

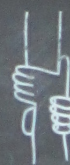


the connection

WINTER 2014




Then & Now

 **JIREH**
SANITATION
566-8040



*How Serving with We Care Program
Impacts Future Direction*

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Then & Now

How Jireh Sanitation Came To Be

by David R. Landis

Since 1970, three hundred forty-two individuals have given a portion of their lives to serve in a ministry capacity with We Care Program. While it is true that the focus of this organization has been and continues to be focused primarily on proclaiming Christ and discipling inmates, there is no question that for many who have served, God has used their experience at We Care to tremendously impact the shaping of their spiritual mindset and future direction.

Tim and Karen Miller are one example of this influence. After working in the RV industry for a number of years, Tim and his family moved from Indiana to Alabama in 1992 for Tim to serve as an assistant chaplain at J. O. Davis Correctional Facility. Tim's decision came about partly because of hearing We Care's founder, Martin Weber, speak in a church meeting several years earlier. The Millers were a part of the We Care family from 1992 to 1998. After their term of service, they sensed God leading them to relocate to a ranch in Tyler, Texas, where they assisted in a discipleship and rehabilitation ministry.

With time, and needing funds to provide for their family and further ministry, they felt God directing them

to begin a rural sanitation service. Initially the business was located on the ranch and served as an opportunity for the students to earn some

extra income and live out the things they were learning in the program. Tim came to Karen after praying about a name for their business and discovered that God had placed the name "Jireh" on both of their hearts. "Jireh" is the Hebrew word for "God will provide."

Jireh Sanitation began with nine customers and a pickup truck. Through God's continued blessing, the influence of seasoned mentors, faithful employees and a lot of hard work, Jireh has grown into what it is today – a successful business that

now serves over 4,500 customers in Smith County, Texas. Currently, about half of Jireh's employees are men who have served time in prison.

However, the service aspect of the business is only part of the story. Part of the vision for Jireh Sanitation is to be a vessel God can use to provide resources to local, national, and overseas charitable organizations. We Care Program is blessed to be a recipient of their partnership.

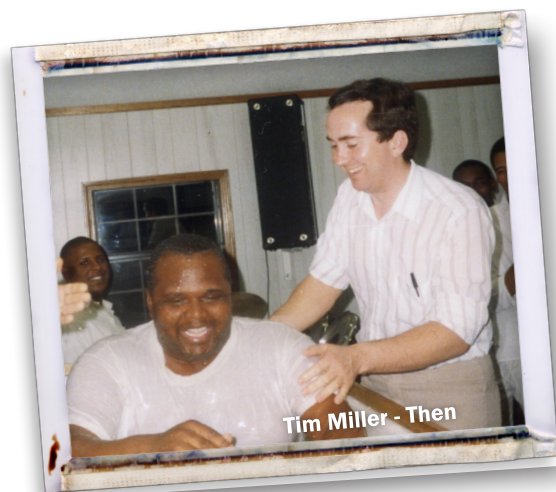
When asked how his time at We Care has impacted his ongoing vocational and ministry decisions, Tim specifically noted the need while serving as chaplain to seek God daily in difficult situations. Learning how to do this has helped Tim to hear God more clearly in day to day operations. Walking with integrity in the workforce and as a businessman has served as a powerful example to those who have been privileged to be a part of the Jireh team.

Truly, the hand of God has been upon the Miller family, both in leading them to We Care and now as they serve their community through Jireh Sanitation. May His grace continue to cover their family and their ministry.



"I am not the same person I was when I first walked in to minister behind bars. I really thought that I was going to change lives, and even though I know God used me (in spite of myself), I was the one who was really changed."

– Tim Miller



Alumni Survey

Yields Encouraging Updates

“Challenging.” “A time of growth.” “Stretching.” “Life-changing.” “Learning to depend on God.” Words and phrases such as these surfaced repeatedly in the responses to a recent survey asking former We Care staff members to describe the impact their term of service had on their lives. As highlighted in this issue’s cover story (and confirmed over and over in the survey), investing a period of time in ministry with We Care could, and most likely will, radically affect the trajectory of a person’s future. The following responses are examples of such testimonies.

Dennis Nolt ('81 - '82, '89 - '00) – Serving with We Care challenged me to share more freely wherever I go.

Dale Mast ('81 - '82) – It was during that time I came to understand my spiritual gifts, and it settled in my mind the direction God would take me.

Alvin Yoder ('70 - '74) – It helped confirm my calling for a life of ministry.

Glenn Weber ('97 - '00) – It was during our time with We Care that I began a journey of pursuing and solidifying my Christian “belief systems.”



Jeff Burger ('89 - '95) – Currently: Chaplain, Belmont Corr. Institution, Belmont, OH

Fannie Yoder ('88 - '90) – When I came home, I was hoping to get into the same kind of ministry close to home, but that never materialized. Then the Lord said, “Look around you, there are hurting women right around you.”

Delmar Weaver ('81 - '82, '89 - '92) – Nothing has impacted my life like answering the call to serve in prison ministry. It started a spiritual life-changing fire that has changed my life and our entire family life to this day.

Another interesting and encouraging discovery is the number of former staff persons who have moved on to serve in other ministry settings. (We readily recognize, though, the equal value in serving in “non-full-time” ministry settings as well.) Based on the responses we received, our unofficial tally would indicate that 75% of male alumni have at one point since leaving We Care served in a pastoral position, with 50% still serving as pastors. Many alumni mentioned that time served with We Care influenced their career decisions. The list below is illustrative of current ministry positions held by alumni.



Arlin Schrock ('74 - '87, '90 - '96) – Currently: VP, Choice Books of Gulf States, Mobile, AL

Stephen Russell ('81) – Instructor at Faith Builders, Guys Mills, PA

Kevin Horning ('80 - '81) – Pastor, New Life Fellowship Church, Ephrata, PA

Marietta Yoder ('84 - '88) – Teacher, Counselor, Good News Clinic, El Salvador

Leonard & Marlene Rutt ('90 - '91) – Pastor, Hammer Creek Mennonite Church, Lititz, PA

Fannie Yoder ('88 - '90) – Counselor, Birthright Crisis Pregnancy Center, Hutchinson, KS

Randy & Eunice Bruckhart ('03 - '06) – Church Planters, Sanford, ME

Mark & Starla Schlabach ('89 - '91) – Pastor and Counselor, Life Counseling Ministries, Conestoga, PA

Dale Mast ('81 - '82) – Pastor, New Holland Mennonite Church, New Holland, SC

Alvin Yoder ('70 - '74) – Pastor, Pigeon River Mennonite Church, Pigeon, MI

Anthony Swartzendruber ('83) – Pastor, Mennonite Christian Fellowship, Atmore, AL

Alumni Survey *Continued*

And finally, what advice do our alumni have to give to those who may be considering a term of service with We Care Program? If you find yourself sensing a nudge in this direction, may you be encouraged, challenged, and inspired by those who have served in one way or another over the years.

Dennis Nolt ('81 - '82, '89 - '00) – It will force your faith to become much more practical and down to earth.

John & Arlene Hurst ('83 - '84) – You will NEVER regret it. The times we served with We Care and other ministries were the best years of our lives.

Aaron Martin ('83 - '84, '89 - '91) – Just take the plunge and go. When we were considering serving with We Care the hardest part was making the decision. After that it was such a blessing, and I must say they were the best years of our life.



Carl Carpenter ('02 - '07) – Currently: Pastor, Conestoga Valley Church of Christ, Lancaster, PA

Marvin Reed ('83 - '84) – Accept God's call on your life; it will change your life forever.

Alvin Bontrager ('88 - '89) – Go for it. It will make you grow spiritually.

Jim Hochstetler ('85, '88 - '89) – Beware! It may change the course of your life!

Randy Bruckhart ('03 - '06) – Money cannot buy what you will gain.

Mary Musser ('93 - '94) – It's a wonderful opportunity to get out of your comfort zone and take a leap of faith. It will change you and grow you. You can make a difference for eternity!

Sheldon Histan ('10 - '11) – Prepare for life change because it will happen in one form or another.

The Greater Impact



BY STEVE MARTIN
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Over the past two years, I have shared with many of you regarding the work We Care Program is doing in prisons. Numerous inmates have told

us how chaplains and volunteers have spoken into their lives. There is no doubt many have been impacted by your willingness to serve "the least of these" in prison.

The other side of the picture are stories I've heard from you about how participating with We Care in prison ministry has made a difference in your own life. Many of you have mentioned that your opinions of inmates have drastically changed. Others have told me of being challenged to become involved in ministries in your

home communities. Some of you have made drastic life changes by moving to Alabama or other places in order to enter full-time ministry. Most share how your walk with God has been influenced by relating to inmates and other volunteers. I believe that whenever we are willing to serve others, God uses these opportunities to effect change in our own lives.

When you support We Care financially, you are not only providing the opportunity for inmates to hear the Gospel and be discipled, you are also opening the hearts and minds of future missionaries and leaders. We invite your continued participation in building the kingdom of God in Alabama, all over the United States, and throughout the world.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Ephesians 3:21-22)

Have you considered including We Care Program in your will?

To learn more, call **Steve Martin** at 610-909-9285 or check out our online giving page at **www.wecareprogram.org**, click on "Give Online" and then "Legacy Giving."

PRISON MINISTRY SUMMIT HELD

About 50 participants gathered at We Care headquarters on September 26 and 27 for We Care's first Prison Ministry Summit. Along with a number of breakout electives, main session keynote speakers included Steve Longenecker, Troy Walker, Daniel Martin, and Chaplain Brian Eskelinen – all involved at various levels of ministry to the incarcerated in the state of Alabama. The summit challenged, strengthened, and affirmed us in the work that God has called us to – particularly in regards to discipleship. Though much of the content and interaction focused around the theme "From Converts to Disciples," it became evident by the end of our time together that one cannot be an effective discipler if he or she is not willing to be continually disciplined by God.



Summit guests enjoy a break-time conversation.



Spring Tour

March 2 -13, 2014

Featuring

THE BONTRAGER FAMILY
&
MINISTRY UPDATES

Sunday, March 2, 6:00 pm

Service at New Holland Mennonite Church, Batesburg, SC

Monday, March 3, 6:30 pm

Banquet at Dayton Mennonite Church, Dayton, VA

Tuesday, March 4, 6:00 pm

Dessert Reception at Calvary Chapel, Farmville, VA

Wednesday, March 5, 7:00 pm

Service at Powhatan Mennonite Church, Powhatan, VA

Thursday, March 6, 7:00 pm

Service at Landis Homes, Lititz, PA

Friday, March 7, 6:30 pm

Banquet at Yoder's Restaurant, New Holland, PA

Saturday, March 8, 10:00 am

Service at Souderton Mennonite Home, Souderton, PA

Saturday, March 8, 6:30 pm

Banquet at Franconia Heritage, Franconia, PA

Sunday, March 9, 10:15 am

Service at Perkiomenville Mennonite Church, Perkiomenville, PA

Sunday, March 9, 7:00 pm

Concert at Ephrata Business Center, Ephrata, PA

Monday, March 10, 6:30 pm

Banquet at Amish Door, Wilmot, OH

Tuesday, March 11, 6:30 pm

Banquet at Der Dutchman, Plain City, OH

Wednesday, March 12, 7:00 pm

Service at Griner Mennonite Church, Middlebury, IN

Thursday, March 13, 6:30 pm

Banquet at Yoder's Kitchen, Arthur, IL

Be on the lookout for event postcards coming to your mailbox soon, or go to www.wecareprogram.org for more information.

From the Field

David S. Landis

J. O. Davis Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL



“Hey, Chap, I did it!”
“Did what?” I asked.
“I got my GED!”
“Praise the Lord!” I responded.

I was excited as he was!

Last May I made a transition in chaplaincy from Holman to J. O. Davis. My duties are now more administrative in nature. While that might feel less spiritual at times, it also serves as a means to minister to people that I would not have otherwise engaged.

So what do I do? I schedule services for volunteers. I write memos to the warden to ask for permission for special events. Frequent questions come to me such as “Chap, do you have the phone number for the rehab center in Mobile?” or, “Can I have a piece of paper?” At times, “Can you put me on the marriage list?”

Every day a steady flow of men come into the chapel or into my office. Some of them just want prayer about an upcoming parole hearing. Some simply want to talk about the grief they are experiencing over the death of a family member. Some request a Bible study course, or they want to know how a word in the Bible reads in the Greek. Others share with me their dreams for the future. Sometimes we enjoy a laugh at the differences in the cultures we grew up in.

Somewhere in all this is a GED class that many times flounders because of the variables of prison life. And yet, another one makes it and excitedly announces, “Hey, Chap, I did it! I got my GED!”

Wilma Mullet

Ohio Reformatory for Women
Marysville, OH



Someone stole my Arby’s bag from the chapel refrigerator. Granted, it contained only two small sandwiches, but I was going to have one of those Jr. Roast Beefs that day and the other the next day.

I can identify with struggles for most sins, but stealing never really was an issue for me. I had trouble understanding how anyone could rationalize picking up an article simply because 1) it was there, 2) it had no

name was on it, and 3) no one was around to catch you. Then Nancy told me her story.

When she and her brother were around six or seven, as they drove around and saw something their mother liked, a nice lawn ornament or other item, she would tell them, “Look closely at what is sitting around it. We’ll come back after dark and you two will go and get it. We might need it sometime.”

Nancy is a Christian now, and she saw an orange lying on a bunkie’s bed. She reached down to grab it, knowing full well that God says He will provide for her. BUT she thought He needed her help. Almost instantly she “heard” Him ask her, “Did I need your help when I created all the animals?”

“No.”

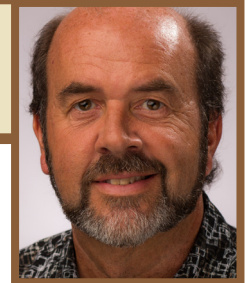
“Did I need your help when I made the whole world?”

“No.” At that point she understood: I really do not need to steal to help God provide food for me. And she left the orange on the bunkie’s bed. Don’t you know, God and I were proud of her!

As for the Arby’s sandwiches...I like to think I’m a wee bit skinnier without them!

Irvin Martin

Century Corr. Institution
Century, FL



“Chaplain, if you have a minute, I need to talk to you. It seems like you really care, and I need to talk to someone.”

Bill went on to describe the common dilemma shared by so many in prison, of the unfairness and harshness of the sentence he was given. I thought to myself, “Oh, I see where this is going, another one who says, ‘I didn’t really do anything that bad to deserve all this.’”

However, as he continued to share his story of a broken life filled with much bitterness and regret, not only of the crime he had committed, but also of all the things he had done leading up to it, my heart went out to him. Bill wept as he talked about his dashed hopes and dreams as a musician and about missing his family.

For inmates to be separated from their families for so many years always feels so harsh and bitter to me, and it does seem sometimes that their punishment is more than they deserve. I know, however, that life is difficult, and most of the time we don’t get to choose what trials God allows. When we turn to Him, though, He is always able

Stories and Testimonies from We Care Chaplains

to redeem whatever circumstances we find ourselves in.

As I shared with Bill, I thought of Joseph in the Bible. God redeemed not only Joseph's own life, but provision was made for his entire family through the redemption process of false accusation leading to imprisonment, which in turn led to his becoming governor over the land of Egypt. I prayed with Bill that he would recognize the plan of redemption God has for his present situation. Through tears he thanked me and smiled.

There is hope, for Bill and all of us, no matter what we are going through!

David Bucher

Donaldson Corr. Facility
Bessemer, AL



I will never forget the feeling I had as I dialed Troy Walker's number. I was calling to notify him of the approval of his application to come back to Donaldson as a chapel volunteer. Out for over four years, including receiving a pardon, Troy had not seen his friends at Donaldson for over six years. When I told Troy of the approval, he exclaimed, "You never saw anybody so excited to get back into prison!!"

Normally someone's return to prison is not considered coming "home." We see a lot of guys come back, but they certainly don't want to be there! For Troy, it was a homecoming, spiritually speaking, for Donaldson was the place where he became rooted in the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word.

As we made plans for him to enter the institution, the excitement level for both of us greatly increased. When the time finally arrived, we walked together from the front gate to the chapel. Several staff members met him and with varying positive responses, remembered him and "welcomed him back."

Walking into the chapel, where he had faithfully attended services as a resident, Troy was overcome with emotion. This was the place where he had grown in Christ in so many ways, and to be back home was beyond words. I stood teary eyed in the corner of the room as he walked around in wonder, shedding tears of joy in awe of our God's faithfulness.

Our excitement continued to mount as we awaited the arrival of residents coming to attend the service. These are men (many Christian brothers) with whom Troy served years of time. Tears flowed and hugs abounded as they

came one by one and were reunited. Again, all I could do was stand teary eyed, watching and marveling at God's faithfulness.

Matt, one of Troy's dear inmate friends, had the honor of introducing him to the audience of 90 guys. Then Troy spoke to the assembled group. There was hardly a dry eye in the crowd as the Lord used him in a mighty way to speak truths to men who knew beyond any doubt the speaker understood what they are dealing with, because he used to be where they are.

While I am glad to be a part of this ministry, even after 11 years, there are times I am really glad. Occasions such as that evening are the really glad times! Praise the Lord!!

Lester Huber

Fountain Corr. Facility
Atmore, AL



I enjoy staying in contact with some of my "mentorees" after they have been released from prison. Gary has been out over four years, and we touch base several times a month. A while back in one of our phone conversations, I detected a sense of desperation in relation to maintenance needs on his 80-foot mobile home. After personally surveying the situation, I was able to form a group of ten men who were willing to spend a Saturday doing everything from painting the exterior, putting skirting around the trailer, building a set of steps, fixing the AC, patching the roof, and doing some minor plumbing. Gary was totally overwhelmed with amazement and gratitude. He got very emotional when it was mentioned that he went from having one brother to having eleven brothers in one day!

After most everyone had left, he invited me into his trailer. In a back room he showed me a broken and discarded rocking chair. The hand-carved chair had been brought from Turkey by his father years ago. Gary explained that he wasn't able to fix the chair, and if I could fix it, it would be mine.

The chair has been totally refurbished, and Gary has had an opportunity to sit in it in our home. Plans are in place for him to be our guest again before long. Gary appeared to be greatly blessed by being able to share a personal possession with me, and I was greatly honored as well.

Continue to pray for Gary as he seeks God's will for his daily life.



“ON THE WAY”

A MESSAGE FROM DAVID R. LANDIS, PRESIDENT

dave@wecareprogram.org

In reading the story of Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts 8 recently, I thought of the work that We Care chaplains do on a daily basis (and have done for over 40 years). If I were to paraphrase the story to fit our context, it would go something like this:

Some time ago, “Mark” and his family sensed that God was going to be taking them in a new direction. Their journey led them to We Care Program, where Mark began serving as a prison chaplain. One day Mark noticed an inmate sitting in the back of the chapel reading his Bible. It was evident he was seeking God. Mark felt impressed to go over to the man and asked him if he understood what he was reading. The inmate, with some frustration, admitted that he was struggling with the passage. So he asked Mark to explain it to him.

Mark was thrilled when he saw the passage was an Old Testament prophecy about Jesus. Using this section of scripture as a starting point, he shared the Good News.

It was soon clear that the man’s eyes had been opened to the Gospel because he asked about the possibility of being baptized. Mark, with the state chaplain’s permission, was happy to baptize this new brother in the faith.

As often happens in the prison environment, their paths soon went in different directions. The man, now full of joy in Christ, was transferred to another prison. Mark, with more opportunities than he could ever respond to, faithfully continued his day-to-day ministry. Whatever the future held for Mark – one thing was sure. He would share the Gospel with anyone who had ears to hear.

Several details stand out to me in the story of Philip and the Ethiopian, but two relate to the subject of this newsletter. 1) God gave a clear call – with directions. 2) Philip’s response is recorded thus, “So he started out...” What a beautiful picture of obedience. As the story goes, Philip met the Ethiopian “on the way.” May we all be attentive to God’s voice, be obedient to His directions, and be ready to share about Jesus as we journey “on the way.”

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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