

**ST. MARK'S UMC  
PAPERBACK BOOK DRIVE  
FOR THE  
RUTHERFORD COUNTY JAIL**

***Give a Book.  
Plant a Dream.  
Grow a Life.***

April 4th – May 2nd (???)

***by Robin Stone***



I support having a book drive for the Rutherford County Jail because of all the positive things I have witnessed involving books and inmates. Because of safety concerns, we are only collecting PAPERBACKS! The Jail will not accept hardback books. Here's why a book drive is so important:

First, the Rutherford County Jail has a lot less Recreational time for their inmates as opposed to jails in surrounding counties. There are three 1½ hour Rec times per day, 8:30 to 10:00 a.m., 2:00 to 3:30 p.m., and 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.; that's less than 5 hours that the inmates are granted out of their cells; most of the other almost 20 hours per day are in the cell! This allows and calls for a lot of time where an inmate could be improving their lives and their futures through reading.

Next, books are scarce at the Rutherford County Jail, and often the Jail runs out of books. There are 5 floors at the Rutherford County Jail; each floor has 4 pods, 20 pods total, with a current total of around 900 inmates. Often there are only 20 to 30 books per pod, and they do not get systematically rotated between pods. Good books are so valued that I have witnessed inmates "renting" books from other inmates! They will borrow a book for 2 to 3 nights in exchange for a couple of ramen noodle soups and a sweet, like a Cinnamon Roll.

Having books on hand encourages greater literacy among the inmates. I have witnessed inmates who have never read for pleasure when they are in the free world, yet while incarcerated, they discover that they actually enjoy reading. I've witnessed inmates feeling elated that they have successfully read an entire book for the first time in their lives! They are very proud of this and will brag about their reading accomplishment out in the pod. Out of this new appreciation for reading, they will search for a new and better book than the previous one that was just read.

Books offer a wonderful "escape" from the inmate's current condition of being locked up. They may be physically incarcerated in a Murfreesboro jail, but their minds get to travel to a battlefield in Vietnam, or perhaps walk toward the Eiffel Tower in Paris,

France! This helps them learn about the world and develop hope for a better future for themselves.

This book drive is an important and worthy cause. Many of the inmates in the Rutherford County Jail are there for a year or less, and some have aspirations of higher education and/or vocational school. You may change an inmate's thoughts and thought patterns because of the influence of your book! They really enjoy educational books, and books that teach you something that helps you in your life and career. Books like "Auto Repair for Dummies", or "Writing Well for Dummies", are appreciated; many inmates love that series because it teaches something basic in an easy way.

The Detention Center also houses female inmates, so if you have romance novels, parenting books, or anything that you feel a woman might especially like, please donate! We will be separating the books later; including books selected especially for the women's pods.

So if you can find it in your heart to go to your shelves and choose a few good, paperback books that you know you can live without, I ask you kindly to please donate them to our Rutherford County Detention Center Book Drive! We would really like to enhance the reading opportunities for these inmates.

A collection box is available near the church office April 4th – May 2nd. As you drop your books in the box, say a prayer for the inmate who will read your books.

Thank you for considering why this book drive is an important and positive thing to do! Just a friendly reminder, these books **MUST** be PAPERBACKS! The Jail will not accept hardback books.