

A History of 1970-1979 We Care Program

Martin Weber started going into the Atmore State Prison Farm in 1964. Later he expanded his work into Holman. He first went in as a volunteer several times a week. The warden suggested he take the guard exam which he did and passed so was put on the payroll—carrying a Bible instead of a gun. Later he took the lieutenant exam and passed, followed by the chaplaincy exam which he also passed. At that point he was made a state chaplain even though he had no seminary training. This happened about 1970.



1964-1970



Nov 1970 Martin Weber formed New Life Foundation to give structure to his prison ministry. The first service under NLF was held in November 1970.



1974 NLF constructed The Bridge, a group home for girls aged 12-15 who were in trouble with the law. Open house was held July 14, 1974, and the first girls arrived on August 30. After one year of operation The Bridge changed its focus to boys aged 13-15.



June 1977

Plans were made to send the boys from The Bridge to an NLF sponsored ACE (Accelerated Christian Education) school for the '77-'78 school year. This was the beginning of what is now Atmore Christian School. During that first year a building was purchased and made ready for the following school year. Atmore Christian School provided an alternative to public school and its influences on the boys at The Bridge.

October 1979

In 1979 The Bridge was closed. The state required NLF to revisit some of the house requirements such as no TV and mandatory church attendance. NLF believed it could not compromise; the state refused to renew the license and removed the boys.

1970 By 1970 two teachers, Alvin Yoder and Leon Weber, were teaching Bible classes to 64 men at Holman. There was an additional Bible class for illiterate men.

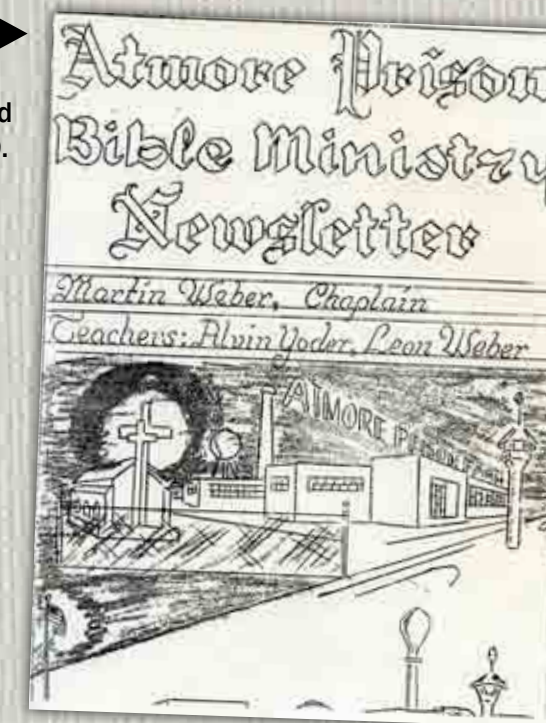


Aug 31 1970 A 6-week Bible school was held at the Prison Farm [Fountain]. The first graduation class was held with 60 men receiving diplomas or certificates.

Sept 1970 During 1970 a Yokefellows group was formed within the Holman prison for fellowship both within the prison and with free world volunteers. The group also helped raise funds for prison religious needs. This included buying a projector and renting movies after they were no longer being sent gratis. Inmates had to be Christians for two months before they could be nominated for Yokefellows.

1972 The first newsletter in April, 1970, was photo-copied and mailed to 200 persons. In February 1972, the first printed newsletters were sent to 3500.

New Life Foundation bought a mobile home to be used for re-entry by released prisoners. Anna Weber, Martin's wife, helped with laundry and meals.



1977 In the mid-seventies Chaplain Weber brought an evangelist and five volunteers into Fountain (Atmore State) Correctional for revival meetings. This outreach was so successful that it became a yearly event starting in 1977 with 36 volunteers. The annual We Care Crusade now reaches into 20 prisons with hundreds of volunteers.

