



# MINISTRY OF HOPE

# HEARTBEAT

AUGUST 2020  
ISSUE

A Publication for the Swannanoa Correctional Center for Women Chaplaincy Committee

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## PANDEMIC CHAPLAINCY 101

by **Carol Sasser Dalton, Chaplain**



**It took weeks to figure out what to DO!** As of March 16, 2020, SCCW began implementing the following: no volunteers; no educational, transitional or religious programs; no visitation from family or friends. The first month was busy for chaplains as we were still allowed to have small groups for corporate worship and other religious programs. On Palm Sunday, I preached the same sermon four times to women from each dorm. It was exhausting, but if I had known the even more drastic changes coming, I would have savored every moment! Everything changed - again - in a week. Easter Sunrise Service became the final worship service at SCCW until only God knows when.

**What do chaplains do in a pandemic?** First, we put large papers on the chapel walls, and women would come in, a few at a time, to write their prayers, expressing anguish and gratitude. They would walk through several times a week, reading, praying, and writing requests. We posted cards and letters from volunteers so the women knew they were not forgotten. Because of the generosity of our supporters, we were able to give out puzzle books, colored pencils, coloring pages, jigsaw puzzles, and journals. Eventually, as the virus began to spread at other prisons in the state, more safety measures were put into place, and we settled on setting out a circle of five chairs on what has come to be known as the "stoop" or the "front porch" of the chapel. For a couple of months women would just drop in whenever they wanted, but next came testing day.

On July 15, every woman at SCCW was tested within 50 minutes. The results came back on July 20, and ONE WOMAN had a positive test result. One woman positive for COVID-19 put SCCW in "red," meaning even stricter precautions. This meant establishing a schedule rather than the "y'all come" stance. Now women can only come over during specific times, and only with women assigned to their cohort. But they still come. We sit in the shade of a tree, and we talk. Sometimes they come for prayer. Sometimes they just need to get out of the dorm and have a change of scenery. Some days have themes, and very often that theme is transition.

We offer space for women to share experiences of feeling less than because they have dark skin. With great pride and trepidation, they tell stories of their very brave children who are marching in cities across North Carolina. A few share their own memories. Just recently, Carolyn shared her memories of the day Dr. King was shot, and how she, as a 12-year-old child, was allowed to march with her beloved grandfather in Winston-Salem. She said, "Chaplain, I wish these young 'girls' could understand what it was like to drink water from a fountain marked 'coloreds only.' We've come so far." I said, "Carolyn, I remember those fountains, too, but from a very different perspective. We came a long way, but we have so much more work to do."

I was sharing that story with another woman, and she said, "I'm too young to remember the water fountains, but I remember an old man who would give me money to take over to the diner to buy his lunch. When I would walk in, all conversation would stop. I didn't understand it then. I just knew what it felt like." She put her hand over her heart, and she said, "I just knew it hurt because something about me was unacceptable."

Safe, brave space is offered under a tree. Unconditional love, a ministry of presence, a practice of mindfulness, healing past hurts, antiracism education, and hope for the future are the gifts you make possible.

**The Ministry of Hope is alive and well, and we need your support more than ever.**

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## WELCOME, WARDEN T.A. BOYSWORTH!

On July 22, 2020, the Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice named Theodore "T.A." Boysworth as the new warden at the Swannanoa Correctional Center for Women in Black Mountain. He had been the deputy warden for custody and operations at the facility since 2018.

"Warden Boysworth is a leader with decades of experience managing a secure and productive prison," said Todd Ishee, Commissioner of Prisons. "He brings a passion for rehabilitating offenders and a vision for building on the facility's culture of excellence and responsiveness to the needs of the female population. I'm proud to welcome him to the ranks of our wardens, who do so much to protect our communities."



Please know that Mr. Boysworth served as Interim Warden beginning in early March, and his steady presence makes a difficult situation much less chaotic and frightening for the residents. Staff and Residents alike have only good things to say about Mr. Boysworth, and you can look forward to hearing more from him when things settle down.

You may read the full press release, written by John Bull, posted on the NCDPS website on July 22, 2020.

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## TRANSITIONING DURING A PANDEMIC

**My name is Christy. I was an inmate at Swannanoa Correctional Center for Women for the past four years.** In May of 2018 I went on work release, and in October 2019 I was in the Home Leave Program, allowing me overnight passes with one of my sons and his family. All that was going good. But when COVID-19 hit, everything was shut down in the prisons. When you're in prison you get used to a routine, and when that routine gets broken, you don't know what to do. I felt like my world had fallen apart. I sat there and put puzzles together. I didn't want to go outside. I didn't want to do anything. Those last 3 months of my sentence were the hardest.

I couldn't wait to get out. I would go over to see Chaplain Dalton, and we would sit under the tree and talk. The day before I got out, I stayed over at the chapel with "the Chap" all day. She helped calm my nerves. When you're getting ready to get out, you say you're going to do this and that when you get out. I know I said it. Well once you get out that all changes. I was lucky and was able to go to the Pfaff House. My first day out I went to Walmart and everything was so different - everyone was wearing a mask. I was just overwhelmed. Once I was back at the house, I just sat there on my phone trying to figure out how I was going to deal with life.

After a week and a half, I decided I was going to start getting my life back together. I wasn't going to let COVID stop me. I went to my first job interview at the Hampton Inn, and I told the lady that interviewed me that I was in prison for 22 years and why. She looked at me and said, "What size shirt do you wear?" I had tears in my eyes because when I went there I just knew I wasn't going to get the job. God knew what I needed.

I'm not going to say it's been easy out here because it isn't. I take it one day at a time. The world is so different, and the COVID situation doesn't help.

### *Editor's note:*

*Women who are assigned to the Work Release Program earn regular wages at jobs in the community. These women generally have served several years in prison, working their way to minimum security, gaining the privilege of going on passes in the community, and finally being allowed to go out to work every day. Some women hold these jobs two and half to three years prior to their release. During their final year, they may be awarded home leaves. All of these programs are in place to provide a smooth transition back into society.*

*The Jane Pfaff House is owned and operated by Swannanoa Valley Transitional Housing, a sister organization, and is located in Black Mountain. They receive women directly from SCCW, providing housing, emotional support, assistance in securing employment, and some transportation.*

*Christy has been in the Transitional Mentoring Program since August 2017, and she now offers hope to the women in the program who still anticipate their own release.*



# LOCKDOWN

by Jessica M., SCCW Resident

When I look at the past 24 weeks of the lockdown, I see I have a lot to be thankful for. We tend to forget the little things, The Basic 1...2...3 that helps us move from day to day. I know I did.

Before lockdown, my daily routine had me up at 5:30 a.m. count and out the gate to catch the bus at 7:30; work my shift as a housekeeper from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m.; and back on the bus to make it to the prison by 5:15 p.m. count. I had a routine - one I had been following steadily for a year. So, when my case manager called me to his office to tell me the work release program was on hold, my world crashed to a very loud, grinding halt. I panicked. The silence of the pandemic brought me to the chapel.

My journey with God has been very rocky. My time in the military brought me nothing but heartache and self-doubt. The deafening silence after the first month of my return to institutionalization (no work release) practically brought me to my knees, searching for a safe outlet for my anger, depression and loneliness. I found myself at Chaplain Dalton's "stoop," attempting to face my demons.

Every day, she has made it possible for me and others to be able to be still and confront our choices from the past and begin to make some peace with them in this unstable time in the present. She has even taught us a few life lessons - even me, the stubborn, hard-headed woman that I am in my journey. To be able to accomplish that, especially in this place, speaks volumes about her presence on our compound.

We have this heavy burden of being "the Forgotten." Chaplain Dalton coming here every day reminds us that not only are we not forgotten, but that somebody out there cares about us. Cares about me. She brings a small rainbow to our daily life.

The Ministry of Hope means more to me every day in my journey with God. And I'm not sure I would be on this path if not for the chaplain's gargantuan effort in peeling back the layers and helping me discover the fabric of who I am. This ministry is vital to the heartbeat of Swannanoa. I hope you will continue to support Chaplain Dalton and Chaplain Spencer in the efforts to support us through the COVID-19 Pandemic. They help us become stronger women for ourselves and our families. Thank you!

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## "LIGHT A PATH" FRIENDS

(An example of encouraging words sent as a note from one of our volunteers...)

**TOPIC: "How are you feeling at the moment?" (in these COVID times)**

Not to ask a boring question & one that I won't even be able to hear your answer to...

But as an invitation to pause and feel what's deep within you right this minute.

And now... Please take a nice deep breath. Ah, Exhale.

...And know that this letter is coming to you in support of your deep peace.

When you go back outside, please notice whatever the air feels like on your skin.

Look up at the sky and feel this wild earth spinning.

Remember that you are a beautiful part of this creation.

You are a part of it all!

Amid the constant changes, there is a part of all of us that is changeless - a still, steady point.

Here's to being grateful for and connected to the changeless truth within us all.

May We Remember to pause, and breathe - again & again.

**Do you have an encouraging word, poem or share that you'd like to communicate with the women of SCCW?**

Email us at [admin@ministryofhopewnc.org](mailto:admin@ministryofhopewnc.org) and we'll get it "inside the gate" to help shed more light for the path...

## ATTENTION: OUR IN-PERSON FUNDRAISING EVENTS FOR 2020

Had you planned on attending one of our luncheons this year, but were unable to because we had to cancel the event(s) due to COVID?

Please consider donating the amount you had expected to spend at the event. We are currently working on providing our supporters "virtual" presentations by the chaplains, stories from SCCW residents, and ongoing video updates to be posted throughout the rest of the year to keep everyone up to date about our ongoing work at the prison...

**STAY TUNED IN, AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!**





# MESSAGES OF HOPE PERSIST

by Amanda Wrublewski, Program Supervisor & Volunteer Coordinator

Swannanoa Correctional Center for Women has always relied heavily on the commitment of its volunteers. Because of our devoted volunteers, we've been able to offer all kinds of re-entry programs, sobriety meetings, vocational programs, educational classes, clubs, religious programs and other curriculums geared towards equipping incarcerated women with important life skills and positive decision-making tools. On any given day prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the hallways of our facility could be found bustling with enthusiastic volunteers, impassioned by the messages of hope they sought to bring to the women here.

In March of this year, North Carolina prisons began a state-wide directive to suspend all volunteer programs in an effort to prevent the potential spread of the virus to the vulnerable and incarcerated individuals across our state. However, because of our volunteers' involvement in the rehabilitation of these women, and the positive skills and encouragement they've provided over the years, the women housed at our facility have been able to rely on those tools to help make it through this challenging time.

While the hallways are much quieter without our volunteers, their messages of hope persist! I've been incredibly moved by the service that so many members of our community dedicate to empowering these women to become healthier and more productive versions of themselves. During this unprecedented time, **Ministry of Hope has played a critical role in helping to provide the women with opportunities to engage in positive activities. We are so thankful for their donation of colored pencil sets and composition books to every single resident here!**

Ministry of Hope has also donated a great deal of elastic band material for our face mask

sewing project. Because of this generous donation, as well as the donation of fabric from our volunteers, the women have sewn over 900 face masks that have been donated to local non-profits in our community. This project has been an extremely meaningful way for these women to emulate the giving nature of our volunteers and to have a positive impact on the community.

**We are abundantly grateful for the special people in our community who have taught the value of healthy and positive living, and also of service.** They continue to inspire our residents during this pandemic, and will even inspire many to serve the community upon release. What a wonderful gift that is! On behalf of all the incarcerated women at Swannanoa Correctional Center, we express our heartfelt gratitude for your continued support during this time!



**We are relying on the generosity of continuing donors like you more than ever.**

Please use the enclosed envelope, or you may donate online by going to our website:

[www.MinistryOfHopeWNC.org](http://www.MinistryOfHopeWNC.org)



## AN UNPRECEDENTED TIME

by Lauronda Morrow, Ministry of Hope Chair



**“Unprecedented.”** This word is being used in almost every conversation these days, and its meaning couldn't be any more true for how we are living right now: “without previous instance; never before known or experienced; unexampled or unparalleled.” And it's not just our community feeling the discomfort of the COVID pandemic. Friends and family across our country and across the globe have had to brace for the impact of this spreading virus - let alone our classrooms, institutions, industries, and the economy at large.

I believe the “STAY-AT-HOME” orders hit us the hardest, restricting people from leaving their homes for anything other than essential activities. Many of us can remember the fear, frustration, and general uneasiness that this “new normal” created for us that can still be felt... No more socializing. Limited (or no) family visits. Businesses frequently patroned closed down, limitations in groceries and shopping. No more doing what we want, when we want to do it. Even having the freedom to eat, buy, share or go about things as we wish had been taken away - while knowing all the while it was only going to be temporary. This was when it being “an unprecedented time” first sank in to our minds, hearts, and spirits. We were all grieving - plain and simple.

This is also when I had the realization - if as only a fraction of a true understanding - what being incarcerated must feel like. Sure, it has it's own sense of community which gives a certain amount of comfort and safety. (Fortunately, I believe our SCCW campus does.) But, understanding the idea of isolation in its most basic meaning - separation. And worse, not having any control of the choices that get made that affect you - that certainly rang true of how I felt during the first several months of the pandemic. Now, imagine all of that AND being in prison with even the few threads of the outside world being cut off... That's what these women are faced with every day.

**But here's the amazing part - we're still there, and we've gotten even stronger.** Ministry of Hope is still present inside the gates, and we have a great partnership with our SCCW staff to serve the women in the best capacity that we can - whether it's the outside chats on the “front porch” of the chapel, providing supplies for crafts and projects for the women to make items that can help our community in this crisis, or simply supplying the women with encouraging words and materials to support their spiritual and emotional health in this challenging time.

**Here's the other amazing part - we couldn't do it without your help, so THANK YOU.**

The protocols for maintaining the health and safety of the women in SCCW are still constantly changing. Until the time comes when they can have visitors again, go out on work release, resume education classes & workshops, have services and volunteers on campus again - in other words, return to what was once normal - we'll just have to be creative and find new and meaningful ways to provide support for these women.

Unprecedented circumstances do not imply insurmountable circumstances. What we've experienced because of COVID may have been “never before known,” but we believe with the support of our volunteers, donors, and the Western North Carolina community, what we can provide moving into the future at SCCW could be shown as unparalleled opportunities - in the best of possible ways. Ministry of Hope will continue to rise to that challenge, and with your support we will set an example for what chaplaincy services can truly accomplish amidst these “new normal” times.

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## A SPECIAL WORD OF THANKS

by Eileen Shea, Ministry of Hope Board Secretary



All of us on the Ministry of Hope Board are thinking of and praying for you during these difficult times. You are part of our extended family, and we hope you understand how important you have been and continue to be to our shared mission of ministry at the Swannanoa Correctional Center for Women.

Nonprofits like ours are facing financial challenges we've never seen before. For the safety of our guests and supporters, we cancelled both of our annual fundraising luncheons (Lake Lure traditionally in April, and Montreat in September.) If you know of individuals or institutions who might find the Ministry's mission important enough to support, please share our information. Thank you for your continued support and generosity!



# THANK YOU!

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

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

## Partners (\$1,000 - \$2,500)

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



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FOR 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](http://www.MinistryOfHopeWNC.org)**

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

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Balfour United Methodist Women  
Black Mountain Presbyterian Church  
Black Mountain United Methodist Church  
Central United Methodist Church  
Church of the Good Shepherd  
Church Women United Of Asheville - Area 1  
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Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting  
Thursday Thrift Shop  
Trinity Presbyterian Church Of Asheville  
UMW Estates  
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# MINISTRY OF HOPE

Swannanoa Correctional Center for Women  
Chaplaincy Committee

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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
- ♥ Our chaplains are available to provide virtual educational events for your group

### Contact us today to learn more:

P.O. Box 998, Black Mountain NC 28711

Email: [admin@ministryofhopewnc.org](mailto:admin@ministryofhopewnc.org)

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

Online: [www.MinistryOfHopeWNC.org](http://www.MinistryOfHopeWNC.org)

