



Seeing lives transformed

PRISON FELLOWSHIP

Introduction

Welcome to the Christmas 2010 edition of *Voices*. This issue we take a look at the exciting developments that Angel Tree has seen this year, and two Prayer Groups share the inventive ways in which they have been raising money for the programme.

Many Christmas blessings!

The Prison Fellowship team

Blessing Mum

Paulette Staniec, Angel Tree Coordinator for PF Manchester Central, shares why this year's Angel Tree programme became even more exciting at HMP Styal:

Several times a year the Chaplaincy at HMP Styal hold Family Days. This year God used these opportunities to make a big difference in the lives of these families and it was amazing to be a part of it.

It all began when Stephen Hawkins, Regional Coordinator for the North West, told me that Prison Fellowship volunteers in HMP Thorn Cross were using their Family Days to run a Pilot 'Mini Angel Tree.' He asked if I would like to be involved in arranging this for the women at Styal and of course I agreed.

Before this day I didn't realise how much love I have for these women, or the desire that I have to see their lives changed for the glory of God, but that's God isn't it?! The day went so well. The 12 women and their families seemed to have had a really blessed day and several of them told me that 'it was the best'.

When buying the gifts I bought as near as possible to what the mums had asked me to try and get and, by God's grace, I



did! Before lunch we had the mums come into the back room to view their gift and to write a message to accompany it. They were so taken aback because in essence nobody had ever done this for them before. Several commented that, 'Wow, this is great', even more so because I had met with them previously to get an idea of what kinds of things their children like. I had not promised that I could get the exact requests, but I had said we would ask God to lead and guide - whenever I do that He never fails to answer me. When they came and saw the gifts we had bought, with pretty much everyone getting exactly what was asked for, they were blown away!

On the day we also had an extra family, who had initially been turned down, join us. I quickly ran out to buy extra gifts. (This was great as God showed me that I should get one or two extras next time!) They were thrilled that I did that but who wouldn't? Mum was blessed, I can tell you!

We had each mum get her gift and present it to her child and this by far was the best bit. Those kids' faces were a picture and they had no idea that mum didn't buy the present.

This was an awesome day and I will do it again and again and again.

Paulette Staniec

A special gift

Prayer groups across the country have been busy fundraising for Angel Tree and Anne Liu, Prayer Group Leader for PF South Liverpool, explains how they were able to raise money for the children of prisoners this Christmas:

In September three of us from our church community completed a sponsored cycle to raise funds for Angel Tree. It was all new to us as none of us are particularly sporty or had cycled that distance before. We were trusting in God for His protection and provision. The cycle ride took 4 hours in total and it was such a joy to be out in beautiful countryside in fine weather and, praise God, no punctures. We covered 26 miles and I still find it hard to believe that we did it; it just seemed like a lovely day out!

We were greatly encouraged by the level of support we received and together we raised £755, all glory to God for His faithfulness! We had a fabulous day out and are happy that through this the children of



prisoners will be able to receive a special gift from their fathers at Christmas.

Ann Liu

Getting out into the community

In the run up to Christmas PF Milton Keynes have been busy fundraising for Angel Tree and Lynn Atkinson tells us what they have been up to:

Ever since I read the story of how Mary Kay Beard* set up her very first Angel Tree in a shopping centre, asking shoppers to buy gifts for the children of the inmates of the local prison, I have wanted to do this in Milton Keynes. This year we made that a reality.

Central Milton Keynes shopping centre has a community zone stand which is available to use for free by charities. We picked a day in mid November to give us enough time to process the application forms from the prison and to allow enough time afterwards to process the gifts received or, if it all failed, to go shopping ourselves!

John Lewis kindly loaned us a Christmas tree for the day and so we dressed the stand with tinsel and some (fake) wrapped Christmas gifts. We also had plenty of Angel Tree leaflets and gift aid slips to hand and made sure that we were all clear on how to explain who we were and what we were doing.

We had a varied response throughout the day and money was raised and several gifts were donated. Many people who gave money or gifts had heard of Angel Tree

before, had worked in prisons, or knew a Prison Fellowship volunteer!

As well as getting out into the wider community, we also raised awareness in our local churches. The day before our shopping centre appeal we went to the Oldbrook Christian Centre and we had an amazing response. They have two services and I did a short talk on Angel Tree during each. We then handed out 50



Lynn Atkinson and Diana Buteux, PF Milton Keynes

Angel Tree cards (the resulting 50 presents were returned with much excitement the following week), and we also picked up a fantastic £958 in donations!

All this goes to help the children for the glory of God!

Lynn Atkinson

**Mary Kay Beard, the founder of Angel Tree, tells her incredible story in her book Rogue Angel. A small supply are available for sale in the office but they are also available at: www.marykaybeard.com*

Prisons Week ran from 21st – 27th November and we were once again able to take this opportunity to raise awareness about the work of Prison Fellowship. Our staff and volunteers were involved in many speaking engagements and below are links to two such occasions:

- www.stmarysgreatbaddow.org.uk/our-services/listen-again
- www.stmarysealing.org.uk/index.php?page=listen-again

Prayer Points

- Give thanks for the amazing opportunity at HMP Styal's Family Day and that those families have been blessed through Angel Tree. Pray that PF Manchester Central will have this opportunity again and that more and more prisons will be open to such events.
- Give thanks for the wonderful support shown to PF South Liverpool in their fundraising efforts for Angel Tree. Pray that God will continue to bless Prayer Groups as they faithfully work to spread His love this Christmas.
- Give thanks for the exciting ways in which groups such as PF Milton Keynes have been raising funds for Angel Tree and for God's provision in this. Pray that each child who benefits from Angel Tree this year will experience God's love.
- Give thanks that Prisons Week continues to run each year and pray that more and more people will have a heart for prison ministry as they become aware of the needs in this area.

Getting the Message Across

A training day for Prison Fellowship volunteers on communication & media

- 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, now Communications Advisor to Prison Fellowship.

Dates

LIVERPOOL – 28th January 2011

Liverpool Cathedral, St James' Mount, Liverpool, L1 7AZ

YORK – 25th February 2011

Novotel York, Fishergate, York, North Yorkshire, YO10 4FD1

LONDON – March 2011 (tbc)

Time

11am – 3.30pm

Price

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

To book your place please send your cheque into the office for the attention of Sasha Chipperfield.

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