



Angel Tree Report **2009**



Why Angel Tree?

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.

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.'

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.

We believe that Angel Tree is important for the following reasons:

- Angel Tree helps families maintain their relationships
- Prisoners are less likely to re-offend if good family relationships are maintained
- Angel Tree assures the children it serves that their parent in prison has not forgotten them
- Raised awareness amongst the community of the impact of imprisonment on prisoners' families
- It is an opportunity for people to demonstrate God's love in a practical way

Angel Tree has been running in England and Wales since 1994 and in that time has grown from 1 prison to over 60. 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)
- 2008 = in 56 prisons (approx 3,600 gifts)

The table below details the results from the 2009 programme;

No. of prisons running AT	65
No. of groups running AT	51
No. of prisoners applying for a gift	2,100
No. of gifts sent	4,084 *
Money spent on gifts	£24,369
Ave cost per gift	£8.71 **
Money spent on postage	£8,347
Ave postage cost	£2.45 ***

*Accurate for 64 of the 65 prisons participating.

**Based on all those groups returning financial information.

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This year has been fantastic. New groups have taken up Angel Tree and we have entered two or three new prisons as a result. Many Angel Tree Coordinators took on board more than one prison.

Money for 73 gifts was sent to Nigeria this year, which is less than previous years.

There were unfortunately 92 gifts returned to the PF office. Thanks to the coded return labels, a large number of these have been re-sent or returned to the group.

Feedback from Angel Tree Coordinators

Feedback from AT groups	Response from PF office
10 boys book was reformist and I felt it was anti catholic	Books are reviewed to ensure that they are inter-denominational
Blank letterhead paper to be included on resource disc for thank you letters	Can easily be added to updated resource disc
Courier is easier than post office	DHL contract to be reviewed and other couriers to be considered as well for cost purposes
Found The Entertainer difficult this year ordering online with a delivery note that didn't break down the cost	Orders for the Entertainer must now be done online as this is the only way they could continue to support us
Gift suggestion was unclear and many prisoners missed it	Previous gift recommendation had led to requests for large and expensive gifts and it is felt that a cost recommendation would be detrimental
Could we have magazines for mid age kids	We will try to find a supplier of Christian comics for 2010 programme
Could we have a new promotional DVD next year?	A range of new promotional materials and marketing resources will be considered in 2010

Update on last years feedback

Feedback from AT groups 2008	Response from PF office	Action taken
Christian storybook is unsuitable for small children	Quantities of books ordered to be tracked so all books sent are age appropriate	Systems put in place to reduce the chances of running out
DVD poor	New DVD to be available including an interview with a former offender who had used angel tree	This film has been made available
Too much information sent out	Communications are being reviewed and some amendments to be made to AT Manual and	Feedback form has been reduced, AT updates are now included in the 'voices' publication rather than a separate mailing and as

	feedback forms	much correspondence as possible is sent by e-mail
Feedback from AT groups 2008	Response from PF office	Action taken
Starting early is the key to success	Timeline for office operations to be reviewed	New time line drawn up for office operations to ensure adequate time for communications
AT needs to be more widely promoted	Further marketing and promotion to be considered and built into regional coordinator role	Angel Tree has become a larger part of the role of our Regional Coordinators and several new marketing resources are being considered
Application forms were returned too late	A space for groups to include a closing date to be included on the forms	This option has been added to the application form
Cut off date for PF Nigeria was too soon	Nigeria timeline to be reviewed	Cut off date must be end of Nov to allow time for funds transfer and PF Nigeria to purchase, wrap and send gifts

Developments in 2009

Several innovations and changes in the resources available were made in 2009 with the able help of the Angel Tree Steering group, which is comprised predominantly of volunteers. This group was supported by another set of volunteers who agreed to join an e-mail consultation group to further expand the field of experience from which we can draw expertise.

These developments include;

- Resource CD ROM made available to make it easier for groups to obtain extra forms and to personalise their resources.
- Coded return labels to make it easier to source gifts that have been returned to the office. Each group has its own code.
- Contract set up with DHL domestic to offer an alternative to using Royal Mail to deliver gifts. This included guarantee of 2 delivery attempts and a fully traceable door to door service eliminating the need to take everything to the post office.
- Some changes made to the application form so that prisoners understand that gifts must be suitable for postage.
- Option of a closing date added to the application form so that prisoners know when to return their forms.
- Christmas card was produced for groups to send to prisoners, perhaps detailing what gift had been sent to their child.

- The way in which we order toys from the Entertainer changed slightly. They now supply us a list of appropriate age specific toys which we can order online with a discount code.

Quotes

'My 13 year old son has gone off to school thrilled and bubbly because he hasn't received a present from his dad since he was 1.'

Partner of prisoner

'Isn't it amazing that someone who doesn't know us should worry about us!'

Partner of prisoner

'My daughter was so pleased that the present she received was exactly what she wanted!'

Prisoner

'To the Angel Tree Team, thank you for taking the time to buy my son & daughter Christmas presents. I thank you from the bottom of my heart, you are doing a good job, all the best...'

Prisoner

'Angel Tree has reinforced my faith in humanity which had been lost long ago.'

Prisoner

'It made me feel like I was doing something for my children at Christmas.'

Prisoner

'Since I have been in here I have never had any help from anyone & having my kids happy at Christmas makes me feel better. Many thanks to everyone in the Angel Tree group.'

Prisoner

'It was a lifeline for me, I could not afford presents last year and felt ashamed about it so am very grateful.'

Prisoner

'...Something very special because it is the only way I have to send presents to my kids, I will use it again and again because the presents give my kids a lot of happiness.'

Prisoner

'I would like to say a VERY BIG thank you to all involved with Angel tree. I really appreciate the generosity.'

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 putting together a list of quality toys for a discounted price.
- Christian Focus Publications for supplying the majority of our books at a huge discount.
- Candle Books for also supplying discounted books.

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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