



the **connection**

FALL 2015

A photograph showing a person's hands holding an open book behind vertical metal prison bars. The person is wearing a white shirt. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**Faithfully Ministering
in Prison**

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Faithfully Ministering in Prison

Message from the President – DON METZLER

Over the years we have found that this newsletter is a great way to communicate with the people who care about prison ministry and want to know what is happening around We Care Program. Often we will use this opportunity to share about a significant event (such as ReNew Hope or other outreach event). At other times we may share a story of a former or current inmate and how God has brought about a significant change in his or her life. Then there are occasions when the schedule indicates it's time to send out another newsletter and yet we don't have a "major" story. As I thought and prayed about what to share in these few pages, it seemed like it would be good to simply let you know what happens on a regular basis.

While big events are exciting and major life change stories are extremely encouraging, it really is the day to day activities that make up most of what we do around here. It is people like our chaplains Bob and Frank serving at Holman Correctional, David serving at Donaldson, Allen serving at Frank Lee, Dale serving at Draper, and Anna serving at Montgomery Women's Facility, to name just a few who are on the front lines. It is also because of the stresses of regular daily prison ministry that we provide our chaplains with a break every now and then so they can continue to minister long term.

In this newsletter you will read about the faithful work of our chaplains as they serve on a daily basis. You will read about how when one of our chaplains was an inmate himself, it was the way he went about his daily life that made an impact on a fellow inmate. You will also read about lessons learned by one of our

chaplains who took a break for a period of time. While we do have a story of life change, as well as some past and future events that we want to let you know about, I encourage you to pay attention to the stories that show what happens on a daily basis. As you read the stories our chaplains share in the following pages, think about how you can take opportunities you have to listen to or pray for someone you encounter. Be challenged by Romans 12:1-2a from *The Message*, "So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out."

Lastly, I want to take this opportunity to thank each one of you who supports the ministry of We Care Program in any way as we serve the inmates from day to day. Some of you receive this newsletter because you give financial support to one of our chaplains or you sponsored a participant in the read-a-thon or gave in a banquet offering. For some, you are getting this because you volunteered during ReNew Hope. For others it's because you signed up on our mailing list with a heart for prison ministry. Whatever the case, please know that your support is greatly appreciated. You are helping to make a difference in the lives of many inmates behind bars as they see the love of Christ demonstrated on a daily basis.

Introduction by a Chaplain – FRANK GOSSETT

When I first started serving at Holman, I noticed what I thought was a familiar face. As time went by, I kept feeling God wanted me to speak to the man. My usual icebreaker question is “Have you ever done time at Bullock Correctional Facility?”

During the next couple of years Mike and I built

a relationship as brothers in Christ. In every class and every service Mike was there. Now we spend time encouraging and reaching out to others in the dorm. I appreciate Mike and his growth and faithfulness to God. I praise God for divine appointments and the opportunity to shepherd Mike and the others at Holman.

Testimony of an Inmate – MICHAEL

My life was a mess filled with women, partying, and steroids. The combination of being mean-tempered and strong from years in the gym was volatile. I had an on again-off again relationship with Jesus. During a consistent “on again” time, He blessed me as a youth pastor for eight years and later as an associate pastor. My life seemed to be under control. However, I still would not give total control of my life to Christ. I thought I could keep some of the “not so bad” things in my life. Slowly my ministry fell apart. I was letting the little foxes spoil the vine. One by one, they crept in until they overwhelmed me.

Four divorces and three fatherless children later, I ended up in prison. I was mad at God, my family, myself, and everyone around me. Sitting in my dorm at Bullock, with tears of frustration and pain rolling down my face, I heard the soft, still voice of the Holy Spirit. He spoke to me and said, “Don’t you remember?”

“Yes, Lord,” I answered, “I remember when I talked to You. I read Your word, and I trusted in You. I remember how you changed my life.” I realized then that He had brought me to a place where I had to be solely dependent on Him. “Thank you for loving me that much!” I cried.

He finally had my undivided attention, and I was ready to give everything to Him. However, I was still scared, heartbroken, and lonely. I was still dealing with feelings of how I hurt my family, myself, and God.

One day, I saw a friend of mine talking to another inmate, and I asked him who it was. My friend began telling me about Frank Gossett and what God was doing in his life. I passed Frank in the halls and

dorms a few times with little more than a hello. I noticed a peace in him that you only see in people who really love Jesus. Unfortunately, I never seized the opportunity to know Frank personally, and he left the prison not long after I got there.

Five years later at Holman Prison, Frank and I crossed paths again. This time Frank was a free man! In the past two and a half years, Frank and I have established a close relationship. He is my brother in Christ, as well as my friend and pastor. He never judges anyone, but makes us feel loved. He is constantly reminding us that Jesus loves us no matter what we have done in the past. Frank truly has a call on his life. His tireless devotion to teach and preach the Word of God has helped me in my walk with Jesus. I have attended his classes on spiritual warfare and most recently a class titled “Stepping Up.” Through Frank’s leadership, these classes have helped me become a better Christian and man. I have also been blessed to attend Frank’s Sunday night services. His anointed sermons have touched the hearts of us all.

Frank and I share a burden to bring peace to a violent place through the love of Jesus Christ. We want the men here to put down the knives and pick up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God! We both believe that Jesus can bring revival throughout the Alabama prison system and beyond. Will you believe with us?

I thank Jesus for Frank Gossett. And I thank Frank for allowing God to use him to bless me. He is truly a light in a dark place. “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

Reflections from Sabbatical

David Bucher, Donaldson Correctional Facility

Editor's Note: We Care provides our chaplains with a sabbatical after four years of full time prison ministry. The following article was written by David Bucher regarding some of the things he learned during his recent sabbatical.

It was late. After a very harrowing Friday of driving in New England traffic, my son Ethan and I went out to the van to retrieve the last of our things for a weekend stay with my sister's family in Maine.

All of a sudden, Ethan exclaimed, "Dad, look at the sky! There are a lot more stars here than in Alabama!" I looked in awe at the clear night sky. Our "supposed to be eight-hour trip" that turned into ten was now worth it!

"Ethan," I said, "actually, there are just as many stars in Alabama, only we can see more of them here in Maine." I briefly explained it might be because of cleaner air, or less light pollution caused by the absence of a large city nearby...but in my heart I immediately thought of the sky Abraham's eyes beheld when Almighty God gave him the impossible promise of his future fatherhood of many nations, even in his childless state. I must continue to believe our God is the answer for every need and problem we face in our lives, and in the lives of those we touch in prison, or in our communities. His promises are true!! It was one of those moments I shall never forget.

Fast forward >>>. The July 4th afternoon wore on; we were having a great time in the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. Periodic glances out the windows showed a deluge coming from the sky. Our expectations of watching fireworks on the National Mall were not looking promising. Thankfully, the rain did stop and we ventured from the museum into the throngs, hoping to find a suitable vantage point from which to enjoy the show.

Our attention was drawn to a white tent from which was coming beautiful Christian music. Getting closer, we saw a group of girls in long flowing dresses, performing an interpretive dance to a meaningful worship song, "Oceans." "You call me out upon the waters, The great unknown, where

feet may fail, And there I find You in the mystery, In oceans deep, My faith will stand...I will call upon Your name."

Several hundred people gathered to listen. I looked one direction at the Capitol building and the other at the Washington Monument. I thought "Wow, this is cool." Then as we all listened, the young lady and leader of the group gave testimony of how in the past two years, she was ready to give up on God and His plan for her life after her five-day-old baby died. She was in the depths of despair, but that song and scriptures and the support of fellow believers brought her back to faith in her Heavenly Father. What an account of His grace in front of so many onlookers in the heart of our nation's capital!

Several hours ensued. As we waited for the show to

begin, we heard a man's voice and then saw a young man walking and preaching. He carried a banner with bold writing, "GOD WILL JUDGE: Adulterers, Fornicators, Liars, Murderers, etc, etc." The banner held a long list. His preaching coincided with the banner and was causing quite a stir. Many onlookers gave angry verbal outbursts. People mocked him, swore at him. I just watched and listened quietly.

A torrent of thoughts ran through my mind; all of what he said was true. I knew it took COURAGE for him to walk among the crowds, proclaiming what God had put in his heart. Many of us Christians talk about God's impending judgment on sinful people, but few of us are emboldened to say it to their faces! I also couldn't help noticing the CONTRAST between his delivery of the Word of God and the delivery of the young lady several hours earlier. I assert that both could be used by Jesus to touch the hearts of those who heard.

As I reflect on these experiences from my sabbatical, the question I face is not, which way is better, but am I doing and am I being all I can be for my Lord, to further His kingdom, to show forth His promises, to seek the lost, and to be a relevant and true portrayal of a person He has redeemed? Both in prison ministry or in our world, let us be useful instruments in God's almighty hand!!



The Bucher Family

NEWS

S MOKER TRANSITION

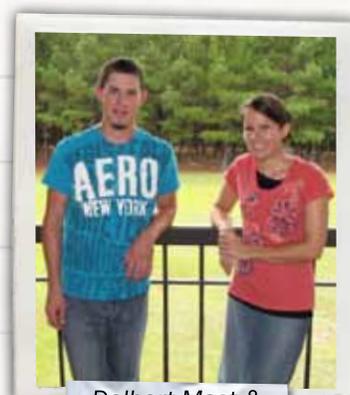
On Friday, August 21, James Smoker completed his time as chaplain at Donaldson CF. He was honored with a plaque of appreciation by the warden, chaplain and other staff for his years of faithful service. On August 24, the Smoker family relocated to Atmore, Alabama. James will be fulfilling his role as part time Recruitment Director by working out of an office at the We Care headquarters. He plans to continue his chaplaincy work at one or two of the local Atmore prisons.



James Smoker

D ISCOVER

This year's Discover term began on September 15. We welcome Delbert Mast and Judith Martin. Delbert comes to us from Prospect, Virginia, and Judith comes from Reinholds, Pennsylvania. Please join us in prayer for them as they spend the next eight months in prison ministry.



Delbert Mast & Judith Martin

R EAD-A-THON

Once again, we have surpassed the previous year's total contributions made during our annual read-a-thon! Thanks to the participants' hard work, diligent reading, and fundraising efforts, we were able to raise a grand total of \$77,626.63! We extend a huge "thank you" to all of the 102 participants and are already looking forward to next year!

Y OUTH CHORUS

On July 29 and 30, We Care had the privilege of hosting the Kansas Youth Chorus as they presented their "In Christ Alone" program in three different Alabama prisons.

Their first program was at Limestone CF. The chapel was too small, so the program was held in the gymnasium in which there was no air conditioning! The chorus did a great job in spite of the heat, and the inmates seemed to appreciate the program.

The next morning, the second program took place at Bibb CF. The prison staff was very easy to work with, and we were able to get 46 people in and out without any problems. The chorus was blessed by the prison's own praise team sharing a number of songs to open the service.

The final program was at Staton CF. We felt the bond

B ENEFIT AUCTION

We invite you to join us at this year's Support for Prison Ministries Benefit Auction in Ephrata, PA, on Friday evening and Saturday, October 23 & 24. Purchase quality items, enjoy warm fellowship, and treat yourself to a delicious variety of home-cooked meals and snacks, including a chicken BBQ dinner on Friday evening and a pancake and sausage breakfast on Saturday morning. Proceeds benefit a number of prison ministries, including We Care Program.

For more info go to:

www.supportforprisonministries.org

or call 717-859-5519.



Kansas Youth Chorus

of fellow believers with the inmates who packed out the chapel. Two standing ovations at the end of the program indicated a high level of appreciation.

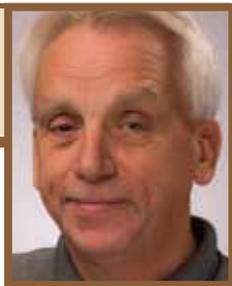
Thank you, Kansas Youth Chorus, for giving your time and talents to bless the inmates. Your kindness will be remembered for a very long time!

From the Field

Stories and Testimonies from We Care Chaplains

Frank Gossett

Holman Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL



“**G**ood morning, Chap! Will we have class on Thursday?” Such questions have been the norm since I started leading the class “Stepping Up, A Call To Courageous Manhood.” The class started with a bang, and then it happened...it seemed like every week something hindered us from meeting.

During all the setbacks each man stood firm and did not give up on the class. Only two men dropped out, and that was unavoidable due to their being moved into other dorms. Praise be to God, we have recently been able to start meeting again, and everyone is still pumped to get to the next session.

To see God working in and through these men has surely blessed me. Most classes that miss a week or two usually disband and end up being set aside. The fact that these men are still so enthusiastic about the coming sessions shows me that God is using the series to convict hearts and change thinking about what it means to be a man.

Jeremy Miller

St. Clair Corr. Facility
Springville, AL



Late one afternoon as I was walking down the sidewalk, intent on completing my errands for the day, a young man yelled out, “Chap, pray for me!”

I quickly gave him my usual response, “I will.”

He responded just as quickly as I had, with a question that made me stop in my tracks, “How are you going to pray for me? You don’t even know my name.”

I looked up at him and realized that I had become too busy with all the demands of chaplaincy work and had failed at the most important part of ministry. This young man had a need and wanted someone to pray, but my errands had taken priority. Embarrassingly enough, he was right. If he had not stopped me and brought me up short, the promised prayer would have probably gone

unsaid that day. Instead I apologized to him and asked his name and some of his prayer needs. Then right there on the sidewalk I prayed for him.

Praying with someone is the one of the greatest privileges we have, yet it can often be our greatest neglect. We so often become busy doing the work of ministry when in reality the real work is prayer. I love a statement made by Oswald Chambers, “Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work.” I was challenged that day to make an effort in making prayer for others a priority in my daily routine.

Benjamin Zook

Fountain Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL



Taking place twice a month, “Engage” is a chapel service highlighted by a younger generation of Christian men. One of the major parts of the service is an opportunity for Christian songwriters to share their songs. These songs emphasize the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. They also give opportunities for the men to share testimonies of their personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Since “Engage” was started a year ago, I have seen many of these men mature in their relationship with Christ and in the depth of their lyrics.

In a recent service, there was a strong emphasis on sincerely living for Christ, sold out completely for Him. As the service was coming to a close, there was a time of prayer. I had an opportunity to come alongside those kneeling at the front of the sanctuary and pray for them. Some of the men needed prayer for strength to forgive others, some for courage to ask for forgiveness. Others were burdened for family members. One constant phrase we kept hearing from God was that He loves them and has not abandoned them. This assurance was a breath of fresh air for those who felt a sense of hopelessness and depression.

Looking back on that service, the declaration from 1 Peter 1:3 comes to my mind, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

David S. Landis, Chaplaincy Director



As Chaplaincy Director I have the privilege of being involved in the lives of our staff in many ways. My desire is to help make sure that We Care is doing all it can to help our staff do well spiritually and emotionally and find fulfillment in their God-given calling.

I get to walk alongside those who are going through challenging or difficult times and offer a listening ear. I am also responsible to provide our staff with opportunities for spiritual growth and give them tools to help them do their work better in the prison context. Over the last six months we held two events designed towards this end.

In the spring Nelson and Pam Roth from Relevant Ministries led a two-day seminar on the subject of Life Coaching. This teaching gave us some very practical ways to better develop skills in working with people.

We were challenged to become better listeners and to ask powerful open-ended questions. Nelson and Pam also demonstrated how to lead the “coachee” toward action and accountability.

For our staff event in July, Board Member Marv Fisher walked us through I and II Timothy, challenging us to be good students in the study of the scriptures, not just grabbing a little here and a little there and ignoring the rest, but to take in the whole counsel of God’s Word for an accurate perspective on God’s truth. This was particularly helpful to us as chaplains in the prison environment where we are exposed to many expressions of faith and religion. It is important that we don’t make God out to be something different than what the scriptures say about Him. I Timothy 4:16 gives this instruction, “Watch your life and doctrine closely.”

Our desire at We Care is to honor God and bring glory to His name in all we do. Thanks to all of you who pray faithfully for us. We stand in continual need of more of Him! “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13)

Dale Brubaker

Draper Corr. Facility
Elmore, AL



One day not long ago I was out on the yard with the inmates. One of the guys told me, “Dale, I will be honest with you. I do not have the faith for God to do a revival in America.” In response I simply looked at him and asked if he had the faith that God could do a revival at Draper and the whole camp repent and turn to Him. He replied, “No, I do not have enough faith for that either.”

My next question was “Do you have enough faith that your closest bunkmate who does not have a faith in God can experience revival and surrender to God?”

This time he hesitated. Earlier in the conversation he had told me about a bunkmate who at one time was an atheist and he had begun praying for the man on a regular basis. Not too long afterwards he had found the atheist reading a Bible, and within a couple days his bunkmate started to ask him questions about the Bible. Now the former atheist is his best friend and a Christian.

With that in mind I simply looked at him and said, “Revival starts with you and me and works out from there. What we need to do is get our lives right with God and then pass on the good news to others so that one by one we experience revival.”



January 24 - 28

Volunteers Needed!

After a day of worship and orientation in Montgomery, Alabama, teams of ReNew Hope volunteers spend the next four days sharing Christ with inmates in over twenty prisons statewide. The gospel message is also presented through an evening chapel service in each location. Come willingly and boldly, be changed and be blessed!

For more information and an application,
visit our website at

www.wecareprogram.org

or call our office at **251-368-8818**

Registration deadline is November 25



FROM ALL TRIBES, PEOPLES AND LANGUAGES

A MESSAGE FROM DON METZLER, PRESIDENT

don@wecareprogram.org

My wife Phyllis and I recently had the opportunity to travel to Nicaragua in Central America. Our oldest son

Brandon is serving a one-year term with the Children of Destiny Orphanage, and we were grateful to be able to spend several days with him. As with most visits to a country outside the USA, we were struck by what we saw and experienced. There is a pretty big contrast between the two cultures of Nicaragua and the US. Nicaragua has a totally different language and more laid back lifestyle that is often focused on survival, while the US culture is more on-the-go, affluent, and entertainment focused.

During our time in Nicaragua we were privileged to attend two different church services. One was at a small church in a rural town, while the other was at a very large church in the capital city of Managua. Even though we could understand very little in both services, it

was obvious to us that the people loved Jesus very much and wanted others around them to know Him too.

Each one of us has a given environment in which God has placed us. It might be serving at an orphanage in a foreign country. It might be working in a factory, driving a truck, or raising children. It might be ministering in a prison in Alabama. No matter where God has placed us or what He has called us to do, my challenge to all of us is to be faithful in sharing His love and gift of salvation. In doing so, we can one day look forward to being a part of what the writer of Revelation shares in chapter 7, verses 9 and 10, "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages,

standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Amen!

"My challenge to all of us is to be faithful."

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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