



# the connection


FALL 2014



**“Come Over to  
Elmore and  
Help Us!”**

Elmore  
Correctional  
Facility

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# “Come Over to Elmore and

# Help Us!”

by Steve Martin

Prisoners waiting for someone to proclaim the love of Christ and to disciple them in their Christian walk

## There Was No One to Answer the Plea

Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down with Department of Corrections (DOC) Chaplain Ossie Brown in his office at the Elmore Correctional Facility. As he shared his desperate plea for a We Care chaplain to assist him in the vast work there, my mind was drawn to Acts 16. In this passage Paul and his team attempted to spread the Gospel in two different locations but were “forbidden” by the Holy Spirit. That night Paul had a dream in which a man pleaded, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” Luke records that they responded immediately and travelled to Philippi where they planted a church even though they were greatly resisted. They even ended up in prison.

When State Chaplain Brown decided to transfer from the St. Clair Correctional Facility to Elmore, he knew that he would really miss the We Care chaplain. He contacted We Care President Don Metzler and asked for a We Care chaplain to assist him with his new assignment. Unfortunately, Don was unable to honor his request. There was no one available to place at the Elmore facility. Chaplain Brown’s predecessor, Chaplain Woodfin, had also previously made the same request.

## We Care Chaplains Fill an Important Role

When Chaplain Brown first arrived at the St. Clair facility about three years ago, there was a We Care chaplain already in place. He experienced firsthand how We Care Chaplain John Kurtz and later Jeremy Miller were essential for the chaplain’s office to minister effectively. By partnering together, they were able to schedule more visits, teach more classes and facilitate more programs.

Chaplain Brown’s new responsibility, the Elmore Correctional Facility, is home to almost 1200 inmates. According to Chaplain Brown, that is far too many men for one person to minister to properly. During my visit with Chaplain Brown, I asked him why he so greatly desires to have a We Care chaplain assist him in the ministry. “Much of my time is taken up with administrative matters required by the regulations of the DOC,” he replied. “All of the paperwork and other administrative responsibilities allow little time for actual ministry. A We Care assistant chaplain is not nearly as restricted by these things. He is able to spend the bulk of his time ministering to inmates.”

In addition, the We Care chaplain is able to minister in a way that the DOC chaplain cannot. A We Care chaplain can clearly preach and minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He is also more



able to minister in a personal way. “Every inmate arrives in prison with two issues, his baggage and his sentence,” Chaplain Brown explains. “The baggage includes the past—usually from one-parent families, often having suffered various forms of abuse, the negative environment in which they grew up, the crime that got them incarcerated and finally the guilt and shame they experience looking back on all of that. Then the prison sentence increases the hopelessness of their situation. Their life stops while everyone else’s life goes on.”

“These folks need more attention than the average person on the street does,” Chaplain Brown told me. “They want to know ‘do you see me?’ They want to know that somebody knows who they are. They are trying to find peace.” What an awesome opportunity for a We Care chaplain to speak truth and love into broken hearts.

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## **A Wide Open Door!**

I asked Chaplain Brown about the opportunities at Elmore for the We Care chaplain. What would he be doing? “There are many ways the We Care chaplain could minister,” he explained. “Teaching classes, one-on-one counseling and mentoring, assisting with administrating the Faith Dorm, working with volunteers and churches, facilitating ReNew Hope activities and the list goes on. There is no end to the work that needs to be done.” He continued, “Since Elmore has never had a We Care chaplain, the new chaplain would be breaking new

territory, opening new doors. This is an opportunity for someone to evangelize, disciple and help build the Kingdom of Heaven in a dark place. He would not just be an assistant; he would be a partner in the Gospel. He could leave a legacy to the inmates, his family and for the Gospel.”

“Come over to Elmore and help us!” Chaplain Brown pleaded for the 1200 inmates at Elmore.

“Here there are inmates who are looking for love, acceptance and for some Good News! Here there is a church behind the walls that needs encouragement and leadership.”

Like Paul and Silas, you too can pray and sing praises in prison – but fortunately, without the leg irons. Maybe doors to other ministries, which have appealed to you, have closed. Is God opening the door for you to minister to the least of the least at Elmore Correctional Facility? Can you respond immediately and travel to Montgomery, Alabama,

to share the Gospel with the lonely and hurting souls in prison? Will you trust God to provide the strength and courage to face this difficult task for the furtherance of His Kingdom?

The Elmore Correctional Facility is representative of the numerous openings in Alabama prisons. Other prisons in the Montgomery area, such as Draper, Staton, Kilby and Bullock, do not have a We Care chaplain. Additionally, opportunities exist in other parts of the state as well.

***Will you come and help us?***

## **You Can Help Meet This Need**

We urgently need your help to meet this need. Think of the impact of the Gospel on these 1200 inmates – lives changed, families strengthened and hope restored.

### **Here are some things you can do:**

**1.** *If you are sensing a call, we would love to speak with you.*

Contact **James Smoker**, Recruitment Director, at **205-490-1594** or **jsmoker.wecare@gmail.com**

**2.** *You may know someone who would be qualified for this work and can connect us with him.*

Please pray that God would speak to the person He has chosen to minister to these men.

**3.** *If you would be interested in helping to financially support a chaplain for this ministry,*

contact **Steve Martin** at **610-909-9285** or **steve@wecareprogram.org**

# NEWS

## LEADERSHIP TRANSITION



In a public ceremony on August 1, David Landis passed the torch of leadership to Don Metzler as the new President of We Care Program. Landis was first of all honored for his years of leadership with a presentation by Alabama Department of Corrections Associate Commissioner Terrance McDonnell, after which Metzler was commissioned for his new role by former We Care Board Member J. D. Landis.

## LICENSED FOR CHAPLAINCY

We Care Chaplain Irvin Martin was credentialed as a licensed chaplain on August 1, 2014, under the umbrella of Good News Fellowship of Anabaptist Mennonite Churches. Required by the state of Florida, this license will enhance the authority with which Chaplain Martin is able to continue serving at Century Correctional Institution. We gratefully acknowledge the hand of God and His favor in this process.



## FLOMATON STORE EXPANSION

We Care recently purchased the property where our Thrift Store in Flomaton, AL, is located. The purchase enabled us to enlarge both the store sales floor and the area where the merchandise is processed. We trust these changes will allow us to serve our customers better and thus raise additional revenue for supporting the work of our chaplains.

## NEW STORE IN PRATTVILLE, AL

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held on September 24 for our very first Thrift Store in the Montgomery, AL, area. We celebrated with Grand Opening activities on September 26 and 27. Steve Stoltzfus (former chaplain at Frank Lee Youth Center) and his wife Carol are managing this new 10,000 sq. ft. store that will help to expand the name recognition of We Care in the central part of Alabama.



## NEW ARRIVAL

On July 11 Benjamin and Marla Zook welcomed Luella Renae into their family. Big sister Amanda also thinks she's pretty special. The Zooks serve as hosts at the We Care headquarters, and Benjamin is also a part time assistant chaplain at Fountain Correctional Facility.



## DISCOVER

Four young adults recently joined the We Care team as interns for the next several months. Participating in the Discover program this year are Ellie Copenhaver (PA), Ben Nolt (PA), Chaz Hooley (OR), and Tiffani Heisey (PA). The ladies will be splitting time between Montgomery Women's Facility in the Montgomery area and helping out around the headquarters while the men will be serving mainly in Fountain Correctional as well as helping out with work projects in the Atmore area.



## RECORD SETTING READ-A-THON

Previous read-a-thon records exploded with this year's fundraiser. After a restructuring of the way prizes are earned so that all participants can receive something, interest skyrocketed, and excitement in the office rose to new heights as we began receiving packet after packet of read-a-thon forms and money. In the end the combined efforts of 83 readers from 18 states resulted in raising almost \$59,000 for prison ministry! We are indeed thankful to God and grateful for every reader and sponsor for his or her part in enabling men and women in prison to continue to hear the good news of Jesus shared by We Care chaplains.



# Volunteers Needed!

Formerly the We Care Crusade, ReNew Hope has been an annual prison outreach event since 1977. Renew Hope begins with a day of worship and orientation on Sunday in Montgomery, Alabama. Volunteers are assigned to a ministry team to visit in one of over twenty prisons statewide on Monday through Thursday. After a worship and teaching session each morning, team members enter their assigned prison to relate with inmates throughout the day while inviting them to an evening chapel service featuring special music and an evangelist. Each year, hundreds commit themselves to following Christ, some for the very first time. Come willingly and boldly, go home changed and blessed!

For more information and an application, visit our website at

**[www.wecareprogram.org](http://www.wecareprogram.org)**

or call our office at  
**251-368-8818**

**Registration deadline is  
November 25**

**January 25-29, 2015**

# From the Field

## Mike Strehlow

Fountain Correctional Facility  
Atmore, AL



Somehow, in a fallen world populated by sinners, plagued with demons, and complicated by a million variables every second, God, our perfect, loving heavenly Father, sees His will accomplished.

Take one recent day as an example. I was at Fountain Correctional Facility for a meeting with the inmate tutors of the G.E.D. program. For a variety of reasons I was hoping to get out of the prison well before noon.

But it was not to be. For openers, my meeting was delayed by two hours. When I did have the meeting, it went well, and I headed for the door.

Then I discovered I was the only chaplain still in the chapel. The only way for me to leave Fountain right then would have been to clear the chapel of all the inmates and lock the doors. And I was ready to do just that.

Except that it was count time, and the inmates could not go back to their dorms until the count was over.

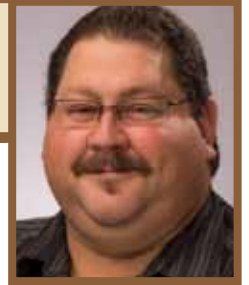
The count ended, and the second it did, an inmate I hadn't seen in a while appeared. He was plainly frightened. I brought him into the office and shut the door. There he told me that his life had been threatened by a gang, that he was being watched and could not go to the captain's office for fear of being attacked, and that the chapel was the only safe place he could think of to flee to. I made a call and two captains and the warden came out to see what the trouble was. In a few minutes the inmate was in protective custody.

None of this would have happened if I had left the prison as planned. The scared inmate would have come to the chapel and found an empty building with a locked door.

Trusting God in all circumstances shouldn't be an exercise in blind faith; it should be common sense. God is greater than we are!

## Bob Depew

Holman Correctional Facility  
Atmore, AL



Walking to the chaplain's office one morning, I prayed, "Lord, make me aware of what you are doing in the prison and how You want me to be involved in it." Throughout the day I felt nudges from the Holy Spirit to listen to the heart of the men rather than just their words.

That afternoon I went to the Faith Dorm for a class. As I sat there, I felt the Holy Spirit nudge me again after class to walk around the dorm praying for the men for revival and repentance. As I began to pray, a tear ran down my cheek. In that moment I realized this prayer walk was more for me to see what God was doing. It was about how God loves people and how He listens to their heart cry. It was about loving the scoundrels, the least of the least, people He made in His image.

In that moment I asked God to renew my love for the men. And with a new vision I saw what He is doing in Holman prison.

## Sharon Bruckhart

Tutwiler Annex  
Wetumpka, AL



"The Lord is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble." Psalm 9:9 (NLT)

Staying late at the chapel one evening, I was there when "KT" came in very angry and crying because of how an officer had treated her. The "old self" wanted to take revenge. The new person God was shaping her to be knew that revenge was not the answer. If God had not prompted me to stay later to give opportunity for some of the ladies to practice singing, the chapel would not have been open for KT to seek refuge.

Another day a lady came to the chapel upset because she had been disrespected. Her "old self" would have immediately begun a fight, but the new creation she was in Christ enabled her to walk away.

## Stories and Testimonies from We Care Chaplains

Still she needed to seek refuge in the chapel to talk through it and spend time in worship. While she was talking to me, another lady came out extremely angry. Her flesh badly wanted to use her fists on another's face, but she expected to go home soon and did not want to get in trouble. Seeking refuge in the chapel, this lady too was able to calm down and to give it over to the Lord.

I thank the Lord that He uses my presence to enable the chapel to be open so that the women can seek refuge in His presence.

### Blaine Copenhaver

Fountain Correctional Facility  
Atmore, AL



**T**he prison system does its best not to put family members in the same facility. However, it does happen occasionally, especially if last names are different. One dad in our Faith Dorm came to me as soon as he heard his son

had arrived in the prison. He begged, "Please put my son in the Faith Dorm. He can't go down the halls. He's too young; he'll get jumped down there."

I tried to explain to him that everyone has to sign up and then wait for his name to work its way up to the top of the list. I can't just put him in. As we continued to talk, he even offered to switch beds with his son so he could be in the safer dorm. Then in final desperation and tears, he appealed to my heart. "Blaine," he said, "father-to-father, please don't let my son get abused down the hall."

At that moment every argument of what was fair and ethical left my mind. I saw clearly a father who had lost every ability to protect his son. All he had left in this world was his voice with a plea to me.

Why, Lord, do I have to stand in as judge and jury today? Why do I feel like the right thing to do is to disregard our Faith Dorm rules to help this man's son? I thought of my own sons. What would I want done? Father-to-father, if I was in the same situation, I would want someone to have mercy on my sons.

## Your Partnership Helps Change Lives!

### Pray

Receive the monthly Prayer Calendar. Call Noreen at 251-368-8818 to sign up.

### Get Involved

**January 25-29, 2015**  
Annual ReNew Hope  
Prison Outreach

**Summer 2015**  
Softball Outreach

**Winter 2015 - Spring 2016**  
Discover - Young Adult Program



**Your gift today of any amount will help enable We Care Chaplains to reach prisoners with the Good News of Jesus Christ.**

### Easy ways you can give...



**Give by mail:**  
Return your gift in the envelope provided.



**Give by telephone:**  
Please call 251-368-8818  
(M-F 8:30 am - 5:00 pm CST)



**Give online:**  
Just visit our website at [www.wecareprogram.org](http://www.wecareprogram.org) and click on "Give Online."



**Become a monthly giver:**  
See the flap on the enclosed envelope or sign up to give online.



*Have you considered including We Care Program in your will?*

To learn more call Steve Martin at 610-909-9285 or go to [www.wecareprogram.org](http://www.wecareprogram.org), click on "Give Online" and then "Legacy Giving."



# THE IMPACT OF ONE!

A MESSAGE FROM DON METZLER, PRESIDENT

don@wecareprogram.org

We Care Program was greatly blessed by a significant increase in read-a-thon participation this year. As I was thinking about this recently, I was struck again with the difference one person can make. I'm sure you can probably think of a long list of names of famous people who have made a huge difference in this world. What about those unsung heroes who have made a significant impact but on a smaller scale?

The We Care Read-a-thon was started by a single reader back in the summer of 2003. That one reader read 6,382 pages and raised \$1,525 that first year. This may not seem like much until

you consider the fact that our first reader was legally blind and had to use a magnifying machine to read. In addition, when you look at the growth of the read-a-thon in the years since then, with this year being the highest number of readers and highest amount of money raised, it really is a big deal.

While our readers and sponsors may or may not visit in prison themselves, every single one is a partner with us by enabling our chaplains to continue the work of *Proclaiming Christ and Discipling Inmates*. Thank you, Mrs. Emma Bender, for being "The One" who had the vision for this program. And thank you to everyone who has read or sponsored a reader along the way. May God bless your efforts with eternal rewards.

**"EVERY SINGLE [READER AND SPONSOR] IS A PARTNER WITH US."**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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