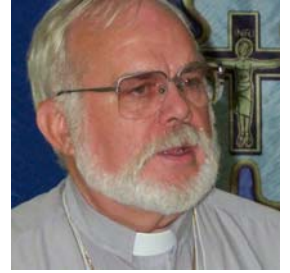


The Church of the Damascus Road



Pastor Carroll Lang

Fort Dodge/Rockwell City Prison Ministry



Worship Service at one of the prisons

When the Iowa Department of Corrections accepted Fort Dodge's second bid (in 1996) to have a prison located in Fort Dodge, an ecumenical steering committee was formed to place, as promised in the bid, a prison congregation, with an experienced parish pastor, inside the walls. The Western Iowa Synod was very helpful in connecting up with the ELCA, and an organization called Prison Congregations of America, directed by Pastor Ed Nesselhuf who steered us in the right direction to work with prison staff.

Since the minimum security prison in Rockwell City was only 24 miles away, permission was granted to extend the congregation there, so the steering committee formed a call committee chaired by an Episcopal priest. They interviewed five candidates and issued the call to Carroll Lang who began his ministry on August 1, 1997 in Rockwell City and in May 1998 in Fort Dodge.

Little interest was shown at first to form a church council, but when the members of the Fort Dodge facility formed one, the members of the Rockwell City facility formed one, too. Since then, members *ask* to be on the council.

Since those early days, the Church of the Damascus Road has developed into the model designed by Pastor Ed Nesselhuf in Jessup, Maryland, in 1984. The model is that all ministry is done in the prison on weekdays, leaving weekends free for Pastor Lang to tell the story of CoDR to congregations, asking them for their prayers, their presence, and their financial support. Members of congregations in the Western Iowa Synod are invited to attend worship at CoDR during the week and then tell others about their experience the next Sunday morning back in their own congregation.

Of the six ministries listed in Matthew 25 that are important to Jesus, visiting those who are in prison often stumps congregations. The Church of the Damascus Road provides Western Iowa Synod congregations the opportunity to extend their ministries into prison and to "do to the least of these my brothers," therefore ministering directly to Jesus.



Worship Service at one of the prisons

If you would like to extend your congregation's ministry into prison, call The Church of the Damascus Road at 515-955-3579, or e-mail them at DamascusCh@aol.com. They will be glad to help you get involved.