

The Connection

THE NEWSLETTER OF WE CARE PROGRAM

OCTOBER 2004

A Glimpse into Faith/Honor Dorms

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October 1999 marked the beginning of a new era in Alabama prisons. The commissioner at that time, Michael Haley, after visiting a pilot Faith Dorm program at Donaldson Correctional Facility in Birmingham, AL, ordered that a Faith Dorm program be instituted in every major state prison facility in Alabama.

Since that time, We Care chaplains have been involved in varying degrees at several institutions, doing everything from teaching classes, developing leaders, and in some instances being given freedom to coordinate overall programming.

The main purpose of the Faith Dorms is to provide a structured living environment for inmates who have volunteered to participate in its programming and have a desire to grow in their particular faith. These men and women submit to peer leadership, take on extra work responsibilities, and enroll in many different kinds of classes including GED tutoring, practical life skills, leadership, family relationships, computer training, and religious studies.

Of course, as in any learning or structured environment, there are men or women who seek entrance into the Faith Dorms for ulterior motives, including a cleaner, quieter dorm, certain achievable privileges not possible in other dorms, and a generally safer living environment as compared to general prison population dorms. Still, the seeds that are planted as a result of the programming in many cases takes root, and life change begins to take place.

Since 1999, many inmates have had the opportunity to be a part of the Faith

Dorm programs throughout the state.

Although changes in administration and general policies have taken place and numerous challenges exist in a multi-faith environment, it is our conviction that those searching for something deeper will be challenged to think about their eternal destination, and many have taken significant growth steps in their spiritual journey that may not have happened otherwise.

In many of the Faith Dorm programs, there has been an increase in free-world volunteer involvement because of the need for coordinators, teachers, mentors, and tutors. This involvement is a benefit to the residents, especially in cases where an inmate is nearing release and can be given encouragement, counsel, and direction as he/she anticipates integration into society again.

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Survivin' Ivan ...page 3



Staff and church friends replace roof of We Care president Dave Landis and family after Ivan rips through Atmore, Alabama.

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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.

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Faith Dorm (Continued from page 1)

Following are testimonies of men currently living in Faith Dorms:

From Fountain:

This is my first time in prison. I did not know what to expect when I got here, but by the grace of God I was told about the Faith/Honor Dorm, and in a short time I moved in. This dorm is larger, cleaner, and quieter than the other dorms, and most of all, is a place where men are encouraged to practice their faith.

My faith in God grows stronger day by day. I have Christian brothers here to talk to and witness to about what God has done and is doing in my life.

We also have time to read and study God's word. This dorm has been a blessing to me. It always seems that when I'm going through a valley in my Christian walk, God sends a Christian brother to encourage and lift me up and share God's love for each of us. You cannot find this love in other dorms.

Each day I thank God for this dorm and the Christian men in here.

"Blessed be the Lord: for He hath shewed me his marvelous kindness in a strong city." (Psalm 31:21)

From Fountain:

The Faith Dorm has caused me to think about what kind of impact a program can have on an inmate's life if he allows it to. Definitely, this program can have a huge impact if the inmate will work with it and be a part of it instead of just being there. It has changed my life in a way that not only do I want to be a part of it, I want to see that inmates in the future understand it for what good it has in our lives.

As for my Christian walk, being in the Faith Dorm has really taught me a great deal, from controlling my anger to prioritizing my time in my life. The best part of the dorm classes is that we have some good free world teachers coming in. I am growing and will continue to do so.



From Donaldson:

Living in the Faith Dorm is truly a blessing from God. The Faith Dorm is God's gift to the prison system. The inmates are given a major part in governing themselves. That alone makes the Dorm unique. We are taught to be accountable to our peers, to obey authority over us, to be responsible men, and to perform our duties to the best of our abilities. The program helps us to be mature men. A person can only increase his self-worth.

The Faith Dorm has lifted me spiritually. Being a Christian, I welcomed the program with my whole heart. Since being in here, my Christian walk is getting much better. A variety of ministers come in to teach us Bible classes. In addition, we are taught academic classes. What I love most is the love we show one to another. God is teaching me to love helping other people. My goal is to be all I can be in Christ Jesus. The Faith Dorm is helping me reach that goal. The Dorm is a family of men, not just inmates doing time. We are sincere about helping each other to be better fathers, husbands, sons, and friends. The values I learn here will help me wherever I go. God is in this program. Every inmate should have the blessing of being in a Faith Dorm.

News of Note

Survivin' Ivan

During the early morning hours of September 16, **Hurricane Ivan** tore through Atmore and the surrounding area, downing trees and power lines and spreading destruction in its wake. With the sound of the wind roaring in our ears, no



Several of the staff worked together cleaning up tree debris at the home of administrative assistant Noreen Horst in Century, Florida

Farewell

After serving as a missionary chaplain for seven years, **Howard Reed** has resigned his position with We Care Program. Immediate plans are to pursue further education and seek the Lord's direction for future ministry. Thank you, Howard, for your years of service on the team, and may God richly bless you and Terie as you follow His leading in your life.

Young Adults Arrive!



Having just arrived on October 2, six young adults have committed themselves to the 6-month chaplaincy internship program. Teams of two will serve in various capacities in prisons in Atmore, Montgomery, and Birmingham. Clockwise from bottom left are: Ashleigh Baillargeon, Lewiston, ME; Tony Nisly, Partridge, KS; Ernie Glick, Gap, PA; Glendon Yoder, St. Thomas, PA; Albert Mast, Leon, IA; and Laura Hursh, Atmore, AL.

one got much sleep that night. We are grateful to God that the We Care headquarters building, Economy Shops, and most of the homes of local staff and Economy Shop employees suffered only minor damage, mainly to roofs and/or siding. We Care Associate Jim Britnell, who lives in Pensacola, FL, and one Economy Shop employee in Monroeville had more extensive damage to their homes.



We Care chaplains assist We Care Associate Jim Britnell with hanging sheetrock in his family's living room after their home suffered extensive water damage from Ivan

Power was off in the entire area, so the office and both Economy Shops were closed for a few days. Some areas were without water for a while. As a staff, we have worked together on various roof repair and cleanup jobs, helping each other in the recovery process. We thank and praise the Lord for His protection and care during the long night of storm!

Read-A-Thon Report

Twenty-four readers, ages 7-79, raised **\$9,062.66** in the first We Care Program summer read-a-thon. Together they read 391 books. Readers in six different states participated. Winners in the children's division were **Caleb Caudill**, KY, (first place) and **Jacinda Stahly**, AL (second place). Adult winners were **Celia Landis**, PA, (first place) and **Eunice Bruckhart**, AL (second place). **THANK YOU**, readers and sponsors!

Upcoming Events

October 22 & 23, 2004

Support for Prison Ministries Auction

Farmersville Auction Grounds, Farmersville, PA

January 9 - 13, 2005

We Care Prison Crusade

Print Volunteer Application - www.wecareprogram.org

Picture with me a crime scene. A house has been broken into, a bank has been robbed, or a person has been hurt or killed in the streets. Someone calls 911. Soon, the cops come tearing up in their cars with lights flashing and sirens wailing. The police jump out of their cars with guns pulled. They start shouting commands

like: **“Freeze!” “Nobody move!” “Put your hands up!”**

These are only a few of the orders the police could give in a situation like this, but they all mean the same thing: **“Surrender!”** The people involved are to stop whatever they are doing, and let the authorities take control of the situation.



Those in prison are all too familiar with situations like this. I like to remind them of such scenes to point out an important lesson we all must learn.

What if Jesus would walk up to me or you in person *and we knew for sure it was really Him*? What if He would say, **“Stop what you are doing!”** or **“Give me your heart and hands!”** or **“Follow me!”** I know I would do what He asks! With all that I know about Him and all He has done for me, how could I do anything less than what He is commanding me to do?! He really does ask us to do these things, though not in person. True, Jesus will never bark these orders forcefully as the police do, but does He need to call us to surrender that way? No! *He is the Lord, and we always willingly do as He says, right?* Sometimes, but sadly, not always. Why do we so often fail in the area of surrender?

We all like to be in control of our lives. While in prison, people are ordered what to do in almost every aspect of daily life. In the free-world, we really should be under Jesus’ “orders” in much the same way as the men and women in prison take orders from officers.

We need to surrender our time to Him. Each day is a gift from the Lord. Do we give it back to Him, asking Him to give us wisdom to use every minute for His glory? People in prison have lots of time on their hands. I encourage them with the fact that they were given today and its time for a reason, and what they do with it will affect their future “time.” Once a minute is wasted, we can never get it back. Let us daily pray, “Lord, teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom!” (Ps. 90:12)

We need to surrender our possessions to Him. All we have, or call our own, is given to us by God. How tightly do we hold on to the things we call ours? How do we react when we lose something dear to us? The

answers to these questions tell if we are surrendering our possessions to Him. In prison, fights often erupt when one guy steals items out of another guy’s locker box. As I talk to the inmates, I encourage them to surrender to the Lord any items that they are able to possess. God can take much better care of “His things” than we can.

We need to surrender our health to Him. We are quick to ask for His healing when we are sick. Let’s be even quicker to thank Him often for the health that He gives and to surrender our health to Him for His glory. Disease runs rampant in prison. Many inmates live in fear of disease. I encourage them to surrender their health to the Lord. We as prison workers can feel fear at times, but our desire is for the Lord to be glorified in our health or in our sickness.

We need to surrender our reputation to Him. Slander, backbiting, and rumors run wild in prison and in the free-world. We need to be willing to do what is right at any cost, regardless of what others say. If we surrender our reputation to Him, we do not have to “wear” what other people are saying about us. This is my challenge to inmates who are striving to live a righteous life but are suffering hardship and slander because of it. “The fear of man bringeth a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.” (Prov. 29:25)

We need to surrender our loved ones to Him. Our wives, husbands, children, grandchildren and all loved ones are gifts from the Lord. We need to give them back to Him for His care. Men and women in prison care deeply for their loved ones outside, and can be very discouraged when things go wrong or when sickness or death strikes. Not knowing what is happening can also cause a lot of heartache. I encourage them that God will work in their own life as they allow Him and will take care of their family as they surrender their loved ones to Him.

In a nutshell, we need to surrender our hearts and every aspect of our lives to Him. So, how are you doing today on the “surrender scale”? Are you holding on to a part of your life? Please give it to the Lord for His glory. Is He calling you to leave behind “normal life” and go with Him on His mission that He has planned for you? **What are the chances of letting Jesus use you “behind the fences”?** There is nothing more special than living in the peace that He gives as we surrender our lives for whatever He is calling us to do.

David Bucher has been serving as assistant chaplain at Donaldson Correctional Facility in Birmingham, AL, since January 2003. The highlight of this past year for him was his marriage to Veola on May 1.

From the Field

Marysville, OH

Ohio Reformatory for Women

The evening's chapel service was unexpectedly cancelled. So a Christian inmate returned unexpectedly to her two-bunk cell and found her new bunkie of three to four days engaged in a sex act with another inmate. (They didn't see her.) Her immediate anger and disgust was compounded by the dilemma of not knowing what to do. Though she wanted to report it to the officer, she felt God telling her not to, and just let Him handle it. She had been praying to be able to get to know God more intimately, and she knew her bunkie would need to be won by love, not condemnation.

The next morning she came to me, wondering whether she was doing the right thing. I had just read 1 Peter 3:1-2 earlier that week (*Wives, ... be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of their lives.* NIV) and had found such reassurance in those verses regarding a situation I was dealing with where I was told to do "No preaching! Absolutely no preaching!" I knew my hands were tied but God's certainly weren't!

So we looked at those verses together and agreed that as great as God is, He is totally unlimited in dealing with her situation. We agreed that God certainly could impress upon her the need to say something sometime but until He did that, mum was the word. We left the situation in His hands.

The next week I asked what was happening. I burst out laughing when she said, "They came and cut big holes in every door in our dorm! There won't be anymore secret meetings in our cells!" And I thought, "God, I'm glad You didn't make me come up with that solution! I'd never have thought of that one!"

-Wilma Mullet

Montgomery, AL

Staton Correctional Facility

"I tell you the truth," Jesus said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in all she had to live on." These words went through my mind as I watched three men donate almost 50 belts to under-privileged special needs children. These men don't have much. They are dressed in white, state-issued clothing, they don't collect a paycheck, and all their possessions are kept in a 24" by 24" by 8" box beneath their bed. They didn't give all they had to live on, but they did sacrifice to help those less fortunate. As I reflect on these men and their gifts to these children, I am deeply touched. Incarcerated men with very limited means freely gave materials and time in this labor of love. This school year the children at Davis Learning Center



will have a gift of love around their waists, thanks to "Kevin, Tim, and Clark."

It was so incredible to see how God met this need. A volunteer at the school brought up the need for belts at a chapel service. A lady attending that service presented the need at a ladies' Bible study, and they prayed that God would provide the belts. A school teacher in that Bible study told her class about it, and our daughter Maddi was in that class. Maddi asked me if we could have an inmate from the leather craft department at the prison make some belts at a cost that we could donate. After talking with Kevin

about the situation, he said that he would like to donate the materials and his time. As he was working on the belts, Tim and Clark wanted to join in. We also thank Warden Thomas, Deputy Warden Forness, and Officer Hurst for allowing this to happen. - Carl Carpenter

Cherrylog, GA

Fannin County Jail

The new Fannin County Jail opened during the second week of July. First announced to open promptly January 1, the weeks, and then months, slid by as each week seemed to bring more deficiencies and code changes requiring additional investment and re-design.

These delays were not necessarily unwelcome to us ministers, as it is often easier to cope with a known disaster than to face that which is unknown. And for us, the impending transition was made more ominous by frequent warnings that our access to the inmates would be much more restricted in the new facility.

So we talked together, worried, and prayed. And then suddenly the prisoners were transferred, and the Jail Administrator asked that we give her staff a week, then a second week, before we visited. We waited and fretted some more.

But when that evening came and I passed through those electric gates, rather than the dreaded restrictions and obstructions, the officers said, "Go wherever you want and talk with whom-ever you wish." And that's the way it's been—even better than at the old jail, where we were forced to stand and talk through cold steel bars, the gloom often masking just to whom we were speaking.

For now the cell blocks cluster around central common areas where there are tables to sit at to talk, teach, and leave literature. The facility is modern and at least borders on beautiful. I can truly say that despite the warnings and our fears, I couldn't imagine a better scenario for ministry than what we now have. Isn't our Lord wonderful? Amen! - Del Yoder

Perspectives



David R. Landis
President

One of our concerns as prison ministers is seeing “decisions” being made for Christ but very little or no growth or change happening in many of the “converts” lives thereafter. That concern is what drives this ministry to pursue one-on-one relationship building through prison chaplaincy services, where serious daily interaction and discipleship can happen. Of-course, post decision follow-up carries with it certain levels of frustration as root systems falter due to tribulation, persecution, the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches. Nevertheless, our work continues, and encouragement follows as some hear and understand the word, grow into maturity, and bear fruit.

Sadly, similar circumstances, though not as obvious, occur in free-world church settings as well. Consider “Joe.” He has attended church since birth, and is now nearing retirement. Joe did what most in the church would expect. He faithfully attended services, read his Bible, vigorously defended certain church doctrines, gave money, and helped in various church capacities.

Somewhat hidden from fellow church-goers were troubling signs concerning issues of deeper importance. His marital relations had stagnated through the years, family get-togethers were tense at best, church “outsiders” were given very little room for faltering, and those inside were continually judged by Joe as a result of his increasingly harsh and critical spirit.

Joe was not growing. In fact, it had been years since Joe had even sensed the Holy Spirit’s movement in his life. But even more disturbing was the fact that few in the church seemed to notice or care. There was no attempt made to confront Joe’s lack of growth through Spirit-led biblical confrontation. They did not expect that day by day, month by month, and decade by decade Joe would be transformed into the likeness of Christ.

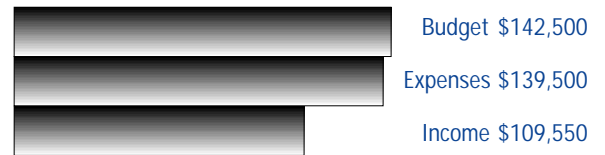
Inside a closet door at our house is a measuring chart where we keep track of our children’s growth over time. Periodically, one will come to us asking to be measured. It’s exciting for us to have to put a mark on the chart a little higher than it was before. (They are growing so fast!) How do we measure spiritual growth? For the “convert,” for Joe, and for you and me, the question should be: “Are we learning to know Jesus more intimately and living as if He were in our place?” Maybe it’s time for a measurement.

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

The Bottom Line

Thankfully, expenses were \$3000 under budget for the first quarter of the fiscal year, considering that income fell to almost \$30,000 under budget, due in part to loss of sales before, during, and after Hurricane Ivan and resulting clean-up efforts. The Read-a-thon proved to be a timely blessing. Your gift would be especially helpful at this time.

3 months ending September 30



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