

The Connection

THE NEWSLETTER OF WE CARE PROGRAM

MARCH 2006

2006 CRUSADE EDITION

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



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January 9-12 marked the 28th annual We Care Crusade in which a diverse group of 325 participants (including 24 evangelists and 18 music groups/soloists) from 21 states and 2 Canadian provinces came together in a unified effort to share the love of God with men and women in seventeen Alabama prisons. In the following pages are photos, testimonies, and stories of God working in our lives and those we ministered to. May you gain a deeper sense of God's heart and mission as you share in our experiences.

Fulfilling the Great Commission in America's Prisons

www.wecareprogram.org

2006 CRUSADE

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www.wecareprogram.org

Life-changing experience. God through His Holy Spirit empowered me to befriend men that began as strangers and left four days later as friends. - *Frank Vaughn, VA*

My eyes are opened wider—I came, I saw, I felt with compassion, and I can now pray with understanding. - *Lois Good, PA*

God's ways are much higher than our ways. I saw people with prisoner clothes who were free in Christ. - *Jake Peters, MB*

After a two-year absence from the crusade, I had a deep desire to come again but struggled with discerning God's will. When I got no clear direction, I decided to go ahead with plans to go but still had some doubts.

In the past in various ways and means, God has used the song and verse "Be Still and Know That I Am God" as a confirmation. Well, you guessed it! On the bus on the way to Tutwiler on Monday morning, ...the very first song ...was "Be Still and Know That I Am God." What a gracious, wonderful God we serve!

- *Susan Martin, PA*



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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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I found out on Wednesday morning that I would be responsible for the evening service due to a speaker's cancellation. I was in my office...ready to pray for God to give me a message when the phone rang and Irvin asked about the evening service. I asked if he wanted to preach. He chuckled and said that he felt that God might have him preach in one of the local prisons that night. We had a variety of spiritual input: congregational singing, a drama, and personal sharing, as well as preaching. God met us in special ways, and I didn't have to prepare a sermon because God had laid it on someone else's heart!

- *Marvin Bender, AL*



I will never be able to drive past a prison without thinking, "I wonder how many souls are 'ripe unto harvest.'"

- Albert Miller, VA

The Lord used this crusade to take me out of my comfort zone... It is difficult for me to just walk up to an inmate and strike up a conversation. I learned a little more how to be continually in tune with the Holy Spirit so that He could direct me to the people He wants me to talk to. It was a blessing to be a small part of God's work in the prisons in Alabama.

- Jason Sommers, OH

Very blessed with the way everyone worked together.

- Noah Burkholder, NY

One guard is a pastor. He asked me to pray for him and I did. Right there on the walks.

- Gary Burkholder, PA

I saw a gentleman sitting alone on a bench in the prison yard. He seemed to be glaring and totally unreceptive to my approach. I felt urged by the Holy Spirit to talk to him

though, so I approached him with a "Good morning." We talked for some time, and I could tell his spirit was lifted. He was acting animated and friendly. He said, "Can I share something with you?" I said, "Surely, that's what I'm here for." He told me that he had awakened that morning very angry even though he knew it was wrong. He was sitting there by himself when he saw me approaching. He said to himself, "I hope this guy keeps right on walking. I don't want to talk to him or anybody." He continued, "Then once you sat down and after we had talked for awhile about what a beautiful day it was and God had provided this day to praise Him and be thankful, I felt my spirit lifted. Now I feel at ease and at peace. Thank you." Well, I confessed that I also didn't want to stop and talk to him. But thankfully, I obeyed the Holy Spirit and we did talk. We continued our

Sunday, January 8 marked the official start of the 2006 Crusade with an all day orientation session in Wetumpka, AL. **"Christ Alone! From the Beginning... Throughout Eternity"** was the theme for the day's program, which included training, teaching, worship, special singing, testimony, drama, and lots of Christian fellowship. Pictured on these two pages are, clockwise from top left: Willard Mayer, OH; opening assembly; Glick Family, OH; Deborah Daniels, AL; Blaine Copenhaver, AL; and the Yoder Family, VA.

conversation in newfound brotherhood and thanked God in mutual prayer right in the middle of Satan's territory.

- Ralph Smith, OH

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This year has made me realize again the power of the blood of Jesus. In the blood we have forgiveness, power, healing, salvation, protection , and much more! It's wonderful to be a child of the King! - *John Miller, VA*

The unity and kinship of believers is tremendous, including those in prison. It's like a slice of heaven.

- *Richard Graber, KS*



I've never before prayed for somebody at the altar. That gave me great joy.

- *Paul Sensenig, AL*

It opened my eyes to the needs within prisons. I've been blessed by being able to give and share the good news of Jesus Christ.

- *Lester Glick, NY*



It motivates me to go home and be more zealous in witnessing and praying with people right in our midst. - *Randy Kandel, OH*

One day I met a lady who had the same name as I. She came back later with a friend and was just delighted to ask questions and hear my testimony as a young person. They were glad when I turned to my Bible and read verses that went along with what I was sharing.

- *Rhonda Zimmerman, PA*

Seeing the church within the bars touched my heart as a worshiper, not a performer. - *Michael Yutzy, ON*

It's all about Jesus—and we get so caught up in jobs and stuff and plans and schedules. When life gets stripped to the bare essentials (like in prison) nothing else but Jesus really matters! My tent pegs have been loosened a bit more after being here. - *Barbara Borntrager, VA*

We Care is like a reunion. We see volunteers that have become friends over the years, as well as prisoners who welcome us back each year. - *John Schmid, OH*

I was asked some difficult questions that are gonna make me go home and do some serious studying.

- *Justin Smoker, PA*



I was blessed to hear how a girl was encouraged by reading a tract I had given to her. She was in a struggle for about two weeks, and I gave her a few tracts to read. Then for the last day she came out and was ready to talk and give everything to God again. - *Bernice Shetler, VA*

This crusade confirmed the call God gave me many years ago to take my preaching to the prison. - *Jim Eigsti, IN*



On Monday through Thursday, hundreds of volunteers visited seventeen correctional facilities during the daytime hours, building friendships and sharing Christ in a variety of ways. Pictured clockwise from top left: Marian Harnley, PA, and friend; Sid Chapman, AL with friend; Emma Bender and Joyce Eby playing games with inmates in Tutwiler's "old dining hall"; Galen Martin "hanging out at the weight pile"; St. Clair team praying before entering facility; and Jeremy Troyer and George Dyer making friends and studying the Bible.



I was touched that a guard brought an inmate to me to talk and to pray with me.

- John Kurtz, PA

In January 2001 (six crusades ago) I befriended an inmate with whom I spent quite a bit of time that year. In August of that year I was cleared for a special visit to Tutwiler Prison

for only a few hours. I requested specifically to see this girl, and she was brought to me. I remember being a bit disappointed that she didn't seem excited to see me, but we had a nice chat. Although I've been to each crusade since, I never saw her again until two years ago when she asked me if I remember her. I did. She said she had been moved to Tutwiler Annex but had a job in the kitchen-dining room. Being in the food line, I had to move on, and I didn't see her again.

It was the last afternoon of this year's crusade before she got enough courage to come out to see if I was there. She had been out of prison, but only two months until she had landed back in. She was so full of bitterness and anger: anger at the prison system, her family, the judge, and at God himself for not answering her prayers, etc.

At first I tried to point out her need to forgive, but I soon saw that she wasn't ready for that, so I backed off and just let her talk. She confessed that the crime she committed was her own fault, but... She said a firm "NO" when I asked if she would like for one of the chaplains to contact her and visit with her. When I invited her to church, she said she hadn't gone to church for a long time. I said, "But you will come to church tonight, won't you?" She didn't commit herself, so I was thrilled when she came. She wanted me to sit with her, and I did. She responded to the altar call, and I had the privilege of being her counselor. What a joy to hear her prayer! When we were finished, I asked, "Would you like one of the chaplains to seek you out and encourage you?" She said, "Yes," and filled out a response card.

About 15 minutes later the crusade was over and we left the prison. What a grand finale! - Emma Bender, AL

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[view more photos and team pictures on-line at](#) WWW.wecareprogram.org

It has renewed my vision and burden to minister to others. I was rather nervous because it was my first time visiting a prison. It was a blessing for me to sit down and play games with the women and then steer conversation to a spiritual level.

- Jennifer Zimmerman, PA

I appreciate the effort that has been made to equip, challenge, and motivate us as workers. I have been truly blessed and God has spoken deep to my heart. - Pat Hertzler, VA

Truly blessed my heart as many men cried out their hearts of bitterness and hurts, therefore allowing God to start the healing process and deepen their relationship in Christ. It makes every mile of the trip worthwhile.

- Paul High, PA

I was feeling rather discouraged... The Lord led me to an inmate who was sitting on a bench beside the basketball court. He introduced himself and I soon found out that he was a Christian. Before long he started sharing how grateful he was that we took time off work just to come visit them there in prison. He said he was really glad to see young people like me come too, not just the older ones. After sharing and praying for about an hour, I left with my spirit lifted! It's amazing how the Lord works! I went to encourage and came away encouraged. Praise the Lord!

- Jason Sommers, OH

As simple as it may seem, I had taken along a few table puzzles and spread them out. I was amazed how that drew out the puzzle lovers and started conversations.

- Esther Mae Martin, PA

The instant bond that can form in units when we have a united goal and purpose. Seems that should work at home too!

- Albert Miller, VA

I've been so blessed again by the earnest desire of the Christian men who are desiring to continue to grow and be faithful to the Lord. I want to be more faithful in prayer for them and for God's wisdom for the chaplains as they fill such an important role in their lives. - Luke Bucher, PA



One of the many highlights of Crusade week is the evening chapel service in each facility. A special singing group and evangelist are invited to share in each of these services across the state. As God's love is proclaimed, laughter, tears, encouragement, and conviction are all evident as many decide to follow Jesus. Pictured on right, John Schmid, OH; and the Zambian Vocal Collection, Zambia.

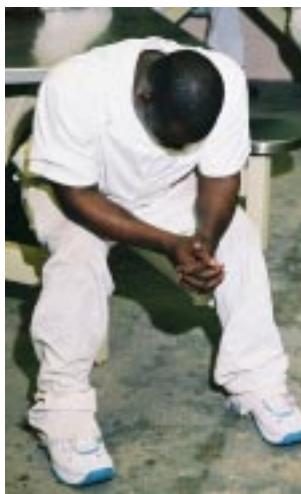


2006 CRUSADE FACT SHEET

325	Total Volunteers
123	Churches Represented
23	States/Provinces Represented
18	Music Groups/Soloists
24	Preachers/Evangelists
17	Correctional Facilities
69	In-Prison Chapel Services
7,043	Estimated Chapel Attendees
7,136	Estimated Volunteer Hours
17,550	Reachable Inmates

*Lives Impacted for Eternity...
Incalculable!*

News of Note



Going into prison makes you realize how much of a blessing a godly, stable home life is to those who have it. - *Galen Martin, PA*

I was privileged to speak to an officer, and in our conversation, he told me he is a Christian. I could tell he was different, and we talked for a while... It was just so encouraging and a blessing to meet an officer who is a Christian.

- *Bernice Shetler, VA*



A man with whom we shared the plan of salvation in the afternoon and invited to church gave his life to Christ that night. This guy had such a great peace within, but this is just one of many. I just want to thank the Lord for the mighty work that happened inside the walls of the prison.

- *Nelson Miller, IL*

I was blessed seeing the change in some inmates that I've worked with for several years. - *Justin Smoker, PA*

One man...asked me what makes us come from so far away and so many places just to come here and to talk to them and was it worth it. That opened up the way for me to share with him Jesus, the only remedy for our sin. He was not ready to accept a God that he couldn't understand, but perhaps the seed sown will be watered and bring forth fruit. Yes, it's worth it. - *Joseph Hertzler, VA*

AWC Update

Just over \$73,000 has been contributed towards the Atmore Work Center Chapel Fund since we made our friends aware of our desire to expand the chapel at AWC. Numerous and unexpected delays in the final approval process have prevented us from beginning construction, but we are confident that approval will come in God's timing. Because of design alterations and the lengthy delay in getting approval which will result in higher construction costs, we are anticipating the need for additional gifts towards the project. Many thanks to the individuals, businesses, and churches who have partnered with us.

Dirty Work

Work has begun at the new headquarters site! We feel extremely blessed that staff chaplain Randy Bruckhart, who has excavating experience, and his father Robert (Manheim, PA) were willing to undertake the responsibility of the property development, which included site layout, tree removal, and lots of dirt movement. Shown below is Randy taking part in We Care's chaplaincy anti-stress program.



Election Results

At their annual meeting on Jan. 7, members of We Care Program voted to fill the four vacancies on the board of directors. **John Bender** (Ephrata, PA), **Loyd Gingerich** (Arcola, IL), and **J. D. Landis** (Mobile, AL) were re-elected to a three-year term. **Harvey Fox** (Lititz, PA) was elected to fill the remaining vacancy. Harvey has previously served four terms on the board of directors and as crusade volunteer for 18 years. **Marvin Reed** stepped down from the board after serving for six terms. We deeply appreciate the dedicated service Marvin has given to We Care Program.

**Join us for next year's Crusade!
January 21-25, 2007**

Perspectives



David R. Landis
President

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

An auto accident, in which my wife and four children were hit by a hydro-planing vehicle in a rainstorm, totaled our van but preserved my family. After the initial shock, we reflected on the mercy of God, giving praise for His obvious protection, and then began our search for a van that would meet our future needs. For some reason, the lengthening van search process turned out to create quite a bit more anxiety than I would have expected it to, and my lack of faith caused me to examine the condition of my own heart.

The coming relocation of We Care Program's headquarters will also bring challenges requiring extra measures of faith on our part. As an organization, we have many reasons to praise God as we have witnessed His hand at work, not only over the last 35 years, but also in the initial phase of our relocation process. But we also face many uncertainties that go along with this kind of move. As God directs in our decision making, we will be putting ourselves in positions requiring us to trust for His provision.

The construction of our new headquarters is a prime example. The board of directors feels that God will provide laborers who want to help make the building a reality. As a result, our faith is being stretched because of the uncertainty involved in recruiting and planning for volunteer labor. It's easy to say that God will provide, but life gets a lot more interesting as we wait for the phone calls to come. Please read the information below, and as God leads, we invite you to be a part of our faith-building experience. Lord, increase our faith!

HELP WANTED

We're RELOCATING and BUILDING a new ministry headquarters and would love for you to help us make it happen. Following are some particular areas of need:

Concrete
Framing

Carpentry
Roofing

Masonry
Plumbing

Electrical
Drywall

Flooring
Cabinetry

Specialized work crews will be needed

LATE SUMMER / EARLY FALL and into WINTER 2006

For information, please contact Don Metzler: 251-368-8818 or don@wecareprogram.org
Housing and food provided

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