



the **connection**

WINTER 2023



2023 Staff Directory



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From the Field

Carl Carpenter

Frank Lee Work Center
Deatsville, AL



It's just an ordinary bottle of water, kind of. It is sitting on our table and each time I see it, I think of the Church at Elmore Prison.

When I say the Church in prison, I'm not talking about a building or a chapel, but the Body of Christ, the Body of Believers. The Church behind razor wire fences is not much different from a free world church. There are leaders, teachers, encouragers, those who need encouraging, those who set up and clean up, organizers, visionaries, students, greeters, extroverts and introverts. There are also givers, which brings us back to the water bottle.

I went into Elmore last week for a church service, and as I was preaching, one of the ushers brought me a bottle of water. I took a few refreshing sips during the lesson and didn't give it much thought after that. When the service was over and I went to leave, one of the inmate pastors, Jeremy, said, "Hey, don't forget your water up on the pulpit."

As I picked up the water bottle, a thought came to mind. Elmore has been without a full-time chaplain since last year, so I asked Jeremy, "Who is supplying the water?"

He replied with a smile, "Some of the guys from the Church buy it off the canteen and donate it for volunteers that come in. It's how they tithe."

At Frank Lee the Church has an inmate-led Bible study and church service every Sunday morning. In between Bible study and church those in attendance receive a cup of coffee and after service are fed a plate of "burrito." (Burrito is a mixture of ramen noodles, crushed up chips, corn chips and cheese curls, and summer sausage.) There too the coffee and burrito ingredients are bought from the canteen and donated by inmates as their way of tithing.

Hebrews 13:15-16 says, "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." I believe God is so pleased with the churches at Elmore and Frank Lee as they praise Him, worship, serve and share. I know these churches bless me like a cold drink on a hot summer night.

Steve Stoltzfus

Staton Correctional Facility
Elmore, AL



Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6). It is a joy for me to walk alongside my friends and brothers in Christ on this journey of life. The path God chooses for us is not always easy, but if we can share together, encourage one another, and pray for one another, it can become a joy. A smile, a pat on the back, or even a thumbs up can brighten someone's day.

"Hey, Chap, just you taking your time to listen to me changed my day. You see, what I am going to share with you is too hard for me to carry alone, and I want you to pray for me."

"Chap, I have been locked up for 30 years and am tired, but I am not giving up on Jesus. You encouraged me today. Come back soon."

"Hey, Chap. Can you stop by and sit with me? I am going to school, but today I got a medical appointment and I am getting behind in my studies. I am afraid I will not have enough study time to make the grade. Will you pray for me?" As I took time to listen to and pray with this man, I could see his anxiety leave. A day or two later he came to me, "I feel a lot better. I got peace."

Another time I was sitting in the day room and a friend came over and started sharing. "You know, Chap, you coming out here with us brings us encouragement. You are loved by many." We chatted together for about 30 minutes, then, "Hey, Chap, are we going to have Bible study today?"

"Yes, and today we will study Ephesians 3. Paul shows us how to live out our walk as followers of Christ."

After the class period one of the guys came to talk to me. He shared how he was convicted and wanted to restart his Christian walk. He felt like a hypocrite. With tears in his eyes and joy in his heart, he made things right with God. God was and is working in his heart.

Being hands and feet for Jesus is so rewarding. It is not always easy, but helping to build His kingdom is so worth it all.



DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Kevin Kennell, Vice President

There is always a tension in life between doing what you want to do and doing what you have to do. This tension is very obvious in prison. However, it is not only the incarcerated men and women who wrestle with

this, but also the volunteers. As We Care volunteer chaplains, we all have things that we really want to do as we enter and spend time in prison. For example, I love to talk with the men about their plans and dreams for life after prison and how God and His word intersect with those plans. It is interesting how some men include God in their plans and others do not. In either case it is a great way to initiate conversation about God's plans for their lives and to share Jesus with them. Unfortunately, with all the required chaplain duties I need to do in the absence of a state chaplain, sometimes I find myself with little time to do the things I want to do. This reality exists not only in prison but also in life, and the resulting tension makes life frustrating at times.

At We Care we feel this tension in a very real way as we try to keep events going, get events started again, or dream up new events to get people involved in prison ministry. A lot of the outreaches we have loved doing over many years have been disrupted, and while we want to jump right back into them, we have to do other things at times. Anyone who has ever been in prison ministry has heard the words "be flexible." We are having to live by those words. But in the middle of it,

we need to do what we can and do it well.

Ecclesiastes says, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might..." or in other words, "do it well." It is far too easy to not do a thing well if it is something we have to do and not something we want to do. When I was a child, my parents would give me a task I didn't want to do, and then they would say, "If you don't want to do it, then you have to, but if you want to do it, then you don't have to do it." My younger self thought that was a great way out—just say I want to do it. My parents would wisely say that if you want to do it then you get to do it. It is no longer forced, but is a privilege! Ahhhh...perspective changes everything. We may have to change our "wanters."

In the New Testament we read that Paul wanted to visit the Thessalonians. He tried several times to fulfill his desire, but for various reasons was unable to go. Then we read that he sent Timothy to them. Remember this, sometimes a closed door to what you or I want to do is an avenue to get someone else involved in Kingdom work! One plants, one waters, but it is always God that gives the increase in Kingdom fields.

Don't ever allow the tension of your desires and responsibilities to discourage you from doing well what you find to do. I believe with the right perspective God is glorified in ALL things. And that should be what we all really want!

Thank you for your interest in what God is doing through We Care Program. Please pray for us as we navigate these tensions on a daily basis. Finally, I encourage you to look around at what is available to do, and then do it well!

Spring Tour 2023

Watch your mailbox for the specific details for your area. If you would like to help promote these events, please contact our office for a list of ways you can do so.

Feb. 26 - Mar. 5 Featuring **Anchored Quartet**

Sunday	Feb. 26	Meigs, GA
Monday	Feb. 27	Fair Play, SC
Tuesday	Feb. 28	Prospect, VA
Wednesday	Mar. 1	Harrisonburg, VA
Thursday	Mar. 2	Franconia, PA
Friday	Mar. 3	New Holland, PA
Sunday	Mar. 5	Newburg, PA

Mar. 6 - Mar. 12 Featuring **Shalom Ensemble**

Monday	Mar. 6	Walnut Creek, OH
Tuesday	Mar. 7	Plain City, OH
Wednesday	Mar. 8	Montgomery, IN
Thursday	Mar. 9	Arthur, IL
Friday	Mar. 10	Kalona, IA
Saturday	Mar. 11	Leon, IA
Sunday	Mar. 12	Hutchinson, KS

OHIO

- Madison CI
- London CI



2023 Staff Directory

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Office / Fountain Annex

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ALABAMA

Frank Lee CWC

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Camden CBF



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Alexander, Maria
Thrift Store Director
Office

Monroe County Jail ★ Monroeville

Holman CF
Fountain CF
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Century CI

FLORIDA

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Lauren
President
Office



Omer & Sylvia Petersheim
Host Couple
Headquarters



Noreen Horst
Administrative Assistant
Office



Melinda & Christopher Huber
Bookkeeper
Office



Eddie & Velesia Miller
Chaplain
Santa Rosa CI & Century CI



Charlie & Liz Sytsma
Associate
Century CI



Mike & Patty Strehlow
Teacher
Century CI



Jerry & Judi Stahly
Jasmina
Associate
Century CI



Daniel Earley
Elianna, Jacl
Chaplain
Florida & Atmore Prisons



David & Mary Landis
Abby, Joshua, Benjamin, Lizzy, Matthew
Chaplaincy Director / Chaplain
Office / Santa Rosa CI



Frank & Kathryn Gossett
Teacher
Bibb CF



Irvin & Kathy Martin
Kaden
Chaplain - Century CI



Kevin & Renee Kennel
Sophie, Autumn, Kylie, Tyson, Jenna, Asher
Vice President / Chaplain
Office / Fountain Annex



Monroeville Thrift Store



Flomaton Thrift Store



Flomaton Sorting Center



Atmore Thrift Store



DONUT DAYS 2022

A MESSAGE FROM DON METZLER, PRESIDENT

don@wecareprogram.org

The only annual We Care outreach that COVID did not shut down entirely was Donut Days. Even that outreach was limited to outside-the-fence services for two years, so we were looking forward to going back inside the prisons this year. All the plans were approved and in place, and then because of happenings within the prison system, two of the prisons cancelled just a few days before the event. However, we were still able to make and serve close to 10,000 donuts to inmates and staff at five different prisons in north Alabama.

In one way or another, we were able to enter each prison and connect with the inmates. A couple prisons allowed us to hand out our calendar/scripture bookmarks as the inmates came through the meal line. At one facility John Schmid and a few of the volunteers

went in for a service. Another prison allowed the entire group of volunteers to go in with John for the service.

One afternoon while the ladies were at a women's prison, the male volunteers had their most significant interaction when they were able to hand out the donuts directly to the inmates. (Usually the kitchen staff places the donuts on each person's food tray.) That experience was amazing as we got to relate with the men while handing them two large fresh Strite donuts. As we blessed them with donuts, we were blessed in return to see their smiles and receive their words of thanks. The donut distribution was followed by a service in the chapel.

We extend a special thank you to Carl and Miriam Strite for once again sharing their expertise and equipment with We Care, to Dutch Valley Food Distributors for helping to underwrite the expenses of this event and to all the volunteers who gave of their time and resources to serve in this way.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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