



Seeing lives transformed

PRISON FELLOWSHIP

“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

(2 Corinthians 3:18)

Art by offenders

The Koestler Trust is currently holding their annual art show to exhibit crafts, music, writing and film by offenders across the UK. For the first time, the work of offenders has been curated by victims of crime and Dave Walker, PF Programmes Administrator, shares his experience of the event:

I had heard of the Koestler Trust before and was aware of their work. So when I took a call from their Chief Executive about their annual exhibition of Art by Offenders, explaining that this year was to be curated by victims of crime, I was only too happy to oblige when he asked me if Prison Fellowship could provide some victims to help. We were able to put them in touch with Ray and Vi Donovan, who were pleased to take on the role of curators.

The exhibition is excellent. There are around 150 pieces on display whittled down by the curators from over 5,000

artworks. There are paintings, drawings, sculptures, photography, needlework and much more. I am already aware that there is a huge number of artistically gifted individuals residing at Her Majesty’s Pleasure, because I get to see many of the Symbolic Acts of Restitution from Sycamore Tree, but I must say that some of these pieces really struck me.

Among my favourites is a large pencil sketch of a man, a self portrait actually, but around his face is a host of images that seem to tell the story of his journey into crime and his life in prison. I must have stared at this drawing for 10 minutes straight. There were a number of other highly emotive and moving pieces, each as profound and thought provoking as the last. If art is a way of expressing emotions and telling a life story, there are surely few people more appropriate as artists than offenders.





Prison visit to Wormwood Scrubs

Tracey Stemathe, a visitor from the local community, went into a prison for the first time through attending a Sycamore Tree final session. Below she tells of her experience:

I truly didn't know what to expect when I went into Wormwood Scrubs. We were taken into a magnificent Chapel and it was there that I met the volunteers who had been working with the prisoners over the previous five weeks.

I didn't know when 'they' started coming in. I would not have truly known that they were prisoners if it wasn't for the fact that they were all in grey or blue. They were shaking the volunteers' hands, asking how they were - everyone was catching up.

Once the group work started I made an effort to go and sit with 'them' and each group had a piece to do on the story



An Act of Restitution, Sycamore Tree

Ray and Vi Donovan, curators of this year's exhibition, tell us how they were affected by being involved:

"We have found the experience very emotional, more so than we thought. The pictures have been created straight from the heart and they are much more hopeful than we expected. Of course there are the darker pieces, but there is also such hope! It was also great to see the artists being lifted up through their work. You could see how much it affected them as their family stood taking pictures of them by their work. We pray that all who attend will go away more informed of the issues facing prisoners and that they will think upon these things further."

Where: Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Center, Belvedere Road, London, SE1 8XX

When: Running daily until Sunday 14th November 2010 (10am – 11pm)

Admission: Free

The artwork on show is available to purchase. 25% from each sale is donated to Victim Support, 25% to The Koestler Trust and 50% to the artist.

of Zach. They were all very good, but I couldn't help but think that 'our group' were the best. I find that funny, even now, that I felt part of the group so quickly.

Then came the grand finale where the inmates could read out a letter. It was an act of restoring them and again there were nerves, but there was also pride. You could see it on their faces and the eyes of the volunteers were bright with tears.

Once it came to the break I didn't know what to expect. Do I approach 'them'? Do I stay where I was? I didn't have time to think as one of 'them' came and sat next to me.

Pete was around my age. We chatted about the programme and he said that the turning point for him was when the victims of crime had come in and that this had got him thinking. As we chatted some more I forgot that he was one of 'them.' He could have easily been my friend on the street.

One thing that I got from my short time at Sycamore Tree is that there is no 'us' and 'them'. They just made some bad decisions and they are now paying for it. I also learnt that the week where a victim of crime comes in is a real turning point for the inmates and I saw the satisfaction and love that came from the volunteers.

I found the experience truly rewarding and I would relish the opportunity to go in again, even to volunteer! And, if I can be honest, I didn't think I would have said that!

Tracey Stemathe

To read the full version of Tracey's experience please visit:
www.prisonfellowship.org.uk/patchwork/sycamore-tree

To find out more, to get involved, or to support Sycamore Tree financially, please call: **01621 843232**



Angel Tree

"Thank you for my Christmas present, I loved it. It made my day getting a Christmas present off my Dad."

Child of Prisoner, Angel Tree

Angel Tree aims to have a positive impact on the lives of prisoners' children by providing a present at Christmas, and last year Prison Fellowship prayer groups were able to send out an amazing 4084 presents. This is a great achievement, but when you compare this to the 160,000 children in the UK who are affected by the imprisonment of a parent, we are barely touching the surface. Our aim is to reach all of these children through Angel Tree and to do this we need your help.

You could help by volunteering with an existing Angel Tree group, or by coordinating the scheme for your local prison. If you are short of time you can also aid Angel Tree by financially supporting the scheme or through fundraising with your church.

For further details please call:
01621 843232

A rewarding day - PF Teesdale

Voices is a great way for volunteers to publicise events and to share their experiences. Prayer Group Leader for PF Teesdale, Andrew Heron, tells us how his group were able to raise some money for Prison Fellowship:

Each year our local parish church organises a large car boot sale as a fundraising event and this year our prayer group decided that we could use it to raise some funds of our own.

To start, I placed an advert in the local parish newsletter appealing for anything

that we could sell. We were very fortunate to have the Chair of the Barnard Castle Lions group contact me offering what they had left over from a sale that they had held. I went to collect the items and it was almost like an instant boot sale. There was not much room left in the car and there was more still to come!

After a bit of sorting out it was time to load the car. Thankfully my son offered to help and we crammed the car absolutely full. It was so full that opening a door resulted in masses of things falling out! We also had plenty of volunteers to help throughout the morning and the Chaplain of HMYOI Deerbolt, John Little, came along to lend some very welcome support.

It was a real team effort and it proved to be a most enjoyable and rewarding day. Not only were we able to raise a wonderful £167.85, which we are hoping to put towards running Angel Tree next year, but we were also able to talk to people about the work that we do and to give out some leaflets about Prison Fellowship. A most blessed and successful event!"

Andrew Heron



Christine Graham, Andrew & Matthew Heron, Janet Stark and Jeremy & Regina Rutland

Getting the Message Across

A training day for Prison Fellowship volunteers on communication & media

Communication is at the heart of most aspects of our lives. We live in a web-dominated world in a 24-hour breaking news culture. Our lives are bombarded by messages and people have to increasingly discern what is really important.

- How do we communicate our work to others?
- How do we tell the story of our involvement with Prison Fellowship?
- What is the best way of using traditional and new media to tell our story?

Course Tutor: Revd Rob Marshall, former Media Advisor to the Archbishop of York, is now Communications Advisor to Prison Fellowship. He is a regular presenter of 'Thought for the Day' on Radio 4.

Dates: Liverpool – 28th January 2011
York – 25th February 2011
London – March 2011 (tbc)

Time: 11am – 3.30pm

Price: £19 (includes hot drinks and a sandwich lunch).

More details about these events will follow soon! To find out about more events happening near you, take a look at our regional section on the Prison Fellowship website:

www.prisonfellowship.org.uk/regional-events