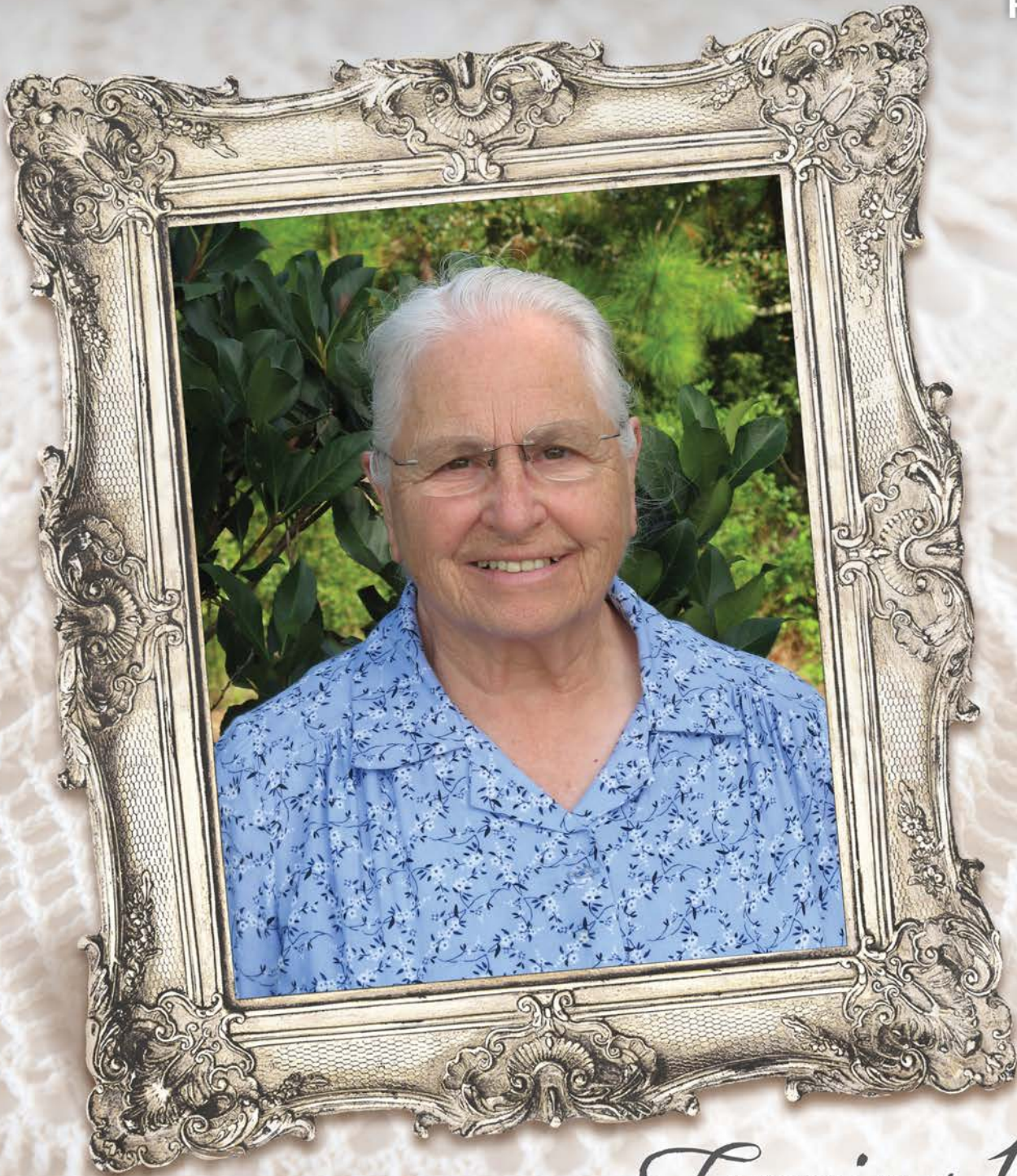




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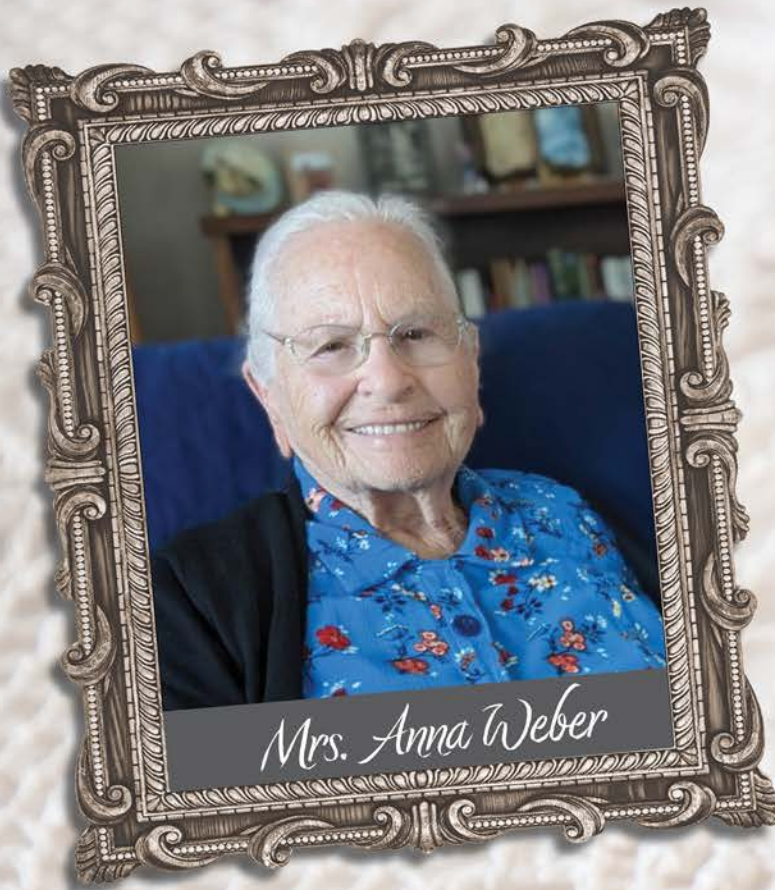
Fall 2024



Turning 100

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Turning 100

By Don Metzler

Who is Mrs. Anna Weber? Mrs. Anna is the matriarch of We Care Program and turned 100 years old in early September. About a week before her birthday, I had the privilege to sit down and visit with Mrs. Anna in her home at The Summit, an assisted living facility in Atmore, Alabama. I quickly found out that she has 7 children, 19 grandchildren, 47 great-grandchildren, and 1 great-great-grandchild! During my visit we talked and reminisced about various subjects. Following is a compilation of our conversation, my memories, things she had shared in the past, and information gleaned otherwise that will help give you a glimpse into this remarkable woman.

Mrs. Anna was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, on September 6, 1924, to Joe and Mary Sensenig Hoover. She moved with her family to Lebanon County when she was 17 and moved back to Lancaster County when she married Martin Weber at age 19.

They began raising their family on a farm in Lancaster County until God called them to move to Alabama in 1962.

In 1970 Mr. Weber founded the New Life Foundation prison ministry. The ministry name was changed to We Care Program in 1984. Mrs. Anna was not one to be out

front, but she was a faithful spouse who stood by her husband as he forged new territory in the prisons of Alabama. Along with hosting many meetings in their home, Anna was responsible for the food that was needed when Mr. Weber began bringing groups of volunteers into the prisons. This undertaking turned into what was first called The Revivals, then Crusade, and is now known as ReNew Hope. Mrs. Anna told me that most of the responsibility to feed the volunteers fell on her and her family until the orientation day was moved to

Montgomery. At that point they tapped some others on the shoulder to help with the food preparation and serving. She also was involved in the prison ministry by



Weber Family (1965) L to R: (back row) Velma Schrock, Leon Weber, Ruth Ann Yoder, James Weber, Mary Jane Schrock, (middle row) Anna Weber, Joyce Suter, Martin Weber, (front row) Phil Weber

preparing food that was taken into the local prisons in Atmore. From time to time in the mid-1970s, Mr. Weber would get permission to take free-world food in for a special meal for the men who were part of the chapel programs. Mrs. Anna played a vital role in coordinating and preparing the food for those events.

Mr. Weber never met a stranger, and he often invited people to stay in their home, even on short notice. Mrs. Anna was a wonderful wife and lovingly showed great hospitality to all who came through their doors, many of whom were connected in some way to Martin's work in prison. So while Mrs. Anna was not one to speak from a stage or platform like her husband, she contributed to the prison ministry work through her cooking, cleaning, and caring for many, many people through the years.

Based on her extensive history with prison ministry, I asked her what advice she might have for anyone considering that opportunity. She responded, "They should know the Lord and realize they will be going into a dangerous place." She also mentioned that prison ministry is hard work and a person needs to be sure of their calling. That sounds like good advice from someone who knows what she is talking about!

When I asked what she is looking forward to when she turns 100, Mrs. Anna shared that it simply means she is one day closer to heaven where she longs to be. Regarding

what she dreads about turning 100, her biggest concern is losing her strength and needing to depend on other people. However, she is thankful she still has her sight and can read. She is also thankful she can pray for people when God brings them to her mind. She reminds me regularly that she is praying for me and for We Care, which is a huge blessing to me.

As we closed our visit, Mrs. Anna spent time recalling specific ways that God called them to move to Atmore. She told me that Mr. Weber said God had to call him to Atmore to work with the youth at the church in Poarch because if God had called him to move to do prison ministry, he probably would not have come. Mr. Weber's opinion used to be, and I quote Mrs. Anna, "They did the crime, so let them do the time." Thankfully, God changed his heart and he had a wife who supported him in God's call. Together they laid the groundwork for the ministry of We Care that has impacted thousands of lives over the years, both inside and outside of prison. Only eternity will reveal the ripples that have gone out from Mr. Martin and Mrs. Anna as they were faithful to the call God placed on their hearts!

Thank you, Mrs. Anna, for being a faithful servant of God. Thank you, too, for the example you gave to all who know you, and especially to those of us who are carrying forward the torch of We Care Program. May God bless you as you begin your next 100 years!



Volunteers serving food to inmates at Fountain Correctional. Mrs. Anna Weber is the last lady in the serving line. (early 1970s)



Mr. Martin and Mrs. Anna Weber sharing with Revival volunteers in the We Care building. (mid 1980s)

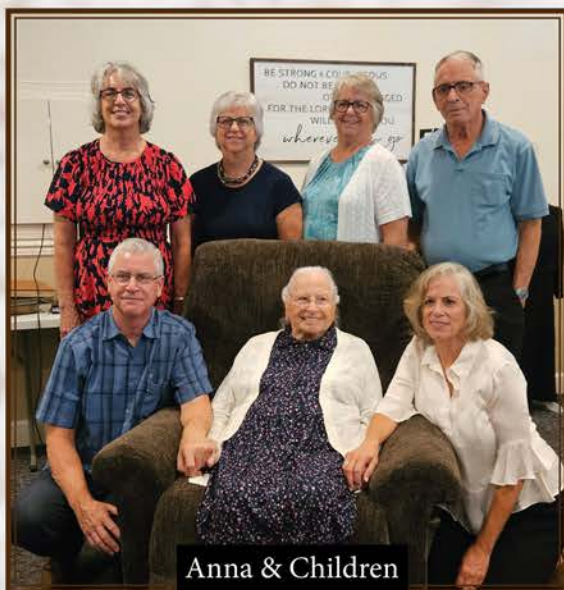


L to R: Gloria Hochstedler, Anna Weber, Doris Ranck, Lenora Longenecker (1980)



2008

Weber Family



SERVICE

▶ OPPORTUNITIES

To Inquire, please contact:

Recruitment Director - James Smoker

james@wecareprogram.org

251-368-8818

▶ Prison Chaplains

In Alabama: Donaldson, St. Clair, Bibb, Elmore, Staton, Tutwiler, Bullock, Ventress, Fountain, Holman, Fountain Annex

In Florida: Century, Santa Rosa, Walton, Okaloosa

Start Date: Any Time

Length of Commitment: One year or longer

▶ Host Couple

Facility oversight and hospitality at our headquarters in Atmore. Could also include prison ministry.

Start Date: May 2025

Length of Commitment: Two years or longer

NEWS

WELCOME

We are excited to welcome Justin and Heather Halteman to our We Care staff family. As the new Thrift Store Director, Justin is replacing Nathan Kennell who is transitioning to oversee the store building project. Justin and Heather reside in Atmore and attend Mennonite Christian

Fellowship. One interesting bit of trivia is that Justin is the third generation in his family to serve with We Care. His maternal grandfather, Joseph Horst, served on the board from 1975 to 1980, and his father, Lyndon Halteman, was on staff from 1984 to 1988.



Justin & Heather Halteman

APPRECIATION

On August 1, We Care hosted an appreciation banquet for the employees who work at our three Thrift Stores. Twenty-five of the 40+ employees were able to attend and bring a friend or spouse with them. The banquet was held at the We Care headquarters. The delicious meal was prepared by our host couple, Steve and Sara Petersheim, and served by the We Care leadership team and their spouses. Thrift Store Director Nathan Kennell led some fun activities before the meal and later shared a few comments to open the program. Chaplain/Assistant Thrift Store Director Ben Nolt introduced the main speaker of the evening, Brian Pendleton, a former inmate. Brian encouraged the employees that their work is not in vain, sharing about how God transformed his life while he was in prison. President Don Metzler gave a short talk expressing gratitude from the We Care leadership. The program concluded with the introduction of Justin Halteman, Thrift Store Director-in-Training. The special evening was one small way to show our Thrift Store employees how much they are appreciated.



BUILDING UPDATE

You have probably heard the saying, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." In our efforts to get the new Thrift Store building underway, we have been given a lot of lemons. After numerous delays, we are excited to report that the metal building has finally been ordered. If the time estimates for delivery and erection hold true,

we could be ready for volunteers sometime between the end of December and the end of January. The lemonade in this case is that instead of working in a metal building in 100-degree weather, our volunteers should be able to enjoy some 50 – 60 degree days. Be sure to follow We Care's Facebook page for updates as they become available.

From the Field

Tim Stutzman

Bibb Corr. Facility
Brent, AL



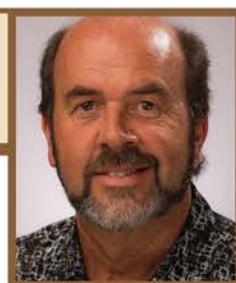
In May 2023, Dave Bucher asked me if I would consider teaching a Pathway to Freedom class, a new startup for We Care, for 80 men in the B3 dorm at Bibb Correctional Facility. He invited me to come for a morning and showed me several of the teaching topics. A book I had not read, "Prayer, the Great Adventure" by David Jeremiah, sparked my interest because my wife and I co-lead the prayer team at our church. In addition, my wife has been passionately involved in Moms in Prayer for over 18 years.

On the first day of class I began with the greeting "Good Morning" followed by a time of silent prayer. By the fourth teaching session I began using the greeting "Thank you for showing up" to start the class. After the prayer time we shared how God reaches out to us when we pray. Sometimes He speaks our name and says, "Thank you for showing up." By the fifth day some of the men greeted me by saying, "Thank you for showing up." In the classroom men were greeting each other with the same words, "Thank you for showing up." Later I heard men in the dorm greeting each other with "Thank you for showing up." When I entered the dorm, we greeted each other with the words, "Thank you for showing up." Outside on the yard and in the chapel, the same greeting was used, "Thank you for showing up." Toward the end of the quarter a resident showed me a crossword puzzle where he had praised God for showing up. In the midst of it all, I was surprised by how God used gratitude catchwords to get my attention.

Beginnings never tried.
A dorm labeled the hood.
Some said it wouldn't survive.
Hope says we should.
Uniform colors remain the same.
Shirt numbers identify each man.
Letters speak out their name.
Feelings taste the wrinkled tan.
Trinity singing "WE CARE."
It's the new covenant cup.
Catchwords ringing from within,
Thank you for showing up.

Irvin Martin

Century Corr. Institution
Century, FL



Are you a chaplain? I need to talk to a chaplain. I can't take any more." Jimmy suddenly appeared at my office door just before time for the Celebrate Recovery class.

"I'm Chaplain Martin and I'd be glad to talk with you, but I'm leading a class in a few minutes," I replied.

"I remember you," he said. "You came down to the (Century) Work Center and ministered to me when my mother passed. You probably don't recognize me; I lost a lot of weight since then. I'm so stressed out, can someone please help me?"

Since I had a class, Chaplain Dean took Jimmy into his office and ministered to him.

Not too long into the class period, Jimmy slipped into the last row pew. He was obviously very stressed but gave his full attention as the various participants momentarily shared their struggles. After everyone else had shared, I encouraged him to share if he wanted to.

He broke down in tears. "I know it was God that led me here to this meeting. I feel so much love and concern from everyone here. I have never been to anything like this. I've messed up in so many ways. I'm hurting and broken, and I was so encouraged to hear everyone share. How often does this group meet? I want to sign up! I desperately need this."

As Jimmy wept, we gathered around him and lifted him to the Father in prayer. Joy and happiness came over him as he re-dedicated his life to the Lord! Hallelujah!

Fawn Jacobs

Birmingham Work Release
Birmingham, AL



Thirty-two joyful women came to a communion service, and the Holy Spirit's presence was in that place! As we listened to worship music, there were some tears and raised hands. When "Amazing Grace" played, the ladies sang along, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound...My chains are gone, I've been set free!" The last song that played was "Hosanna." God was in it, as I did not plan it, but that song led right into the

message. The message began with Palm Sunday and the praise and hosannas on that day and continued with looking at the events of crucifixion week. In addition to the worship music and message, we read the Word and had communion. The service ended with singing a hymn, "Jesus Loves Me." It was a great time together in the presence of the Lord.

One of the ladies serves other inmates with feet washing and pedicures; she likens it to Jesus washing the disciples' feet. There are many believers in the camp. I've heard many say, "Coming to prison saved my life. It took me out of a bad situation and is where I found or came closer to God."

At Birmingham Work Release (BWR), some go out to work and can earn home passes. Some desire to start ministries after their release and reach out to people in lowly situations like where they once were, an illustration of II Corinthians 1:3-4. Inmates are realizing the power of prayer and are getting answers, which builds their faith.

I have recently moved from the Montgomery area to Birmingham. Living closer to BWR will enable me to give more days to help fill the need for chaplaincy at that facility.

Mike Strehlow

Century Corr. Institution
Century, FL



When it comes to ministry, especially to prison inmates, often you just don't know. What I mean is, if you rely on audience feedback to gauge the success of your preaching, you might be in for a rough ride. A joke that would result in a five-minute rolling laugh from a free-world congregation might get a smile and a "Hrmf" from the students in my New Testament Survey class at CCI. This isn't a complaint. One can't expect waves of laughter in prison; it's not a happy place.

Teaching the Bible is both an incredible privilege and a heavy responsibility, so I work as hard at preparing the lessons for my Faith Dorm students as I would if the governor were sitting in. And for the past three months, it's been a great class.

The students take the class seriously. They treat God's Word as God's Word. Drenched in sweat in the Faith Dorm (no air conditioning), we open our Bibles, take out our study notes, and Jesus is there.

Still, one particular inmate seemed immune to my

charm. He is a big tough guy who looks like he could break down a door with his head and his hair would still be combed. He's smart too; I've talked to him enough to know. Yet while he attended every class, he never smiled, never talked, and often looked as though he was falling asleep.

On the day of the last lesson, again the students seemed pretty happy, except for that one man. At the end of the session, I announced that in two weeks I'd be starting a new class, and what do you know? The tough guy walked up to me and asked, "Are you really coming in to teach again in two weeks?" When I answered in the affirmative, he looked me right in the eye and replied, "Good. I wouldn't want to miss it."

I suppose that's why Jesus wants us to be faithful to our calls and walk by faith and not by sight. Because when it comes to the work of the Holy Spirit on a person's heart, sometimes you just don't know.



**January 26-30
2025**

**Volunteers
Needed**

**Applications available online
or contact our office for more
information**

www.wecareprogram.org

251-368-8818



HANDMADE ENCOURAGEMENT

A MESSAGE FROM DON METZLER, PRESIDENT

don@wecareprogram.org

We Care chaplains get into all kinds of situations. They never know exactly what they might face on any given day. Following is an account

Chaplain Daniel Earley recently shared with me about an interaction he had with a man who goes by the name "Porkchop."

For the past few years, Porkchop has been one of the happiest inmates at Santa Rosa Annex. He is a faithful chapel attendee, always sits in the front row, wears a huge smile, and can't stop testifying about how much God means to him. Porkchop blesses everyone.

So I was shocked when I entered the compound one day and was urged repeatedly, "You gotta go see Porkchop! He got locked up." This was followed by, "He did nothin' wrong! The officer kept messin' with him!" Concerned, I hustled to the dorm where he was being held.

I found Porkchop's window and knocked. His 67-year-old body hobbled over to me. With tears he stammered, "Chap! I didn't do it. I didn't do it. You know me. None of these officers will listen. I've served God so long...and they

put me in this dungeon!" This record had been playing in Porkchop's mind for days as he suffered alone.

Quickly I realized there were no words capable of comforting this grieving saint as he experienced the weight of what felt like injustice. I listened and I prayed. Then, not certain we would meet again (since he could have been shipped to another camp), I left him with all I had on me—two small gospel tracts of encouragement written and designed by my daughters (ages 9 and 11). Maybe these would provide solace.

Not long ago I entered the chapel and Porkchop was in his usual spot! He came over and gave me a big hug. Beaming, he exclaimed, "They let me out! They let me out! The Lord delivered me! And guess what!? I've been reading what your daughters wrote every morning and every night for the last three months. That is what kept me going." Oh my. I'm still in awe of how God worked.

It is a privilege for We Care chaplains to be present and show the love of Christ when men and women in prison are going through tough times and experiencing deep pain. Thank you for your partnership in this work of "Proclaiming Christ and Discipling Inmates."

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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