

The Connection

THE NEWSLETTER OF WE CARE PROGRAM

MAY 2006

We've Moved!

First Step in Relocation of Ministry Headquarters Is Complete

After 21 years in one location, the We Care Program headquarters has moved. Belongings were sorted and packed, and on March 29 and 30, the Atmore staff combined their efforts to transport furniture, supplies, and equipment to a temporary office in a house (*top picture*) just two miles down the road. Along with the office relocation, the hospitality branch of the We Care headquarters moved to a new double-wide mobile home (*bottom picture*) set up on the property where the new ministry headquarters will be constructed beginning later this year.

A sign in the front yard is the only exterior indication that anything unusual is going on inside the house. Upon stepping inside the door, however, it immediately becomes evident that this is a workplace. The living room has been transformed into a receptionist and bookkeeping area. Bedrooms have become executive offices, and the den is now a conference room. The host couple and one remaining young adult volunteer are settling into the mobile home and making preparations for housing incoming ministry volunteers.

These two current facilities, ½ mile apart, will house the administrative and hospitality operations of We Care Program while the new headquarters facility is under construction. Although the arrangement may not be ideal, it is certainly very workable, and we praise God for the way He has provided for our needs during this time of transition.



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Fulfilling the Great Commission in America's Prisons

www.wecareprogram.org

Please note Our New Address. . .

We Care Program
3493 Highway 21
Atmore, AL 36502-4669

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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.

Direct all correspondence to:
We Care Program
3493 Highway 21
Atmore, AL 36502

Phone: 251-368-8818
Fax: 251-368-0932
E-mail: wecare@wecareprogram.org
Web site: www.wecareprogram.org

Board Chairman: LaVerne Eash
President: David R. Landis
Vice Pres./Business Mgr.: Don Metzler
Editor: David R. Landis
Asst. Editor: Noreen Horst
Circulation Manager: Noreen Horst

Mission Completed*

During the first weekend of October, 2005, three young men from Pennsylvania, Paul Sensenig, Nadon Zook, and Blaine Copenhaver, journeyed to Atmore, Alabama, to join a fourth young adult, Ernie Glick, also from PA, who had extended an earlier term, to begin the '05-'06 Six-Month Young Adult Internship. After a week of formal training and getting to know one another, the interns were assigned to different roles alongside current We Care missionaries in local correctional facilities. Following are some insights from the interns about their time of service.

1. How would you describe your time of service (what you actually did) in the prison during the term?

Paul - At first it was hard to talk to the guys, but after a while I got to know some, and I had some long conversations and built some good friendships.

Nadon - Mainly I just hung out with the guys. I also taught a Bible study on the life of David with two inmates, led worship, and preached a few times. Did a few dramas/skits.

Ernie - Lots of time just hanging out with the guys, discipling, mentoring, teaching, some office and library work.

Blaine - The biggest thing was being like Jesus in action on the prison yard.

2. Describe any spiritual growth or learning experiences you had during the term.

Paul - I know I grew a lot spiritually. I learned to lean on God more and listen to the Holy Spirit more. I also felt I grew in the area of discernment.

Nadon - Being here gave me a desire to learn and dig into the unknowns of God's mysteries. It opened my eyes to a lot of crazy stuff that I have been shielded from.

Ernie - I learned a lot about people and how to better relate to them as well as learning more about myself.

Blaine - I learned how to trust in the Lord when I did not know how to answer questions from inmates.

3. What was your most memorable moment of the term?

Paul - When I talked to two guys who shared their testimonies. God was definitely speaking to me that day through them.

Nadon - When I witnessed the inmate graduation for the Man of God class. It was awesome to see them succeed in something.

Ernie - Our times together as "family."

Blaine - One day an inmate came to me with tears in his eyes. He told me that one of his family members had passed away. It made me realize that he put trust in me and the God that I serve.

4. What was the most challenging aspect of prison ministry for you?

Paul - Leading Bible studies and devotionals.

Nadon - To try to minister to so many different men in one place with different personalities and bondages and to have the wisdom and discernment to know how to show them the hope of Christ.

Ernie - Being committed to working with the inmates consistently on a long term basis.

Blaine - Studying before teaching lessons in the prison.

5. What would you say to someone who is considering an internship with We Care?

Paul - Be ready to be stretched, to learn a lot, but also to be fulfilled and have fun.

Nadon - Go for it! It is a God-sized adventure where He can show Himself strong and where you will be strengthened. Just hang on!!

Ernie - Prison is a good place to see what areas you are gifted in.

Blaine - It's only seven months of your life. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Take a risk, step out of your comfort zone into one of the most life-changing opportunities ever.

6. Summarize your internship experience in one sentence or less.

Compilation - A high calling, adventurous, fulfilling, stretching, eye-opening, spiritually challenging, fast paced, very worthwhile, a risk worth taking, some of the best times I have ever had.

***Except For One**

Two years ago I would have never thought of ministering to men in prison, let alone being an assistant chaplain. It all started at crusade 2005 which inspired me to come to the young adult internship program. After two months as an assistant chaplain, it became apparent that the Lord was calling me to stay in Alabama for another year. I wrestled with the thought of leaving my family, friends, and job on the home farm for that long.

While wrestling with this decision to make, God showed me a couple verses. The first one was Matthew 10:37-38, "Anyone who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." These verses made me question how much I really love God.

After I was pretty sure of my decision, God confirmed it by showing me Lamentations 3:27, "It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young." This verse helped me realize that although I am young it is good to bear the burden of ministering to others.

Making the decision to stay another year has not been easy, but the Lord's leading couldn't be clearer.

- Blaine Copenhaver

Blaine, Ernie, Paul, and Nadon Made A Difference In Prison.



With God's Help, You Can Too.

Young Adult Internship October '06 - April '07

A seven-month program designed for a team of young adults who will be placed in various prisons to work alongside our staff prison chaplains. Emphasis will be placed on spiritual growth through the development of interpersonal relationships with those who do not know Christ, discipleship of new believers, and fellowship with the Body of Christ within prison walls. In addition, the team will be assigned to various community service projects and be encouraged to grow in personal spiritual disciplines.

Who: Young Adults ages 20 and older
When: October '06 thru April '07
Where: Alabama
Why: I was in prison, and you came to me. - *Jesus*
Cost: Will need to raise some program expenses and have health insurance coverage. (Room, board, and monthly allowance provided.)

For more information contact David Landis:
dave@wecareprogram.org or 251-368-8818
www.wecareprogram.org

From the Field

Atmore, AL

Fountain Correctional Facility

There are so many ways to encourage and be encouraged in prison ministry. Over the last several months, one of my good friends at Fountain Prison has had a variety of experiences that had left him rather discouraged and disgruntled. Three issues concerned him the most:

- he was not being successful making contact with his family by phone.
- he couldn't get an answer to whether he had acquired enough credit points to enjoy family night supper with his family on the visiting yard.
- his eye glasses had been broken several times and repaired by a friend. However, he needed an eye exam and new glasses.

We prayed together concerning the Lord's will in answering these needs. Two weeks later, with a big grin, he informed me that all three of these issues were taken care of! This answer to prayer was very encouraging to him, as well as to me. Thank you, Lord, that you care about all of our needs! - *Lester Huber*

Recently, I had the experience every teacher lives for. I was teaching Fountain of Life Bible College's Bible Interpretation class to a small handful of students. The subject was Meaning vs. Application of Scripture, a difficult idea to get across, especially to us Americans. When we read the Bible, we are used to going straight to how a verse applies to us, rather than trying to figure out what Jesus was saying to his *original* audience. Many free world Bible college students struggle with the distinction. Probably no more than half ever really understand it.

Anyway, while going over and over it, I saw a light go on in the eyes of one of the students. He turned to his buddy (who had been saying, "I don't get any of this,") and essentially took the class out of my hands for about five minutes, explaining what *meaning* was. Before the

class was over, a second light went all the way on, and there were at least a couple more dim glows in that class that will soon be fanned into flame.

They *got* it! Sitting inside a storage room of a prison chapel, they *got* it! Convicts, men that most of the free world write off, caught something that maybe one out of two free world Bible college students grasp. They *got* it! And the best part is, they *knew* they'd got it!

- *Mike Strehlow*

Atmore Work Center

God has shown Himself as the Great Physician at Atmore Work Center. Recently at a Sunday evening service, one of the inmates asked us to pray for him because he was having internal bleeding. We gathered around and laid hands on him, praying for God to heal him as He sees best. Plans were for hospitalization the next day. On Monday he was still doing tests at the hospital, but by Tuesday the doctor was amazed and said he couldn't find a problem. This man is feeling better and is praising God for his healing. Pray that this will draw him closer to the Lord, as he has a limited understanding of God. - *Bob Depew*

J. O. Davis Correctional Facility

When was the last time that you sought God with tears as you interceded for someone's salvation? Not long ago I had the opportunity to cry and pray with a man who has a deep burden for his unsaved brother. His brother was born with some physical problems, is full of anger, and seems to blame God for his condition. This man thinks that his brother may be getting toward the end of his life on earth and is grieved by the real possibility of his brother going to hell. We asked God to be merciful and send the Holy Spirit to convict him of sin and convince him of God's love. I wish we all had such deep concern for our unsaved family members and friends.

- *Marvin Bender*

Montgomery, AL

Tutwiler Prison for Women

Recently I talked to an inmate who needed encouragement to be honest at a court hearing where she would need to testify against someone very dear to her. This person had been telling her that if she lied then her friend wouldn't have to go to prison for her crime. Pointing out that when we lie we have to lie again to cover it up, I also shared Jesus' words in John 8:32, "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free."

When I asked if she realized that her friend is being manipulated by the father of lies, she admitted that she did but said, "I am torn between feelings and facts." I challenged her to tell the truth. In doing so, her friend would be held responsible for her actions, and she would stop enabling her friend to live a lie.

My heart aches when I see how some people are being pushed and manipulated to sell out for Satan and the world. It takes strength and courage to take a stand for Jesus and do the right thing. Let us be truthful and remain faithful even if we have to stand alone. - *Anna Miller*

Staton Correctional Facility

While speaking at a chapel service in prison, I asked the question, "What's the toughest battle in your life right now?" Of course, someone said the obvious, "Being in prison," but there were also some different answers: "Fighting for custody of my children," "Missing my children," "My mother passed away this week," and "I'm worried about staying close to God when I get out."

In II Chronicles we read about a major battle for King Jehoshaphat. Three nations were planning war against Judah. How could Judah possibly win? A battle was ahead for King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah. What did they do? II Chronicles 20:3-4 says, "Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came

News of Note

together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek Him.”

Whether incarcerated or in the free world, we all struggle with battles daily. Who or what do we turn to during these difficult and uncertain times? There is one fact that holds true. When God is with us we don't have to fear the enemies that rise against us. - Carl Carpenter

Marysville, OH Ohio Reformatory for Women

After serving as a couple, for 11½ years, with a well-established national mid-western ministry, her husband's weakness for women was exposed and the leadership of that ministry rightfully released them. A few years later, in true repentance, he humbly submitted to their denomination's intensely disciplined two-year restoration program and has been faithfully serving the Lord since then. Meanwhile, their marriage destroyed, she went her way, successfully setting up several businesses over the years. But her pain and lack of fulfillment led to alcoholism and she found herself at the Ohio Reformatory for Women. Obviously no novice to the Scriptures, every verse I quoted, she completed. She was a wounded, defeated soldier, looking for hope and strength.

We talked at length. After acknowledging and confessing her anger at God and her husband, we asked God to bring His Truth to the pain of those years. We sat quietly waiting and suddenly she said, "It's not his fault." Startled, I said, "What?" "It's not his fault. He is responsible for what he did, but I am responsible for what I did. For 17 years I've been blaming him for everything that's gone wrong."

Her head had known it, but when the Holy Spirit revealed it to her, her heart knew it. Her running was over; she returned to Him with joy and freedom. No longer a fugitive from God.

- Wilma Mullet

Spring Banquets

Instead of only one banquet as usual, We Care Program held three banquets in March. In addition to the annual banquet at *Yoder's Restaurant* in New Holland, Pennsylvania, two others were held in new areas. The first of these was at *Franconia Heritage Restaurant* in Franconia, Pennsylvania, and the second one at the *Amish Door Restaurant* in Wilmot, Ohio. Combined attendance at the three locations was 1,063, and we praise the Lord for a net banquet income of \$46,000.

Thank you to those of you who helped with organization and reservations, to all of you who attended and responded with a financial gift, and to the individuals and businesses who covered the expenses of these events through their sponsorship. We extend a special thanks to *T.H. Properties* for generously underwriting the complete cost of the Franconia banquet.

Welcome Back!

Sensing a call from God to return to prison ministry, *Irvin Martin* has again joined our chaplaincy staff. Irvin and Kathy and their family served with We Care Program from 1994 to 1998 and have remained in Atmore since that time. They are actively involved in their church at Grace Fellowship. Irvin will be serving as chaplain at J. O. Davis Correctional Facility.



Thanks, and God bless!

Randy and Eunice Bruckhart have recently returned to their home area in Pennsylvania. Thank you, Randy and Eunice, for your contributions to our lives and to the ministry of We Care Program during the past 2½ years. You've been a tremendous blessing! Although you are greatly missed, we wish you God's richest blessings as you continue to walk His chosen path for your lives.

Construction Help Wanted

Specialized work crews in the areas of concrete, framing, carpentry, roofing, masonry, plumbing, electrical, drywall, flooring, cabinetry, and much more will be needed beginning late Summer/early Fall 2006 and into Winter and Spring 2007 to help make our new ministry headquarters become a reality. We would love for you to help us make it happen. Along with short term work crews, some longer term general volunteers would also be helpful. We will be glad to provide food and lodging for all laborers.

For more information, please contact Don Metzler at 251-368-8818 or don@wecareprogram.org.

Perspectives



David R. Landis
President

Several months ago, I received a call from a newly placed warden at a small work release facility. The camp's small size and unusually rural location make it difficult to attract ministries to serve there. In fact, he informed me that at the present, there were NO ministries whatsoever coming into the facility. I was quite surprised that a situation like this existed anywhere within our realm of influence. Having received a recommendation from a warden at another facility, he asked if there was any way that We Care Program could begin some type of ministry at his camp.

Of course, I was very interested in his request since our organization's primary mission centers around placing ministry personnel into facilities such as this. I promised to make some contacts with ministry partners in a town within reasonable driving distance to see what might develop. My first contact was positive, so we made an appointment with the warden to tour the facility and find out how we can best serve the men incarcerated there.

Immediately upon entering the shift office to sign in, we sensed the spiritual need. The officer who checked us in, after finding out the purpose of our visit, informed us that since he had been working there he had seen only one service take place, and that was led by an inmate (no doubt a concerned brother longing for spiritual fellowship). The officer urged us to do something that would help to "lift the spirits" of the men in the camp.

"Is there anything you can do to help us?" were the first words we heard from the warden when we sat down in his office to discuss our potential involvement. We then spent some time exchanging ideas about how and when to begin, even if it means only weekly or monthly visitation. Our hearts were deeply touched by the reception we felt, the spiritual needs that were evident, and the limitless possibilities and wide open doors that God was making available to us.

The setting and circumstances, although so close to "home," reminded me of missionary stories in which God used native community leaders to invite workers into practically unreached people groups to "bring the Light." We have the invitation, and in this case I believe we already have the ground breakers for future ministry at this facility. I praise God for the interested persons who are planning to begin serving there. I am also thankful for the way so many people have supported our organization in many different kinds of ways allowing us to be available for needs such as these.

Unfortunately, because of lack of personnel, we are still unable to respond to numerous requests from wardens and institutional chaplains for a multitude of service opportunities. We are humbled by the trust that has been placed in our organization and desire with all of our hearts to see these and many other positions filled according to God's will. With your prayers, your financial support, **and perhaps, your very life**, I believe we can greatly impact incarcerated men and women for the Kingdom. Because of Christ, I only hope that it is sooner, rather than later.

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

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