

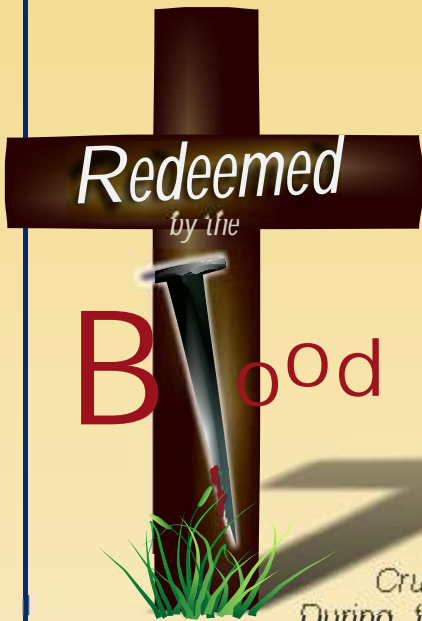
THE

Connection

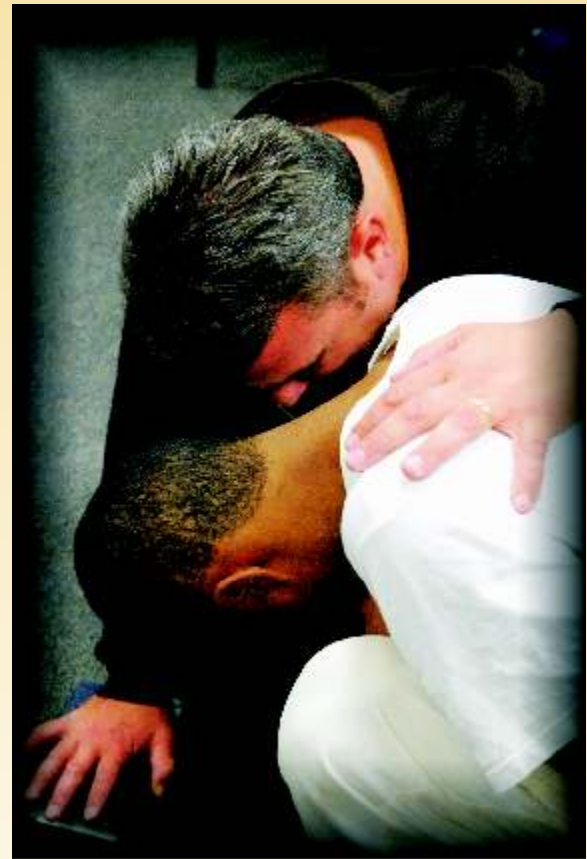
THE NEWSLETTER OF WE CARE PROGRAM

March 2008

2008 CRUSADE EDITION!



The 30th annual We Care Crusade was held on January 27-31. During that time a diverse group of 339 participants from 25 states and 2 Canadian provinces came together in a unified effort to share the love of God with men and women in eighteen Alabama prisons. Sunday, January 27, marked the official start of the 2008 Crusade with an all-day session in Wetumpka, AL, that included training, teaching, worship, special singing, and lots of Christian fellowship. Volunteers then dispersed to set up bases in four different regions (Birmingham, Montgomery, Troy, and Atmore). Each day of ministry, Monday through Thursday, started with a morning seminar in each region after which the volunteers spread out in teams to visit the eighteen institutions. Friendships were built, and inmates were invited to the evening chapel services that were conducted in each of the facilities. Musical guests and special speakers invited the participants to a deeper walk with Christ. Many men and women also made first-time commitments to follow Christ. On the following pages are comments from some of the volunteers about their experiences.



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Fulfilling the Great Commission in America's Prisons



2008 Crusade Fact Sheet

17	Music Groups/Soloists
18	Correctional Facilities
22	Evangelists
27	States/Provinces Represented
74	In-Prison Chapel Services
125	Churches Represented
339	Total Volunteers
6,210	Estimated Volunteer Hours
7,394	Estimated Chapel Attendees
18,395	Reachable Inmates

Volume XL, Number 1

Published six times a year, *The Connection* provides news and views of 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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I feel "refueled" with a desire to deepen my relationship with God and reach out to others more.

- Charlotte Yoder, VA

The first day I talked to a guy that had been in a gang. I told him I am part of the Jesus gang. He got mad at me and walked off. The next day I came upon him and I told him I didn't try to make him mad. So everything seemed alright. Then the last day I met up with him again. This time he told me to put him on my prayer list. Then he walked away. So God used a bad situation for His glory. Please pray for Chris.

- Paul Sensenig, PA

I asked God to give me one girl who has never known Him, and on the second day a dear young girl walked right up to me and said, "I want to be saved."

- Jean Musselman, PA

The last eve of crusade Raul prayed with such fervor, such urgency. With tears he said, "I want to be faithful; I want to be a daddy like I should be to my children. This is my fourth time here. My lady and me talked about it. With Jesus we can go a different route." What got his attention? The family singing group from Cody, WY.

- Nelson Miller, OH

It was a great privilege to introduce my father as the speaker in one of the services again this year. Many men in prison don't have a good relationship with their dad or don't even know him at all. My relationship with my dad is good, though strained at times. It is a wonderful thing to know and feel his support. I think the one who may have been the most moved [by the message] was the son of the speaker.

- David Bucher, AL

It was a divine appointment on Tuesday afternoon when a man approached a fellow team member and me and asked, "What does it feel like to be a Christian?" This opened the door to really be able to share the gospel with Melvin. I saw this man go from being so in despair, shoulders drooped, and eyes half shut with hopelessness to smiling from ear to ear as we read in God's word together and unfolded God's wonderful plan of escape! I don't know if Melvin got saved or not, but I do know he got hungry for more!

- Alvin Landis, PA

Morris Ropp, AL, ministers to a Holman inmate.



No flashing lights or trumpets. I just look forward to telling the folks back home Jesus is alive and well among the inmates. Lots of low-key contacts made a large impact on me.

- Preston Nowlin, VA



The Tutwiler team meets for instructions and prayer during the Sunday orientation.

One lady in particular was on my heart. One look at her, you could tell she was a cold, hard-hearted person, but she was very intrigued by us and became open and willing to listen and share. She was puzzled what would make us (my twin sister and me), being so young, want to come and spend a week with them in the prison. Behind her hard shell, I could see someone who needed to be loved and know the love of the Savior.

- Karen Zimmerman, PA

We spent time in the hospital at the prison, with men having all sorts of issues and physical problems. I talked with James, who had recently had a brain tumor removed. He



The Wissmann Family, NE, share their musical talents.

That was just one indication of the cooperation we received from prison staff this year. - Ed Ranck, AL

One encouraging statement we heard several times from inmates and one guard, "Your presence here has put a light and peace over this whole place!"

- Esther Bontrager, IL

Being part of the Crusade has been a pool of refreshment for me personally after experiencing a dry season. Also, I was so blessed by how the team united together for a common cause. We came from different backgrounds and states, different churches and denominations, varied

in ages from 19 to 86, married and single, yet we were able to put all that aside and unite with a common purpose.

- Grace Brubaker, ME

My compassion for incarcerated people was renewed. As I visited and prayed with each one I came in contact with, I felt a new burden for the many hurting men with emotional and spiritual problems. My prayers go out to them.

- Eugene Hoover, PA

I recently attended my 17th annual Crusade with the We Care Ministry. This crusade was a blessing to me and many of the other inmates at J.O. Davis. We were blessed with a record breaker crowd on Jun. 31. The inmate head count conducted at 2:15 pm shows 118 inmates present.

Over the years I have had the pleasure of meeting three generations of the Weber family. I first met and completed a Bible study course offered by Chaplain Martin Weber in the early seventies. Then I lived in the faith dorm during the nineties under Phil Weber. Now in 2008 I have the opportunity to meet two of Martin's grandsons during the musical ministry. Praise God for sending the Webers to Amore, AL.

We were blessed with several volunteers from various places around the world, some for the very first time. It takes a lot of courage and love to volunteer for four days of prison ministry. Through these volunteers many souls were touched. We appreciate each and every one of the volunteers.

I have been blessed throughout the years of my life and look forward to the next year's Crusade. Until we meet again I encourage each and everyone with these words: Keep the faith, and may God bless each of you!

Sincerely,
Inmate, J.O. Davis Correctional

was doing okay, but was handicapped at doing many normal things. It crossed my mind to read some scriptures to him. As we meditated together, I could tell it ministered to him. He thanked me so much for taking time with him.

- Dennis Nolt, PA

I missed letting speaker Larry Skrant in the gate. Upon my apology he replied, "Who needs the chaplain to let you in if the warden escorts you in."



Dan Nase, FL, presents the gospel at Ventress Correctional Facility.

On Tuesday I had an appointment with Jay to meet with team leader Allen Yutzy and to deal with Jay's past. He claims to be walking with the Lord, but was not having victory in his walk. While I was waiting to meet him to go to the chapel, a young man came over to talk to me. Usually when I talk to an inmate, I start by asking about their family, but this time out of the blue I asked if he was a Christian. He said he was not, so I asked him if he would like to become one. He said he would. I then asked if he would like to become one now, and he said, "Yes." Both he and Jay went with me to the chapel, and with Allen's help, they completely turned their lives over to the Lord. That morning I asked the Lord to bring a man to me, instead of my going after a man, and He did. Praise the Lord!

- Bill Helmuth, OH

I asked myself, "Why did I leave my comfort zone and travel from PA all the way to AL?" Then I had



Susan Martin, PA, shares with a Tutwiler inmate.



Phil Weber gives a message at the Sunday orientation.

to think, "Did Jesus not leave His comfort zone and leave heaven to come all the way down here for me?" He came down to our level so we could understand better.

- Daniel Shirk, PA

(continued on page 7)



Special Service Commemorates 30th Annual January Crusade

It was a night to remember and give thanks for what God had done through the many years of We Care in-prison crusades in Alabama. Gathered in the visiting hall at Fountain Correctional Facility on Wednesday, January 30, 2008, were about 100 "brothers in white," the 2008 Fountain crusade team, musicians, and a group of invited guests.

Its first January crusade held at Fountain in 1979, We Care's influence was felt this year in 18 different correctional facilities. Attendees at Fountain on this particular night met with a spirit of thanksgiving and celebration while remembering that it all started with the vision of one man, We Care's founder, Martin Weber.

After a welcome and opening comments from We Care President David Landis, guests were introduced. Of special significance was the presence of Martin's wife, Anna, along with four of their children (and spouses) and one daughter-in-law.

Time was then given for a group of Fountain's residents to present Martin Weber with a large hand-made "Thank You" card filled with notes and signatures from inmates and volunteers. Then, in a gesture of deep gratitude, they proceeded to wash Weber's feet (pictured left) as the crowd watched in quiet reflection. They closed out their portion of the program by praying blessings over Martin.

The service continued with a time of worship led by the "Grace Worship Team" (which included three of Weber's grandchildren) and concluded with a message given by son Jim Weber, who expounded on the 2008 Crusade theme, "Redeemed by the Blood."

The future of We Care's in-prison crusades will remain in God's hands, but on this special night, it was certainly evident that He had blessed the vision of Martin Weber some 30 years earlier, and only eternity will reveal the impact that these many years of crusades have had on Alabama's incarcerated. 🙏

View more photos and team pictures online at www.wecareprogram.org.



News of Note

VOL. 40, NO. 1

Atmore, Alabama

March 2008

Atmore Work Center Chapel Dedication

Thursday, January 17, 2008, was a very special day for We Care Chaplain Ed Ranck and all the inmates at the Atmore Work Center. This day marked the dedication and open house celebrating the completion of a new chapel. The new chapel, which consists of several classrooms, a library, an office, two restrooms and an auditorium, replaces the small one-room chapel that had been in use up to this point.

The chapel project began in the spring of 2005 with a fundraising campaign. Many people from around the country shared generously, and the funds were successfully raised. The process of obtaining blueprints and getting permission from the State of Alabama lasted almost two years, but finally this past summer everything was in place to begin construction.

Dean Miller from Arthur, IL, served as the overseer for the project and helped to keep things moving along. The majority of the actual building of the chapel was done by the

inmates at the Atmore Work Center, and all their hard effort was recognized and celebrated during the open house.

The Chapel dedication was highlighted by a rope cutting led by Chaplain Ranck. He chose a rope because of its three strands and spoke of how each strand represents a different aspect of the project: 1) individuals who have envisioned, prayed for, and planned for this project, 2) the many donors who have entrusted We Care with the financial gifts toward this chapel, and 3) the men who have done the actual construction. During the rope cutting ceremony, Chaplain Ranck thanked Warden Patterson and the Alabama Department of Corrections staff who worked with We Care to help make this new facility a reality.

After the rope was cut, David Landis, President of We Care Program, presented the keys for the new chapel to Warden Patterson signifying that We Care had completed the construction and that it



Above: Vice President Don Metzler, Inmate Builder Mark M., Chaplain Ed Ranck, Chapel Worker Eldrick W., and Construction Overseer Dean Miller participate in the dedication service.



Right: The newly completed chapel at Atmore Work Center.

now belonged to the State of Alabama. As the new chapel officially opens, it is the prayer of Chaplain Ranck that the new facility will “be a place where men can meet and

be with God, that they can learn of Him, but most of all that it will be a place where men can find Jesus Christ as Savior and receive the peace that only He can give.”

Welcome!

We welcome Anthony Bricker, who joined our staff in January as an assistant chaplain at Holman Correctional Facility, Atmore, AL. “Bricker,” from

St. Thomas, PA, comes to us with the support of his home congregation, Chambersburg Mennonite Church.



Wanted: Young Adult Men

A seven-month young adult internship program will be offered beginning in October, 2008. Interns will be placed in service assignments to work alongside one of our full-time chaplaincy staff persons. If you love Jesus, have a heart for hurting persons, are considering a ministry vocation, desire to grow spiritually, or simply want to give a portion of your life to God’s service, contact dave@wecareprogram.org for further information.

Board Election Results

At their annual meeting on January 26, members of We Care Program voted to fill four vacancies on the board of directors. Eli Yoder (Hutchinson, KS) and LaVerne Eash (Gambier, OH) were re-elected to three-year terms. A big welcome to Randy Bruckhart (Manheim, PA) and Sherwin Wenger (Lancaster, PA), who were

elected to fill the other two remaining vacancies. Both served with We Care Program as assistant chaplains at Fountain Correctional Facility; Randy from 2003-2006 and Sherwin from 2001-2005. Stepping down from board service were Lee Hochstetler and Alvin Mast. Thank you, gentlemen, for your dedicated service!



Montgomery, AL

Montgomery Women's Facility

"A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his step." (Prov. 16:9) As I think about my life's journey, I sometimes wonder why God sent me to serve in prison. However, recently I met an inmate who is like the old me! I saw myself in this inmate and began to realize how persistent, patient, and loving God had to be with me. He slowly, but surely, broke down the walls that I had built around my heart. And through it all He was drawing me to Himself so I could be free. "If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31, 32)

Proverbs 27:17 states, "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of a friend." I realized that God places certain people in my life who need to be delivered from the same bondage that I had at one time. I too had made some wrong choices that allowed Satan to have a foothold in my life. Then God put specific people in my life that helped me see unconditional love and peace lived out. This drew me and made me see that life could be better instead of bitter. These people showed tough but tender love toward me, and it was this love that made me see Jesus' love.

Now God has placed me in the same spot where my mentors were at one time, to show unconditional love and acceptance to one who is living in bondage. Love will break down the walls and soften the heart so a bridge can be built from her heart to a Father whose love has no end. He sacrificed His only Son Jesus to set us free from

the bondage that once held us captive. And with persistent unconditional love, my sister too can experience true freedom in Christ. That is my prayer for all the sisters God has called me to serve. - Anna Miller

We Care Crusade

I enjoyed returning to Alabama for crusade week. But I was somewhat disappointed that the afternoon workshop I was scheduled to teach, entitled "Disappointment with God," was cancelled for the second time during the week. I had no doubt, though, that God knew what He was doing. And then I found myself giving parts of it to a former chapel worker I had worked with seven years earlier at Tutwiler. As she listened, tears kept welling up in her eyes, even rolling down her cheeks. I knew she had been through a lot of pain and was sure she felt disappointment with God. It wasn't until later that I found out she had brushed off the volunteers earlier in the week with, "I'm not into God!" The Spirit of God had found the crack in the hard shell she had built around her heart. And I have no doubt He's still working with her. - Wilma Mullet

Frank Lee Work Release Center

When we are working in God's kingdom, two things that give us the most joy are seeing people come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior and then watching them continue to grow in the Lord. I have had opportunity to see both here at Frank Lee Work Release Center. Conversing with men and hearing their life stories, I have the joy of seeing God work in their lives.

The issues and situations that these men need to deal with seem insurmountable. As I present the Gospel to them, they question if it really works and what it is all about. When I talk about praying to God, many say, "I don't know how to pray." As I watch a man take his first tentative steps of trusting God and then continuing to grow in his Christian life, I see him go from wondering if it will work, to trusting God in more and more areas of his life. Some of the men go from not knowing how to pray, to telling God their hearts

cry, and from finding any excuse they can find to not come to the chapel, to eagerly looking forward to coming to services. An important thing for them to learn is to forgive those that mistreated them in their childhood, even though they were innocent victims. I praise God for the opportunity to be involved in men's lives in this way.

When you are working a full-time job, you may look at us in full-time service as having opportunities that you don't have. But God has called us all to share the Gospel with those all around us who need hope. A listening ear is often the gateway to presenting Jesus Christ as Savior. May God's blessing go with you as you look for these opportunities to build the Kingdom of God.

Thanks to all of you for your continued support in prayer, financial gifts, and words of encouragement. If it weren't for your interest, it would be difficult to do what God has called us to do. - Steve Stoltzfus

Atmore, AL

Fountain Correctional Facility

Among the many guys that I talked with during our recent prison crusade was a young man in the Faith Dorm at Fountain. After some introductions and casual conversation, he began to share some things about his personal life. He was discouraged and bitter, but was open to listening to some scripture and some of my own personal experiences.

He accepted a Daily Bread devotional book, and the reading for that day was right on target for his needs. After praying with him, he told me, with some emotion, that was the first time in four years that anyone had prayed with him.

He came out to at least one of the evening services that week, but has changed dorms since then, so I no longer have access to visit him. Thank God for divine appointments and for the way His Word penetrates the soul. If you care to, you may pray with me for Sonny. - Lester Huber

The man in this story is crying out for help. I will call him "Joey." Joey says he is a Christian, but most people wouldn't call him a Christian because of his homosexual lifestyle. He has been practicing this lifestyle for twenty-two years, and at this point it is easier for him to justify his actions than to change. He believes that he is not living in sin but in the calling God has given Him. He feels that he was predestined to be the way he is.

Joey admits to not having a clear understanding of the Bible, but he says, "I believe every word in the Bible, and the Bible is true. But as good as the Bible is, it has one flaw: it isn't human. It doesn't have arms to hold you when you're lonely; it doesn't speak to you like a friend. You read it, yes, but we don't live in Jerusalem. We live in Fountain thousands of years apart. It doesn't help you financially or when you are

in a bind. There is just a human aspect that the Bible doesn't have."

He is terribly mistaken. Although it is important to hide God's Word, "the Bible," in our hearts, we can't build a relationship with a book. The relationship needs to be with Jesus Christ. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He said that He would send the Holy Spirit to comfort us.

When I talk to men like Joey, my heart aches for them. They are looking for lasting love in many places. Their lives are full of torment and despair, crying out for help. Their eyes are filled with pain, begging and pleading for help. If only they would let Jesus have full control of their lives.

- Blaine Copenhaver

Atmore Work Center

"Ain't God something?" I recently received a letter from Allen, a Christian friend who had transferred

from the Atmore Work Center to a Work Release, a prison camp where men can get free world jobs in preparation for their upcoming release back into society. On the Monday following his arrival at the new camp, Allen inquired about getting a job. He was informed that there were about one hundred guys in line ahead of him waiting. To quote his letter, "Monday night when I prayed, I told God I needed a job, and Tuesday I went for an interview. Wednesday I started work as a prep cook at a nearby restaurant. Ain't God something, and He has continued to bless me."

Chaplaincy work involves working with men who have hurt and been hurt, rejected and been rejected, and had hopes raised and dashed, so it was quite encouraging to hear of God moving on behalf of Allen. Indeed, we serve a "something God."

- Ed Ranck

2008 CRUSADE (continued from page 4)

I entered this year with the sensing I really should focus on encouraging and praying with some of the Christian brothers. On Tuesday I got that chance to pray with a brother named Ron. He had some things really on his heart. As we prayed, the Holy Spirit moved, gave me the words to pray. When we were finished, my brother was in tears. Praise the Lord for these great opportunities to serve!

- Marv Wenger, PA

The focus this year, "Redeemed by the Blood," moved me, and to realize that Jesus, when He was on this earth, was a friend to sinners made me again see Jesus in a new way. What a wonderful salvation!

- John Miller, VA

Seth Kauffman, PA, builds new friendships during the Crusade week.



To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to say "thank you" for a blessed "We Care" Ministries last week, Jan. 28-Jan. 31. It was a truly blessed week. The musical groups were awesome. I got a message each night from the speakers and the concerts.

Thank God for the women that came to Tutwiler. They were blessed and on fire for the Lord. I've never been to prison and I'll be gone in a few months, and I just want you to know that I had a blessed time.

Keep up the good work and keep on letting God use you.

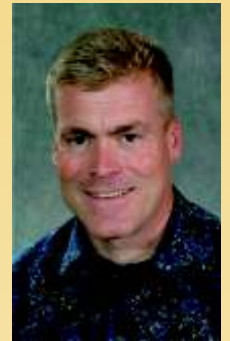
Yours in Christ,
Inmate, Tutwiler Prison

Crusade 2009:
January 25-29

PERSPECTIVES

with David R. Landis
President

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



For some time I have been thinking of the need for a **PIT Crew** (Personal Intercessors Team). This crew would be a team of people with the gift of intercessory prayer who feel led to pray for me regularly in relation to my leadership role at We Care. I hesitated to proceed with the idea, because it feels like I'm trying to be something special, and I know that there are a lot of other situations that are in need of prayer as well.

However, after an unusually challenging week recently, I decided that not only was it a good idea, but an extreme necessity. My mind went to a story in Exodus 17. The Israelites were battling the Amalekites, and as Joshua was commanding the troops in battle, Moses was holding up the staff of God so that they could win the battle. As the battle

raged on, Moses hands got tired, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands until sunset, assuring victory.

Anyone who has been in leadership understands the "weight" of responsibility. I confess that my hands get tired sometimes, and it would be a great comfort to know that there was an Aaron and a Hur to hold up my hands. I believe that a team of prayer warriors would have the same effect.

If you sense a leading to commit to God's work in this way, please let me know. I will gladly send out periodic **PIT Crew** prayer bulletins to those who can receive them by fax or email. From your own prayer corner, you can help me (and us) win the battle! 🙏

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