



MINISTRY OF HOPE

AUGUST 2022 ISSUE

HEARTBEAT

This year at a glance...

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TIME CAN REALLY FLY...

When Lynn Michie made the decision to return to the classroom for a master's in school counseling years ago, she told me that she wanted to leave well, and she did. One thing she made sure was in place before her departure was a sabbatical policy. Because of the good work of that board and under the leadership of Margaret Whitt, full-time chaplains with the Ministry of Hope are awarded a three-month sabbatical every five years. I took the first one in 2017.

When I realized in early January this year that five years had already passed, I gave serious consideration to what I should do. I heard from my pastor, Sara Wilcox, and some other clergy friends about this idea of splitting a sabbatical. Remembering how I felt returning in 2017 – like it had never even happened! I approached our chairperson, Lauronda Morrow, with the idea of taking six weeks this summer and another six weeks next winter. With her support, I sent my proposal to the Ministry of Hope board along with the long-range plan of retiring in the summer of 2024.

In my mind was the idea of “leaving well” and using these two half-sabbaticals to determine just how that might look. I didn't make any big plans, but the few things I hoped to do just didn't work out for sabbatical number one. It became relatively clear that I needed six weeks of rest, time with family, and renewed relationships with a few close friends. Maybe in the winter I will be able to work on my long-range goals.

I did accomplish a couple of things: I spent many hours watching YouTube videos and teaching myself a little bit about watercolor. The process of just dabbling in this art form continues to bring relaxation and a spiritual connection I cannot explain. My other project was a bit more frustrating! I wanted to purchase a chest of drawers and turn it into an art project. It was a project alright! I started over twice and gave up on it being anything very crafty. Several times it came very close to going up in flames, but my patient husband encouraged me to hang in there and not use it for fire wood. Today it graces my little home office, reminding me to never give up.

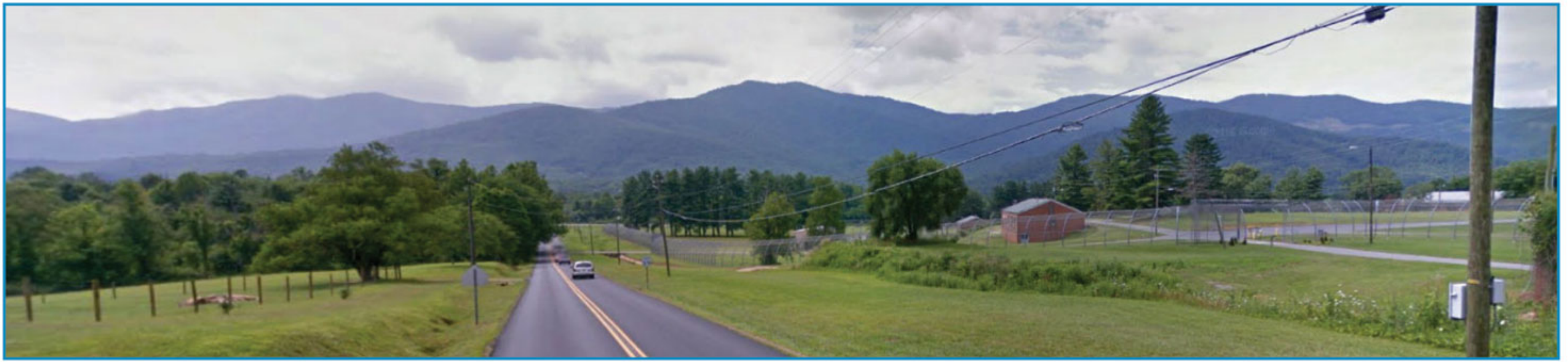
The project came to mind this morning as I facilitated the opening session of our eighth Houses of Healing: Inner Power and Freedom class. This program came out of that first sabbatical back in 2017. The book was written and the course was designed by Robin Casarjian. It is evidence-based and used in prisons nationwide. Like the old \$35 chest of drawers, we all have stuff hidden away. Many hours of sanding and stripping finish and more sanding did not remove all of the scars. However, the chest no longer sits in a thrift store, waiting to be wanted. It has been restored to its original purpose and has been made new. **What an honor to watch women work hard to strip away the layers and layers of accumulated shame and grief as they discover the true Self, the person they were created to be.** An axiom of the recovery community is, “We are only as sick as our secrets.” When those secrets are exposed to the Light, healing begins.

Every person and organization who supports the Ministry of Hope sits in the room with us as emotional healing happens. **It would not be possible without you.**

With gratitude,
Carol Dalton



*Carol Dalton,
Chaplain*



A MESSAGE FROM INSIDE THE GATES

by Jessica K., WCCW Resident

I am currently incarcerated at Western Correctional Center for Women. I have about eighteen months left on a seventy-month sentence. I find myself here because of an addiction, culminating in a series of very poor choices on my part. I come from a good family, from a nice place where nothing of note ever happens. People look at me and say "You don't look like you belong in prison." My reply is that no one does; no one was created to be locked up.

I am from Highlands, NC, a tiny town on a mountain plateau on the NC/GA/SC line. I am about the only person from Highlands that I can think of that has been to prison. Like, ever. I guess you could say for that, I'm infamous. At the time of my arrest, I had just lost my husband of ten years. Two weeks after his loss, I was facing the loss of my freedom as well. I was so angry: angry at myself, angry at the system, angry at God. After sentencing, I was sent to prisons all over the state: North Carolina Correctional in Raleigh, Neuse Correctional in Goldsboro, and Anson Correctional in Lanesboro, places that to me couldn't have been more different from home. I felt lost in a sea of women. I felt so alone, that no one saw me. My anger that I was holding onto began to subside and morph into an overwhelming sense of loneliness. I became more depressed than ever before and slept up to eighteen hours per day. I behaved as though there was nothing to live for.

Then, I transferred here to Western. The day I transferred, as soon as I saw my beloved mountains of Western North Carolina come into view, I felt like I was coming home even though I was not free. One of the first nights I was here, it was around Thanksgiving, an announcement was made inviting everyone to the chapel. I hadn't dared go to the chapel, or even to church for that matter, in years, but there was something in my subconscious urging me to go. Walking outside for the first time at night in years was liberating. Looking at the Christmas lights around me and breathing in the crisp, dark air was almost magical. Those are feelings that I can explain without much effort, but the feeling I got when I entered the chapel does not easily lend itself to description with words. I have had a complicated relationship with God and with religion in general. I don't know what God looks like, but I can say one thing for sure: when I walked into the chapel that first night I thought "God is here."

Since that first night at the chapel I have come a very long way. I am sober now for three years and I am currently attending AB Tech working on an Associate's Degree in Human Services. I participate in about every class and join every group that I can. My time in this prison has changed the way that I think about myself and the way that I function in the world around me. For the three years that I have been here I've known the chapel is there if I need it, the chaplains there if I need them. Although at times we experienced a unit-wide lockdown due to COVID-19 precautions, the chaplains were always here doing what they could to make sure that we know that we are cared about. Though most religious services as we knew them before were on hold, our mentorship group kept going, albeit in a different way. Throughout the pandemic I have often admired the dedication and determination of our chaplains in keeping up with us and our lives. We have been through so much since I got here. Just one year ago we thought we were closing down completely; we lost half of the ladies that lived here in a period of two days. Through that too, the chaplains were there for us and planned to remain so, up until the point that they closed the doors on us all. Luckily, that didn't happen. All this time, all through these ups and downs, the chaplains have been here, worshipping, having meetings of all sorts, providing ladies with a means to read to their children or giving out greeting cards, welcome bags, words of encouragement, maybe just a smile. Now things are opening up; we can all meet together in the chapel again, volunteers are returning, and churches are coming back. Like the first blooms of spring after a very long winter, life is returning here.

When I first got here, I let the labels that others put on me determine how I saw myself. Drug-addict, loser, felon, offender. When everyone around you seems to look at you with suspicion, it is easy to lose who you are. The chaplains and Ministry of Hope volunteers don't look at me like that. They see me as I see myself. Mother, daughter, sister, friend.



THE FAMILY REUNIFICATION CENTER

We are happy to announce that WCCW can now provide approximately 150 families to be "reunited," and can begin and or enhance their healing while the mother is still incarcerated. This forecasted count is determined by the actual number of mothers in any given year at WCCW, and based on 2019 pre-Covid visitation numbers.

Many mothers who qualify to move to a minimum security prison (WCCW) have had a difficult choice to make up until now. Raleigh's correctional center, NCCIW, is the only women's prison with a "family friendly" visitation program and center like the one we have created. Until now, a mother has had to choose between their own well-being in moving to a less restrictive environment for themselves or staying where they can be with their children more often. Creating this Reunification Center at WCCW enables both the mother and the children to thrive in a minimum security setting which is far less traumatic than the institutional visitation at present.

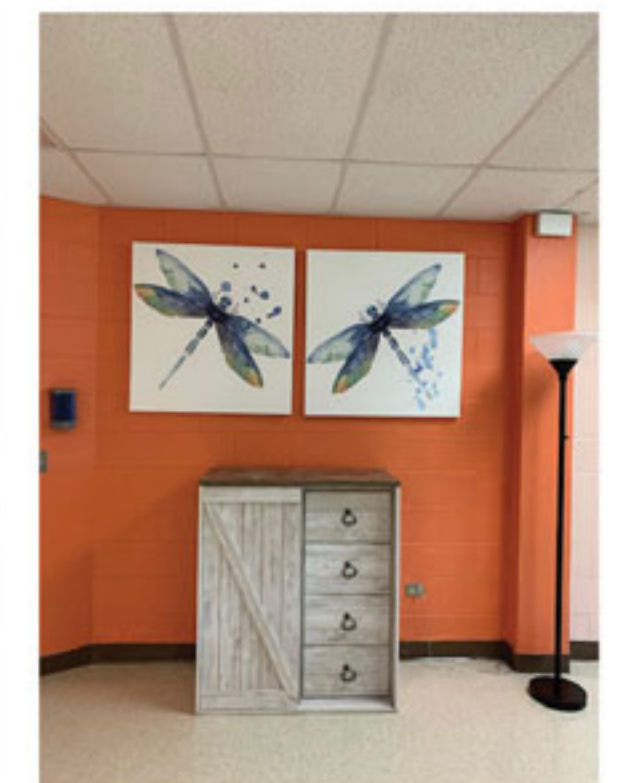
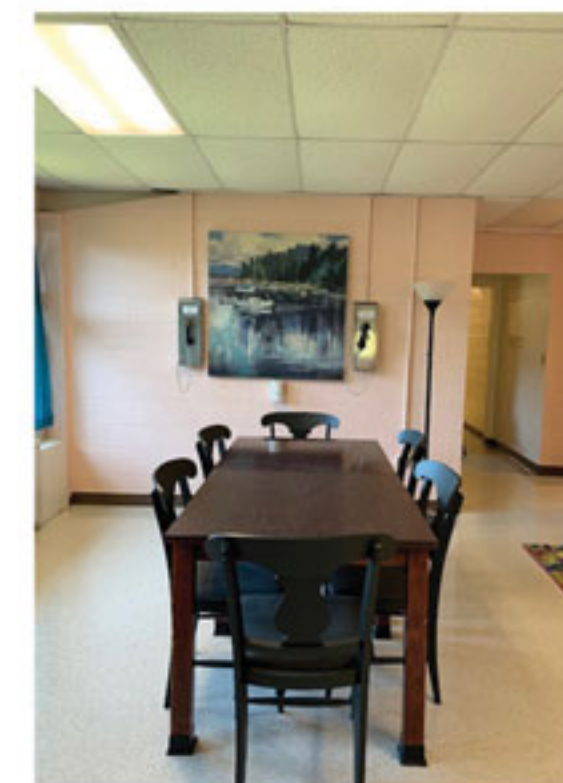
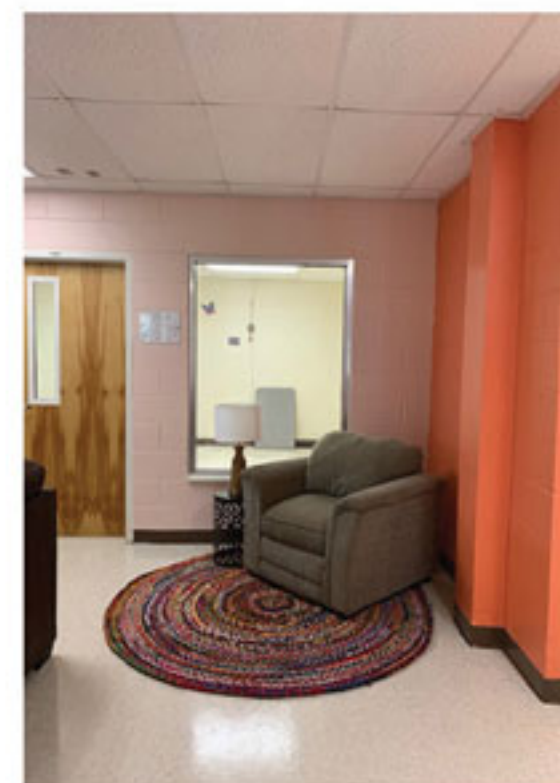
The Reunification Center's interior design was planned to meet the needs of mothers and children, ages birth through 18 years old, with furnishings allowing mothers and children to be actively engaged with one another and not simply watching television. The purpose of creating this new space was to make a comfortable, warm environment in which one mother at a time may reunite with all of her children together, thus becoming more familiar with one another as a group and not just individually. Visits can be longer in duration and frequency. Caregivers who bring the children to WCCW will remain in the Center to help the mother with her children. (The current visitation process has the mothers and children in the cafeteria with no real private family time and no home-like setting, as well as having a limit on the number of children who may visit simultaneously.)

Over the next year, we have plans to expand the visitation area to possibly include a kitchen area (for preparing meals and or desserts for special occasion visits) and outside space (incorporating some playground equipment, bikes - for small riding area and recreational games/activities).

BEFORE



AFTER

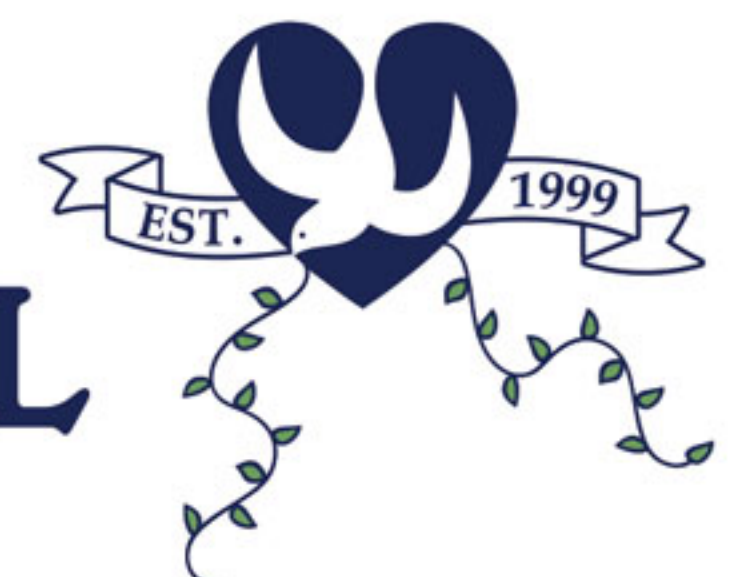


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SEE YOU THERE!**

With 2022's
NEW location:

**Montreat's
Upper
Anderson**

Tuesday, September 20th

11:00 am SILENT AUCTION - 12:00 pm LUNCHEON

JOINING IN THE JOURNEY

by **Becky Wilson, Ministry of Hope Board Member**

I have an adventurous sister who is an avid hiker. She has hiked the Appalachian Trail and other distance hikes in the US and overseas. I love hearing of her adventures as well as learning some of the details of what it takes to complete long-distance hikes. As I think of what it means to come alongside the women at WCCW as they prepare to re-enter society and then work through post-release transition, I am reminded of hearing from my sister of hiker "support persons" and "Trail Angels." Turns out there are some parallels that can be drawn between these roles.

Some long-distance hikers opt for having a "supported hike" where a friend parallels their hiking progress in a vehicle. That support person can provide transportation and supplies, can sometimes carry some of the load so that the hiker doesn't have as much in their pack, and can just be that welcoming, familiar face at the end of a challenging section. Trail Angels are people who make themselves available to hikers along their route and are willing to assist the hikers as they pass through. They can give rides and share valuable information on the local area.

Being a part of the transition process for incarcerated women means coming alongside, not as a superior, teacher, provider, or parental figure but as another human being on a journey, though probably on a path that is currently more smooth. The woman in transition must do the hard work, put in the miles, and conquer the challenges. At the same time, the support person is available to give direction when asked, offer transportation, be a listening ear at the end of a difficult day or season, be a cheerleader who celebrates their accomplishments.

It has been an honor and blessing for me to be a part of this process both inside and outside the gates. Being a part of seeing women move from unsure and overwhelmed to increasingly self-sufficient and confident is inspiring and gives me hope. Of course, not all the stories end in success, but in my experience thus far, with proper support, the successes outweigh the setbacks and even what could look like a failure can lead to opportunities for future progress.

As volunteering at the prison was shut down for COVID, new opportunities opened for me to experience the "supporting role" with women in post-release. Now that the prison is reopened to volunteers, I have returned with a better perspective on what awaits the women as they leave the system. I see more clearly the importance of the women doing the work beforehand and the importance of a support system once they're on the outside. I now have greater appreciation for how the entire process is multi-faceted and requires supporting people in various roles. I am fortunate to be a part of a new church family (House of Mercy Asheville) that shares a passion for coming alongside incarcerated and transitional women. I am also now serving on the Ministry of Hope Board and look forward to helping more with the local transitional house. Having a "village" of like-minded people is of utmost importance and, again, helps share the load and give balance. Having the opportunity to observe and learn from Chaplain Dalton and Chaplain Spencer as they minister to the women at WCCW has given me valuable tools as well. In addition to helping me better understand the challenges the women face, they have helped me gain a better understanding of myself. I am learning healthy, truly helpful ways I can play a role in the process.

Many hikers strike out on the Appalachian Trail in search of healing from grief or trauma, seeking a personal recalibration. Joining in the journey with the women of WCCW is indeed a similar adventure. It is a privilege to come alongside amazing women as they face and overcome huge obstacles in their path. It is a journey we share as we grow in self-discovery and gratitude.



*Becky Wilson,
Board Member*

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\$500: SPONSOR

\$1000: BENEFACTOR

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NEWS FROM THE PFAFF HOUSE

by Lutina O., a former WCCW Resident

My name is Lutina, and I've been out of prison since June of 2021. I'm staying in the Jane Pfaff Transitional House through Ministry of Hope. My transition back to society was not as hard as I thought it would be. It would have been if I hadn't had the support and community that I had upon my release. Ministry of Hope volunteers and House of Mercy Church took that rough road that I had to face and smoothed out a lot of the bumps along the way. They have been there for me though this whole year. House of Mercy is a big part of my life. They became the family that I needed to get through all of this.

When I decided to not go back to the place where I lived before prison, I thought that I would have to do this all on my own, but, no. House of Mercy and Ministry of Hope stepped up and took me in and became my family. They have allowed me to grow and stand on my own two feet, but when I stumble they are always there to help me back up and dust me off. I thank God every day for the family I was born into and the family God provided me with upon my release from prison. When you surround yourself with positive people, positive things happen in your life. I have learned to ask God for help, and God will provide a helping hand along the way.

Editor's note:

The Jane Pfaff House is owned and operated by Swannanoa Valley Transitional Housing Committee, a sister organization, and is located in Black Mountain. They receive women directly from WCCW - providing housing, emotional support, assistance in securing employment, and some transportation. Lutina and several of the past residents continue to offer hope to the women in the WCCW program who still anticipate their own release.

...WE'RE
GROWING!



OPENING DOORS
Post Release & Reentry Programs



Our nonprofit's most important service and mandate is to provide Chaplaincy staff, services and programs at WCCW. This will never change, as it is KEY to our purpose and mission. However, during these years of COVID, our board, staff and volunteers have had lots of time to brainstorm, plan, and now work on how we want to grow our organization - as well as its impact, outreach, and ability to help MORE WOMEN within the WCCW community.

Any group that works in service to the women at WCCW (or any correctional center) will tell you that the ultimate goal we all have is to REDUCE RECIDIVISM - the likelihood that an individual will return to prison within three years. The North Carolina state recidivism rate is pretty scary (over 50%). That's right, let it sink in. That means that one out of every two individuals released from incarceration right now will return within three years... Needless to say, the cycle must be broken.

The Pfaff House (a transitional housing program) has been working in collaboration with WCCW and The Ministry of Hope for over 10 years now, working with potential WCCW residents that WANT TO BREAK THEIR CYCLE by not returning home - they typically participate in our mentoring program, attend the Reentry Program provided on-site, do additional programs available from our chaplaincy services, and begin building a support system in our community (via churches, organizations, individual mentors, and schools) so that upon release, they not only have the tools and support they need, but a safe place to transition and start a new life on the "outside" - and the Pfaff House is that place.

Women that have participated in one or several of our programs (as well as transitioning to the Pfaff House) drop the recidivism rate to less than 10%. IT WORKS, plain and simple. We'll keep you posted on our progress with these new programs and how they develop over the next six months, so stay tuned!



THANK YOU!

The generosity of these contributors has made an immediate difference in the lives of the incarcerated women at WCCW.

The following individuals have made a contribution over the past year:

***NOTE:** These contributors represent donations that have been received as of August 1, 2022 (and do not represent monies received for our upcoming September Luncheon, but thank you to those that have donated and will be attending!)*

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John & Barbara Swart
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Leith Tate
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Howard Waxman
Dawn Wilson & Jasper Beckert
Mary Jo Wright



A reminder about recurring giving as a way to support Ministry of Hope...

When a donor signs up for this recurring donation program online, there are no checks to mail and no reminders needed - it's all automated!

A monthly gift allows our supporters the option to spread the financial impact of their giving across the entire year, making the commitment more manageable. These ongoing funds will provide regular and predictable support for our ministry, allowing our organization to fund our ongoing operations overall, but also predict future cash flow - giving us a better lead in future planning and outreach.

Sign up now online at: www.MinistryOfHopeWNC.org

The following churches, nonprofits and businesses have made a contribution over the past year:

Black Mountain Presbyterian Church
Black Mountain United Methodist Church
Church Women United Of Asheville - Area 1
Episcopal Church Women of WNC
Fairfield Mountains Chapel
First Baptist Church of Black Mountain
First Christian Church of Black Mountain
First Presbyterian Church of Asheville
Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church
Grace Lutheran Church
House Of Mercy Asheville
Kiwanis Club of Black Mountain
Land Of The Sky UCC
Long Creek Presbyterian Church
Montreat Cottagers, Inc.

Montreat Presbyterian, PCUSA
North Carolina Kairos State Committee
Oakley United Methodist Church Women
Presbyterian Women Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church
Presbyterian Women, Presbytery Of Western NC
Skyland United Methodist Church
St. James Episcopal Church Of Black Mountain
Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting
The Church Of The Good Shepherd
The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina
Trinity Presbyterian Church Of Hendersonville
Tyson's Furniture
Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church & College Chapel
WNC Bridge Foundation
Women Of The ELCA, Grace Lutheran Church Unit



ATTENTION: SUPPLIES NEEDED FOR WCCW

We're trying to get ready for the upcoming season and our inventories back up on holiday greeting cards and composition books!

If you have either available to donate, please email us at admin@ministryofhopewnc.org and we'll get your supply drop-off coordinated with the chaplains, thank you so much!





MINISTRY OF HOPE

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at the Western Correctional Center for Women

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The Ministry of Hope is a community-funded chaplaincy program, which raises funds to employ on-site chaplains at the Swannanoa Correctional Center for Women (SCCW).

Our chaplains conduct religious services in the center's chapel and provide pastoral care and spiritual guidance to the inmates. Their guidance and leadership are crucial to helping these women, many of whom struggle with addiction, abuse, and grief issues. The women of SCCW are within five years of release or parole. Our chaplains offer them a sense of hope and real-world self-care tools to manage parenting, relationships, and employment with discernment and spiritual maturity.



BECOME A PARTNER IN THE MINISTRY OF HOPE!

Here are some ways **YOU** can join us in
our mission to provide chaplains at SCCW:

- ♥ Sponsor a fund-raising event for the benefit of Ministry of Hope
- ♥ Put the Ministry of Hope in your mission budget, either as a church or as a Sunday School Class/Mission Group
- ♥ Make a one-time or regular contribution
- ♥ Request that you be put on the mailing list for our quarterly newsletter
- ♥ Invite one of our chaplains to provide a virtual or in-person educational event for your organization

Contact us today to learn more:

P.O. Box 998, Black Mountain NC 28711

Email: admin@ministryofhopewnc.org

SCCW Chaplains' direct number: (828) 259-6055

Online: www.MinistryOfHopeWNC.org

