

# The Connection

THE NEWSLETTER OF WE CARE PROGRAM

MAY 2005

## Blessed to Serve

by Bob Depew

**I** imagine a foreign country in your own backyard where children are almost never seen. There are no playgrounds. A dad would love to hear his own children's laughter but can only remember that wonderful sound. Think what it would be like to have no grocery stores or fast food. Where a fence or cement wall prohibits you from ever leaving to go home or to see family and friends. Where it is difficult or impossible to go to your own mother's or father's funeral. And a phone call costs too much for your family to accept the collect call. You may not hear from family for weeks, months, years or never. Or possibly you're told never to call again because you are a disgrace to the rest of the family. You live in a room with 250 other men and have less than two feet between your bunk and the one beside you. The noise is so loud in the dorm that you just want some peace and quiet. You can't get away from the TV, and swearing is normal.

As a chaplain, I talk to a lot of men who have lived in prison for years. This foreign country has become a way of life. Often free world people express distrust or have questions when they find out what I do. Some say that prisoners deserve to be there. My answer to that is often, "But what do you and I deserve?" I've come to realize more and more that men in prison have feelings just like you and me. How would you encourage someone who comes to talk to you with tears running down his face saying, "I'm homesick and miss my wife and children. I know it's my fault I am here. I've asked God to forgive me, but that doesn't change the fact that I will be here four or five more years."

It has been a blessing to work with We Care the past eight months. As I look back at what God has taught me and continues to teach me, I just have to thank Him for the opportunity to do what I do. As I drive to the prison, I always pray, "Lord, please give me divine appointments." I see so many hurting men I don't know where to start, but God is faithful. Some of those divine appointments come through a game of Chess or Horseshoes or other games. I know that may not sound spiritual but if they won't come to me, I will go to them. As friendships develop, the men start talking and sometimes

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*Chaplain Bob Depew visiting in the prison yard*

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***Fulfilling the Great Commission in America's Prisons***

www.wecareprogram.org

## Volume XXXVI, Number 3

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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*Inmate names changed*

# Summer Read-A-Thon

Looking for a way to get involved in sharing the gospel with inmates? Read a book or two or three or ...! This summer's We Care Read-A-Thon gives you the opportunity to read and at the same time to help support our missionary chaplaincy staff as they share the love of Christ with inmates on a daily basis. In addition to reading on your own, consider multiplying your effectiveness by promoting and coordinating the event in your church or Sunday School class. Encourage friends to read. Ask friends, family, and business acquaintances who aren't participating as readers to sponsor you.

*Instructions and the necessary form are on the insert in this newsletter.*

Feel free to make as many copies as needed.

During last year's read-a-thon, twenty-five readers ages 7-79, located in six states, read 399 books and raised \$9,212.66. Join us by reading and/or sponsoring readers, and let's see if we can at least double that amount this year.

*Your participation does make a difference!*

## Now Accepting Applications

**WANTED:  
YOUNG  
ADULTS**

**Who:** Young Adults ages 20 and older  
**When:** October 05 thru March 06  
**Where:** Alabama  
**Why:** I was in prison, and you came to me. - *Jesus*  
**Cost:** Will need to raise some program expenses and have health insurance coverage (room, board, and monthly allowance provided)

For more information contact David Landis:  
E-mail: [dave@wecareprogram.org](mailto:dave@wecareprogram.org)  
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**What:** A six-month program designed for a team of young adults who will be placed in various prisons to work alongside our staff prison chaplains. Emphasis will be placed on spiritual growth through the development of inter-personal relationships with those who do not know Christ, discipleship of new believers, and fellowship with the Body of Christ within prison walls. In addition, the team will be assigned to various community service projects and be encouraged to grow in personal spiritual disciplines.

Quotes from Team '04-'05...

**"Stretching - Growing - Fulfilling - Challenging - Life-changing"**



*You Can Make A Difference! . . . In the Lives of Prisoners*

# We Care Read-A-Thon

*Supports Missionary Prison Chaplaincy Workers*

Here's How It Works...

- 1 Complete reader information form below. (please print) **Set your goals.** (other side)
- 2 Ask family and friends to sponsor your reading efforts. (per book or donation)
- 3 Collect the books you want to read. (age appropriate please)
- 4 Beginning July 1, READ, READ, READ! (As you finish each book, note finish date on reading list form.)  
You must finish reading books by July 31.
- 5 Beginning August 1, collect pledges from sponsors in the form of a check or money order made out to WE CARE PROGRAM. After collecting all pledges, put in envelope along with PLEDGE FORM and send to: **We Care Program, 5825 Highway 21, Atmore AL 36502**
- 6 After We Care Program receives your pledges, we will send a receipt to your sponsors for their tax-deductible gifts. (checks and money orders only)
- 7 Pledges received by August 31 will qualify reader to be eligible for prizes. (gift certificates to Christian Book Distributors)  
Ages up to 12 - Most money raised - 1<sup>st</sup> place \$50 gift certificate, 2<sup>nd</sup> place \$25 gift certificate  
Ages 13 and up - Most money raised - 1<sup>st</sup> place \$100 gift certificate, 2<sup>nd</sup> place \$50 gift certificate
- 8 All readers collecting over \$150 in pledges will receive a free T-Shirt from We Care Program.

*Questions? Call Noreen at We Care Program 251-368-8818*

We Care Read-A-Thon

*Reader Info*

Reader's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Church: \_\_\_\_\_

T-Shirt Size (If raised over \$150) *Please check one size*

Youth Medium     Youth Large     Adult Small     Adult Medium     Adult Large     Adult X-Large

Feel free to make additional copies of this form as needed.

# We Care Read-A-Thon

## *Sponsor List*

Sponsor's Name	Amount Per Book	or	Donation	Money Collected
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				
(use another sheet for additional sponsors) My Goal: \$ _____ Total Money Collected				

# We Care Read-A-Thon

## *Reading List*

Book Title	Date Completed	Book Title	Date Completed
1.		13.	
2.		14.	
3.		15.	
4.		16.	
5.		17.	
6.		18.	
7.		19.	
8.		20.	
9.		21.	
10.		22.	
11.		23.	
12.		24.	
(use another sheet for additional books) My Goal: _____ books Total Books Read			

# From the Field

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## **Birmingham, AL**

### **Donaldson Correctional Facility**

One day I went into the toughest block in the prison to do my usual one-on-one work in the “trenches.” As I sat there at a table, a tall strong young man approached me and we started talking. We had a very good conversation. He opened up and started talking about his life and his troubled past. He is not an outgoing person, and in his dealings with people he has earned a reputation for being rather nasty. His daddy had been killed when he was about 10, and he started getting into trouble with the law around that same time. I began to share the Gospel with him. As I was telling him about God’s goodness, I asked him to tell me about one good thing that he had experienced in his life. He said, “Well, for right now the fact that you are here talking with me is one of the really good things that I have experienced in my life.”

- Brian Miller

## **Atmore, AL**

### **Fountain Correctional Facility**

One short year ago, a Bible college at Fountain Correctional Center was an “It sure would be great if we could have a school here someday...” kind of idea. Six months ago, we considered it to be a long-term goal. Four months ago it was a plan with a timetable.

Now? As of April 6, 2005, the time of this writing, Fountain of Life Bible College has just finished its first mid-term exam week. Judging from the quality of the homework, papers, and tests we have received so far, the 25 inmates in the school are not only sticking with their Bible courses, they are excelling at them. If they can keep this up, and by the grace of God they will keep it up, we’ll be passing out some A’s at report card time in June.

When God opens doors for ministry, we who make up His Church need to go through them as decisively and confidently as we know how to. In the case of Fountain of Life Bible College, the results speak for themselves. - Mike Strehlow

## **Montgomery, AL**

### **Tutwiler Prison for Women**

Before coming to We Care I had doubted that the Lord could supply my needs, but recently God showed me otherwise.

While I was driving to Tutwiler one day, my car had a flat tire. God met my need by bringing two businessmen to change it for me. God in the flesh! I thanked them and asked God to bless them. At Wal-Mart the following day I was told that the tire cannot be fixed. Initially thinking that I would have to pay for a new one, I remembered that these tires were bought at Wal-Mart and were still under warranty. I paid only \$1.70 for the new tire.

I’ve also been encouraged at Tutwiler. During a conversation with one of the inmates, she told me how she hurt herself to get rid of the pain of the abuse she has suffered. I didn’t suffer the same kind of abuse she did, but I could relate on a smaller scale. She expressed appreciation to be able to talk to someone who understands.

Sometimes I wonder if I am doing any good at the prison. Then God sends someone to encourage me and make me realize that He is faithful in meeting my needs in more ways than one. - Anna Miller

### **Staton Correctional Facility**

Have you ever been part of an organization, a church, a sports team, or even a family, and they let you down or made you feel ashamed to be a part of it? It is a great comfort to know that when we lean on Jesus He will never let us down. God also tells us that He is not partial to those He saves. Romans 10:11-13 says that our backgrounds, our skin color, our sin, nothing about us or our past can stand in the way of being saved.

I was reminded of this in a very real way during our last baptism in the prison. “Richard” was a member of the Arian Nation, a white supremacy group. He walked away from and abandoned those ways and those that he had associated with for years. He knows that he is no longer that old person. I was touched after

his baptism when I saw him hug “Matt,” a born-again Christian who used to be a member of a black street gang. When I saw them embrace, I saw two men who in the past were enemies. Their backgrounds don’t matter anymore. They are now brothers in Christ!! Praise God that “there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, the same Lord is Lord of all, and richly blesses all who call on Him”!

- Carl Carpenter

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## **Blessed...** (Cont. from pg. 1)

come out to chapel services. Other times those divine appointments come through Bible Studies, chapel services or counseling times. I am learning, as Gal. 6:1-4 tells us, to “bear one another’s burdens, to gently restore, not to be proud in your own abilities, and to examine your own work.” At the end of the day I have to thank God for bringing the right men to me that day.

When I first got to Atmore Work Center, there was nothing going on in the chapel, as there had been no chaplain there for some time. The first week there were three men out for the service. Now attendance is regularly 17 - 28 men in a one-room chapel that seats 30. At one evening service, there were 37 men. Some stood for the entire service.

Though prison life is hard and frustrating, God is blessing the Christian brothers. I am blessed to be a part of it.

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*Bob Depew joined the chaplaincy staff of We Care Program when he, along with his wife Polly and three children, moved to Atmore, AL, from Hutchinson, KS, in August, 2004. Since that time he has been serving as chaplain at Atmore Work Center. He also takes care of maintenance and handyman duties at the two We Care Economy Shops. The family attends Grace Fellowship.*



# Perspectives



David R. Landis  
President

Atonement, justification, ransom, salvation, reconciliation, adoption, regeneration, conviction, conversion, and sanctification. Big words with deep meanings. For many lifetime faithful church attendees, these words are a common part of the vocabulary used in preaching, teaching, and discipleship programs. Sadly, for many others who have not been “brought up” in the church, most of these words might as well be another language. This is true particularly in prisons where the percentage of previously unchurched people is much higher.

While the focus of many in the field of prison ministry is primarily evangelistic in nature, we feel that our distinctive mission is to expound the truths of these and many other words and concepts through the faithful witness of our dedicated chaplaincy staff who daily visit, counsel, encourage, teach, pray with, and build relationships with men and women in prison. Our prayer is that these fundamental concepts, faithfully taught and exemplified, will solidify the foundations of those who have chosen to follow Christ and are now walking with Him in prison. Ultimately, we believe this kind of ministry will produce mature men and women of God who not only can rejoice in their salvation, but will grow to become Spirit-led examples of God’s grace not only in prison but also on the streets.

Studies have shown that men and women who have been discipled while in prison have a lower recidivism rate than those who have not. This should not be a surprise to anyone, but so often if we are not careful, we get caught up in the latest program, technique, book, or seminar that we think has the “edge” and for sure the answer needed for our particular cause. Don’t get me wrong. Some of these approaches are very effective, but lets not forget to teach the basic tenants of the Christian faith. Christ’s commission was simple. Make disciples, baptize, AND teach new converts to “observe all things that I (Jesus) have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:20)

Is this approach more labor intensive? Are we spending more time with fewer people? Yes, but I would rather see a smaller number of converts in prison become well grounded in their faith, get out of prison, and stay out than see a larger number of overnight success stories who are released only to return to prison again.

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

# The Bottom Line

We appreciate those of you who regularly read this paragraph out of concern for the financial well-being of We Care Program. As you can see by the graph on the right, God continues to bless us with strong financial support. Your continuing partnership is appreciated as we head towards the traditionally lean summer months.

9 months ending March 31



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