

THE Connection

THE NEWSLETTER OF WE CARE PROGRAM

May 2008

I was in prison,
and you came to me.

Matth. 25:36B



7

Opportunities for involvement

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Fulfilling the Great Commission in America's Prisons



www.wecareprogram.org

As you may already know, the ministry of We Care Program is primarily to place men and women in correctional settings to share Christ's love and disciple inmates. This is accomplished through a dedicated missionary prison chaplaincy team and support staff. But it should also be known that our work would not be possible without a widespread circle of support through various opportunities for engagement in our work.

This issue outlines some of the ways that persons who may not necessarily be called to "full-time" ministry can help us to accomplish our mission. If you have a heart for prisoners, there are ways that you can make a difference in their lives, either directly or indirectly. As you consider the following options for engagement, please know that whatever avenue you choose to partner with us will not only be a great encouragement to us as a ministry team, but will also enhance and multiply the fruit of our labors.

Volume XL, Number 2

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
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
Layout & Design: Sheila Schrock
Circulation Manager: Noreen Horst

1 Softball Outreach

(July 4-6, Atmore, AL)

Looking for an opportunity to share God's love in prison...and play softball at the same time? We are planning an Atmore area (four prisons) Softball Outreach over the July 4th weekend and are looking for softball players to help us make it happen. A \$50 registration fee covers three nights' lodging and meals at our headquarters. Contact Don Metzler at don@wecareprogram.org or 251-368-8818 for more information. Registrations due by June 9.



2 Read-a-thon (Month of July)

You can make a difference in the lives of prisoners! We Care Program's Summer Read-a-thon is an opportunity for you to participate in taking the gospel to thousands of inmates. Solicit sponsors for your reading efforts, read your chosen books, collect and send the pledges to We Care, and be assured that you have helped to share the message of Christ with men and women behind bars. Regardless of your age—child, youth, young adult, middle-aged adult, or senior citizen—we invite you to get involved by participating or promoting. Print out the read-a-thon form on our web-site or call the office for a copy.

You Can Make A Difference! . . . In the Lives of Prisoners

We Care Read-A-Thon

Supports Missionary Prison Chaplaincy Workers

Here's How To Work...

1. Complete reader information form below, please print. **Set your goals!** (How did you want to spend your reading time? How many books?)
2. Get the books you want to read to read, best appreciated at home!
3. Beginning July 1, 8:00 AM, READ the books you have chosen, read first book on reading list first!
4. Beginning August 1, collect pledges from sponsors in the form of a check or money order made out to WE CARE PROGRAM. After collecting all pledges, put in envelope addressed to: WE CARE PROGRAM, 3402 Highway 21, Route 44, 35002
5. After We Care Program receives your pledges, we will send a receipt to your sponsors for their tax-deductible gifts. (Books and money orders only)
6. Pledges received by August 31 will qualify readers to be eligible for prizes:
 - 1st - \$1000 (to Christian Book Store/Amazon)
 - 2nd - \$500 (to Amazon)
 - 3rd - \$250 (to Amazon)
 - 4th - \$100 (to Amazon)
 - 5th - \$50 (to Amazon)
 - 6th - \$25 (to Amazon)
 - 7th - \$10 (to Amazon)
 - 8th - \$5 (to Amazon)
 - 9th - \$2 (to Amazon)
 - 10th - \$1 (to Amazon)
7. All readers collecting over \$1500 will receive a book from the We Care Program. (downloaded) Call We Care at 251-368-8818.

We Care Read-A-Thon Reader Info

Beginning Date: _____ Ending Date: _____

Reader's Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Birthdate: _____ Children: _____

1. \$1000 (to Christian Book Store/Amazon) 2. \$500 (to Amazon) 3. \$250 (to Amazon) 4. \$100 (to Amazon) 5. \$50 (to Amazon) 6. \$25 (to Amazon) 7. \$10 (to Amazon) 8. \$5 (to Amazon) 9. \$2 (to Amazon) 10. \$1 (to Amazon)

GET LOCKED UP!

with the

3 Young Adult Internship

(October 2008 - April 2009)

A seven-month program designed to help single young men discover their ministry giftings and life purpose. Following initial teaching and training, participants will be placed alongside a staff chaplain in an internship role, assisting with prison chaplaincy duties, including friendship evangelism, one-on-one discipleship, new entry contacts, and Bible study teaching and/or facilitating.

As a team member, you will develop a deeper appreciation for the greater Body of Christ, you will be stretched beyond your comfort zone, and you will grow closer to God as you depend on Him to lead you in the work of missionary prison chaplaincy. Contact Dave Landis at dave@wecareprogram.org or 251-368-8818 or download the Young Adult information packet on our website.



4 Crusade

(January 25-29, 2009)

For thirty years We Care Program has conducted an annual Alabama prison crusade. January of 2009 will be our 31st, and we are hoping to send ministry teams to 18 different prisons for four days of friendship evangelism and special chapel services. This event has propelled many into a deeper walk with Christ resulting in a greater love for hurting people. Mark your calendars and be on the lookout for further information as it becomes available, or check out our website for further information and pictures.



5 Missionary Chaplaincy



Over the history of this organization, over 250 persons have served in various capacities with We Care Program. Currently, twenty full and part-time staff persons are directly involved in prison ministry, along with a team of support persons at the headquarters in Atmore, AL. Those considering the path of ministry in a correctional setting may want to know we still have invitations for assistance that have not been answered. Take the first step in finding out if you might be the answer to someone's prayer. Contact Dave Landis at dave@wecareprogram.org or 251-368-8818.

6 Prayer

Distributed monthly via email or fax, the Intercessor's Prayer Bulletin outlines praises, requests, and answers to prayer focusing on the different aspects of our work and other organizational needs. We are deeply indebted to this wonderful group of intercessors for bathing our ministry in prayer. You are welcome to join that team by contacting Noreen at noreen@wecareprogram.org or calling our office and giving us your email or fax number.

7 Finances

Obviously, much of what we do would not be possible without the financial partnership of individuals, churches, and businesses, who support either our General Fund or designate their giving for individual missionary chaplains or special projects. As operational costs continue to increase and as God draws additional workers to our team, it will be vital to our stability for new donors to become a part of our financial support structure. (See article at right.)

FOCUS ON FINANCES

by Don Metzler, Vice President & Business Manager



Does God care how you spend your money? Yes, without a doubt He cares very much how you steward the resources with which He has entrusted you. For some people that amount is more and for others it is less. But regardless of how much God gives each of us, He expects us to use it to further His kingdom. Advancing the kingdom of God with your finances can take many different forms. The most common way to do this is through the giving of tithes and offerings at your local church. Other ways might be providing for the family God has given to you or running a business that is used to bless others.

Obviously, here at We Care Program, our hope is that concerned people like you will help to further God's kingdom through gifts to this ministry. We Care is funded in part through profits generated by our two thrift stores, but is predominately supported through the generosity of God's people who have a burden to reach the lost and encourage the saints behind prison walls. God continues to bless We Care with new staff and new ministry opportunities, but we need your financial help to meet those opportunities. **Our desire is to increase the size of our team of monthly supporters who help to cover our general operating expenses.**

Some of you already support us on a regular basis and for that we are extremely grateful! If you have given only occasionally, I challenge you to pray about joining us as a monthly partner. For those of you who have never made a donation to We Care, I encourage you to pray about the possibility and consider allowing God to use you to help further His kingdom through the ministry of We Care Program.

While donations by check are always welcome, in order to make it easier to give, we have recently added the option to give with a debit or credit card. We can even set up your donation as a recurring transaction automatically billed to your card each month. This not only saves you time and money, but it also helps us to have a more consistent financial base. To give using a debit or credit card, please fill out the information below and mail or fax it to our office. Or give us a call, and we will receive your donation over the phone. (Our contact information is on page 2.)

Name on card: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Debit or Credit Card #: _____

(We accept Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover.)

Expiration Date: _____ Three-digit Verification Number on back of card: _____

Amount: _____ Signature: _____

Frequency of Donation (preferably monthly): _____

Phone # (in case we have a question): _____

* Note that monthly donations will be charged around the 10th of each month.



From the Field

Birmingham, AL

St. Clair Correctional Institution

When a soldier is given orders, there has to be preparation to carry them out so that the enemy will not thwart the effort. According to Ephesians 6:11-18, preparation is the armor of God for each Christian. The battlefield of this age plots us, God's redeemed, against the devil's schemes.

The battlefield in prison is similar to that throughout the world, except that there is a concentration of men who have invited the devil's activity into their lives. It seems that the Kingdom of God faces a stronger concentration of the enemy's basic schemes in prison. Men are caught up in sinful mindsets because they have not had God deal with their sinful nature through Christ. The high pressures of the flesh are very forward advancing. These include drug and alcohol problems, homosexuality, violence, hatred, gambling, selfishness and the like. It is easy for an inmate to get trapped by these things even if he was not involved in them upon entering prison. These sins are evidences of lives caught in the devil's schemes and separated from God's Kingdom. For Christian men in prison, part of God's call is to resist the devil and his schemes. For new Christians in prison, the armor is very important in overcoming the enemy.

The armor is glorious. The belt of God's truth protects our waists, while the breastplate of Christ's righteousness protects our hearts. Our feet should wear the readiness of the gospel of peace so that we take that message to others. The shield of faith protects us from fiery darts. If they were just darts, we might heal more quickly from being hit by them. But these are "fiery" darts. Get hit and you also get burned. The healing may take far longer. Anyone who has experienced burns knows how excruciating they are and how long they take to heal. This shield that God has given us is faith in Him. Jesus said the work of God is to believe in Him. It is a big shield if we will use it. If a man is surrounded by others who are also using their shields, then the enemy has even less of a chance to trick him. We should not be loners. We are warriors in God's battalion, his church. The helmet of salvation protects our minds. Because of the hope of salvation in Christ, we can overcome the trials in our minds. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God and we are to use it. But we are also to pray in the Spirit and pray for each other (battle for each other). With the use of the weapons, each can stand against the devil's schemes.

The work in prison is to take the gospel of Jesus to men who are trapped by their sin and to build up the church. God's armor is essential in these activities. But what orders has God given to you? The enemy's more subtle scheme is to get you to not obey God's command. If we know the good we ought to do and don't do it, we sin (from James 4:17). We must be careful that Satan is not tricking us. Let us follow God's orders in our lives and battle on.

- John Kurtz

Century, FL

Century Correctional Institution

One of the classes that I teach in prison is called "Long Distance Dads." The lesson material includes a page where the students are asked to write "agree" or "disagree" beside each statement in a list. One statement says, "A man who cries easily is weak."

What kind of response to you think inmates write for this statement? Of the dozens of inmates in the classes over the years, I believe they all wrote "disagree." All of them agree that it is okay for a man to cry. Does that surprise you? It keeps surprising me. I guess I expect them to capitalize on the word "easily." A following page asks this question, "Why is it so difficult to act according to our values? Perhaps some of us may have said that a man who cries often is not weak, but never cry ourselves. How do we explain the discrepancies between what we say we believe and how we act?"

I tell my children that it is okay to cry if you're hurt physically or if you feel a deep hurt inside. I try to make a distinction between the "hurt" and "please feel sorry for me" kind of crying. I cry at funerals. I cry before the Lord when my soul is in anguish over my own or someone else's sin or heart-wrenching experience. I weep with those who weep. Part of expressing God's love to others includes weeping and mourning with them. (Rom. 12:15)

Not long ago while in the prison, I took three death message calls in one day. Two were mothers of inmates; the other was an uncle. As I shared and wept with one of the men who lost his mother, I sensed a compassion from Jesus for this hurting man. I trust that His love was shown, and not just

my personal sympathy.

Tears can be a release of emotion that allows healing to come. Tears indicate that pain is acknowledged and expressed. Crying is one way we minister to other people. I'm not ashamed to minister God's love and concern in this way. *- Marvin Bender*

Montgomery, AL

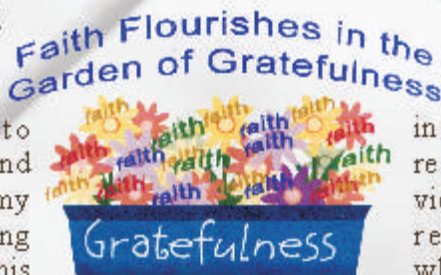
Montgomery Women's Facility

Recently, I noticed a church billboard sign that said "Faith Flourishes in the Garden of Gratefulness." The words seemed to fly right into my spirit. What a great and uplifting saying, I thought. I knew I could not keep it to myself; it must be shared.

That afternoon as I thought of the saying, I pictured a flourishing garden with colorful flowers where the soil had been properly

prepared to help them grow into something strong and beautiful. I sat at my computer wondering how I could put this

idea on paper so I could share it more effectively with the ladies in the prison. I found some graphics that were nice and colorful and put that together with the saying, then wrote the word Faith on each flower. The next day I took my creation to the prison thinking the ladies would probably like it, but was not prepared for the overwhelming response of every one of them wanting a copy. I told them I would work on it. Not wanting to disappoint them and desiring to bless them with something they could keep to encourage them at any time, I reduced the graphic to postcard size and printed enough copies for each of them to have one. Now at the end of each of our Bible



studies, we all say it together, "Faith Flourishes in the Garden of Gratefulness."

The sign itself was a small thing, but it connected in our hearts. When we are grateful to God for all He has done for us and how much He loves us, our faith grows. That makes us even more grateful, and then our faith and gratefulness continue to grow and flourish. *- Donna Wyatt*

Atmore, AL

Atmore Work Center

Lately I have been challenged by certain individuals who have openly shared their struggles with sins and addictions. They have made a commitment to Christ for salvation but do not have victory in their lives. And I look upon my life and how I overcame addictions and sinful desires in the past and walk in victory now. I realize that I have victory, and I do not remember exactly when I received it.

But I remember Jesus inviting me to trust Him, look to Him, and to walk with Him in a real and intimate way.

We always have victory when we abide in Him, walk with Him, and look to Him. Walking after the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-18). The world says "just say no" in our own strength. But in saying yes to the Holy Spirit, and yes to Jesus Christ, we are trusting in His power. "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1-2). Victory comes through confessing of sins and surrendering of the will

to Christ.

I know that when we become intimate with Jesus, trusting Him implicitly, adhering to Him relentlessly, we have His heart, mind, and His life in us. This is victory, and I can share this boldly because it is the truth, and it is all Christ. *- Dean Miller*

Holman Correctional Facility

One weekend recently we had Family Night for the Faith Dorm at Holman. This event is a special occasion, not a normal gathering. In order for an inmate to be eligible to attend Family Night, he must have been in the Faith Dorm for at least two years and have one hundred or more merit points. The inmate can then invite two family members to bring in food. That is the fun part. The men tell their families what they would like to eat. Some items often requested are shrimp, pork chops, ham, steak, fresh fruits and vegetables, or some family specialty. As the families arrive, the food is inspected by officers and placed at a table reserved for the inmate and his guests. My wife Polly helps with providing food for those who are eligible to attend but don't have family or else their family can't come. On these occasions Polly is able to come in and meet the inmates I work with.

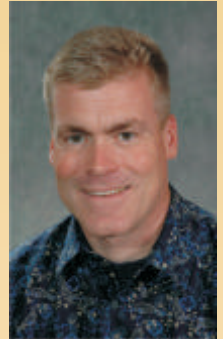
This part of Family Night I enjoy. I love to see the families reconnecting and having a great time. And the men sure enjoy the food! There are tears of joy but also a heavy sense of awareness that two hours later the men will have to go back to the Faith Dorm to the reality of life in prison without choices and with a sense of aloneness. However, the men were able to see that their families are okay, and for those two hours life was a lot more bearable.

- Bob Depew

PERSPECTIVES

with David R. Landis
President


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



Those involved in corrections and who are keeping an eye on current events are aware of the statistics. One in 100 Americans is behind bars. Of the 2,000,000+ inmates in America's jails and prisons, 90% will be released someday. Approximately 650,000 inmates are being released back into society each year. (Unfortunately, more than that are being incarcerated each year.) According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, two out of three ex-inmates will be re-arrested for new crimes within three years of their release from prison, and more than half of those will return to prison.

Recently, President Bush signed the Second Chance Act of 2007. This bill aims to help transform lives and build safer communities by helping prisoners returning to society to break cycles of crime and start new lives. Specifically, it is hoped that partnerships can be established with local corrections agencies and faith-based and community organizations.

In Alabama, new winds are blowing as well. Governor Bob Riley has instituted the CPR Network (Alabama Community Partnership for Recovery and Reentry). He is calling members of the faith community who have an interest in helping to provide services to newly released ex-offenders to his first Alabama Governor's Reentry Summit.

What does this mean for We Care Program? There is undoubtedly a movement towards issues related to prisoner re-entry. This we fully support. But we also believe that the most effective reentry models will include years of pre-release preparation focused not only on practical life skills teaching and mentoring, but on sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ and discipling inmates towards Christian maturity. This newsletter features seven different opportunities for involvement. Will you consider being a part of what God is doing through We Care Program? 



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Atmore, AL 36502-4669
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