

## Mission

The mission of the Buncombe Correctional Center (BCC) Community Resource Council (CRC) is to raise funds for a multipurpose facility dedicated to religious, educational, and family programs and services. The CRC goal is to change lives by assisting inmates to make positive preparation for their return to family and community as productive members of society. The BCC-CRC mission is to provide space for worship services, faith studies and personal development programs and services.

## Vision

The interfaith vision of the BCC-CRC is:

1. To manifest the presence of God in the gathering of God's people;
2. To offer viable futures with education for job opportunities and pastoral care from the faith community; and
3. To improve each inmate's chances of never again returning to the criminal justice system.

## Join Us!

The entire BCC-CRC vision for curbing recidivism through program development is based on an active core of volunteers. Our volunteers are building an organization to provide program development and future fundraising activities. We welcome new volunteers at all times. Please contact Susan Pearce (828-277-0998) if you are interested.

## Background

The mandate for ministry to prisoners is vivid both in Christian scripture and tradition and in the heritage and practice of many faiths. People of faith are called to visit those in prison and to guide them toward positive life choices. Three key factors help end the cycle of prison recidivism:

1. Strong faith commitments;
2. Positive, supporting personal relationships; and
3. Stable, rewarding work.

These are things that people of faith can organize to help provide.

The BCC was designed in 1989 by the NC Department of Corrections (DOC) as a minimum-security, work-release prison unit—the last stop before a prisoner's return to the community.

Today, BCC houses 182 men but has only 39 work release slots. For prisoners BCC offers a variety of religious, educational, and re-entry programs conducted by the program staff, chaplain and/or dedicated community volunteers. Unfortunately, lack of appropriate program spaces at BCC severely limits prisoners' participation.

The members of the CRC began work with BCC Superintendent Clifford Johnson in February 2000 to consider the pressing need for space to house vital programs and services.

## The Need in North Carolina

The North Carolina prison system houses 36,000 inmates today—four times more than in 1980. 23,000 of these prisoners will be released in 2005. Within five years, 51 percent of them will likely be rearrested and 42 percent will likely be back in prison.

NC residents pay an average of \$23,000 a year per prisoner. Recently four new prisons were constructed for \$100 million each.

## Steps Toward the Vision

Every NC prison is required to have a CRC—a committee appointed to stimulate community involvement and to promote volunteerism in the local correctional institution. In the early 1990s at Craggy Prison, a medium-security unit for 400 men next to BCC off Riverside Drive in Woodfin, CRC volunteers and donors for the non-profit Craggy Prison Chapel Fund built a chapel. Now, the call to prison ministry stirs anew in our community. The BCC-CRC is taking initial project steps toward a multipurpose chapel.

Among the early leaders of this effort was Dan Cabaniss, M.D. A memorial fund created after Dan's untimely death in 2001 provides start-up resources for the project work to assist BCC prisoners. In 2004 the project was revived under the CRC leadership of John Klees and Micki Cabaniss, M.D. In 2005, we began step two of a multi-step process that will include a capital campaign and many checkpoints of state approval before we fully realize our ministry dreams for BCC prisoners.

## BCC Programs and Services

NC prisons include space for religious activities in larger, new facilities. However, prisons built before the mid-1990s, like BCC, provided no such space. After 20 years of budget funding for chaplains at larger facilities, the state eliminated one-third of the funded prison chaplain positions to save costs in 2002. **At BCC the chaplain since 1997 is Rev. Steve Plemmons**, whose salary comes primarily from churches and individuals' gifts. His salary is raised annually by BCC Prison Ministries, a non-profit organization formed to provide chaplaincy services at BCC.

In addition to worship, Bible studies, and chaplaincy services, many programs exist to assist inmates in making positive preparations for their return to family and community. Lack of space limits participation in all programs.

- **Orientation** and assessment of incoming prisoners
- **GED**—high school equivalency classes (through A-B Tech) and **college courses** (through UNCA)
- **DART**—Drug/Alcohol Rehabilitation, aftercare program
- **Narcotics Anonymous & Alcohol Anonymous** (led by volunteers)
- **Cognitive Behavioral Intervention**—“Thinking for a Change” at A-B Tech
- **Re-entry Program** (led by Prison Fellowship volunteers) and **Nurturing Fathers Program** (community volunteers)

**“The Lord sets prisoners free ... ”**  
— **Psalms 146.7**

Higher purpose and faith grounded in practical efforts can break the cycle of recidivism. Also, positive family ties and good community connections are assets for released prisoners.

The CRC will work to create circumstances and relationships to assist prisoners to embrace lasting freedom upon their release.

Some key statistics giving the work of CRC added weight include the following:

1. All prisoners at BCC are within five years the possibility of release or parole;
2. Over half of the 182 inmates currently at BCC have not finished high school;
3. The average cost per inmate is \$24,000 per year; and
4. Recidivism rates for NC prisoners are currently between 60 and 70 percent.

Other prisons that have introduced intensive religious/educational programs have reported reductions in recidivism (some reduced to below 15 percent). This could be a significant savings to the taxpayers of North Carolina.

**Gifts to this ministry make a difference.  
Please make checks to:  
“The New Life Center, Inc.” and mail to:  
125 Caldonia Dr., Candler, NC 28715.**

**Buncombe Correctional Center —  
Community Resource Council**

# New Life Center



## A Project to Build A Multipurpose Chapel For Prisoners

**“I was in prison and  
ye came unto me.”**  
— **Matthew 25:36**