



Angel Tree Report

2010



Why Angel Tree?

A Government review of the children of offenders carried out in 2007 stated that 'children of offenders are an 'invisible' group: there is no shared, robust information on who they are, little awareness of their needs and no systematic support.'

There are 160,000 children in England and Wales with a parent in prison. This is two and a half times the number of those in care and over six times the number of those on the Child Protection Register. 7% of children will experience their father's imprisonment before they leave school. In 2006 more children were affected by the imprisonment of a parent than by divorce.

The Angel Tree Programme

Prisoners are less likely to re-offend if good family relationships are maintained. It is difficult for families to maintain these important relationships when one of them is in prison. By providing Christmas presents for prisoners' children, Angel Tree can help. Although the majority of these children have very little, and many of them are vulnerable, Angel Tree is not just about the gift itself. The immediate effect is the delight of the child who receives a Christmas present from their parent in prison, but the longer-term benefit of Angel Tree is a strengthened link between a child and their mum or dad in prison.

Angel Tree assures these children that their parent in prison has not forgotten them, whilst raising awareness amongst the community of the impact of imprisonment on prisoners' families.

Many people support Angel Tree by buying gifts and making donations. Local prison volunteers raise funds and work with churches and prison Chaplains to buy and deliver the presents. Parents write a personal message to their child and the gift arrives as though it is from the parent in prison.

Unless the parent requests otherwise, we send a Christian story book along with the gift. Angel Tree is a practical demonstration of the unconditional love of God and we believe that this practical action presents an opportunity to introduce God to the children, perhaps for the first time.

Angel Tree has been running in England and Wales since 1994 and in that time has grown from 1 prison to over 70. Around 40 gifts were sent during the very first programme.

- 1994 = in 1 prison (approx 40 gifts)
- 2004 = in 34 prisons (approx 3,000 gifts)
- 2009 = in 65 prisons (approx 4,000 gifts)

The Headlines

The table below details the results from the 2010 programme;

No. of prisons running AT	76
No. of groups/Coordinators running AT	55
No. of prisoners applying for a gift	2046*
No. of gifts sent	4608
Money spent on gifts	£21,062**
Ave cost per gift	£10.37**
Money spent on postage	£5,947***
Ave postage cost	£2.13***

*Accurate for 60 of the 76 prisons participating.

**Based on all those groups returning financial information.

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This year has been our best ever. Thanks to the dedication of our many volunteers, supporters and six new Angel Tree Coordinators, we have operated Angel Tree in 76 prisons.

We have been unable to send money to Nigeria this year, as in previous years, and we have experienced issues with parcels sent to Nigeria in the post.

There were unfortunately 90 gifts returned to the PF office. A large number of these have been re-sent or returned to the respective group.

DHL (now Parcelpoint) were able to offer the same service we received from them in 2009 at a slightly reduced price. Some Angel Tree Coordinators reported issues with the service due largely it seems, to the weather during December and the subsequent disruption it caused. Others reported a good service.

Developments in 2010

With the able help of the volunteers represented on the Angel Tree Steering group, we have made a number of further improvements to the resources available.

These developments include:

- New A5 leaflet to replace the 3-fold leaflet/poster combo
- New A4 poster for churches and supporters
- New A4 poster for prison wings
- New thank you postcard to send to supporters and donators
- Family feedback form to send to the parent/carer of the child to ascertain the impact of Angel Tree on the children and the families
- Minor amendments to the application form to make it clearer that gift requests must be reasonable
- Minor amendments to refresh our resources and replace the old images

Further to the above developments we have been in discussion with the Girl Guides to explore how they can join up with Angel Tree. They are a huge organisation and are on board with the programme. One major development to come out of our meetings with the Guides has been the idea of Angel Tree for Mother's Day in Juvenile facilities and Young Offender Institutes, an idea we are looking to trial in 2011. More on this and on our relationship with the Guides will follow during the year.

Our biggest development has been the inclusion of Angel Tree during Family Fun Days at various prisons in the North West. This was the brainchild of our North West Regional Coordinator and the thinking behind it was based on the idea that most family outings invariably end up with a visit to the gift shop of whatever place you have been to with the children. The same could apply to family visits to prison. We have piloted a handful of programmes in the North West and we will be looking to roll it out nationally during 2011.

Feedback from Angel Tree Coordinators

Feedback from AT groups	Response from PF office
We need a money box for churches and schools to help us fundraise	A collection box as a way to boost fundraising is being considered
Please send the feedback form earlier	Forms will be sent with programme resources
We need a way to identify our group on the family feedback form	A space for group codes will be included this year

Update on last year's feedback

Feedback from AT groups 2008	Response from PF office	Action taken
10 boys book was reformist and I felt it was anti catholic	Books are reviewed to ensure that they are inter-denominational	10 Boys was not re-ordered
Blank letterhead paper to be included on resource disc for thank you letters	Can easily be added to updated resource disc	Quality of the letterhead is reduced when sent electronically so was not included on the disc
Courier is easier than post office	DHL contract to be reviewed and other couriers considered for cost purposes	Contract was drawn up with DHL for 2010 at a reduced cost
Found The Entertainer difficult this year ordering online with a delivery note that didn't break down the cost	Orders must now be done online as this is the only way they could continue to support us	Entertainer orders are still required online with a discount code
Gift suggestion was unclear and many prisoners missed it	Previous wording had lead to requests for large and expensive gifts and it is felt that a cost recommendation would be detrimental	Application form has been updated again and cost included in the wording

Could we have magazines for mid age kids	We will try to find a supplier of Christian comics for 2010 programme	A potential supplier has been identified for 2011
Could we have a new promotional DVD next year?	A range or new promotional materials and marketing will be considered in 2010	Angel Tree DVD is part or a range of new PF resources currently under discussion

Quotes

“It was very nice getting a nice present from my mum, it made my Christmas, I felt special and it was nice of you to do that, thank you so very much”

Child receiving a gift

“My son was so pleased to get a gift from his daddy and it brought a tear to my eye. I am so grateful as it has shown him that daddy still cares about him. Thank you very much”

Parent

“He was over the moon with his gift. Knowing his dad had sent it him, he cried, it was just what he wanted”

Parent

“Thank you so much, it so empowered our son who felt he was actually getting and sending his own gifts to the kids”

Parent of prisoner

“Christmas without daddy was something we all found difficult to contemplate, receiving the gift made him very much part of our day and the children feel very secure that he was thinking of them”

Parent

“I am so very touched that the people would give up their own time, without prejudice, to carry out such a very kind act”

Parent

“More grace to your elbow! Don't relent in your work because there are people like me for whom it is not possible to see their family but through your gift, you made it possible for such a family to come together”

Prisoner

Thank you

The vision of Angel Tree would simply not be accomplished were it not for the many Angel Tree Coordinators around England and Wales, their teams of volunteers and supporters, wrapping parties, local churches who fundraise and donate, and their collective commitment and dedication to serving God in His ministry to the children touched by this programme.

Special thanks must go to:

The Entertainer: For their continued support in once again offering us a discount on their range of quality toys.

Christian Focus Publications: For once again supplying the majority of our books at a huge discount.

Thank you all for your continued support and God bless.

Contact

If you would like to know more about Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree programme, or if you want to know how you can get involved, please contact:

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