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Memorial and honorary gifts to  
The Matthew 25 Center are tax deductible.

***“Remember those in prison  
as if you were their fellow  
prisoners, and those who are  
mistreated as if you  
yourselves were suffering.”***

**Hebrews 13:3**

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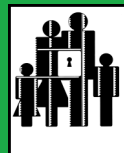
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**The Matthew 25 Center**  
1196 Penderlea Highway  
Burgaw, NC 28425

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# The Matthew 25 Center



1196 Penderlea Highway, Burgaw, NC 28425

Phone/Fax (910) 259-7133

e-mail: [matthew25@bizec.rr.com](mailto:matthew25@bizec.rr.com)

[www.matthew25center.org](http://www.matthew25center.org)



*“A home away from home for families who visit their loved ones in prison”*

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# Merry Christmas



The staff and board of directors of The Matthew 25 Center wish all of our readers a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year! This has been a good year for The Matthew 25 Center in many ways. It is the churches and individuals across southeastern North Carolina and beyond, who pray for and who give sacrificially to support this ministry, who make it possible for us to serve our guests in Christ's name.

Christmas is a time for celebrating the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. It is also a special family time with good food, gift giving, parties and everyone home for the holidays. But for families who have an incarcerated loved one, the holidays also accentuate the sense of separation and loss.

Below are stories of families impacted by incarceration and the power of Christian mothers:

A mother of two teenage boys found herself completely lost when her husband was sentenced to several months in prison. At the time he was removed from the courtroom they were not prepared for the verdict, she did not know where he was being taken, and had no opportunity to speak with him. In a second all of their lives changed and she was totally alone.

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We think this couldn't happen to us as we read this story but in Matthew 7, God's Word instructs us not to judge or condemn others. Families agonize over tough decisions while defending themselves from often brutal public attitude. They are not always willing to tell you the whole story because they are not sure that you will understand. They feel guilt, shame, and loneliness.

This mother had many decisions to make but the most important was to rely on God to turn this into a life altering experience instead of a life shattering experience for her sons. She wanted to make sure they realized God's power and love despite this time of hopelessness. Her husband returned home, and having lost his original career, he started over. They work four jobs to support their family. The two sons are in college. Their faith in God and His promise that they can rise above this experience to be a successful family sustains them. She commented "I give thanks to The Lord for bringing my family this far and never leaving us despite our faults".



The next story is about the mother of an incarcerated son:

A mother struggled for years to help prevent incarceration for her adult son but it eventually happened. The rest of the family often criticized her attention to him as this was not their only child. Her heart broke past the point she thought bearable.

Despite all of this, these parents traveled the day long trip every weekend that visitation was allowed. Many times this would exclude them from other family occasions spreading further tension. Out of prison now, this son is trying to stay on the right track, and be a good father, husband, son, and brother. When asked about all the sacrifice, his mother simply and tearfully replied, "I am his mother, if not me, then who?" She continues to hope that in time others will understand. She further added that a family cannot show God's love without showing each other love. Through the confidence that God loves her she was able to show that love to her son no matter how long it took.



These are real stories, not the fairy tale, happily-ever-after type. For the rest of their lives families continue to struggle with rebuilding, resolving conflict from years of pain, and financial burdens. It is our hope that you will add all families of incarceration to your daily prayer lists.



Stories submitted by Sharon Baucom

## Matthew 25 Happenings

Sept. 24 — The directors went to Winston Salem, NC to meet with the RYE Foundation board of directors to discuss possible funding for projects benefitting the children who visit The Matthew 25 Center.

Oct. 1- 5 - KAIROS #16 Retreat at Pender Correctional Institution used the Center as their base of operations.



October - Burgaw Baptist WMU donated cleaning supplies and paper products to the Center.

Oct. 14 - Maple Hill Presbyterian Circle toured the Center following their monthly meeting. They made a donation for the purchase of Bibles to be given to guests.

Nov. 1 - The smaller children's portion of the playground was completed.

Nov. 4 - The Wilmington Baptist Association Library Team visited the Center and donated books, videos and two tables.

### Playground Construction Makes Progress

The construction of the playground is progressing. The smaller children's area is complete. Bad weather has delayed the construction of the climbing/swing/slide structure. The component parts of the structure have been completed and only lack final assembly. Hopefully, both sides will be complete before Christmas when the number of children visiting the Center increases.

