

# THE

# Connection

THE NEWSLETTER OF WE CARE PROGRAM

October 2007

## A Vision for Revival By David Landis

Lord willing, on Monday, January 28, 2008, hundreds of volunteers from at least 20 different states and provinces will once again penetrate the walls of Alabama's prison system for We Care Program's 30<sup>th</sup> Annual January Prison Crusade. During that week, volunteers will be divided into teams for four days of ministry and special chapel services in at least 17 of Alabama's state correctional facilities in Atmore, Troy, Montgomery, and Birmingham areas.

Obviously, none of this was on the mind of Martin Weber, founder of New Life Foundation (later changed to We Care Program) when he felt God's call to move his wife Anna and family from Lancaster County, PA, to Atmore, AL, to assist with mission work among the youth of the locally based Poarch Creek Indians. While farming and sharing Christ's love with the Indian young people, Martin was eventually confronted with the needs of the prisoners incarcerated at the Atmore State Prison Farm (now Fountain Correctional). Starting in 1965, he began to give his time to counseling, Bible studies, and preaching services at the prison. In 1970, New Life Foundation was formed to help meet the growing needs of ministry at Fountain and neighboring Holman Correctional Facility.



Chaplain Martin Weber sharing with an inmate at Fountain.

Midway through the 1970's, Chaplain Weber invited a group of six men from Louisiana, including evangelist Don Price, to conduct three days of revival services at Fountain. It was during that series of meetings that Martin saw the possibility of conducting similar events, only on a larger scale involving more volunteers.

In July of 1977, the first official "revival" was held at Fountain. Thirty-six volunteers participated in the week-long event. The next July, sixty-seven volunteers labored for ten days of ministry and special meetings at Fountain.

On January 22-27, 1979, eighty-three volunteers invaded Fountain for the first January "revival." It is thought that the January dates were selected to better accommodate those involved in construction and farming who would have more available time for volunteering during the winter months.

*(continued on following page)*



## Special Edition!

## Volume XXXIX, Number 5

Published six times a year, *The Connection* provides news and views of 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](mailto:wecare@wecareprogram.org)  
Web site: [www.wecareprogram.org](http://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  
Layout & Design: Sheila Schrock  
Circulation Manager: Noreen Horst

After the second annual January crusade in 1980, the warden at Staton Correctional in Montgomery, hearing of the success of the Atmore revival, invited Chaplain Weber to bring a team to Staton. The next month, twenty-two men from ten different states spent a week at Staton, fed and housed by the Department of Corrections in the Staton Pre-Release Center, nearby the prison!

After the January 1981 revival at Fountain, doors opened at four Montgomery prisons: Frank Lee, Staton, Draper, and Tutwiler. A revival was held in the spring of that year with the help of 50+ volunteers from many different states. It was the first revival of its kind at Tutwiler, the only women's facility in Alabama at that time. From that time on, revivals were held in January only.

In 1982, the revivals were expanded to four Atmore prisons: Fountain, Holman, Fountain Trustee Barracks (now J.O. Davis), and Atmore Work Release. Nineteen eighty-six was the first year for over 100 volunteers (103 from 54 different churches). In 1987, Tutwiler was included again and has been visited every year since. Bullock and Escambia Corrections were added in 1988 for a total of seven prisons.


In 1990, after the Sunday orientation in Atmore, one hundred of the 158 volunteers traveled from Atmore to Montgomery on Monday morning to minister at Bullock, Staton, Elmore, Frank Lee, Red Eagle, and Tutwiler for the remainder of the week. This was also the first year the revivals began to be referred to as a "Crusade."

The 200 mark was passed in 1992, when 223 volunteers from 17 states and one province ministered in 12 prisons. In 1994, **one hundred forty first-timers** joined 150 veterans for the crusade!

The idea of prayer intercessors was introduced in 1995. Eighteen persons received daily updates and prayed for the 254 volunteers who were canvassing the prison compounds. This past year, approximately 150 persons were interceding on our behalf.

In 1996, heavy snowfall in the Northeast caused twelve percent of the volunteers to cancel, including some speakers and musicians. Years 1997 through 1999 included several prisons in the Tallahassee, FL, region bringing the total number of prisons to 16. In January 2003, the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual January Crusade, the 300 barrier was broken with a total of 327 volunteers. The largest group of volunteers was in 2005, when 351 men, women, speakers, and musicians shared in 17 institutions.

While statistics like these are relatively simple to compile, what is more important and impossible to measure is the fact that over these many years thousands of hurting hearts have been touched and encouraged by the simple friendship and testimony of so many caring individuals sharing God's love with some of society's forgotten ones. In a way that only God can orchestrate, each year we make preparations for the crusade event with the expectation that God will once again call laborers to the work. This coming January will be no exception. We are tentatively planning to minister in 19 prisons and are trusting that God will bring the teams together for each of these prisons.

Many years ago, We Care founder Martin Weber had a vision for revival. That vision has grown beyond what anyone could have imagined. Not only have the flames of revival been fanned in the hearts of the incarcerated, but those of us who have shared in this great work have been changed as well. Our 30<sup>th</sup> Annual January Crusade is only a vision. Will you consider helping to make it a reality for the glory of God? 





# Interview with: Martin & Anna Weber

Founder: We Care Program

How did you go about getting permission for the first crusade?

I shared with the warden what I am planning to do, and he looked at me and said, "You going to handle it?" And I said "Yes, I'll handle it." What he meant by that was he did not want his officers to be involved in my program. So, "You got to handle it. Count 'em in, count 'em out; don't let anyone stay and don't take an extra one along." So there was no paperwork or nothing, just bring 'em in, take 'em out.

What is the biggest difference from the early years of crusade as compared to today?

The difference from the early crusades to today is there was no paperwork. I was in charge of everything, and it went so easy. I would get my men, bring them up to the gate, and the officer stepped back and I was in charge counting them in. When we wanted to go home, same way. The officer stepped back, "You count them out."

What are some of your most vivid memories of the last 29 years of crusades?

My most vivid memory was how near we had lost our privilege of having a crusade. During orientation I always stressed the point how important it is that you abide by the rules. And one of the rules was no free-world money. One of the first days at Fountain, an inmate came to me and said, "One of your men is giving out free money." I said, "Who?" and he told me, and I went and looked the man up and I said, "Did you give free money out?" "Yes, Chaplain," he said, "I know I wasn't supposed to, but I just couldn't help it." So I said, "Well, you come with me." I took him up front and put him outside of the prison and said, "Sorry, but you can't come in the rest of the day or the rest of the week." Then I went straight to the warden and said, "Warden, one of my men has violated my rules." "Where is he?" I said, "He's out the front gate and he's not coming back in." He asked, "What did he do?" I said, "He gave free world money." And he said, "Okay, since you handled it the way you did, I'll let you continue, but if my officer would have come up and told me that your men are handing out free money, that would have been the end of all your revivals."



Another thing that I remember so well is during orientation I stressed the point of making sure you have a clear conscience so that the Holy Spirit can use you. And I told them that there are a lot of telephones in this building. "Go in the room and shut the door if you have to clear something with somebody. But do it, so that you have a clear spirit to go." It wasn't long they went to different rooms, and I can so well remember this one man came out, and oh, he was so happy. He said, "My brother and I haven't spoken to each other for twelve years. I just called him and made arrangements for us to have a breakfast together when I get home." Oh, he was so happy. The blessing of getting a clear conscience.

This [particular incident] happened up at Staton. When I brought in 20-some men, the captain of the guards came to me and he was angry. He said, "We have to watch the inmates, protect them. Now what do you think you're doing bringing all these men here? Now we have to watch them yet!" And I just stood there so guilty. By Friday he came to me and said, "Chaplain, can't you keep these men here all the time?" I said, "For what reason?" He said, "Normally we have twenty disciplinaries a day on average, and this whole week we didn't have a single one. Can't you keep them here?"

Describe the process or the thinking that led you to expand the crusade into multiple prisons.

The warden at Staton asked me would I, could I not bring this team up there. He liked what he heard from Atmore. So I did, and of course, things went well there. The next thing there were chaplains had asked, and so between wardens and chaplains it spread.



**What value does the crusade have for the prison community?**

A lot, because it shows to the inmates that people in the free world do care about them and they are not totally forgotten.

**What value does the crusade have for the volunteers?**

I've heard it so many times, the men would tell me, "I can never be the same." "I saw something this week." "God spoke to me." And things like that. So I think sometimes it does more good for the volunteers than it does for the inmates. They go back home and they are not the same. They just can't shake it off because they saw something.



**What would you say to someone who is thinking about coming to the crusade for the first time? Why should they come?**

I would say, come, and expect great things to happen in your life. It will be a time that you will never forget the rest of your life.

**Anna, what do you remember about the first crusades, and what was your role in that?**

My role was to furnish lodging and meals. There were the seven men that came, and they were in our basement, and I served creamed eggs on toast. (chuckle) And the one man had no bottom in his stomach, I don't think, because I ran out. And the other thing is to support my husband. That was my role.

**And over the years as the groups got to be a larger size, how did that work? What did you do in that situation?**

Women would come along and offer to help, and I would oversee, until my daughter-in-law pitched in. And we did quilts. The first couple years, women came along with their men, and they couldn't get in at Tutwiler at that time yet, I don't think. Anyway, one year we did two quilts for the We Care benefit auction in Pennsylvania.

**Do you remember anything about the largest group of volunteers you ever had in your basement?**

Well, I'm not quite sure. Martin thinks it's 20; I know we had at least 15.

**And what was that like?**

They evidently didn't have enough hooks to hang up their clothes, so they put nails in our storage room to hang up their clothes. They had one bathroom, I'm not sure how they did that. (pause) They evidently enjoyed it, some of them anyway. They would come upstairs, and there would be some fun stories told.



**Anna, do you have any particular memories about the volunteers that came to participate?**

I always enjoyed hearing the stories when the men came back at night, and in the morning when they had their devotions, there would be some more stories coming out of the things that happened at the prison. I always enjoyed that. 🙏



# News of Note

VOL. 39, NO. 5

Atmore, Alabama

October 2007

## Welcome! *By David Landis*

We extend a big welcome to four individuals who have joined our team in the last month. Jeanna Fox, from Lititz, PA, is taking care of our bookkeeping needs as well as assisting with hospitality at headquarters. Jeanna is the daughter of board member Harvey Fox and is a member of Word of Life Mennonite Fellowship.



**Jeanna Fox**

Donna Wyatt, from Powhatan, VA, joins We Care staff person Anna Miller at Tutwiler Prison for Women, Wetumpka, AL, to assist with chaplaincy duties. Donna felt God's call to serve at Tutwiler earlier this year while participating in the January We Care Crusade. She is a member of Powhatan Mennonite Church in Virginia, also the home church of headquarters host couple Ed and Doris Ranck.



**Donna Wyatt**

Dennis Bilbo, Atmore, AL, has come on board as a part-time volunteer giving assistance to David Landis with the Faith Dorm Program at Fountain Correctional. Although Dennis has been involved in prison ministry at Fountain

for many years, it was not until his retirement that he could devote additional time to serving in this way. Dennis and his wife Evelyn are members of First Presbyterian Church, Atmore, AL.



**Dennis Bilbo**

ministry of We Care Program. With Gary's extensive experience in retail and his heart for ministry, we are excited about the way that God will use him as he relates to employees,

And finally, a welcome to Gary and Rosanna Mast and their family. Gary has consented to manage operations at the Atmore and Monroeville We Care Economy Shops, whose proceeds provide financial support for the on-going



**Gary & Rosanna Mast & family**

customers, and the local communities. The Mast family attends Grace Fellowship, Atmore, AL.

God's richest blessings to each of you as you serve in your various capacities!

## 24th Annual Benefit Auction

*Support for Prison Ministries, Lititz, PA*, will again be hosting a benefit auction for various prison ministry, chaplaincy, and aftercare programs, including We Care Program. Since 1984, the annual event has generated over \$1.3 million of financial support for prison ministry causes. The event will be held at the Farmersville Auction Grounds, located southwest of Ephrata, PA.

### Friday, October 26

4:00-7:00 PM Chicken BBQ (eat in or take out)  
5:00 PM Auction of quality merchandise, hardware, flowers, gift certificates, toys, collectibles, meats, and groceries

### Saturday, October 27

6:00 AM Pancake and Sausage Breakfast  
8:30 AM Auction begins with quality merchandise for home, farm, and business

Homemade baked goods and a variety of food items will be available throughout the sale. Join us for a day of fellowship, food, and fun...all for the benefit of prison ministries! For more information, call Nelson Martin (717) 625-0232.

## Farewell

Kenton Bucher, who came to We Care as part of last winter's Young Adult Internship program and then extended his service five additional months, returned home to Pennsylvania at the beginning of October. We thank you, Kenton, for sharing your servant's heart with us and with the men at J. O. Davis during this past year. May God bless you richly as you continue to follow His call and plan for your life.

## Read-A-Thon Sets Record

Twenty-four readers from eight states participated in We Care Program's fourth annual read-a-thon in July. Together they read 428 books and raised \$11,325.25 for prison ministry. This amount is more than any of the previous read-a-thons. Congratulations to the winners in each division: age 13 and up, 1st place - Goldie Huber (AL) and 2nd place - Celia Landis (PA), and age 12 and under, 1st place - Lyndon Gingerich (IL) and 2nd place - Kenton Bender (AL). We extend a big thank you to all readers and sponsors! Your participation with us makes a difference in the lives of prisoners.





# FROM THE FIELD

## MONTGOMERY, AL

### Tutwiler Prison for Women

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” (Romans 13:1) Recent changes at Tutwiler have greatly affected the chapel calendar. Most of us don’t like change, and in some way or another we fight it. We like what is familiar and within our comfort zone where we know what to expect. In these changes, God was stretching me. As I looked at the calendar I wondered how I could keep my two Bible studies. I am ashamed to admit that I reacted, and yet praying for God’s wisdom brought a solution. Both Bible studies were changed to different days of the week.

Not long ago I met an inmate who has been incarcerated for 17 years and is nearing release. She has never seen a Wal-Mart Supercenter, and a lot of other changes have happened while she has been in prison. The changes that I had to deal with are so small in comparison to what my sister will face.

Why do we fight change? Doesn’t God sometimes orchestrate the clashes between His will and our human nature? How else will we ever be made holy and become more like our Master and Savior? I’m reminded of a song that says, “So change us, Lord, remake us, Lord, conform us to the image of Your Son.” Romans 8:28, 29 puts it this way, “And we KNOW that ALL things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Emphasis mine) - Anna Miller

### Frank Lee Youth Center

I started working at Frank Lee Youth Center (FLYC) on May 15. It has been good to get back into prison chaplaincy work. At the beginning, I was somewhat apprehensive about it. There was no active chaplain in this institution when I arrived. Thankfully, the move into this role really went well. I was welcomed and received warmly by both staff and inmates. It was a blessing to see a small vibrant church here among the inmates. There was a good group of free world volunteers coming in who have been doing a good job of teaching and training.

When I came to FLYC, there was also no warden here. In early August a new warden was placed at the institution. I thank God for this warden, as he is a born again man and very interested in having a good chapel program. He also approached me about putting in a faith dorm. It surprised me to hear the suggestion come from him. The work of the chaplain is so much easier when security appreciates the chapel program.

Pray for us as we serve God in this capacity. We thank God for this awesome privilege. - Steve Stoltzfus

## ATMORE, AL

### Holman Correctional Facility

I am amazed at some of the things that still break my heart after three years in prison ministry. One of those is mail call. The inmates gather around the officers’ raised platform hoping to hear their name called, their faces revealing their excitement when it is and disappointment when it’s not. One man told me recently he doesn’t know why he even goes to mail call. He had not received a letter from home for a long, long time. Another man told me he wished he would get a letter from someone, anyone, just to know he is being thought of.

Another thing that breaks my heart is seeing so many needs and knowing I can’t meet all of them due to time and other demands. Here at Holman Correctional Facility we need more workers to come alongside Chaplain Summers and myself to further the kingdom of God. - Bob Depew

### Fountain Correctional Facility

Standing in the gap, or more preferably, spending time in contemplative prayer interceding on the behalf of others, is a privilege that was given to us on that day the veil of the temple was torn. Not only was salvation offered to all mankind, but a road—a four-lane highway—was paved that would usher us into the presence of a Holy God. Men could now take their burdens and prayers to a personal and loving Heavenly Father. Hebrews 4:16 tells us to come boldly to the throne of grace, because we have a new High Priest, Jesus. Jesus now resides in heaven interceding to God on our behalf. Just as Jesus stands in the gap for us, we can stand in the gap for others through our prayers.

Every Monday at three o’clock many of the Christians at Fountain Correctional come to the chapel to spend an hour in prayer, interceding on behalf of their unsaved family members, prison authorities, the lost men in their dorms, and many other various needs. It moves my heart as I watch men cry out to God with an earnest longing to see their friends come to Him. Often there will be tears of joy running down their faces as they offer up their prayers of faith. Some of the men have even started small prayer meetings in their dorms. About seven or eight men meet together every evening for a few minutes of “standing in the gap.” Often they experience ridiculing remarks and sneers of belittlement from the other men in the dorm that they are praying for. The leader of the prayer meeting has been threatened many times with verbal assaults. They say to him, “If we can get rid of you, the whole prayer time will stop.” In addition, his mattress was slashed and some of the cotton was stolen, as well as some personal items and a set of clothing.

Satan will do all he can to stop the prayers of a righteous man. James 5:16c says, “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” (NASB) Who has God put on your heart to pray for? Even if you are not near or able to talk to the people in your life, you are still able to reach them with your prayers. Your prayers are powerful; do not underestimate them. - Blaine Copenhaver



## Marysville, OH

### Ohio Reformatory for Women

She'd heard the song before. But this time it was as if God was personally talking to her. The song was something about "Would you take My place? Would you pull the nails from My hands?" And even though she'd known Him and had drifted way too far from Him, she'd been longing to feel His presence again. She thought over the questions and said unhesitatingly, "Yes. For Jesus. He was innocent. He shouldn't have had to die for me."

And then He asked, "Would you do it for everyone else?" She looked around her. Over there was "Psycho," everybody hated her. To her left was the one constantly turning the air blue with her vulgarity and profanity. Over there, with that one you had to watch what you put where because it would be gone if you didn't. The one on the right was always creating "mess" somewhere. "No," was her answer. "For Jesus, yes. For them, no way."

And into the deepest recesses of her mind came the reply, "JESUS DID!" It hit her so forcibly that she cried for over an hour. Cleansing tears.

Now instead of gritting her teeth and "being nice because I've got to do His will," she sees them in a whole different way. If Jesus loved Psycho and the rest of them enough to die for them, if He thought that much of them, she can be nice to them.

After she left, I looked at the last notation I'd made when we had met previously. We had prayed that she would be able to see the ways God would use to help rebuild her faith in Him. Wow!  
- Wilma Mullet

## Cherrylog, GA

### Fannin County Jail

Sometimes doors close. One did for me this past June. After seven and a half years of weekly visitation in the Fannin County Jail, those privileges were withdrawn. "You violated a verbal directive," I was told. And that's the way it was—and is—even though I cannot recall the Jail Administrator telling me what he remembers saying. I was devastated as well as horribly embarrassed. After several days of anguish and nights with little sleep, the Lord began filling my mind with things I could do as well as things I shouldn't.

First, the Lord seemed to say, put away all those thoughts of retaliation and using political power to force a reversal. That's not the Jesus-way, the little voice whispered. Begin thinking instead of ways to continue ministering from the outside to those on the inside. For many years I have dropped off at the jail several copies of each issue of the local newspaper for both inmates and officers. I still do, which keeps me in contact with the officers and jail environment.

Next came the idea to get the literature previously distributed in-person into the jail by mailing it to specific inmates who would just naturally share it around with others. And I now spend several more hours each week keeping in contact with former inmates and their families, to express concern, to encourage, to teach, and to help in any reasonable ways as a witness to the love and grace of Jesus.

Am I hoping to be reinstated? Yes. But when, I don't know. And the urgency to have it happen soon has faded as the response to the alternatives has become more and more encouraging. I'm not good at waiting. But now I wait. Thank you for your prayers.  
- Del Yoder

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Bringing the Gospel Message to Thousands of Men and Women in Alabama's Prison System

January 27-31, 2008

- Begins with a Sunday of orientation and missions rally in Montgomery, AL
- Four days of friendship evangelism in at least 17 different prisons located in the Montgomery, Troy, Birmingham, and Atmore areas
- Daily morning workshop sessions with gifted teachers in each locality
- Nightly prison chapel services with special music and evangelists
- Open to mature Christian men and women ages 20 and older

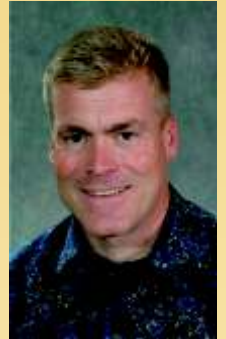
TO VOLUNTEER: Call We Care Program (251-368-8818) for application or download application online at [www.wecareprogram.org](http://www.wecareprogram.org).

Completed Applications REQUIRED by December 21, 2007

# PERSPECTIVES

with David R. Landis  
President

I'd love to hear from you.  
Contact me at  
[dave@wecareprogram.org](mailto:dave@wecareprogram.org).



Having spent some time researching the history of the We Care Crusade, I find myself having a new appreciation for what God has done over the years of this unique ministry experience. From the singular and bold vision of one man, Martin Weber, in one prison, to what is now the largest event of its kind in the Alabama Department of Corrections, one has to appreciate with a new understanding that “with God, all things are possible.”

Neither can one underestimate the importance of the event to our staff chaplains who work year-round in the field. To be supported by a team of brothers and sisters who believe that God can redeem brokenness and are willing to step away from their vocations to labor with us for one week is indeed an encouragement. Without fail, stories abound of those who had a way of reaching out in their own unique style to the man or woman who for whatever reason our staff person was not able to reach.

From our perspective, each year seems to require the same level of faith to anticipate that somehow, through the mysterious work of God’s calling, men and women will receive that gentle (or not so gentle) nudge to participate in what is primarily an evangelistic enterprise with fellow believers from different persuasions and convictions, having one purpose which is to lift up the name of Jesus to a mostly broken and forgotten prison population.

I hope that you too, after reading this issue, will recognize God’s working in our midst, but more importantly that you will realize that without people like you, this event would not have been possible over these last thirty years. In faith, we believe that what happens on January 27-31, 2008, will once again reap eternal rewards, but it won’t happen without pray-ers, givers, and go-ers. Won’t you join us in one of these ways? 🔥



3493 Highway 21  
Atmore, AL 36502-4669  
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Atmore, AL 36502  
Permit No. 99