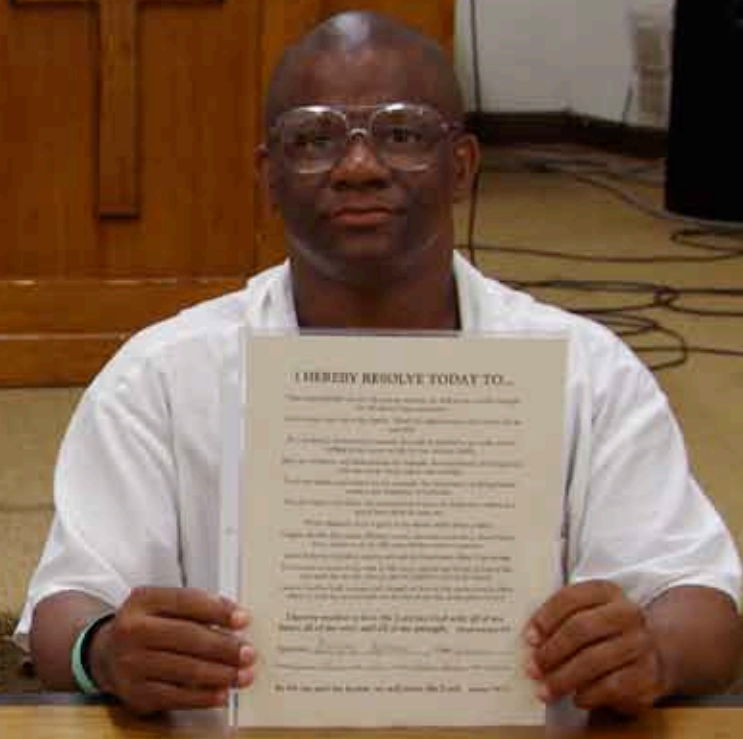
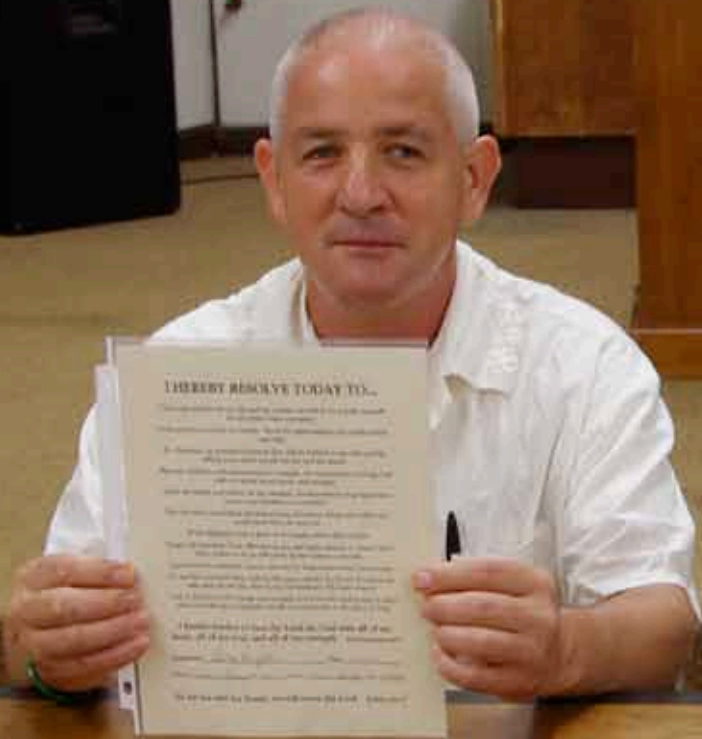




the connection

NOVEMBER 2012



“COURAGEOUS” MOVIE IGNITES STRONG RESPONSE

STORY INSIDE

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NEWS

MOVING ON

John Kurtz recently terminated his position as assistant chaplain at St. Clair Correctional Facility in order to return to computer programming work. The Kurtz family plans to remain in Alabama, and John will stay connected to We Care Program through website management and occasionally going into St. Clair CF as a volunteer. We've been blessed, John and Shirley, by your partnership with us for the past five years, and we pray God's blessing on you and your family.

BRICKERFEST

We extend a huge "Thank You!" to former We Care volunteer Anthony and Vanessa Bricker and friends for hosting the 4th annual "BrickerFest" in Chambersburg, PA. Over 300 guests joined the Brickers for an informal night of fellowship, music, and BBQ. Together they collected a record offering in support of We Care Program.



Anthony & Vanessa Bricker

LEAST OF THESE CONFERENCE

Over 100 folks were blessed, encouraged, and challenged at the recent Ministering to the Least of These Conference in Lancaster, PA. Twelve different presenters shared on various topics such as prison ministry, aftercare programs, crisis pregnancies, addictions, HIV/AIDS and more. Additional opportunities for ministry were presented in the exhibit area. One attendee commented that she appreciated "the encouragement and support and that I am not alone in ministry." She went on to state that this conference was an "affirmation of what God has me involved in."

From the first session to the last, the message that God has a special place in His heart for the "least of these" came through loud and clear. Thanks to each of the speakers, exhibitors, volunteers, and all who helped make this event possible!

E-NEWS!

We Care has recently started sending out occasional e-mails with news and updates. If you would like to be included on this list, please send your name and e-mail address to info@wecareprogram.org.

READ-A-THON 2012

This year's read-a-thon raised \$29,767.45. Forty-one readers in seven states read a total of 95,738 pages. First and second prizes were awarded for most money raised: Adult division – Goldie Huber (AL) and Emma Bender (AL), Ages 13-17 – Rachel Rittenhouse (PA) and LaRonda Bender (AL), Ages 12 and under – Carissa Derstine (PA) and Aubrey Copenhaver (PA). Many thanks to God and to each one who read or gave in this fundraising effort!

RECORD SALES AT SFPM AUCTION

Several staff persons and board members represented We Care at the Support for Prison Ministries auction in Pennsylvania on October 26 and 27. A record crowd on Friday evening helped to generate record sales for the event. We Care is grateful to SFPM, Farmersville Auction, and the many volunteers and buyers who worked together to make the sale a success. The portion of the proceeds which We Care receives is a tremendous blessing in helping to fund our mission.



“COURAGEOUS” MOVIE IGNITES STRONG RESPONSE

by Brian Eskelinen, State Chaplain of Fountain Correctional Facility

We have all heard it said that a picture is worth a thousand words. That certainly proved to be the case at Fountain Correctional between March 12 and May 28, 2012. During that time hundreds of inmates were presented with one free ticket to view the movie *Courageous* on a big screen in the chapel. For the first time ever many of these inmates watched intently as the men in the movie resolved, “**I will** love the Lord my God with my whole mind, heart and strength, and **I will** be the husband and father I was created to be.” The outcome was nothing short of miraculous as believers and unbelievers alike left the chapel mesmerized at what they had just seen. We thank God for using this mighty film to lift up the name of Jesus to many who may never have stepped foot in a church. We also praise God for the forty men who came forward to sign their own resolution declaring with their voices and actions, **I will**.

Stewardship Corner

Support We Care and Receive Income at the Same Time

by Steve Martin, Development Director



Many people want to give to charity but are concerned because they aren't sure what finances they might need for the future. Would you consider making a gift that would support our mission and pay you guaranteed income for the rest of your life? With a Charitable Gift Annuity you can have the security of fixed payment and the satisfaction of supporting our ministry!

How It Works

In this type of arrangement, you make a financial gift to Mennonite Foundation designated to benefit We Care Program, and in return Mennonite



Foundation sends you annuity payments at a fixed rate for the rest of your life. A gift annuity offers substantial tax savings. Most people can deduct a significant part of their gift right away. In addition, part of the annuity payments you receive may be tax-free. Finally, you receive the satisfaction of knowing your favorite charity will benefit from your generosity.

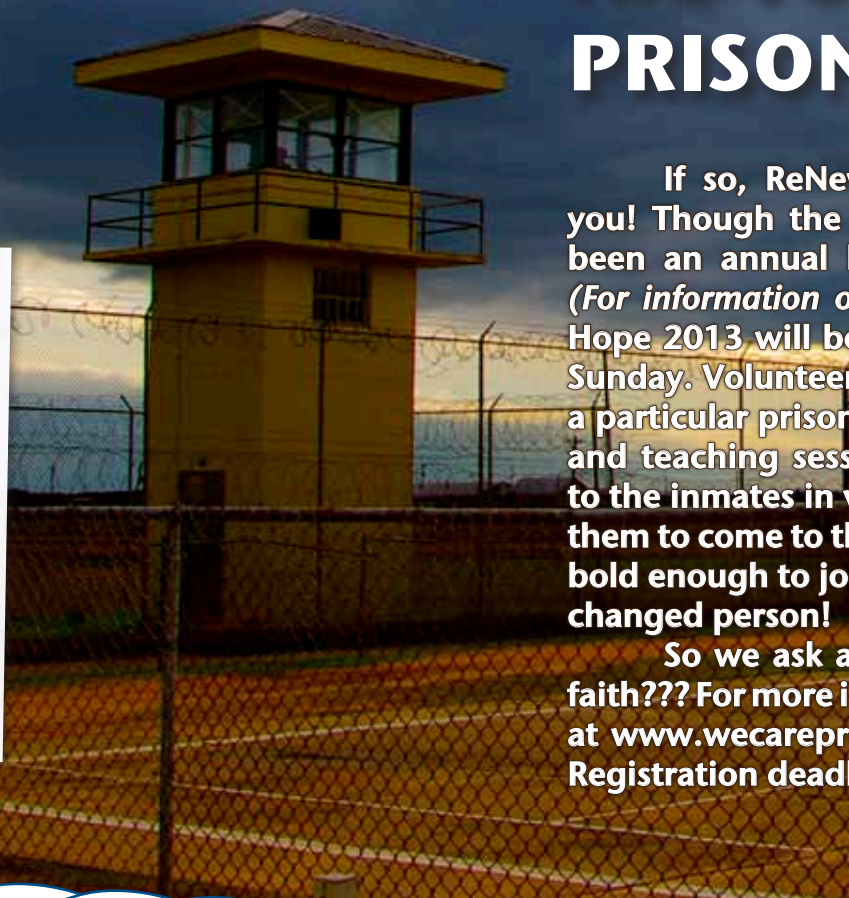
To learn more, contact Steve Martin at 610-909-9285 or steve@wecareprogram.org. You also can read about Charitable Gift Annuities on the Giving page of our website, www.wecareprogram.org.



Are YOU PRISON

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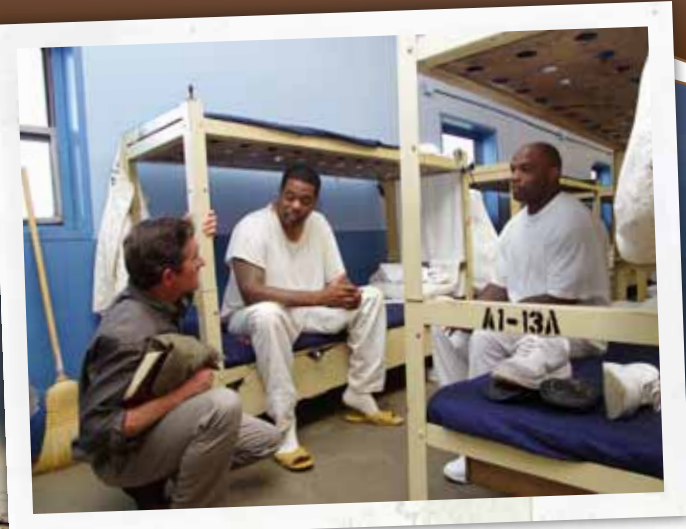
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SAME PURPOSE, SAME

Over the last year or so, we have been thinking about a possible “Crusade” name change. Through much input, thought and prayer we have reached a decision, and beginning this year the name “Crusade” is being changed to “ReNew Hope.” Thanks to each of you who were a part of this process.

The word “ReNew” serves a dual purpose, thus the capital “N.” Written this way, the word communicates that for some, Hope is renewed during the annual We Care prison outreach, while for others, Hope is found for the very first time. Ultimately, we carry the message



Are you willing to go to prison for your FAITH?

ReNew Hope 2013 is the perfect opportunity for you. The name is new, this prison outreach event has been happening at We Care Program since 1977. (In the name change, see article below.) ReNew Hope begins with a day of worship and orientation on Monday. You will be assigned to a ministry team to visit in the prison on Monday through Thursday after a worship service each morning. Team members will relate the message in various ways throughout the day while inviting people to Christ at the evening chapel service. If you are willing and able to go, you will go home on Friday a blessed and

transformed man. Again, are you willing to go to prison for your faith? For more information and an application, visit our website at www.renewhope.org or call our office at 251-368-8818. The deadline is December 8. Hope to see you in January!



MESSAGE...NEW NAME!

That hope for any situation is found or recovered through the saving and transforming work of Jesus Christ.

We realize that change is hard for many people. We also realize that there will always be some who will refer to this event as Crusade, Revival, or some other title. We are ok with that. However, from this point forward We Care Program will be referring to and communicating this event as "ReNew Hope."

May the message found in this name be overwhelmingly experienced by all who are touched by it in years to come.

ReNew
HOPE
2013

A Christ-Centered Outreach
of We Care Program

Too often we overlook the small things that happen in our day.

We tend to focus on big things. The other day I was sitting in my office. The chapel worker and I were talking. He had just sat down in his chair in front of his desk when he turned to me and said, "This desk is higher than a normal desk."

I glanced from his desk to mine to compare their height. Without much thought I turned to him and asked, "Do you need a phone book?" He looked at me with a puzzled expression, wondering why he might need a phone book when he didn't have a phone. With a smirk I added, "To sit on." As the meaning sank in his mind, we both burst out laughing.

Later I was thinking back over the incident. I thank God for allowing me to bring some joy and fun into both our lives, even if it was just through a small joke. I believe God enjoys when we smile and have fun. Let's not forget the small things in life and thank God for them.



Jonathan Zook
**Fountain Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL**

There is no doubt I had a privileged birth.

Our farm family of twelve certainly did not have a lot of extra cash, but through no effort of my own I inherited many special gifts.

I was a wanted and loved child. My family was excited about my birth. (Even being born on the tail end of a large family carried its own set of privileges...I can hear my siblings chuckling at that one.) I learned that I was a valuable asset to those

Steve Stoltzfus
**Frank Lee Work Release
Montgomery, AL**

around me. I learned that being accountable is important in life. My upbringing included the expectation of an honest day's work for a day's wages, no slacking allowed. All these privileges and more were strong contributing



James Smoker
**Donaldson Corr. Facility
Birmingham, AL**

factors in making me what I am today. Most importantly, I was taught about God since I was old enough to hear and understand.

Working with incarcerated men has deepened my appreciation for my background. In my conversations with the men in prison, I find many who are still trying to find purpose in life because of being denied the very things I have taken for granted. As I reflect on these things, I am reminded that with privilege comes responsibility. In the account of the rich farmer in Luke 12:16-21, we can see God's view of selfishly holding onto privilege.

I count it a joy to use the privileges that I inherited to be able to proclaim to others the way to the ultimate privileged birth, being born into the family of God. Through Christ, all can live as children of the King.

Lately I have been meditating on **Philippians 2:5**, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

That's a high standard to follow—having a mind that thinks like Christ thinks, responding like Christ to the needy, the hurting, those who have made a mess out of their lives. This verse especially spoke to me regarding how I handled one particular opportunity to minister.

It was late in the day when I received notice that an inmate had a death in the family and needed to make a phone call. Since I was the last of the chaplains to leave, it was my responsibility to handle the situation.

I had never met this man before so I did not know who I was dealing with. When he was escorted into the office, I was shocked by his appearance. This man was dressed up to the degree that if I had not been in a men's facility, I would have thought him to be a female. He tried to talk like a female, act like a female,

From the

dress like a female. He had the other men turning their heads as he walked by. I thought, let's get this over with and send him on his way. When he finished the call to his family, we talked for a few minutes and then he was escorted back to his cell.

Later I was convicted and asked myself whether that man felt God's love and compassion through me or whether he felt judged. God wants us to look past the appearance and see the heart's cry of those in need. Let each one of us have the mind of Christ so we can show love to those who might be difficult to love.

The image
m a n y
people have is
that of inmates
spending year
after weary
year looking

at the same bleak walls.

While this is true for inmates in some prisons, it is not at all true at Fountain.

The average stay in this prison is probably two years. However, the hundreds of Bible College and G.E.D. students we have had here don't disappear; they just move on.

One day recently during a testing break, I was talking to some inmate peer trainers from the G.E.D. program I facilitate. I asked, "Where's JF?" He was one of my best Bible college students.

"Oh, he's been sent to work release."

"How about MT?" I asked. MT is a rather elderly man who came to the G.E.D. program reading at the kindergarten level. The last time I saw him he was reading at the eighth grade level.

"He's gone, too." Nobody knew what camp he'd been sent to; transfers often happen in the middle of the night. Inmates in a reading class on Tuesday can be three hundred miles away on Wednesday.

However, they take us with them when they go. JF knows his Bible backwards and forwards, and will go on knowing it wherever he ends up. MT, who three years ago couldn't read a small child's picture book,



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

can read a magazine now. Or a newspaper. Or a Bible. Hundreds of other inmates over the last eight years can say the same. Inmates in prison don't have much. They aren't allowed to. On the other hand, whatever they have gained from the various programs and classes under the direction of We Care is theirs to keep.

"Hey, Mama, I need you right now. I just got some pictures of my brother, and it hurts all over again."

She sat beside me, put her head on my shoulder and sobbed. So started one of my days at Lovelady Center. She had lost her brother in an accident a few weeks earlier, and the pain was still fresh. I assured her that through Christ they will someday have a great reunion since they both have trusted Christ for salvation. I also encouraged her to read I Corinthians 15:54 and 55, verses which speak of death being swallowed up in victory.

A short time later another lady sat down looking very discouraged and said, "Miss Anna, Why is it that most of the ladies my age have a boyfriend and I don't have any good relationships? I only get hurt or taken for granted. I guess I don't know how to do relationships since I never had a good example. Maybe I just need to realize that Jesus can be my friend for now." I told her she needs to focus her time and effort on her relationship with God and trust Him for the desires of her heart. (Psalms 37:3,4)

That afternoon a sister came to me, "Chap, what am I going to do? I just got fired, and I don't know how I will pay the rent!"

"We will pray and ask God to guide you. He loves you and has a plan for you. Remember Proverbs 3:5 and 6, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.'"

I do not have the answers for the problems these ladies bring to me, but I know the One who does.



Anna Miller
**Lovelady Center
Birmingham, AL**

Field

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;
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CIRCULATION MANAGER: Noreen Horst



A LEGACY AND A HOPE

A MESSAGE FROM DAVID R. LANDIS, PRESIDENT

dave@wecareprogram.org

Thirteen and a half years ago my wife Debbie and I, along with our three children, moved from Pennsylvania to Atmore, Alabama, answering God's call for me to serve as a prison chaplain with We Care Program. At that point I had a whopping four days of prison ministry experience under my belt. It would be safe to say that I was as green as they come...and my inmate friends have humored me with that fact over the years.

Three months after our arrival, Darla was born. Her birth and special needs were the beginning of a journey that would take us to places we never would have imagined. One of the greater lessons her short life taught me was the importance of caring for and showing love to the least of these, the forgotten, those with no power or voice. There is no question in my mind that Darla's life did more to inform me in my ministry than anything I could have done on my

own. I am convinced that our loving and sovereign God did not allow even one difficult experience to go unnoticed without giving His divine approval.

Needless to say, our family is experiencing a great void right now. We are working through the grieving process. Darla's homegoing on August 24 is still very much in our minds and in our hearts. However, what stands out to me in these last few months is the overwhelming love and support we have received from the Body of Christ. For each expression of love we are deeply grateful.

Darla was a precious treasure given to us by God. Her life had a way of reaching into the depths of our hearts and influencing us and others in ways we could not have planned. Her "silent" legacy is firmly rooted in our hearts. For now, we long for that day when "we who...are left will be caught up together with [Darla and other loved ones] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." (1 Thess. 4:17 NIV)

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