



the

connection

SEPTEMBER 2011

“...I WAS IN PRISON
AND YOU CAME
TO VISIT ME.”

— *Jesus*
MATTHEW 25:36B

WWW.WECAREPROGRAM.ORG

NEW FOUND *joy*

By: David Earls, Inmate at J. O. Davis Correctional Facility

STEALING AND DRINKING MY DAD'S BEER, AT THE AGE OF TWELVE, I BECAME AN ALCOHOLIC.

I was mischievous in my early years, and my mother often grounded and restricted me. As I grew in my teen years, I often came home drunk. When mother would find out about all the trouble I was in, she would become angry and scream and cuss at me. She'd tell me that I was no good and that I would wind up in prison one day! As a youth, I had a lot of insecurities and fears. I had difficulties making friends and fitting in with my peers during my teen years. Resentment, self-pity, anger, and arrogance compounded my inner struggles to survive. I had no respect for anyone in society, including my own family and even myself. At this point I adopted a criminal mentality and grew reckless and quite careless. Beginning at age 21, I served three and a half years in a Texas prison for robbery. When I made parole, I came to Alabama and adopted an even more degrading criminal lifestyle and was convicted for kidnapping and forgery. Presently I have served 25 years on a 30-year sentence, mostly in maximum security. Anger and hatred of myself have increased over these years.

In June 2010 I was transferred to J. O. Davis Correctional (minimum security prison in Atmore, AL). With only 23 months until I'm released from prison, I'm afraid I won't make it on the streets with my attitude and disposition that I've held for so long.

Through the prayers of my aunt, who recently passed away, and a number of brothers in Christ here, I have finally come to acknowledge the destructive



powers of pride and arrogance in my life and relationships.

A few days prior to the We Care Crusade in January of 2011 here at J. O. Davis, I repented and bowed before my Savior and Lord Jesus Christ and asked for forgiveness of a sin-filled past life. I asked the Holy Spirit to fill me and indwell in me with the love of Christ. In the following days as I began a joy-filled newness of life, the We Care Crusade began, bringing volunteers, evangelists, and the music groups and their families night after night, filling me to overflowing joy and unspeakable glory! That profound influence was a powerful tool of the Holy Spirit in my life, working change from the old prideful selfish nature to the love and peace that is only possible through the grace of God and the redemptive power of humility.

Chaplain Martin's door always being open to us has been vital to my spiritual growth and development. Because of his openness and willingness to sit and talk with anyone, to listen and pray with us individually and collectively, we are strengthened and encouraged. That influence most directly manifests the power of peace and love in Christ Jesus for all who seek a newness in life here. Chaplain's leadership of classes and the Wednesday evening prayer and worship service set the atmosphere for the body of Christ here to experience worship and shouting in the Holy Spirit! I say about this, "When Jesus set us free, we are free indeed! **Amen!**" 🌟

NEWS

WELCOME BACK!

Having served as a full-time chaplain with We Care from December 1986 – January 1996, Allen Screws has joined our



Allen Screws

staff once again as a We Care Associate. Allen serves at both Frank Lee Work Center and Department of Youth Services. His heart for the incarcerated and years of prison ministry experience are a welcome

addition to our team. Allen is a member of The Rock Church, Montgomery, AL.

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Merging professional experience with a heart for prison ministry, Steve Martin joins our leadership team as Development Director. Steve will be focusing his efforts on church and donor relations, planning and



Steve & Ella Mae Martin

promoting fund-raising events, and carrying We Care's vision and purpose to a greater audience than currently possible. Steve and his wife Ella Mae live in Womelsdorf, PA, and attend Lebanon Christian Fellowship. (See back page article for more information on how Steve's new role came about.)



28th Annual Benefit Auction

Farmersville Auction Grounds, Farmersville, PA

Collector items, beautiful quilts and wall hangings, toys, valuable gift certificates, great food, framed artwork, 3-D pictures, hardware, tools, fresh meats and groceries, and more are waiting for you at the auction.

Friday, October 28

4:00-7:00 PM - Chicken BBQ
5:00 PM - Auction

Saturday, October 29

7:00 AM - Pancake and Sausage Breakfast
8:30 AM - Auction

Proceeds from the auction benefit a number of prison ministries, including We Care Program.

Profile...

Noreen Horst



Assignment.....
Administrative Assistant

A Typical Day.....

Upon arrival at the office, I check voice mail and email, forwarding or responding as needed. Before long the phone rings, "We Care Program. This is Noreen." After directing the call to the appropriate person, I turn to any one of the following responsibilities which may be awaiting my attention: editing and proofreading We Care materials, staff newsletters, or office reports; opening mail; recording donations and address changes or deletions; printing and mailing receipts; and providing weekly or monthly data reports to the leadership team and missionary chaplains. Twice daily walks

to the mailbox include one trip around the circle driveway to give my mind a brief rest break. Throughout the day the office is the site of frequent comings and goings of We Care staff, delivery men, and visitors, and my desk places me in the position of being the first person they see when they come in the door. During the months of November to January, my days also include overseeing all data entry relating to the crusade and providing reports to office leadership and prisons as needed.

Rewards.....

Knowing that my office work is part of a larger ministry of life transformation. An ever-widening circle of friends, including fellow staff members, donors, crusade volunteers, and other We Care connections. Personal and spiritual growth through a wide variety of

learning experiences, interactions, and staff development opportunities. Reading notes that come in the mail sharing encouragement and/or assurance of prayer support. Learning a new detail on any of the computer programs I use regularly.

Challenges.....

Keeping abreast of changing mailing regulations from the Postal Service. Balancing responsibilities and deadlines with requests for

assistance. Graciously responding to phone calls and walk-ins seeking financial help because they think that is what We Care does.

Just for Fun.....

Reading, assembling jigsaw puzzles, conversing with family and friends, working Sudoku or other logic puzzles, traveling to new areas and drinking in the sights of God's wonderful

creative variety in nature. Though I only rarely do these activities any more, I still enjoy playing a good game of ping pong or cornhole and throwing softball with my nieces and nephews.

NEW DIRECTIONS *(continued from the back page)*

OUR HEARTBEAT: PRISON CHAPLAINCY

Our primary focus has always been and will continue to be placing chaplains in prison with an emphasis on discipleship. It was very evident to see that God had used the Timothy House experience to clarify our purpose as an organization. **We are called to enable the church in prison, be role models to Christian inmates, teach God's Word, and build long-term relationships.** New challenges include learning how to be more relevant in a world of changing culture and world views and working harder at sharing our vision and building relationships with the Department of Corrections.

HELPING INMATES PREPARE FOR RELEASE

As has already been reported, the decision was made to discontinue the Timothy House aftercare ministry, but there was strong feeling that we need to maintain our commitment to helping inmates prepare for release and mentor former inmates, especially those with whom we have built relationships in our work as chaplains. Such help may possibly include (1) adding re-entry resources to our website, (2) starting regional support groups for former inmates and their families (in partnership with local churches and volunteers), and (3) creating a Biblically based re-entry curriculum for those preparing for release.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

One of the strongest points that came out of the retreat was that We Care should give more focus to training, developing, and credentialing our ministry staff persons. Although the organization, historically and currently, already prepares leaders for Kingdom service here and beyond, we should do what we can to facilitate that process. This will include shifting and delegating some leadership responsibilities so that development systems can be put in place, new initiatives can be pursued, and persons taking on new roles can grow in their callings.

SERVING AND EQUIPPING

We sense God calling us to make ourselves available for training, encouraging, and motivating other prison ministry workers or interested persons towards greater spiritual effectiveness in their lives and ministries. This may include opening up our staff training events to interested persons, periodic prison ministry conferences or seminars, and generally being a blessing to others by sharing the knowledge and experience gained in over 40 years of prison ministry.

EXPANDED LEADERSHIP TEAM

It was clearly evident to our Board that in order for We Care Program to accomplish its purposes for the future we would need to expand our leadership influence and responsibilities. Along with myself (President), **Don Metzler** (Vice President and Business Manager), and **Gary Mast** (Economy Shop Director), we have added the following persons to our Leadership Team:



Blaine Copenhaver, Discover Director:

Already leading the eight-month young adult internship program, Discover, Blaine will also work at developing a one to two-week experience for young adults as well as opportunities for youth-age individuals or groups to partner with We

Care Program for summer mission projects. Believing that the younger generation holds the keys to the future of the church, we want to do our part in helping to equip and inspire youth and young adults. (Blaine is also serving as assistant chaplain at J. O. Davis Correctional Facility.)



David S. Landis, Staff Pastor:

As the organizational family continues to grow, it became evident that someone should be tapped to shepherd staff persons and their families. David, in addition to his role as assistant chaplain at Holman Correctional,

will monitor the spiritual, emotional, and mental pulse of We Care's personnel and offer counsel, encouragement, and spiritual direction as needed.



Steve Martin, Development Director:

New to our staff (*see News, page 2*), Steve will oversee our national promotional and fund-raising efforts while building and cultivating church and donor relationships. Excited about the way God orchestrated circumstances to bring Steve

to us, we believe that God will use him in this role to build friendships and increase awareness and support for the work of We Care Program.

WHY THESE CHANGES?

We Care Program has a rich history, and much of what we are currently doing is a result of the vision, sacrifice, and dedication of those who have gone before us. Countless others have partnered with us in prayer and financial support over the years. For all of this we are grateful. Yet as we scan the horizon, there are opportunities before us that we cannot ignore: men and women in prison searching for hope, others needing pre- and post-release mentoring, and developing tomorrow's leaders by impacting youth and young adults. We believe that God is positioning us for a season of growth and greater effectiveness both now and in the years to come. 🌍



Jonathan Zook
Fountain Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL

Have you ever noticed how new believers have an excitement about them and everything they pray for seems to come to pass?

It is awesome to see, and it gets me excited when I am around them. Churches need new believers to keep them on their toes and excited.

I have also come to expect that given a few months they will lose that excitement. I am not saying they will slip up or fall back, but they just don't seem to have the same drive they started off with. If I see this in our churches today where we have fellowship together, brothers we can trust, and families we can go home to, how much harder it must be for the Christian brothers in prison to stay excited about what God is doing.

We have been given the greatest gift ever, but somehow we tend to forget and get caught up in what is going on around us. Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). Pray for a fresh excitement to fall on our churches and our brothers behind bars.

"We have been given the greatest gift ever, but somehow we tend to forget and get caught up in what is going on around us."

One of the developments at Holman that we have been encouraged about recently is the discipleship class that Bob and I are leading.

Regular attendance and class participation have been heartening. The group meets each Monday with one week focusing on a lesson and the next week being a time for sharing a life story. The lessons have included subjects such as God's authority, what it means to be "in Christ," and what it means to live for Jesus Christ.

In the sessions designated for a testimony, one person shares what he wants to about his life story and how he has seen God in it. All of the men in the group profess to be Christian, but for many of them it has been a big step of faith to share their personal story because the prison atmosphere doesn't lend itself to trust. We ask them to share only what they feel comfortable with.

My own faith continues to be stretched as almost daily I relate to and pray for people who are disconnected and alienated from their families. I think the loss of connection with family and loved ones is perhaps the greatest hardship that prisoners face. II Corinthians 5:19 talks about God giving us the ministry of reconciliation. I believe that this speaks particularly of reconciliation between God and man, but it is also true that as we become right with God, our human relationships are affected as well. Pray with me that God will be glorified in the work of reconciliation at Holman.



David S. Landis
Holman Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL

From



Stan Schrock
**Century Corr. Institution
Century, FL**

You are not to get anybody saved! That is not your job!"

These words were spoken to me several weeks ago after I had a "down" week. No, it wasn't the warden or an officer telling me this. It was a good friend and former chaplain in a state prison. "It is God's job to save a person. Your job is to be there, right where God called you."

the Field

people. He calls us to live a life like a city on a hill, but it is Jesus who is the light. The Holy Spirit leads us to talk to someone or brings someone across our path,

"God puts us where He wants to use us, but it is the Father who draws people."

How true this is. God puts us where He wants to use us, but it is the Father who draws people. He calls us to live a life like a city on a hill, but it is Jesus who is the light. The Holy Spirit leads us to talk to someone or brings someone across our path, but it is Jesus who does the changing and the saving.

to "be." This art of being is something I am trying to improve on. I visualize it as resting in the way God has created me, basking in the emotion of the moment, aware of the amazing work of God in my life and in those around me. He wants me to "be." And because of who I "be," I do.

I am a "doing" person. Doing should not define who I "be." Often I get caught up in trying to do God's work, and He is simply asking me

When it comes to ministry, perspective means a lot.

Away from Fountain for the first summer in seven years, I have been concentrating on getting Bible college classes into Holman and on teaching Bible college classes at Century. At We Care Program's July staff meeting, I was asked to say a few words about how God's grace is working in my ministry. I said that the Bible college was going great at Century, prompting a pained expression from Stan Schrock, We Care's full-time volunteer there. When Stan got his turn to speak about how the Bible college was going at Century, he said, "It's rough."



Mike Strehlow
**Fountain Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL**

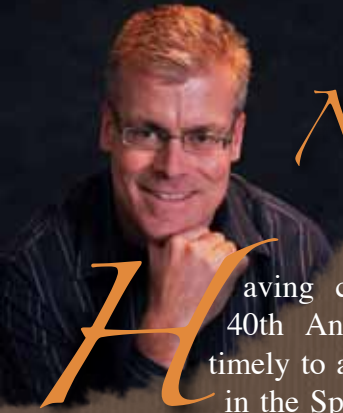
Stan, who is the assistant chaplain at Century, is the reason the Bible college is there in the first place. He made the official requests and did the paperwork to get the college (and me) cleared to go in, he promoted the school and signed up the students, and he makes the calls each week that get the students to the chapel so I can teach them. For a lot of reasons, lately Stan has had to do everything but pull a rabbit out of his hat to get the inmates released to the chapel for the classes. When the inmates do get there (which is the only time I see them), they are engaged in the lessons, growing in the Word, and eager to do the work. From my point of view, things are wonderful. But Stan, who worries about running out of rabbits, sees things differently.

Though we are both part of the same ministry at Century, we don't have the same job. If there is a crown waiting for us in Heaven for this small annex to the Kingdom God is using us to build, I suspect Stan's will be bigger and brighter than mine. His job is the tougher one.

Direct all correspondence to:
We Care Program
3493 Hwy 21
Atmore, AL 36502

TELEPHONE: 251-368-8818
FAX: 251-368-0932
E-MAIL: wecare@wecareprogram.org
WEBSITE: www.wecareprogram.org

BOARD CHAIRMAN: Aaron Martin; PRESIDENT: David R. Landis;
VICE PRES./BUSINESS MGR.: Don Metzler; EDITOR: David R. Landis;
ASST. EDITOR: Noreen Horst; LAYOUT & DESIGN: Sheila Copenhaver;
CIRCULATION MANAGER: Noreen Horst



New Directions

A MESSAGE FROM DAVID R. LANDIS, PRESIDENT

Having celebrated We Care Program's 40th Anniversary in 2010, it seemed timely to assemble our Board of Directors in the Spring of 2011 for what we called a "Strategic Planning Retreat." During that time, we prayerfully sought God's direction in a number of different areas. As we moved through the process, we sensed God's divine leading in our decision making, and when we came to the end of our time together, it was clear that God had spoken and He was calling us to take some new steps of faith.

While much of what we discerned will take time to come to fruition, I felt that it was important to let you, our partners and friends, know of some of the more prominent themes that emerged and several resulting action steps that were taken. My hope is that



Board of Directors, April 2011

as you look over this summary you will be inspired to re-affirm your commitment to We Care Program or possibly connect with us in new or renewed ways as we work together to advance God's Kingdom behind prison walls.

(continued on page 5)

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