



the connection

WINTER 2016

A Taste of Christ's Love

WWW.WECAREPROGRAM.ORG

find us on



A Taste of Christ's Love

By Don Metzler

An Early Start

Three o'clock rolled around mighty early on the morning of October 21 for those We Care staff persons who departed from the headquarters building in Atmore at that chilly predawn hour. After traveling north for about two hours, we picked up several more We Care personnel just above Montgomery. From there the 15-passenger van headed northwest for another hour to the very small town of Brent, Alabama, where we grabbed a quick breakfast at McDonald's.

Shortly after 7:00 AM we rolled into the Bibb Correctional Facility compound. There by the front gate we found a large kitchen trailer set up and ready for a work crew. Inside that trailer was a huge mixer, a proofer, lots of counter space, a big fryer, quite a bit of kitchen equipment, and an enormous amount of sugar and flour and other ingredients. Behind the trailer a canopy tent was set up to be used for shade throughout the day.

Carl Strite from Harrisonburg, Virginia, was waiting for us. Raymond Martin (PA) and Jake Raber (OH) were with him. Carl was ready to show this crew of greenhorns how to mix, roll out, fry, and glaze donuts. We all took crash courses to learn how to perform the various tasks required to make a "Strite" donut. For us work of this nature and magnitude was brand new. Carl, however, does it all the time. In his hometown he owns and leases multiple trailers like this, manned by teams of employees who travel to different locations making and selling fresh donuts.

The Groundwork Is Laid

Let me back up and share how this event came to be. During ReNew Hope in January of 2015, Carl served as a volunteer on the team at Bibb Correctional. As he and Chaplain Johnson were talking one day, the conversation went the direction of what Carl does for a living. It was then that Chaplain Johnson gave Carl

an invitation to bring one of his trailers to Bibb and fry some donuts.

To our knowledge an event such as this had never been done at a prison in the state of Alabama. Figuring out all the details and getting approval for everything took quite some time. When Kevin Kennell came on board with We Care in mid-May, he immediately began helping to arrange this special day. Carl was able to find some people to help sponsor the cost of the trip, and Kevin was able to round up some manpower within the We Care staff to assist with the labor on what we came to call "Donut Day."

Teamwork Yields Big Results

After many months of planning and looking forward to Donut Day, the time had come to begin making donuts. Kevin began mixing dough and kept at it all day long, mixing up batch after batch. Dale Brubaker, David S. Landis and James Smoker received some quick lessons from Carl on the art of "becoming one with the dough" and rolling it out to just the right thickness before cutting out the donuts with the rolling cutters. After a short lesson on frying the donuts just right, Don Metzler learned very quickly how to time two minutes without a timer! Anna Miller, Sharon Bruckhart and Raymond Martin were given the job of dropping the fresh hot donuts into the smooth sugary glaze and then placing them on rods to allow the extra glaze to drip off. David Bucher and Jake Raber were instructed on the proper way to stack the donuts on trays while at the same time making sure to keep count of how many they sent into the prison.

Thus began the donut-making project, and the process was repeated over and over again. About eight hours later, over 4,000 fresh glazed donuts had been delivered into the prison to be served with the afternoon chow. (It could have been more if so many



had not disappeared before they reached the trays. 😊) Each inmate at the facility received one donut with their meal. The extras were dispersed among the staff and in whatever way those in charge deemed appropriate. As the inmates went through the chow line, each one received a small card with a 2016 calendar on one side and a message from the Strite family, along with a portion of Romans 5, on the other side. While some of our staff handed out the cards, the rest of the volunteers remained outside the fence cleaning up the mess of powdered sugar, glaze, flour and grease that was created during the course of the day.

“Taste and See”

All of us were able to go into the prison for a chapel service yet that evening. We were privileged to

have Dan and Fern Utz travel up from Atmore to join us and provide the music for the service. Dan also did a great job using the gift of a donut as an illustration to share about the gift of Christ. He encouraged the men to “taste and see” the love of Christ through the donuts they had received. We ended the service with time for testimonies. Inmates shared how much that act of love meant to them, and volunteers were able to share with the inmates what Christ means to them.

Was it worth the hours of lost sleep, the tired muscles from working hard all day, the blisters from the burns that happened along the way? Absolutely! What a blessing to give donuts in the name of Jesus!

We extend a special thanks to Carl Strite and those who sponsored Donut Day.



Opposite – Anna Miller • Above, clockwise from top left – David S. Landis, Don Metzler, Jacob Raber, Dale Brubaker

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Stan Schrock, Thrift Store Director

I am excited to be part of We Care Program and serve as Thrift Store Director. We Care Program owns and operates four thrift stores. We also have a Recycle and Donation Center (RDC) where we bale and recycle clothing donations that do not sell or are unsellable. As Thrift Store Director, it is my responsibility to oversee the operations of these five entities.



We Care Thrift Stores are a ministry extension of We Care Program. This is so from several perspectives. The stores exist primarily, of course, to provide funding to take the gospel to men and women incarcerated in prison. Without the income the stores bring to We Care Program's general fund, the prison ministry would be hampered.

Our employees are trained to quickly sort many pounds of clothing, choosing only the best to put on the floor for sale. We help to keep tons of used clothing and household items out of the landfills through both our sales and our recycling efforts.

In addition, our stores minister by providing local employment. Between the four stores and RDC, we hire over 40 full- and part-time employees. We appreciate the dedication and effort that each one of these employees contributes to the ministry.

We Care Thrift Stores also provide an opportunity for offenders to fulfill community service requirements. This can present a challenge because we train quite a few people who simply finish their court ordered community service and then move on. However, this particular aspect of the stores really is an extension of the prison ministry – providing discipleship and guidance to many individuals before they commit a crime that lands them in prison. Our managers work with and give valuable counsel and guidance to all employees and community service personnel.

Together We Care chaplains and Thrift Stores employees are working to proclaim Christ in prison and beyond.

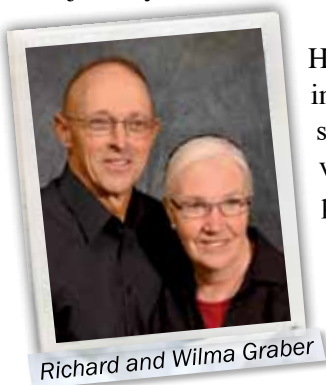


The Thrift Stores minister to the local communities by providing a great option to purchase quality used goods.

Host Couple Transition

After almost two years of serving as the host couple at We Care headquarters, Benjamin and Marla Zook, along with their daughters Amanda and Luella, moved to Gap, Pennsylvania. We are very thankful for the many ways the Zooks blessed We Care during their time here. We wish them God's blessing and guidance in this next phase of their life journey.

Richard and Wilma Graber from Hutchinson, Kansas, are serving as interim host couple for the next several months. They have served various shorter stints with us in the past, and we are excited to have them back for a little longer term. Please pray for Richard and Wilma as they balance all their various responsibilities.



Prison Ministry Rally

Saturday - March 5, 2016

Hinkletown Mennonite Church
Ephrata, PA

Learn from current chaplains

For more information, please call or email
SFPM at 717-859-5519 or sfpm@dejazzd.com

Sponsors



Marysville Musings

By Wilma Mullet

November 2015

(All names changed.)

Editor's Note: Chaplains serving with We Care Program work under a missionary support arrangement where they are responsible to raise the funds for their support. Each chaplain is encouraged to periodically write a personal newsletter to help keep his or her partners informed about what is happening in the chaplain's life and work. The following letter was written by Wilma Mullet, a part-time We Care chaplain at Ohio Reformatory for Women (ORW) in Marysville, Ohio. With Wilma's permission I share her letter with all of you. I enjoy her style of communication and believe you will too.

Hello!

The Fall 2015 Anger Resolution Seminar is now history. It was a God-thing from BEFORE the Seminar ever started. I became unwaveringly aware of that when I knocked over my 32 oz. container of Coke. I was going to sip on that same 32 oz. beverage all four days while at the prison. Back-to-back days of 12-13 hours each can get mighty long in the afternoons; I need the caffeine, or so I thought. But there went the sweet, syrupy liquid flowing off both sides of my desk, over papers, over anything and everything...and I needed to start the seminar in 10 minutes! It was so ridiculous I almost chuckled aloud. I sopped up what I could and left the rest. Telling the women about that incident became one of our leading illustrations. A year ago, the timing of that spill would have sent my blood pressure through the roof; now it was just "one of those things." My reaction amazed even me, but it became our aim—letting life happen without "losing it." (I'm still a work in progress on that one!)

Around 35 women attended all six sessions, with amazing attention. These ladies were "there" from start to finish as we addressed issues I felt needed to be addressed. This audience, after all, included some who HAD killed, or TRIED to kill, in their anger. The majority of the rest of them had turned to addictions to cover the emotional pains they've endured from abuses and molestations, things over which they had absolutely no control. We looked at the positive as well as the negative aspects of anger (they're used to being condemned for getting angry), anger at God (why didn't He stop their abusers), Satan's commitment to destroying them, God's commitment to giving them hope and a future, root issues that still control their current lives, revenge or forgiveness (of others and themselves), and being prepared to diffuse conflict. The women were given the opportunity to choose to open the clenched fists they were shaking at God. Early on they got to draw a picture of their hearts (whether it was raw like hamburger, ripped to pieces, full of stab wounds,



broken, or whatever) and present those mangled hearts to God to allow Him to work on them. They also got to choose whether or not they wanted Satan to lose his hold on them. They wrote the name(s) of those they needed to forgive, presented them to God, and chose to forgive them. Their questions, discussions and responses were amazing.

Two women had totally impassive faces the whole seminar. I thought they were "enduring" it. But by the third day, one of them asked whether she could meet

with me one-on-one, and I got a note from the second one which said, "I thank God that you happened to come into my life at this time. You have opened my eyes to so much of my life's problems."

The seminar truly was a God-thing from beginning to end. It happens only two times a year, and this is the first time I put together and presented the seminar all by myself. Ms. Plank graciously handled the logistics (signing in and out, monitoring, etc.). Thanks for your prayers! We'll hold a follow-up session within a month to check on what God is doing in their lives and how they're handling their anger.

Meanwhile, I'm now back to my normal three days per week routine! My two weekly Bible Studies as well as my "one-on-one's" were on hold the week of the seminar. I've been meeting with "Bessie" for almost three months. Initially, she was very distraught, talking non-stop, and always second-guessing her decisions. Taken from her addict mother, she was placed into the care of her "military mentally ill" father at the age of two. Very verbally abusive, he kept her away from others, totally controlling her life. She refers to him as "the devil." When he passed away 10 years ago, "I had no idea how to live on my own"—and she was 27 years old! He was always telling her she was crazy, and over the years she's been given five different mental illness diagnoses. She had been on drugs for years when God brought her to

continued on page 7

From the Field

Bob Depew

Holman Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL



Recently I was doing paperwork in the chaplain's office when a middle-aged man came in to talk. In the past, he has mostly been very upbeat in his walk with the Lord. However, on this particular morning, he seemed down and wanted to talk to someone who wasn't in prison whites. I asked him what his greatest need was at the moment. He said he needed some peace of mind. I responded by asking if he had peace of soul. The question seemed to catch him off guard. Then he exclaimed, "That's it!" He had let prison life get him down and had taken his eyes off Jesus.

As the Lord gave me words of life to speak to him, he became encouraged. After I prayed with him, he walked out of the office with a new resolve to keep his soul at peace.

I was reminded of Psalm 62:5-8: "Find rest, oh my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, O people: pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge."

Blaine Copenhaver

Fountain Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL



After the first day of discipleship class, "Jack" ran into the chapel jumping up and down as he told everyone his newly memorized Bible verse, Matthew 4:19-20. A week later he turned in his book, saying he realized he wasn't a follower of Christ and didn't think he could be one. For two days he avoided me. Finally, one evening he stopped me as I was leaving the prison. For the next two hours we talked about what it means to follow Jesus. He had done some things that were going to send him to segregation, and even though he didn't feel worthy of Jesus and assumed he would fail, he expressed a desire to re-join the class. Over the next weeks, he grew.

The day came when he had to serve his segregation time. He hung out in the chapel for as long as he could. A couple of us gathered around him to pray for him before

he headed off to segregation. I had a lot of questions as I watched him go. Would he fall into peer pressure? Would he get into a fight? Would he give up again? During his time in segregation, Jack did great. He did all his discipleship homework and said his Bible verses through the fence as I walked by.

He was released from segregation in time for the class graduation. For the graduation party, my wife Sheila made shrimp jambalaya and corn bread. Jack was overwhelmed with gratitude. He sat with a piece of corn bread in his hand and tears running down his face. Everything felt new for him. He is now learning to enjoy life through a renewed mind.

Sharon Bruckhart

Montgomery Women's Fac.
Montgomery, AL



Prior to moving to Alabama to serve with We Care, I wondered how God could use this "country bumpkin" to minister to incarcerated women. Having served with We Care for four years now, I can see how God has used my life experiences to equip me to serve Him.

One of the experiences He has used is my singleness. It's normal to have one of the ladies ask me, "Are you married? Do you have children?" I've been able to share with them how my singleness has made me lean on God even more, how I've had to surrender my dreams and desires to Him, and how I am waiting on Him and trusting Him. I've also shared how God uses the story of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis chapters 15-21 to remind me of the importance of waiting on Him and not trying to move ahead. Many of the women I talk with have had very different life experiences and find this perspective hard to imagine because prostitution or promiscuity are part of their past.

A few months ago, my journey of singleness took a different turn when God brought an amazing gentleman into my life. More recently, it's taken yet another turn when that gentleman asked me to be his wife! Sharing these experiences with the women in prison has helped them to see that it is so worth it to wait on the Lord. Ladies have said, "Chap, I want to wait, like you, for the one that God has for me." Whether they will or not, only God knows. But I am so thankful for the testimony He's given me of His faithfulness through my singleness, dating, and now preparing to marry the one He has chosen for me.

Stories and Testimonies from We Care Chaplains

Mike Strehlow

Fountain Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL



I just finished teaching a course called “Christian Worldview.” Attendance was excellent, I reconnected with several inmates I hadn’t seen for a while, and we had a great time. After the last class period, one of the men, who is not a Christian, asked, “When are you going to teach again?” He wasn’t praising my teaching. Rather, he was responding to something Christianity offers that no other religion or mindset can boast: REALITY! The course showed him a world that was real, with a real God and Savior.

Reality is refreshing in prison because reality does not always rule. Money is given to drug rehab programs that do not work. HIV positive inmates are placed in general population despite the certainty that they will infect others. Religions, like Odinism, are required by court mandates to receive the same consideration that other religions get. The list goes on and on.

Inmates understand this and are exceedingly pragmatic. They laugh at political-correctness, but go along with it because it is in their advantage to do so. But Jesus is real. Christianity is the ONLY faith that is historically testable, speaks to the world, and reconciles us to God. Inmates understand that too. Jesus looks a man in the face. Jesus doesn’t lie, can’t be conned, can’t be lied to, and can’t be fooled. He lived for them. He died for them. He lives again to advocate for them.

No wonder Satan blinds us with fantasy. In the real world, no one is a match for Jesus Christ. Prison inmates know this. Let us pray the world will soon know it too!

Ben Nolt

Fountain Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL



A few days ago I picked up a book of mine, and while thumbing through it, I found a piece of paper with a name written on it. I instantly remembered a phone call that took place several weeks prior at Fountain Correctional.

“Hello, do you know my son, ‘Fred’?” The woman’s voice on the other end was clearly distraught and agitated. “My son’s there and I heard that he’s been abused. Is he okay? Please find Fred! Please tell him I love him...” her words trailed off into tears. The pain and grief in her voice hit me at the core. It was all I could do to maintain my own composure. In that moment, I received a small glimpse of the daily pain and struggle faced by the many people affected by their loved ones’ incarceration. My heart ached not only for her son, but for the difficult journey she and countless others must walk.

As our conversation ended, I wrote her name on a slip of paper and assured her that I would find Fred and speak with him. When I did, the young man, who is only a few years older than me, showed no weakness and insisted that he was fine. There was little I could do but attempt to convey his mother’s love.

It is situations like these that weigh heavily on me. When evil seems to be winning, I am tempted to despair and ask, “Where is God in all of this?” Psalms 43:5 reminds me, “Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.” He is ultimately in control. I will yet praise Him!

Marysville Musings *continued from page 5*

ORW where she sought out Christian counseling as well as Mental Health. She attends four or five different Bible Studies per week and is a sponge for soaking up spiritual knowledge. God has honored her seeking. Though she’s on fewer psyche meds now, I’ve watched her go from a non-stop talker to a listener; she’s now calmer and asks good questions. She still has severe trust issues and occasional “Am I crazy?” fears, and I enjoy helping her sort out her irrational thinking. Last week after reminding her she’s come a mighty long way (“you think?”), I told her she was a joy to work with. “I am? I’ve never had anyone tell me that.” Pray for Bessie; we still have major

root issues to look at. She leaves in December and wants a Christian aftercare place to go.

And so it goes... Bessie is just one of many who need help, hope and encouragement. If I were in their shoes (and it’s not hard to end up there), I’d want somebody with whom I could talk. I thank God I have the opportunity to be there for these women, and I pray I represent Him well.

God bless you for your prayers and support!
From “pain city” for His glory,
Wilma Mullet



AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

A MESSAGE FROM DON METZLER, PRESIDENT

don@wecareprogram.org

Please allow me to take the next few minutes of your time to share with you a few of the

things for which I am thankful:

- The miraculous gift of salvation in Christ.
- The Holy Spirit who leads and guides me each day.
- My beautiful wife and three grown children, all of whom love the Lord and are serving Him.
- My parents, sisters and their families, along with my godly heritage. (Working in prison makes the blessing of a godly family so much more obvious.)
- A strong local body of fellow believers with whom I can worship and fellowship weekly.
- The amazing team of directors and secretaries

who serve with me in the administrative aspects of this ministry.

- The many wonderful employees, associates, volunteers and their families who make up the greater part of the We Care family.
- Many faithful partners who give to and pray for this ministry in so many different ways.
- Good health and the ability to serve others.

“Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.”

Psalm 107:1 NKJV

The list could go on and on, but I’ll stop there. Yes, I realize we “celebrated” Thanksgiving

almost two months ago. However, I challenge each of you to think often about the many blessings you have been given. Take some time now to write your own list, and then allow an attitude of gratitude to be the dominant feature in your life throughout 2016. “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!”

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

3493 Highway 21
Atmore, AL 36502-4669
Phone: 251-368-8818
Email: wecare@wecareprogram.org

