

ECV MISSION

NEWSLETTER

As many of you know, in August of last year, a small team of us began leading a Bible Study at a women's prison over in the town of Niantic. We've been hugely blessed by the opportunity to build relationship with the women there and to be a part of God's work in their lives. Our hope is that, by putting together this *ECV Mission Newsletter*, we might share some of this goodness, & the happenings with some of ECV's other missional work, with the wider church community.

At this point, not only is the bible study at York Correctional still going, but we're also still growing. We've recently expanded from covering only 1 building to covering 2 buildings, a change that we're grateful for and excited about. We've been fortunate to have nearly 100 different women pass through the study at one point or another, many of whom are from New Haven; some have attended once, and others have become committed regulars over time. We sing together, share testimonies, answer silly icebreaker questions, laugh, cry, and of course dig into the bible!

What Have We Learned?

Part of what our time at York CI has meant is that we get an in-depth look at what it's like for a person to live in a prison. These women courageously share stories about the events in their lives that led them to prison but also the hardships they face while inside.

One thing we've learned is that the women regularly find themselves on lockdown. A lockdown in prison basically means that you are confined to your cell for an entire 24 hour day. There is no outside recreation, religious programming, library, school, or work for most individuals. The only people that work during a lockdown are what are called critical workers. Their jobs are considered essential to running the prison, such as culinary, custodial, and hospital workers. Lockdowns can happen for a variety of reasons. An assault between inmates or involving a correctional officer, an inaccurate headcount, riots,

and medical emergencies are just some of the possible reasons. Length of the lockdown can vary as well as severity. We've had bible studies canceled as the result of lockdowns. We've had days where we've arrived for bible study only to hear from the women that they've been on lockdown for the previous 2-3 days and are only just getting out. On these days, we get to see firsthand how such conditions impact the mental state and emotional wellbeing of the women.

This is a big part of the nature of life at York. You can imagine how monotonous and unhealthy such a rhythm can be. Being on lockdown, especially for these extended periods of time, can kill the soul. We're grateful that we get to be a part of feeding the soul in the midst of unjust & unhealthy circumstances.

Pray against lockdowns with us. Pray that when lockdowns occur, the women get to find time with the Holy Spirit through prayer, meditation, scripture, worship, and one other.

How Can You Help?

1. Pray for us! Our Bible Study is from 6:30pm-8:30pm every Wednesday. Consider putting an alarm in your phone so that you can say a prayer for us at this time, to bless our time together and whatever else you feel led to pray.

2. Pray for one of the women. I have always felt blessed by the fact that I have so many people in my life that pray for me, without my knowledge, and without me asking. Contact surrenity.xyz@gmail.com if you'd be interested in receiving the name of a woman that you could simply include in your regular prayers. It matters!

3. Consider joining the team! We have a small, but mighty team of leaders. If you are interested in learning more about how you could join us, by assisting with the studies or providing transportation for example, reach out and we'll share more.



Next Letter: Agape Church for the (Un)Housed

The vision of **ELM CITY VINEYARD church**

*In response to a living and active God who pursues relationship with us,
the Elm City Vineyard is a church that plants, grows, and cultivates
a diverse community of people who:*

Enjoy an ever-increasing spirit of family, humility, and love.

Follow Jesus with daily courage that overcomes fear and darkness.

Choose empathy and sacrificial service, especially for those on the margins.

Discern the voice of God through listening and earnest dialogue.

Celebrate and share the hope that a different world is possible through the Holy Spirit.

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*As people placed in New Haven, we expect our church to have a positive impact on
the families, schools, streets, and businesses in all neighborhoods of our city.*

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Come and see.

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