



EGLINTON ST. GEORGE'S
UNITED CHURCH

Eglinton St. George's Lay Ministry Fair

It was a blustery spring day when four women from Eglinton St. George's set out with Jean Bruce to visit the Grand Valley Institution for Women near Kitchener, Ontario. The process of entering the prison was sobering as we joined families, volunteers and guards going through the surveillance and security systems.

Rosemary, one of the chaplains at the Institution met us and showed us around what looks like a relatively humane environment consisting of stand-alone houses where women live and cook together and a centre which included many services – library, computer labs, classrooms, gymnasium and chapel. But it is a prison and the pain and brokenness are palpable. We met with some of the women and heard bits of their stories and received more background from Jean and Rosemary about the history and context for this women's prison.

Joining the women for an evening worship service was the most moving part of the visit for many of us, as we sat in a semi-circle and sang, prayed, listened to scripture and reflected on the Word. The prayers for children living with the absence of their Mums were tough to hear so near to Mother's Day.

Debriefing at the Tim Horton's on the way home, each of us was grateful for the opportunity to meet some of the women serving sentences and the volunteers and staff who work with them. We were sobered and moved as we reflected on the circumstances that had brought them to this place and our possible response as individuals and members of Eglinton St. George's. We knew we had each been changed.

This visit to Grand Valley Institute was one of the eight prizes at last year's lay ministry fair. Over this past year a number of folks have had opportunity to visit places where members of our congregation are ministering, both in our building and beyond.

Please join us for the Lay Ministry Fair on November 5 this year, following the service. A light lunch will be available as you visit the displays of the many groups and committees of the congregation. This is an opportunity to celebrate the breadth of Eglinton St. George's ministry and to sign up for a group or committee or to help plan a congregational event.

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