever thankful

That I realized

God came down in Jesus' form

And looked into my eyes

Now I found what I've been looking for

And dedicate my life

To spread the word of God's great love

So people will come to

Him more and more

I can't do it alone, I need your help

Please come with me and see

What He has done for you and me

I thank Him daily and say my prayers

That the word will spread

And people will know He cares

—Kyle McMenamin FDCF 2007

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Musings

I have been struggling with something that's laying heavy on my heart. There is a great deal of discussion as to whether or not an inmate chooses to follow Jesus. I know this is only an attempt by Satan to destroy our spirituality.

What I feel makes this such a problem is the lack of maturity among inmates and the way to focus toward others so they themselves are not confronted because of their own lack of self esteem. There is going to be a certain degree of immaturity here because of the age group that most of the inmates fall into. There has been speculation as to FDCF being considered a kids' camp and a gladiator school.

It was pointed out a short while back that less than 10% of the inmates here are 35 years or older. That means that there is somewhere around 1000 inmates under 35. I must admit that I have met men in their teens that acted mature beyond their age. I also have met men in their 30's or 40's that have yet to grow up. Maturity does not only mean knowing what or who we are, it also is accepting others for who they are and not condemning them.

Many times I've heard inmates point out the sincerity of fellow inmates who truly have turned their lives over to God. I feel that it does not make a difference as to what inspires them to come to Jesus. What is most important is the fact that they did! I have had my fellow inmates look down their noses at me because I am a Christian. They consider this a weakness. They think many people seek the Lord as a way to get out of prison sooner. I admit that some men do use this in a negative way. It is these men that seek the Lord for the wrong reasons. These men usually fall away from God sooner than later. They do not open their hearts completely to the Lord. It is these men (that do not seek the Lord with all their heart) that soon tire of their new so-called spirituality. They look at worshiping God as a way to receive rather than to serve. They do not realize what is most important and are very easily discouraged and turn away.

I wish I had a nickel for every time I've been asked, "Did you go to church on the outside?" They then point out that they did not attend church on the outside and are not going to start now. These men are only fooling themselves. Hell is full of fools and you will not find a fool in heaven. Because choosing eternal life over hell is not a decision that is made by a fool.

As for me, I know I do not need to justify my reason for salvation to anyone. This is a personal matter between Jesus and me. I will clarify this matter as a testimony of what Jesus has done, is doing, and will do for me. He, too, will do this for you, if you seek him with a sincere heart.

I was 17 when I first met Jesus. My uncle invited me to a revival at a church he was attending. As I look back I can see I was immature and decided I wanted to study to be a minister. I thought I was ready to make such a decision in my life. The truth is, I was not ready for such a commitment and began a life full of sin that ended up where I am now.

Life is full of choices and you do not need to be a genius to see that I made my share of wrong ones. I still continued to know in my heart that God was there. I did not choose to allow him to be present in my life. I can never praise him enough for not turning his back on me as I had on him.

I now know that he is the one and only true living God and that not having him in my heart will only give me a place with Satan, spending eternity in hell.

My life focuses on one thing. I was living life either doing dope or seeking dope. I should have sought the Lord instead. The sad thing is that the only way to get me in church back then would have been to tell me that I could obtain dope there. I, as many others I know, worshiped one thing—that was the demon by the name of methamphetamine. Sad, huh?

I praise the Lord for loving me enough to allow the only thing that could get me off dope and keep me off it. The drying out process takes a great deal of time. It is a process of healing that only the healing power of Jesus Christ can accomplish.

Don't get me wrong, treatment, education, frequent drug tests, intense probation, and groups such as narcotics anonymous are important. The problem is that this demon will continue to be sitting on your shoulder, whispering in your ear about how good life can be if he is a part of it.

This is a trap that can only be avoided by not facing our problems alone. We do not have to be alone. The Holy Spirit is always willing to be with us, and with him on our side, we cannot fail!

In Matthew 19:26 Jesus said, "With God all things are possible." Again in Mark 10:27 Jesus says the same about what we can accomplish with God on our side.

There are many people that would consider me crazy for praising God because I am here in prison. If I was still on the street I would still be on dope. That is, if I was still *alive*, and there is a good chance that I would not be.

I spent over 25 years of my life doing dope. It will take years for my life physically and spiritually to regain what I once had and to be able to resist the urge to do dope. I lost my sanity on dope and with the Lord's help I will find it again.

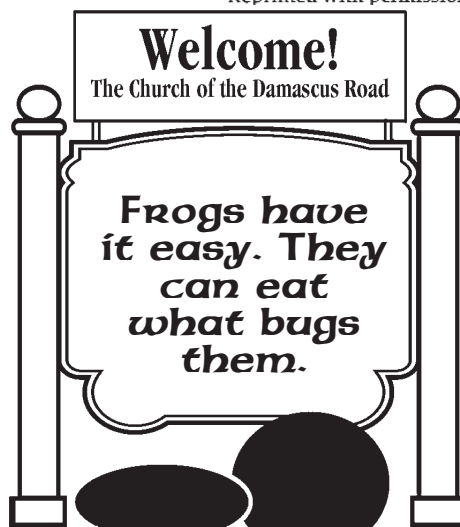
I spent over 25 years doing what is not right with God. How can I not repay him for

Holy Humor



"Your mother is a hypochondriac. The minute she heard an 'apple a day keeps the doctor away,' she ate us out of house and home."

from *The Joyful Noiseletter*
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Thanks!

—Carroll Lang, Editor

The Church of the Damascus Road Flash!

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July/August 2021

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Carroll Lang, Editor, 515-571-6566

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.

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Thank You
FOR YOUR HELP

REentry integration

"It's a Ministry,
Not a Program"

Anticipating Our Future to Unfold

As you may have read on page one, things are shaping up for a shared ministry for CoDR in partnership with other congregations around the Fort Dodge and Rockwell City area. The partnership will provide not only monetary support for pastoral ministry, but also provide more volunteers to lead worship. Pastor Jim Davis has been very busy working toward this partnership. He is a blessing, indeed, as his heart truly is into ensuring the future of The Church of the Damascus Road.



Rev. Carroll Lang

We continue to pray for the end to the pandemic, and that we reach herd immunity so the prisons can open up again and our reentry ministry can also continue as before. Men continue to be released, and we have not been able to welcome them into the community. Please pray that the prisons will open again, so we can continue this vital ministry of Reentry Reintegration again.

When we are allowed once again to meet face-to-face with our brothers who are hoping for a chance to make a new start with the help of a Reentry Reintegration Team. At least then the team and candidate will be able to assess each other and decide if the partnership will be a good "fit" for both. That's one of the important parts of our process which we have not been able to do during the lockout, and we look forward to meeting again.

So, again, what the future holds for reentry, we do not have a clear picture right now, but even though we don't have a 100% success rate, people realize we have helped *some*, and want to know more. We shall see how that evolves in this uncertain time. Are we all in this together? I pray that we are.

—Rev. Carroll Lang



Continued from page 2

rescuing me from the sin of drug addiction and spend the next 25 years serving him? If I am not to be blessed to live another 25 years. I know that by leading a righteous life I will spend eternity with the one that by grace saved my life. And he is willing to do the same for you.

To illustrate my response to those who try to condemn our relationship with God because we did not seek him on the streets, let me describe it this way:

Sin is like an illness that can only end in death. Not just physical death, but spiritual death also. When someone has been healed from a life-threatening disease or illness, we give thanks and praise that this person will live.

This is also what we should do when someone has turned his or her life over to Christ. Just as the angels rejoice when a soul has been won, we as children of God do the same! In the healing of the sick we do not question when, how, or why they are healed. The important thing is that they have been healed.

When someone questions our salvation and they themselves are not saved, it is their salvation that should be in question, not those that are already saved. I say "Come on people, wake up!"

It is not important as to how, where, or when we seek the Lord. The important thing is that we do it soon, because no one but God will know when judgment day is here. On that day he will be here to judge the living and the dead.

I pray that each and everyone of us accepts Jesus as our Savior soon. Remember that those who are persecuting us Christians are doing so because misery loves company.

It truly amazes me how many people can't see the forest because of the trees. I pray that everyone who does not carry Jesus in his or her heart to seek him. Seek what is eternal and not what is temporal. Go in peace, serve the Lord.

— Robert L. Johnson II FDCF (deceased)

Invite a Council Member

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. This allows members of the Outside Council to visit congregations on Sundays, and give a brief update on the ministry during worship, or to the children, an adult forum, or a cross-generational class session, or any or all of the above about CoDR, and are open to suggestions. Just need 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; get permission from your counselor to hand it to the pastor. It will be scanned and then returned to you.

Rich Davis "Change Cycle"



Artists' Corner

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July/August 2021

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. Inmates, get permission from your Counselor to hand it to the pastor. Don't be bashful.



www.codrcare.org

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>

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.....
.....

FDCF Church Council

Trekel Barker -Pres/ST . Bradley Bauman-VP
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Doug Young Kristopher Crabtree
Joseph Chapman Quartez Watson
John Lusk Matthew Nants
Aaron Britton

Weekly Schedule

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

Reintegration Steering Committee

Unfilled-Pres Judy Lang-VP/Treas
Candace Booth-Sec Kelli Glasgo
Mark Juhl Ed Fleming
Doug Rossbach Dave Bohnet
Jan Enderlin Connie Gustafson
Joyce Phelps Carroll Lang-R/R Director
Rev. Jim Davis, Interim Pastor

Outside Church Council

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Judy Lang-Treas Doug Rossbach-Sec
Joyce Phelps Kelli Glasgo
Ed Fleming Candace Booth
Carroll Lang Jan Enderlin
Connie Gustafson

Rev. Jim Davis, Interim Pastor

Weekly Schedule

6:30pm Wednesdays Holy Communion
5:30pm Wednesdays . Bible Study/Council

A note to secretaries and pastors—

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Thank you for your support.

Carroll Lang, Editor