

The Connection

THE NEWSLETTER OF WE CARE PROGRAM

MARCH 2005

2005 CRUSADE EDITION

Thousands of Alabama prison inmates reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ



Inmate brothers unite in worship during a Crusade chapel service at Red Eagle Honor Farm, Montgomery, AL

Photos, Testimonies, and Information Inside...

Fulfilling the Great Commission in America's Prisons

www.wecareprogram.org

2005 CRUSADE

January 9-13, 2005 marked the 27th annual We Care Crusade in which a diverse group of 351 volunteers from 23 states and two Canadian provinces came together in a unified effort to share the love of God with men and women in seventeen Alabama prisons. On this and the following pages are photos, testimonies, stories, and information relating to the crusade. May you develop a deeper sense of God's heart and mission as you share in our experiences.

Volume XXXVI, Number 1

Published eight times a year, *The Connection* provides news and views to friends of We Care Program. We Care Program is a non-profit, interdenominational organization consisting of Christian men and women who share a burden for and commitment to helping incarcerated men and women. We are accomplishing our mission by recruiting, funding, training, placing, and administering missionary chaplains and chaplain's assistants in prisons to provide friendship evangelism, teaching, peer counseling, and encouragement.

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Inmate names changed



Volunteer Ivan Ray Zimmerman (PA) visits at the weight pile

O'Neill started with a very loud trumpet song and aroused this man out of his sleep. "Mike" testified, "I had no idea what was happening. I thought it was the final trumpet sound and that I would soon be with Jesus!" It turned out that Mike is a real trumpet enthusiast, and he was so encouraged that he could listen to such an accomplished musician right in his dorm, even though he was disappointed that it wasn't the "last trumpet call." Mike stuck with David all afternoon. They talked trumpets and encouraged each other in the Lord. At the service that evening, David dedicated one song to Mike. You had to be there. It was really moving. Could it be that our gracious heavenly Father sent a trumpet player from Arizona to Alabama to encourage this one brother? Praise God for His indescribable love!

- Alvin Landis, PA

Tutwiler was packed out the last night, and we were blessed by seeing how the inmates' lives were touched. God was especially working in the life of one young woman who was dealing with the grief of losing a baby. She had pushed back her grief, and that night we sang a song that she had not heard since her baby's funeral. Along with the counseling she has been getting the last few months, hearing that song seemed to help her deal with the grief. - Joy Yoder, VA

We had the privilege of having David O'Neill play a few songs on his trumpet in the Honor Dorm at Ventress before the evening service. There was one brother in Christ who was sound asleep on his bunk. Mr.



Volunteer Stacy Molai (NE) shares a smile

When “Jerry” came to me, he was very troubled over whether to plead guilty or innocent on charges at a future court hearing. Other inmates were telling him to plead innocent, but God has laid a burden on him to tell the truth and he had committed the crime. I explained that God will honor his telling the truth, but recognized that it will be very difficult for him. He agreed. The next day joy was pouring out of him because he was now at peace with God.
- Dan Kulp, PA



Some seed fell on good ground...

I was in the craft and hobby room talking to a painter. He was painting a picture of a seductive woman in a setting that looked demonic. Without my saying anything, he started telling me about that painting that was mostly done. He said he didn't like it. He knew men would lust over it. He said he would never paint anything like it again because he is a Christian. He said the only reason he is painting it is because a friend asked him to do it, and he didn't want to say no to his friend. After he was done talking, I encouraged him not to compromise even for a friend. I shared many things with him like how Pharaoh wanted Moses to compromise. Pharaoh told Moses that the men, women, and children could go and worship the Lord in the wilderness but they would have to leave their cattle and sheep behind. I told him the cattle and sheep represent our businesses. The devil will give us compromises in our lives letting us worship the Lord as long as we compromise in business. Moses told Pharaoh that “not a hoof would be left behind.” Moses did not compromise and we should not compromise with the devil, this world or our flesh either. The painter said he would not finish the painting and broke the picture in two pieces. Pray for him.
- Steve Clark, PA



Volunteer Ada Schrock (IL) with friends at Tutwiler Annex, Wetumpka, AL

I was so touched one evening when the group New Creation got up to sing. As the children started to sing, there was much weeping. The chapel helper came with a roll of toilet paper, unrolling some and passing it to the ladies. I was moved by this sight and tears started rolling down my cheeks too. The girl beside me unrolled some of her paper and gave it to me! She really blessed me!
- Rosalie Derstine, PA

“Debra” said this is the 9th or 10th time she has been in Tutwiler, maybe more; she lost count. She was “at the end” and said, “I can't handle this any more.” She was begging the Lord to bless her and help her stay away from drugs. We had her read most of Romans 7 and 8, and we talked about the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. After about two hours she left with a smile and hope for her future.
- Bev Wenger, PA



Segregation visitation at Easterling Corr. Center, Troy, AL

2005 CRUSADE *(continued)*

I talked to many who came from good homes, but got involved in drugs—to lose weight. This whole experience caused me to see the importance of prayer for our grandchildren as they grow up. What grief one mistake can cause. I was blessed to see and hear how some are living for the Lord in a setting like this.

- Rosalie Derstine, PA

After praying for a man for the past year and a half (who did accept Jesus as his Savior several months ago), I was blessed to see the peace and joy in his face, to hear him tell that all hate and anger is gone, to have him testify of his regular reading of God’s Word, his desire to grow in his prayer life and his interest in starting a Bible correspondence course. Praise God!

- Luke Bucher, PA

2005 CRUSADE FACT SHEET

24	Minors
83	Women
244	Men
351	Total Volunteers
132	Churches Represented
25	States/Provinces Represented
17	Music Groups/Soloists
17	Preachers/Evangelists
17	Correctional Facilities
72	In-Prison Chapel Services
6,152	Estimated Chapel Attendees
8,040	Estimated Volunteer Hours
16,670	Reachable Inmates

Lives Impacted for Eternity...Incalculable



Clockwise from top: Bullock team, Volunteer Eli Troyer (VA) visits in the dorm at Frank Lee, Sisters in Christ join hearts and hands in prayer

I met a man who is not bitter about his situation at all. His sentence is life without parole, but he is thankful that he is in prison. Why? He said, “God saved me twice. I’d be dead right now if I wasn’t in prison. God saved my soul, and I found out I had cancer. Because I was here, we found the cancer early and now I’m cured of it. If I had been out in the free world, I would never have found it out until it killed me.” God saved him twice—physically and spiritually. He considers prison his mission field, reaching out to those around him by encouraging believers and witnessing to the unsaved. He has read and studied the scriptures so much that it flows out of him. It’s a part of his life. He is such an inspiration to me because he has such a bubbly, cheerful attitude and disposition about him, totally content and at peace with his situation in life and grateful to God for His mercy. What a challenge to me!

- Jonathan Sollenberger, PA

On Tuesday the Lord led me to a young man named “Bill” who was really searching. He asked me what it means to be a Christian, so I explained it to him. Then I listened for several hours as he unloaded and told me his story. He got started with drugs at a young age and eventually got caught. After talking with him, I had a real burden for him and began praying for him. Wednesday evening Bill came to the service, and when the invitation was given, he went forward and made a commitment. That made the whole week worth it!

- Jason Sommers, OH



Volunteer Merlin Stoltzfus building a friendship at Frank Lee

On the last day I had the opportunity to go to death row. As I walked down the hall praying “Lord, which one?” I stopped at “Tom’s” cell. What do you say to a 24-year-old man on death row when you have only 25 minutes? I did not know that others had already laid the groundwork. After talking a little while and sensing openness, I asked, “Are you a Christian?” Tom said, “No, but I want to be.” My response was “What are you waiting on?” Tom answered, “There are some things I must do before I will be able to stand. I am not ready yet.” In other words, he was trying to work it out in his own strength. After sharing for 15 minutes and showing him the work he must do is to believe on Jesus for his salvation, he jumped up and, taking my hand, asked me to pray for him. I said, “Why don’t you cry out to God for salvation?” Praise God, he did!

- Luke Zimmerman, PA

As the evening program began, my attention was drawn to a lady who looked very sober and hardened by her experiences. In fact, she seemed to have no emotions at all. My heart was touched by her and I began to pray for her specifically. As I gazed around the room, she suddenly looked up and our eyes met. I smiled, but she quickly looked down. During the Franz family’s presentation, I noticed her blinking rapidly as though she was attempting to hold back tears. I began praying in earnest then. She would clap but not stand as the music continued. As all eyes were closed during altar call, her head suddenly popped up and once again she stared directly at me. Still praying but beginning to get a slight sinking feeling, I thought she wasn’t going to come forward. Another lady in front of her came forward and over to me. As I went to this lady, I noticed movement. Praise God my “project of prayer,” the stoic lady, was coming straight to me! I was privileged to be an instrument to lead these ladies to make first time commitments. I was asking God for one, but was blessed with two opportunities. Praise God!

- Janice Miller, PA



The Glick family (above), Good News (right), and 15 other music groups shared their talents during the four-day in-prison crusade.



Three years ago I met “Pete.” He knew the Bible very well but was out to prove that it is not true. I told him I would pray for him. During last year’s visit, all he wanted to do was debate me on the Bible and God. I finally walked out, but told him how the Lord could forgive his sin and set him free. I continued to pray for him and to write to him. This year I expected the same thing, but when I saw him, I could tell something was different. Almost right away he told me how he stayed up all night to study the Bible and that he found out it is true and is the Word of God. That evening he went with me to church and got saved. Wow! I had almost given up.

- Bill Helmuth, OH

On the way to my motel room one morning I met one of the cleaning ladies who was reading tracts that some children had given her, and she was ready to accept the Lord. It was a really neat experience for me, and what rejoicing in heaven as another child was added to the kingdom!

- Linda Dienner, NY

2005 CRUSADE *(continued)*

Praise Bits...

The evening at Birmingham Work Release was through the roof! A woman was set free from drugs, and many others were touched. Praise God! - *Jason Martin, PA*

From my vantage point as an evangelist, moving from one prison to another, I sensed a unanimous spirit in reaching the inmates for Christ. - *John Forry, PA*

I was blessed to be able to share the gospel with the inmates and see its power when someone chooses to believe it. I was also blessed by the brothers within the prison—their love, hunger, and newness in Christ. - *Wendell Derstine, PA*

It was awesome! It's wonderful to be able to team up with such dedicated and compassionate volunteers. I praise God for the unity among us. - *Lisa Zimmerman, PA*

The teaching in the mornings touched me, the prison women moved me, and the crusade women—we ministered to each other. - *Eva Kratz, PA*

It was wonderful. Denominational barriers were non-existent. - *Emma Bender, AL*

It's an experience every Christian should have. - *David Sensenig, PA*

It was a spiritual boost to me personally! - *Monroe Hochstedler, FL*

Awesome. - *Merle Plank, IL*

I realized afresh how God can change people. - *Nelson Hochstedler, MI*

Another mountaintop experience! - *Sharon Bruckhart, PA*

Every time I come to the prison crusade thinking I will share God's love, encourage people, or just simply be a friend, I'm the one who goes home much more blessed than I could ever ask for. - *Paul High, PA*

Very inspiring, and I rejoice to experience the leading and moving of the Spirit of the Lord. - *Luke Bucher, PA*

This was my first crusade. The most stretching thing was walking up to strangers and initiating a spiritual conversation. It was very rewarding, and I hope to bring that home—to speak about the Lord to strangers. - *Stephen Long, PA*



Clockwise from above: Kitchen crew in Atmore, Eugene Hoover and friend at Fountain, Tutwiler team

I was made aware of the urgent need to get more help for chaplains to mentor new believers. - *Merv Gingrich, PA*



I was challenged to look at myself and ask, "why do I believe what I believe?" - *Jake Peters, MB*

It has renewed my desire to reach out to hurting people. - *Bev Wenger, PA*

Mail Bag

Dear Brother David,

I want to thank you for including Bibb County Correctional Facility in this year's revival. I was well pleased with the entire week...

In any event like this, someone back home has to take on additional responsibilities so their loved ones can go minister like this. If you have some way to do it, please let their families know how much I personally appreciate their sacrifices that made a week like this possible.

Thanks again for this revival... Chaplain Roy Eddie Smith

Dear David Landis:

I thank you abundantly for what you just caused to happen in the lives of the men of Wm E. Donaldson... Truly, we could have enjoyed a year or more of the ministry done by the We Care Team. Thanks again for allowing the Lord to use you to bless his people...

The involvement of each [person] during the entire revival was a sacrifice and sweet smelling fragrance in the nostril of God.

Respectfully, Chaplain Bill Lindsey

News of Note

Welcome Laborers!

Anna Miller has sensed God calling her into prison ministry for some time. In December she moved to Alabama from Ligonier, IN, to serve as an assistant chaplain at Tutwiler Prison for Women. She sees herself as mentoring the women and enjoys teaching God's word and the studying that involves. Anna comes with the blessing of her home church, Griner Mennonite.



Brian Miller has joined the We Care team for a six-month term of service in prison ministry. Coming from Frederickburg, OH, he is now living in Birmingham, AL, where he serves as an assistant chaplain at Donaldson Correctional Facility. Brian perceives prison to be a good place to fulfill God's command to go and make disciples, and his passion in the prison is to teach men about how to do things God's way.



Board Election Results

At their annual meeting on Jan. 8, members of We Care Program voted to fill the four vacancies on the board of directors. *Lee Hochstetler* (Blackduck, MN) and *Eli Yoder* (Hutchinson, KS) were re-elected to a three-year term. *LaVerne Eash* (Gambier, OH) and *Alvin Mast* (Millersburg, OH) were elected to fill the remaining two vacancies. LaVerne has served previously as an assistant chaplain, three terms on the board of directors, and crusade volunteer for 18 years. Alvin also served as an assistant chaplain with We Care, 19 years as a crusade volunteer, and is involved in local prison ministry.

Dale Mast and *Calvin Schrock* stepped down from the board after serving for three and four terms respectively. We deeply appreciate the dedicated service each of them has given to We Care Program.

PA Benefit Concerts

The *Mennonite Heritage Chorale* will present a program of sacred music on Sunday, April 10, 2005, replicating a 1965 *Mennonite Hour A Cappella Singers* recording entitled, "WHAT A SAVIOUR!" *Kenneth Nafziger* will serve as guest conductor. No entrance fee or tickets are required for the concerts. A freewill offering will be received for the benefit of We Care Program. The itinerary is as follows:

9:15 AM - East Chestnut Street
Mennonite Church, Lancaster, PA

2:00 PM - Midway Mennonite
Reception Center, East Lexington
Road, Lititz, PA

7:00 PM - Weaverland Mennonite
Church, Route 897, East Earl, PA

For information, call 717-627-0812.



After laying some ground-work late last year, *Mike Strehlow* joined the We Care staff in

January as the academic dean of the new Liberty Theological Extension school at Fountain. His duties include overseeing all aspects of the college in the prison. Mike and his wife Patty and their two daughters live in Pensacola and are members of Liberty Church.

Having previously served nearly four years with We Care Program, *J.R. and Rhonda Yoder* and children Courtney, Mitchel, Craig, and Ty recently returned to Atmore. J.R. will be directing the Faith Dorm at Holman Correctional Center. The Yoders attended Restoration Fellowship in Sarasota, FL.



For *Shane Beiler*, moving to Atmore, AL, meant moving north. Shane left Sarasota, FL, to become a part of our chaplaincy

staff for three months. He is serving as a mentor and encourager in the Faith Dorm at Holman Corr. Center.

Ron Hock recently began a term of service with We Care visiting the 160+ men on Death Row at Holman Correctional Center in Atmore, AL. He has a passion to share the hope he has found in Christ with men in prison. Ron is also very active in a softball ministry to men in prison. Ron and his wife Patricia live in Fort Walton Beach, FL.



Congratulations!

Dave and Veola Bucher joyfully announce the arrival of a precious daughter, *Cheney Rose*, born on January 17. We extend to them our congratulations!

Perspectives



David R. Landis
President

In my productivity orientated mindset, I am tempted after a week like Crusade 2005 to tally up numbers and think that our ministry has accomplished something great for God's kingdom. Although I rejoice in the fact that hundreds of known commitments were made, I am also enough of a realist to know that what is seen by the natural eye in the midst of a spiritually and emotionally charged event is not all that it might appear to be.

I will always remember something that happened in my first year as a full time assistant chaplain. A nationally known prison ministry held a weekend evangelistic event, bringing in big-name speakers and entertainers to share their testimonies and present the Gospel message. Many "decisions" were made for Christ. After the event, the team leader left materials for "follow-up" classes with these new converts. I was appointed to lead these sessions. I remember having four or five in my class the first week, two or three the second week, then one faithful brother for the remaining classes. Out of the many who had professed a commitment, could it be that only one felt it worth the time to solidify his commitment to Christ with a specially prepared Bible study?

Since that time, I have witnessed all kinds of services, revivals, crusades, seminars, etc. in the prison and other settings where an appeal or invitation is given (sometimes quite manipulatively) for the hearer to (with all eyes closed) raise his hand, stand up, walk down the aisle, kneel at the "altar," repeat the "sinner's prayer" or any combination of the above, and I have pondered "What is really going on in the heart of the person who responds in any of these ways?"

In prison ministry especially, where the inmate audience is a rejected and forgotten people group, the danger is that the hearer will "respond" to the message, not because they see their real need as sinners, but because of a genuine appreciation for the visiting ministry team and an understandably strong desire to be freed from their difficult and degrading environment. Sadly, many times, the ones who seemingly made "genuine" decisions are nowhere to be found in the life of the prison church by our staff chaplains in the weeks and months to follow.

Fellow laborers, my challenge is this: Preach God's Word! Point the hearer to Christ – not to a person, a group, a place, a posture, a formula, or an action – but to Christ, and Christ alone. Ensure that the hearers understand that there is absolutely nothing that a man can contribute towards his own salvation except to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection! Let the Holy Spirit convict of sin and determine the process of surrender. Let the sinner wrestle, let him repent, let him pray, let him find the peace and assurance of God whether it takes days, weeks, or months. In time, true converts will be recognized by their changed lives, observable over a period of time.

I'd love to hear from you.
Contact me at
dave@wecareprogram.org

The Bottom Line

Through the first seven months of the fiscal year, our income has remained steady except for a \$24,000 (12%) increase in Economy Shop sales over the same period last year. Since expenses were up by only 2%, we are blessed with a positive bottom line. Thank you for your continued support.

7 months ending January 31

	Budget \$332,500
	Expenses \$321,235
	Income \$354,089

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