

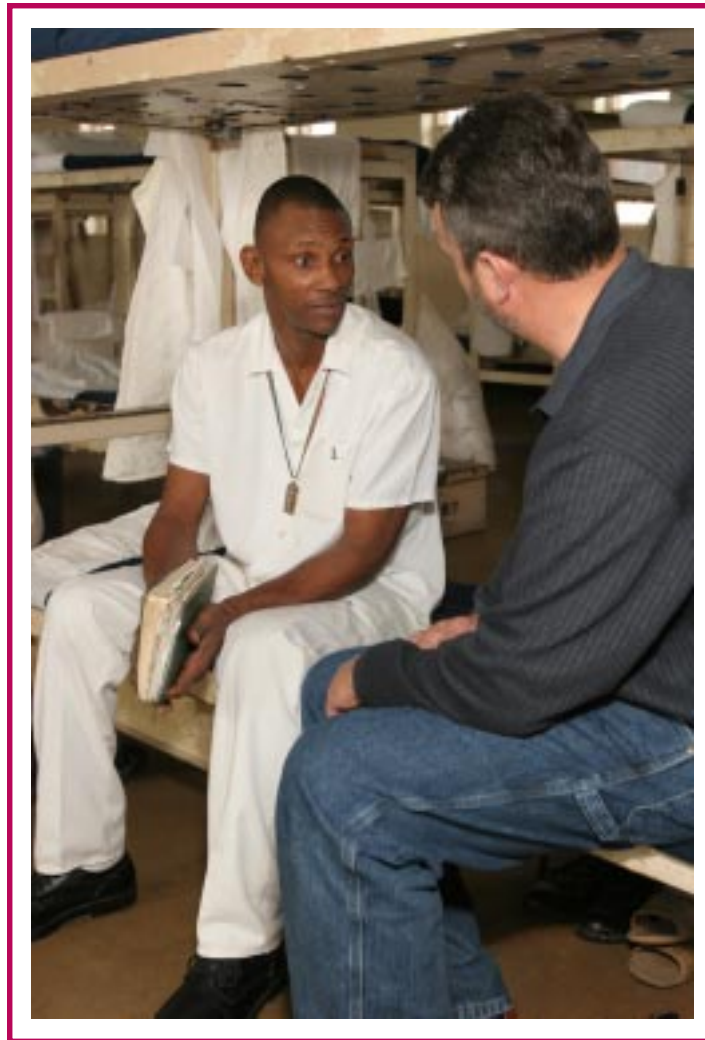
The Connection

THE NEWSLETTER OF WE CARE PROGRAM

DECEMBER 2005

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...”

John 1:14a



“... this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.”

1 John 1:1b

Merry Christmas from all of us at We Care Program

Volunteerism Brings Fulfillment

Pray for us! A monthly Intercrossors Prayer Bulletin is available via e-mail, fax, or mail. Please contact our office to subscribe.

Volume XXXVI, Number 8

Published eight times a year, *The Connection* provides news and views to 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
5825 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
Circulation Manager: Noreen Horst

When our son Marvin and his family moved to Atmore, Alabama, nearly four years ago to join the We Care staff, my husband and I moved with them. Because of macular degeneration, I can no longer see well enough to drive, and with my husband's job being a truck driver, we felt the need to be near one of our children.

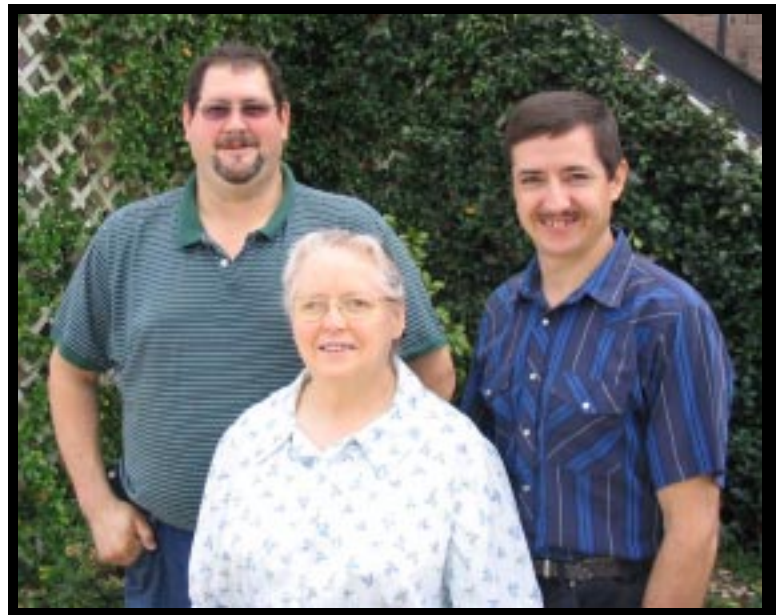
This move has proved to be such a blessing to me! We live close enough to the We Care headquarters that I can easily walk there and back. Not only can I continue grand mothering our grandchildren, but I now have the added satisfaction of helping get *The Connection* ready to mail, as well as helping occasionally with other mailings. I enjoy baby-sitting on Staff Days and whatever else I can help with.

Recently I took on the job of keeping the guesthouse (host couple and "their boys") supplied with homemade bread and dinner rolls. Doris doesn't serve homemade bread every day, but she enjoys being able to "dress up" a simple meal from time to time without the added work, while I "knead" to stay busy. With crusade just a few weeks away, I am looking forward to helping with more food preparation.

With the aid of my Video-Eye, I can participate in the annual Read-A-Thon. (If you are handicapped or homebound for one reason or another and feel like you are restricted in what you can do that counts

for eternity, I challenge you to get involved in the read-a-thon. Also, contact We Care and ask for the monthly Praise and Prayer Bulletin along with a list of all the people on staff...then pray, pray, pray.)

I see the We Care Program as my mission. I know that these little "behind-the-scenes" jobs are all a part of what it takes to keep the prison ministry going, and ultimately are a part of bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to men and women behind bars. Being an "on-call" volunteer gives me much happiness and fulfillment and adds meaning to my life. - Emma Bender



A family affair - Emma Bender with son-in-law Bob Depew (left), chaplain at Atmore Work Center, and son Marvin (right), chaplain at J.O. Davis Correctional Facility

Since the Benders' move to Atmore, Emma's daughter and son-in-law Polly and Bob Depew and children have also joined the We Care family. Bob serves as chaplain at Atmore Work Center. - Editor

News of Note

PA Auction Benefits We Care

For the 22nd year, *Support for Prison Ministries*, along with a network of dedicated volunteers from the Lancaster, Pennsylvania area, organized a special benefit auction to support prison ministries. It was held at the



Apples and tractors...and much more - donated and auctioned off to support various prison ministries

Farmersville Auction grounds on October 21 and 22. Since its inception, the annual auction has generated over \$1,000,000 in proceeds which have been distributed to various ministries, including We Care Program. This year's record auction netted \$80,500, out of which \$16,100 (20%) was directed to We Care Program for its ongoing operational expenses. We are grateful to all who planned and participated in this event.

Change Is Coming!

The selling of the We Care Program headquarters property on November 8, 2005 brought to completion the first phase of a process that began in July of 2004. At that time the We Care Board of Directors was approached by a party interested in purchasing our current headquarters building and surrounding property. After 15 months of prayer, thought and discussion, the decision was made by the board to relocate.

What happens next? We Care will vacate this property by April 1, 2006. Current plans are to move into temporary office/housing units until a new headquarters facility can be built. The temporary and long-term facilities will

be located on sixteen acres of land that We Care is in the process of purchasing. This land is located about two miles south of our current facility.

Why move two miles down the road? While there are many issues involved, the bottom line is that through this move, We Care will end up with a location and facility that is better suited for current needs and future growth.

Funds for the new land and building will come from the sale of the current property. However, we would like to give many of you the opportunity to help stretch those dollars by volunteering your labor during the building process. Details are currently being worked out and will be made known as they develop.

Did You Know...

Congress and the President have agreed to open for a short time an additional window of opportunity for charitable giving. Normally an individual could deduct charitable donations up to 50 percent of their adjusted gross income. But now, until Dec. 31, 2005, this 50 percent restriction has been removed. This change is in direct response to the Katrina hurricane disaster, but it applies to ALL charitable donations.

This new legislation presents some one-time giving opportunities for individuals who have in the past had deductions limited by this 50 percent rule. Most notable, for age 59 ½ and above, the legislation will effectively allow unlimited withdrawals from IRAs and corresponding gifts to charity without triggering any income taxes.

If you have questions or would like more information on this or any other giving options, please contact Don Metzler at don@wecareprogram.org or 251-368-8818.



The landmark We Care headquarters building, erected in 1984, to be vacated by April 1, 2006

Mailbag

Dear Friends,

As we look forward to the coming new year, we do so with great excitement. This coming year will be sure to bring many wonderful changes along with a powerful We Care Crusade. It will be no easy task, but let me bring you up to date with all God has been doing at Fountain Correctional Facility, and a glimpse of the Lord's direction for 2006.

As you know, evangelism is not only at the heart of God, it should be the desire of every sincere Christian to fulfill the Great Commission: Matthew 28:19-20. Along with evangelism, we need powerful discipleship to help new believers. In 2005, we have been blessed to meet this challenge with Fountain of Life Bible College. This school not only offers sincere Christian training, but also will reward the diligent with an Associate and Bachelor degree. We Care volunteer Chaplain Assistant Mike Strehlow has done an outstanding job leading the way as our Academic Dean. Presently, 37 men are enrolled in the college.

In addition, as you can imagine, many people incarcerated are not equipped for college level work, so we have enhanced our education department by partnering with a local college to prepare men for their GED test. How exciting it will be to watch a man who cannot read, go from illiteracy to a GED. More important, watching that

same man begin to read the Word of God. In conjunction with this, we are now offering over 220 men in our Faith Honor Dorm the opportunity to take life skill classes in preparation for life after prison.

Finally, exploration is now underway to take our mentor program to new heights. In 2006, we hope to stretch our mentor program for behind the fence and beyond. Once a man or woman leaves prison, new challenges wait for them. In many cases, it is overwhelming. Imagine if the same person had a mentor waiting for him or her. Imagine if there was a home, job, church family and after care also available.

This is just the challenge that we are stepping into. As you can see, Fountain is not sitting still. We Care Ministry have their hands, heart and pocket book into every aspect of these wonderful changes. As the State Chaplain, I look to the Lord for vision, and when I cast it, We Care not only supports it, but also leads the way in fulfilling the work of the Lord.

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you, with special

thanks going to Dave, Don, Randy, Marvin, and Mike. May the Lord richly bless you, We Care Program, for your prayers, support and willingness as we all look forward to 2006.

- Chaplain Brian Eskelinen,
Fountain Correctional Center



Chaplain Eskelinen in front of the chapel at Fountain Correctional



Time is Running Out!

Crusade Applications Due December 5 (No applications accepted after Dec. 19)

We Care Prison Crusade January 8 - 12, 2006 18 Alabama Prisons
For Details Call 251-368-8818 or register online at www.wecareprogram.org

From the Field

Montgomery, AL Tutwiler Prison for Women

The discipling process is both challenging and encouraging. Seeing an inmate friend go from blaming God and feeling abandoned to realizing that God is all she really needs and He is enough, makes me feel blessed that God allowed me to walk the journey with her. God has worked in my life as well, because there have been times that I too have felt abandoned. I have been encouraged by my sister, and together we have found that God is enough and He is all we really need.

- Anna Miller

Staton Correctional

(Editor's note: In an alternative ministry opportunity, Carl spent several days in disaster relief after Hurricane Katrina.)

I was exposed to two terms during my time in Gulfport, Mississippi: "Search and Rescue" and "Search and Recover." I stayed with a friend who is on active duty with the Coast Guard there. He explained that after a certain amount of time, a search and rescue mission turns into a search and recover mission. Rescue, of course, involves saving survivors, but unfortunately, recovery missions retrieve those who lost their lives. What a sad and solemn day it was when the missions changed. Hope for survivors was gone.

It reminds me of our duty as Christians. Jesus told us, *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations (search), baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (rescue), and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* (Matt. 28:19 - 20)

For most of us, someone reached out to us when we were lost and shared with us the love of Jesus Christ. For Davonna and me, it was a dear couple who did marriage counseling with us when we got married. After completing the counseling sessions, we continued to meet with them for weekly Bible studies. We confessed

Jesus, repented, and were baptized. If they had not been on a search and rescue mission for God, I'm not sure what situation our family would be in right now.

God calls His children to search and rescue. He sent His Son to seek and to save what was lost. (Luke 19:10) When someone dies, it is too late to rescue them from eternal separation from God. My encouragement to all of us is to be involved in search and rescue for the sake of the gospel.

- Carl Carpenter

Birmingham, AL Donaldson Correctional

I will never forget the feeling. It was on August 10, 2005, and I had just been part of a monthly meeting with all the supervisors over the different departments in the institution. Chaplain Lindsey was out for some medical tests. As we finished the meeting, the warden took a phone call and immediately came walking over to me. He said, "Dave, I just got word that Chaplain Lindsey needs to have quadruple by-pass open heart surgery next Tuesday." One of the lieutenants standing near me piped up and said, "Well, Dave, you're in charge of the chapel now, for the time being. Are you ready for this? We'll work with you!"

My mind started to race. **"HELP!!!!"** Is this how David felt when he went out to face Goliath, a seemingly insurmountable challenge? Being in charge of the chapel department and religious activities at the highest security penitentiary in Alabama with 1,600+ inmates seemed like a "Goliath" of a challenge to me. I hadn't planned on this when I came on staff with We Care almost three years ago.

Well, I, like David in the Bible, took daily courage in the Lord my Saviour! Since I took this challenge, and there hasn't been any task that has arisen that the Lord couldn't enable me to handle by His strength and grace. I am so encouraged and empowered by the prayers of inmates and free-world people who have interceded for me! Until Chaplain Lindsey

returns to assume his full responsibilities, the Lord will continue to use me, and may His holy name be praised!

Filling the "Big Shoes" of my overseer has given me a new appreciation for how much help is needed by the state chaplains. **I know** the great help God has enabled me to be to Chaplain Lindsey. **I also know** how great it was to have a second We Care assistant chaplain for six months earlier this year. **Now, I know how it feels** to be the chaplain in a major facility without a full-time helper.

Is God calling you to help carry the burden of ministering to those in America's prisons. Please answer "Yes!" to His call. You will be glad you did as you feel God's pleasure in what He enables you to do!

- Dave Bucher

(Editor's note: Since the time of this writing, Chaplain Lindsey has returned to his duties at Donaldson and Dave has returned to his role as assistant.)

Atmore, AL Fountain Correctional

If I told you that being a chaplain was fun, easy or exciting, I would be telling a lie. Even though chaplaincy work seems hard, God has given me the peace of knowing this is where He wanted me. I do not always find fulfillment in the prison, but God fills me with the joy of knowing Him. He has asked me to be a steward of His word and that I would be a faithful steward. (1 Cor. 4:1-2) My job is to plant seeds—seeds of love, joy, compassion and peace, pointing men to Jesus Christ.

As I look back over these past two years in prison ministry, I see what God has taught me. I also see some hard lessons that do not make any sense to me, but there is contentment, a peace in knowing that it is all worth it. I would not trade these moments for anything this world could offer. As we engage in battle, we may not always come away victorious, but we know Who has won the war. It is with this hope that I can keep pressing on.

- Randy Bruckhart

Perspectives



David R. Landis
President

Since this is the last time you will be hearing from me in this fashion in 2005, I thought it would be a good time to make a year-end appeal. But wait! I'm not talking about money!

I am talking about the growing need at We Care Program for additional staff persons to serve in an increasingly wide arena of opportunities. There are several factors contributing to our current state:

1. We have a growing relationship with the Department of Corrections in Alabama and beyond. As chaplains hear of our ministry, we continually receive requests for assistance.
2. We find ourselves becoming more and more involved in general education assistance (reading, writing, etc.), advanced Bible teaching, and post-release issues. Simply put, one cannot expect a new Christian to grow if he can barely read God's word. Nor can we expect the salvation experience alone to provide the necessary life skills for growth and maturity. All of these areas require greater levels of commitment and time on our part.
3. Because of governmental budget cutbacks of various social services, state employed chaplains are continually being asked to do more and more in the same amount of time. This means that less one-on-one ministry is actually taking place. Therefore, the need for assistant chaplains (our primary mission) is growing.
4. As staff persons move on to other arenas of service and interest, positions become available, and we need new staff members just to maintain our current level of presence in the prisons.

Surveys reveal that most people nearing the end of their lives wish that they would have taken more risks. To most, spending a portion or all of their lives in any kind of "full-time" ministry is too risky. The possibility for injury or loss is too great. I can only tell you that, for me, serving with We Care Program has been the most fulfilling thing I have ever done.

May I suggest that prisons are filled with men and women who have yet to see a visible demonstration of God's love through a relationship with someone like YOU! Perhaps there is only one, but to that one, your willingness to take a risk could mean the difference between heaven or hell.

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

The Bottom Line

While expenses are under budget by \$14,000, income is under by \$21,667. We are very grateful for our many financial supporters, and we pray that God will bless each one as you continue to faithfully support this ministry. Thanks for your 2005 giving.

4 months ending October 31*



*PA auction income was not received until November (see article on page 3)

FINAL REMINDER: PLEASE SUBMIT CRUSADE APPLICATIONS BY DEC. 5 (No applications accepted after Dec. 19)

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