



Seeing lives transformed

PRISON FELLOWSHIP

A present for everyone

Crime in multi-storey car parks... It's just wrong on so many levels.

I've just been on a once-in-a-lifetime holiday. I tell you what, never again.

And one for this time of year: **I actually live in an advent calendar. It's freezing at the moment – most of the windows are open.**

Thanks to Tim Vine who has the world record for the most number of jokes in an hour and can happily pun the time away... By contrast last week I saw a comedian who didn't say a word but with props, music and the willing help of members of the audience, made us laugh for 90 minutes. As I sat there I thought this is just fun; nothing didactic; no utility, just pure enjoyment and in a sense part of the glory of God's creation, if not the jokes, then the capacity to laugh and have fun. I did feel privileged to have the opportunity to spend an evening there.

Inevitably I also thought of all those in trouble and especially those in prison who haven't laughed for a long time. So often a laugh can ease pain or lessen a burden if even for a short time. By chance, I watched a ridiculous film with my mother in the raw, early days after my father's death; it helped so much to have



Howard Dodd – Chair of Trustees

tears of laughter replacing those of grief. We are called to mourn with those who mourn, but also to rejoice with those who rejoice. Angel Tree in keeping inmates connected to their families at this time of year is amazing and we are so grateful to all those who give time or money and work so hard to make it possible. But may I ask as well, as a Christmas present for everyone, that we pray for some fun, laughter and maybe a few bad jokes.

We could even be the answer

to our own prayers! I'll close with these, also from the excellent Mr Vine:

I have a fear of enclosed grottoes – I have Santa Claustrophobia

I sent my girlfriend a huge pile of snow – I asked her "did you get my drift?"

I said to this acrobat "Have you any winter pepper. He said no. Any summer salt?"

I saw two people in the supermarket wrapped in a barcode. I asked them "Are you an item?"

Oh dear! Happy Christmas.

Howard

Angel Tree



Dear Angel Tree,

I am writing to you today to tell you about my experience with Angel Tree. I was 18 and addicted to heroin when I first went to prison and the day I arrived was the day before my son's 1st birthday. It was the first time I had ever been to prison and I was severely depressed and just did not know what to do.

As Christmas approached I went to see the Chaplain and she told me about Angel Tree. She said that all my little boy would know was that I had sent him a Christmas gift, he would not have to know where I was or that I had not bought it myself. So I agreed, filled out the form, and wrote a personal message to my son. On Christmas day I phoned my mum who had my son and she told me that he loved the gift.

I was in prison for a total of 6 months and after leaving prison I got help for my drug addiction. I have now totally turned my life around and those days are far, far behind me.

However, I cannot thank Angel Tree enough for what they did for both me and my son back when I was in prison. Without them I really do not think I would have got through Christmas. I had no money at that point to buy my own gift for him and no means of getting one to him. I really can not thank them enough.

This operation is so good. Not only for the parents but also the children. This is not just about sending a child a gift, it's showing them that even though their mum or dad is not with them at Christmas they are thinking of them every day and love them very much.

I really hope my story will help someone else like you helped me and I look forward to making a donation to say thank you very much.

Anna

Name has been changed



Fun ways to fundraise



PF volunteer Jeff shares how eBay has helped his PF group raise vital funds for Angel Tree this Christmas:

PF Downview and High Down have been running Angel Tree for some years. During this time we have mainly raised funds through receiving donations from local churches, but this year I thought we could do something a little bit different.

I have enjoyed going to jumble/car boot sales for many years and I have been familiar with selling online for some time. Recently, I had the idea of using eBay in a much more purposeful way - to support Angel Tree.

It has been a great success! By this Christmas, our PF group will have raised over

£1000 through auctioning items that have been donated by group members. We have auctioned a whole range of things, from a car seat selling at £7 to a Parker Pen set which went for £50. Items have been described as 'all for a childrens' charity' and lightweight items such as art materials and embroidery kits have sold particularly well.

I have found that my 'addiction' to car boot sales and eBay has been justified by fundraising for this worthy cause. As a group we have been very pleased with the result and look forward to using the funds to bring happiness to the families of prisoners this Christmas.

Jeff - PF volunteer



"Last year at HMP Lewes we sent 60 presents to the children of prisoners, but this year we have already reached that number! For those of us who give the Angel Tree application forms to the prisoners, we are so encouraged by the look of disbelief on their faces when we tell them they can send their child a Christmas present for free. They often say how humbled they are that there are people who are willing to do this for them."

Valerie Maynard, PF Group Leader

Please pray for each child receiving a gift through Angel Tree this Christmas and that families will be brought closer together. Pray for the Christian story books that are sent with the Angel Tree gifts each year; that they might sow a seed in the hearts of those who read them.

PF Carol Service

Please join us on the **14th December 2011** for a Christmas carol service. We will be meeting at our office (77 Great Peter Street, Westminster, London, SW1P 2EZ) for mince pies and mulled wine at **5pm**, before heading off to a carol service at St Matthews' (20 Great Peter Street, Westminster, London, SW1P 2BU) at **6pm**. We would love to see you there! For more information please contact: **(T)** 020 7799 2500 **(E)** info@prisonfellowship.org.uk

Letter Writing Training

London – 8th December, 10.30am – 12.30pm
77 Great Peter Street, Westminster, London, SW1P 2EZ

Please RSVP to Nicola Davey if you are interested in attending:
(T) 020 7799 2500 **(E)** nicoladavey@prisonfellowship.org.uk



PF Conference 2012

The 2012 Prison Fellowship conference will take place between **9th - 11th March** at The Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick. Our theme is, 'Be strong and courageous - making extraordinary things happen' and we would love you to join us for a weekend full of inspiring testimonies, encouraging teaching and worship, and a variety of workshops.

The cost of the weekend will be **£150** (a **£25** supplement applies for delegates requiring a single room) and this price includes meals and accommodation (Friday afternoon – Sunday lunchtime) and a delegate pack.

If individuals in your PF group are unable to meet the cost of the conference, please consider sending a representative from your group by splitting the cost amongst your

members. It would be fantastic if at least one person from each PF group could attend.

For more information or to book your place please contact:

(T) 020 7799 2500
(E) info@prisonfellowship.org.uk

Confirmed Speakers:

Ron Nikkel
President of PFI

Alexander Mclean
Director of African Prisons Project

Bishop Humphrey Southern
Bishop of Repton

Ian Telfer
Governor of HMP Gartree

Staff notices

This month we say goodbye to **Gail Butler**, PA & Office Manager, **Sasha Chipperfield**, Communications Administrator, and **Nicola Davey**, Volunteers Administrator.

We are very grateful for all that they have contributed to PF and we pray that they will be greatly blessed in all that they do.

There will be no edition of Voices in January 2012.

We wish you a happy Christmas and New Year. See you in February 2012.

Prison Fellowship England and Wales, PO Box 68226, London, SW1P 9WR
(T) 020 7799 2500 **(E)** info@prisonfellowship.org.uk