

Spring / Summer 2011

THEINTERview: Ray and Vi Donovan

My story: Lianne: a life restored

SPOTLIGHT ON: Angel Trees

CEllebrate: *pf* looks back

Moving Home

pocket full: Budget Update



CELLOUT *pf*

The new magazine from Prison Fellowship

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Welcome

Welcome to our first edition of CELLout. As I am sure you will see, this magazine is a celebration of all the people involved in Prison Fellowship and a snapshot of lives being transformed.

Equally, we want to celebrate the many facets that make up Prison Fellowship: making them known to all those currently involved in other parts of the enterprise, as well as grabbing the attention of others, so that they will want to join us in the journey!

We hope that CELLout is a treat - where you look forward to receiving something in the post and take the time out to enjoy it. We aim, in time, to deepen your knowledge of the issues involved, encourage you with the results of your labours and spur each other on to greater things!

It seems fitting that the theme for our first edition is *pocket-full*. Here in *pf* we see, time and time again, modern-day “feedings of the five thousand”. Just take a look at the CELLbrate pages! The real principle behind them (and the transformation stories) is that of starting with what you have in your hand (or pocket, as it were). We believe that God takes it, blesses it, breaks it and then multiplies it to meet the need.

It only leaves me to thank the many of you for already giving of yourselves and your talents over the past year.

Enjoy!
Natalie

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Ray and Vi Donovan Under the shade of a sycamore tree...

Ray and Violet Donovan made national headlines in 2001 when they made the decision to forgive the youths who murdered their son Christopher.

THE INTERVIEW



Read their heart-rending story at:
www.prisonfellowship.org.uk/patchwork

Since then, Ray and Vi have been in to prisons and schools to tell their story. More particularly, on the **sycamore tree** course they are invited as 'victims of crime' to describe their experience face-to-face with the offenders.

Sasha Chipperfield talked to them to find out why grieving parents would choose to spend their time in such company.

How did you first get involved with Prison Fellowship and Sycamore Tree?

We were first invited to get involved with prisons by Jean Watson, who was Christopher's R.E.

teacher at school. Jean was already a volunteer with Prison Fellowship and she explained to us about the Sycamore Tree course.

Can you describe the first time you went in to share your story on the Sycamore Tree course?

We did feel a little apprehensive as we did not know what to expect, but we later found that the women prisoners felt the same about meeting us. We also learned that the women were not two-headed monsters that the media often make them out to be.

When we shared our story on Week Three you could have heard a pin drop, we were astonished to see that they were crying and we were made to feel so welcome, but it was Week Six that made us want to go again. It was seeing the positive impact of Sycamore Tree and how the women's lives had been changed. We will never forget that day, even though it was seven years ago now!

What has been the most memorable experience for you during your involvement in Sycamore Tree?

There have been a few but there are two that come to mind... There was a young man in a local prison and he was such an angry young man. He just could not get the word forgiveness into his head. However, on Week Six he came running through the door and came over to us saying, "A light bulb has come on. I know what I have to do; I have to forgive my father. When I get out of here I am going to his grave to talk to him." We later found out that he is now a model prisoner on his wing. Another time was in Bullingdon where there was a young man doing time for murder. He had been part of a gang and had knifed someone. On Week Six he came to the front to read a letter about gang crime and it was so powerful that we asked him if we could use it in schools. He said, "Please tell them about me, to stop somebody else from taking another life."

From your experience, does Sycamore Tree make a difference?

We think it makes an incredible difference to both the victim and offender. Maybe for the first time the victim gets a voice to say how hurt they are and the effect that the crime has had not only on them, but on the rest of their family and sometimes the community. It is the same for the inmates, so many of them say that they don't have victims and to them, a victim is just a sheet of paper. But here they actually see a face, so it makes it more real and brings it home. We feel that both the victim and offender learn something, not only about each other, but about themselves too.

How has Sycamore Tree affected your lives?

This is a good question. We never stop talking about Sycamore Tree and we tell everyone we meet about the course. We can't wait for the

phone to ring with another invite to visit a prison, no matter how far away it is. We feel this is a privilege from God to be used in this way.

What would you say to encourage other Christians to get involved?

People say to us that you need a special anointing to work in prisons. This is not true; all you need is the love of Jesus, a caring heart, and sometimes an ear to listen to what the men have to say. We would recommend the Sycamore Tree course to anyone who is thinking of going into prison ministry. When you see how the inmates change in just six weeks it will blow your mind. This is a great experience and a blessing for both the victim and offender; all we can say is "give it a go - what have you got to lose?"

Why do you feel that Restorative Justice is so important?

We could go on all day about this as we both feel that it is the only thing in prison that helps them see that they have victims. The Sycamore Tree course helps them to come to terms with knowing that they need to change and to demonstrate that they are trying to move on and start afresh. As victims of crime we need to know that this is going to happen. We don't want to see the same people returning to prison over and over. Hopefully these people can find a new life outside. There is nothing else working in prisons like the Sycamore Tree course.

Dear Ray and Vi,

I wanted to say thank you for what you did for us, not just sharing your experience but showing us we can be forgiven. You have shown me how dangerous my behavior can be and the massive impact it could have on so many different people. I promise you this will defiantly help me in my path of recovery. I'm an ex alcoholic and drug addict, and your experience has strengthened my foundations. I wish you all the best for the future, you both really deserve it.

Thank you.

Extract from one letter of many sent by a Sycamore Tree learner.

Over the last few weeks the trustees and I have been meeting you around the country at our roadshow events. We have been setting out our plans for reaching more prisoners, discussing them with you and hearing what is on your hearts and minds, and of course, praying together and committing this next phase to the Lord. We have seen the excitement build as we discuss plans to grow our programmes, tell others about our work and, with you, become a stronger team.

Prior to these **roadshows**, we have been re-examining every aspect of *pf*; what it does and the environment in which it operates. (All in the context of prison numbers near all-time highs, a new government with new ideas and swingeing cuts to the Prison Service budgets!) We wanted to clarify and establish the very essence of *pf*: our core values; what difference we wanted to make; what was needed to effect that; how we wanted to be perceived, and above all, we prayed that God would show us what work He wanted us to do as a team.

At its heart, *pf* believes that every life is precious and we want to bring the hope of transformation to many more lives over the next 5 years, (at the moment we only reach a small proportion of prisoners and their families). In order to achieve this vision we need to be purposeful and determined in what we do. The main components of the strategy are:

Who is *pf*?

- *pf* is a group of people committed to seeing lives restored.
- We want to be a team of paid and unpaid, that is equally valued and supports each other in the work.
- We want more people to join us.
- We want thriving and growing local Prison Fellowship groups, offering lots of opportunities for all Christians everywhere to do this work together, with whatever time or resources they can offer.

What is our message?

- God is at work in our prisons, restoring lives.
- You can be part of it.

What do we do?

- We want to offer the Sycamore Tree course to every prison.
- We want to offer Letter Writing to every prisoner.
- We want to see Angel Tree reach many more children at Christmas and other family members through the year.
- We want to support Chaplains in every prison in practical ways.

How do we get there?

- A strategy can only provide the general direction of travel. Together we want to create an organisation that you are proud of and want many others to join.

In some ways these are difficult and uncertain times, but in many ways, never have they been this exciting: never have we been this ready, with such good news and brilliant gifts to offer! The main challenge now is multiplication and we know to Whom we go for that!

Howard Dodd, Chairman of the Board of Trustees.



June 11th: PF Nottingham
Volunteers Recruitment Day
1.00-3.00pm

June 11th: PF Liverpool
Prayer Breakfast 7.30-9.00am
Prayer and Promotion 10.00am-3.30pm

June 16th: Goodbye Party
Maldon Office, 2.00-4.00pm

June 28th: PFI World Convocation
Toronto

June 29th: Restorative Justice
Council Conference
London, 9.00am-4.00pm

July 2nd: London Volunteer Day
St Paul's Church, Finchley N3 2PU
10.00-4.00pm

July 23rd - Aug 6th:
PF Stand, New Wine Conference, Somerset

September 27th: Welcome Party
77 Great Peter Street, London, SW1P 2EZ
2.00-4.00pm

Nov 11th: Prison Ministry Conference
HTB London, 8.30am-5.00pm

Nov 20th-27th: Prisons' Week

events

pf

October - December
UCB Prayer for Today features *pf*!

ADVANCED NOTICE March 9th-11th 2012:

pf Annual Conference, Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick
For info and booking: elizabethalbery@prisonfellowship.org.uk

For information on any of these events please contact
Sasha Chipperfield: sashachipperfield@prisonfellowship.org.uk
Tel. 01621 843232 / 020 7799 2500

Christmas 2010 saw 76 prisons run Angel Tree with individual presents being sent to 4608 prisoners' children.



Sycamore Tree learner did a sponsored run in a prison gym to raise £34.50 given to course 'victim' for continuation of the work.



Last year 60 prisoners were matched to letter writing volunteers. Letter writing now being run in 31 prisons.



1000th Sycamore Tree course took place at HMP Wayland in December 2010.

CELL**ebra**

“Prisons are not to be warehouses for the incorrigible, but to be greenhouses to restore the redeemable.”

Rt Rev James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool and Bishop to Prisons.



Sycamore Tree volunteer, Lyn Connolly, made it onto the Independent on Sunday's 'Happy List', May 2011.

Last year **2270 prisoners** attended the **Sycamore Tree** course in 36 Prisons.



235 new volunteers recruited since **April 2010.**

262 delegates attend last year's 30th anniversary conference.



16 inmates were recently baptised / confirmed at HMPYOI Swinfen Hall.

“My 13 year old son has gone off to school thrilled and bubbly because for the first time since he was one, he has received a present from his dad.”

ate

Midlands women knitted chicks containing Cadbury's cream eggs to sell raising £200 for Angel Tree!



It seemed I had it all – a good job, a husband, a dog...

mySTORY



At Lianne's request we have used an image of a model

I had led a relatively normal and happy life. I worked, got married at twenty and settled down (or tried to). However, I struggled with a strong sense of discontentment and I could never understand why I felt that way. It seemed I had it all – a good job, a husband, a dog...

But, aged only 26, I had a severe mental breakdown and attempted suicide; completely believing the world would be a better place without me.

I was diagnosed as Bipolar with an overactive thyroid and I was sectioned for six months. I ended up getting divorced. I then found a kind of normality living in the YWCA and worked around the clock in local pubs.

Heroin was a sneaky, nasty habit that I realised too late was very hard to break. Because at first I didn't use needles, I wasn't a junkie! Nor a smackhead - they stole or prostituted themselves - that could never be me; I worked! I only smoked it! Ignorance was partly to blame, but mainly curiosity. Apparently, it had been responsible for killing a cat. Well somewhere along the line I had picked up the clever little reply, "Yes, but satisfaction brought him back."

Before long I had quit a responsible job at Fords to work in a massage parlour. This seemed a simple answer to fund my smack, crack and alcohol addictions and still be in control. Those were the kind of decisions I made, believing myself to be quite sane. All my habits increased just to be able to deal with the 'work' that I found myself doing.

Five years of this life-style, sometimes shop-lifting or often gravitating back to the parlours, was enough for me (or so I thought).

I managed to get a place in a rehab centre and the relief was enormous. Waking up in the same place every day? Priceless! I had managed to make myself homeless by then, so although detoxing was tough I really had nowhere else to go. I committed myself to, and completed, six months of treatment. Once out and in supported housing, the idea that I could just have the one drink - "no problem, I'll be fine, I'm okay now" - crept in.

Two weeks after that 'one drink' I was scoring heroin from a stranger who I had allowed to give me a hit.

If I thought the previous five years had been hell I hadn't seen anything yet. I spent plenty of time in cells painfully ill, banned from every shop, with no veins left in my body that I could find. I spent most days wishing I was dead but didn't have the guts to do anything about it. I survived seven years of this, including two years of homelessness and two horrible attacks of pleurisy, until some of the local 'church goers' rescued me.

They found me trying to sleep behind their church and they welcomed me in.

I couldn't go in the church because I felt I did not deserve to, or even that something would happen to me - like being struck down!

My main friend and mentor, Ann, knew that I was trying to get a prescription and a place in rehab, but that I was dying out there waiting for an answer. I was also waiting to be sentenced for dealing. Ann managed to get me into a Christian rehab centre in Devon and through this my life actually got turned around. Some days I wanted to run, but loyalty to Ann and all the others who had intervened on my behalf stopped me. I knew what else was waiting for me, too.

Well, I got clean but I also got sentenced to 2 years, most of which I did in prison.

Each time I came out of prison/rehab I drank and I also overdosed and almost didn't make it.

During the last part of my sentence I really embraced all the courses and any chance I was given to improve. At this time the Sycamore Tree course was running in the prison chapel and I found it an amazing and powerful experience. The volunteers guided me to really look at my past and see how my actions had affected all those around me. Most importantly, it led me to make some amends and find forgiveness. This experience gave me strength to put the past behind me and move on. The lessons I learned there I carry with me and draw on regularly.

Since completing another three months in an amazing rehab, and six months in supported housing, I now have my own flat which I love, and I have been clean for over 2 years. I have had the very best support and love shown to me. I regularly attend Fellowship meetings and I take a meeting in a detox centre nearby. I have also completed various college courses (now a third of the way through a complimentary therapy course), and I am a member of the gym where I also attend dance classes - great fun!

I can honestly say that I thoroughly enjoy my life.

I'm glad God did not take me up on my prayers not to wake up all those nights. I started on a road to despair, destruction, degradation, homelessness and hopelessness with my first "curious" smoke of heroin aged 27.

I am now 42, with my whole life ahead of me.

Just to highlight one memorable occasion, because there have been loads: I recently celebrated a friend's wedding, all of us in recovery, and it was fantastic! Karaoke, parties, even just to meet up with friends to talk, the point is - my life is never dull!

I thank God and all the people in my life - my wonderful family and friends; you showed me love and kindness and had faith in me when I had none. Thank you! You know who you are.

Lianne.

Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree programme is well known as a brilliant way to connect parents in prison with their children - through the delivery of Christmas gifts. In fact, over **4600 specifically requested presents were bought, wrapped and delivered to children last Christmas!** BUT, not all inmates have children and Prison Fellowship is often asked by young offenders to send a present to their mum!... So last year, Prison Fellowship began thinking about expanding the programme to include Mothering Sunday.

Terry Brown, Regional Coordinator for the South East, who organised the scheme for HMYOI Aylesbury said: "We produced a Mother's Day card and embarked on a pilot scheme to deliver the card, written by the lads, along with a small gift to their Mum. The pilot was run in three Young Offender Prisons: HMP Aylesbury, Reading and Rochester and altogether we sent out over 300 gifts."

angel

"The Mother's Day scheme was well received by the prisoners and their mothers. We kept the voucher as a surprise and the lads were delighted when their mothers called to thank them for it. We have had lots of feedback from prisoners who have come to the Chaplaincy and it is all positive. We would certainly run this again."

David Little, Chaplain at HMPYOI Reading

"The Mother's Day scheme was very straight-forward to organise as it was the same gift for all. I also had some help from volunteers who wrapped all of the 64 presents. We decided to go for a small box of chocolates that we bought at a reduced price of £3.00. It isn't the size of the gift that matters but the thought that counts! Another nice touch was that the offenders could include a personal message in the card. All but one did this and some of them couldn't get enough words on the page!"

Alfred Jeffery organised the Mother's Day pilot for HMYOI Rochester

"We felt it was a great scheme and easy to organise. It was very inclusive in allowing all prisoners to send something to their mums. We liked the voluntary option concerning the UCB booklet that could be sent along with the lovely gift of chocolates; prisoners did not have to include it if they didn't want to."

Sarah Tranter, Chaplain at HMYOI Rochester

“HMYOI Aylesbury was given the wonderful opportunity to trial Prison Fellowship’s Mothers’ Day scheme for 2011. It was a rush to get it through this year but thanks to the huge dedication of the Chaplaincy Team, both paid and volunteering, we did deliver.

48% of the young men in HMYOI Aylesbury took up the offer. We need to address how we reach those who lack a good reading and writing level and, of particular sensitivity, are the young men in here who do not have a mother.

The messages in the cards, written by the young men to their mothers, were very moving and tugged at the heart strings. The young men were extremely grateful that they were able to do something for their mothers. It is a venture that I would whole heartedly support - it had a tremendous impact - and I encourage Prison Fellowship to roll it out over more prisons next year.”

Malcolm Hunter, Chaplain at HMYOI Aylesbury

treetts for Mothers' Day


“In HMYOI Aylesbury, Prison Fellowship volunteers enclosed a £5 Tesco voucher along with the card, as this was easy to administer in such large numbers! We also had requests from 45 foreign national inmates - so we gave them a **£5 credit on their prison phone card so they could telephone their mothers** instead!

We have had some very positive feedback from the lads as they were not expecting a gift to be sent and they welcomed the opportunity to write a personal, heart-felt message to one they loved.

Good news travels fast and even before the pilot scheme was completed, we received requests from other prisons, including adult ones, to run the scheme next year!”

Terry Brown, Regional Coordinator for the South East

If you would be interested in getting involved next year we would love to hear from you. Funding for gifts will need to be raised locally but Prison Fellowship is very happy to supply the cards. Please contact Dave Walker for more information: davewalker@prisonfellowship.org.uk



James Normand, *pf*'s finance officer, talks shop...

First of all, I want to thank you, our supporters, for your generosity, especially in these difficult economic times.

As you will be aware, over the past year or so, *pf* has been formulating a renewed and expanded strategy for reaching prisoners. This strategy is dependent on a fully staffed team, both in the field and at the central office. For example, we expect to have a full complement of 8 Regional Co-ordinators in the next few months which compares with 4 at the beginning of 2009/10. Costs will therefore rise from £707,000 to £938,000 in the coming year.

A significant minority of *pf*'s funding comes in the form of fees charged to prisons for running Sycamore Tree courses.

*p*ocket full

Government cost cutting, however, has seen this source of funding fall from £432,000 in 2008/9 to no more than £324,000 in the coming year. In order to balance the books **we need to raise £614,000 from donors.** This is no small feat as last year our donation income amounted to less than half of that! However, the good news is that if each supporter gave £10 a month the need would be met. Or put another way, **if 2000 supporters gave just £2 a month, 1000 gave £5, 2000 gave £10 and 500 gave £50, we would amply meet the need.**

At 31st March 2011, reserves stood at £199,000, which is the equivalent of only 2½ months budgeted outgoings. Notwithstanding the increasing pressures, the Trustees feel that the growth strategy is very much the right path and they are confident that we will see these needs met as we each give what we can.

Standing Order details:

Account name: Prison Fellowship Ltd
Sort Code: 40-17-08
Acc. No: 81290665
Bank: HSBC



pf is moving house

We are thrilled to announce our new central office at: **77 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2EZ.**
Tel: 020 7799 2500. Leased from the Bible Society in a newly refurbished building, the office is bright, warm and welcoming. We are now only a stone's throw from parliament and the Prison Service Head Offices.

The brief was to find an inexpensive, small space that could be used flexibly, that was easy to travel to from around the country, and which enabled the national team to work with other outside organisations, opinion formers and government departments. Great Peter Street is a real answer to prayer as it meets all the criteria at lower overall cost.

The official move will take place on 11th July but the offices are already being used while they are being kitted out. It is hoped that their location will mean that any volunteer visiting the capital will feel free to drop in and meet the support team.

There will be a **welcome party on the 27th September**, everyone is invited!
(More details to follow...)



birds of a feather flock together

pf Annual Conference 'Ordinary people doing extraordinary things'

A weekend to celebrate, debate and cogitate!

9 - 11 March 2012
Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick

Come and be inspired, equipped and encouraged by hearing what is going on in prisons all over the country and, perhaps more importantly, take the opportunity to come away from the busyness of life and spend time with those who share a similar passion!

There will be transformation stories; talks from guest speakers (e.g. Alexander Mclean – Director for African Prisons Project); as well as workshops where our own in-house “crack” team members share hard-earned lessons and well-trying techniques from among you, the army at the coal face! In the words of Angela Lovell, *pf* Shenstone leader, last year's conference was “an amazing weekend... it was a first opportunity to see and hear from most of those (if not all) who do the jobs that make prison fellowship the wonderful organisation that it is... and the accommodation, all en-suite and beautifully warm, is lovely and the dining experience is wonderful. Don't miss 2012!”

For more information and booking please contact: elizabethalbery@prisonfellowship.org.uk

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