

October 2010
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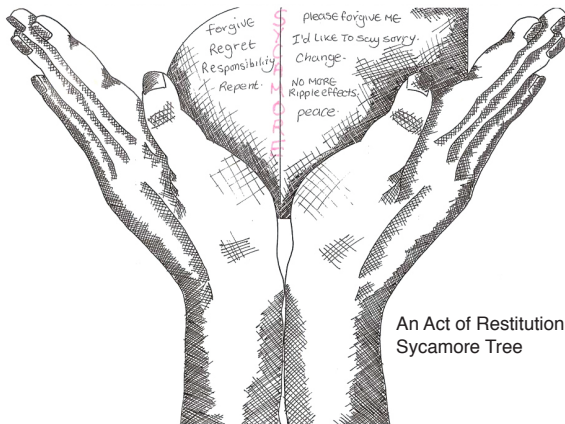
VOICES



Seeing lives transformed

PRISON FELLOWSHIP

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).



An Act of Restitution –
Sycamore Tree

Sycamore Tree - Journey of healing

I agreed to go into prison as a surrogate victim of crime because I could see how helpful it might be to the offenders. It never occurred to me that the process would be part of my own journey of healing. I have taken part in Sycamore Tree three times now and, after hearing my story, many of the women have wanted to tell me about their own crimes - especially if the crime resonates with my experience. It's almost as though they want my forgiveness, and some share how they feel about what they've done and how they intend to make amends if they can. It's been helpful for me to hear their stories and many of them write letters or poems to read to me at the final session. Some of them even make things for me! It's really moving to be cared for in that

way and to hear them express how much my story has touched them; how sorry they are for what I've been through. They say I've helped them to take responsibility for their own crimes - often for the first time.

Sometimes people are skeptical about Sycamore Tree, but you can tell when an apology comes from the heart. You can see it in their eyes and hear it in their words. There's never a dry eye in the house at the end of those sessions. When I go home, it's always with a sense that lives have been changed for good.

Gill – a Sycamore Tree volunteer

If you would like to get involved in Sycamore Tree please contact the office:
01621 843232

Reflections on Sycamore Tree - HMP Downview

Sycamore Tree Tutors John Phillips and Jean Watson, report on the final session of the Sycamore Tree course which was held recently at HMP Downview.

"I couldn't cope with that every week, I would be a wreck!"

That was the comment from one Offender Supervisor present at the final session of the recent Sycamore Tree programme at HMP Downview. She and her two colleagues were truly moved as their comments reflect:

"I felt immensely proud of the women who genuinely allowed the programme to work its magic in their heads. The Sycamore team do a fantastic work to offer this opportunity to the women; to explore very difficult emotions in a safe and supported environment."

"I've never been to one before and I was very impressed! It's such a powerful and effective programme."

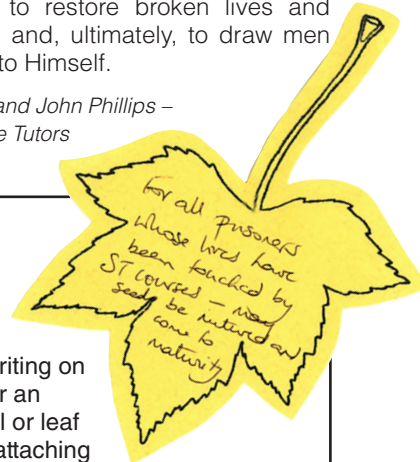
"Some of the women did fantastic work which was evident in their final Act of Restitution. It took every ounce of will-power not to cry at their heart-wrenching efforts."

The demand for tissues suggests that most of those present did not possess that same will-power! Whilst the men present may have bravely allowed the boxes to pass them by, they were not exempt from shedding of tears!

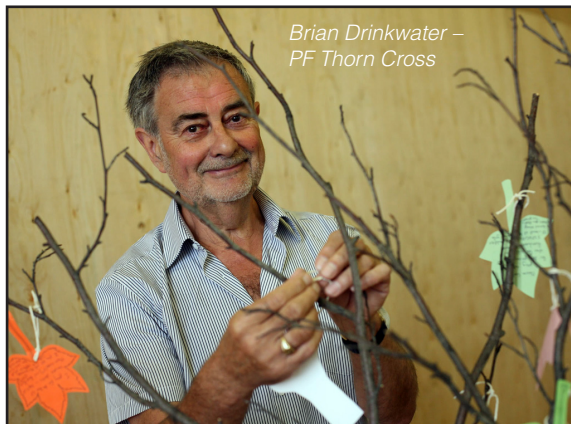
A particular memory from the afternoon is of a mother and daughter in a prolonged embrace. No doubt this was a very precious couple of moments in the healing process for them both. We are so grateful that, for several courses now, it has been possible to allow the women to invite family members and friends to the final session.

We give thanks to the Lord for the wonderful privilege of being involved in running Sycamore Tree at Downview, so enthusiastically supported by the Chaplaincy Team. We long that God will continue to use the programme (and more widely across the Prison Estate in England and Wales) to restore broken lives and relationships and, ultimately, to draw men and women to Himself.

Jean Watson and John Phillips –
Sycamore Tree Tutors



By writing on either an angel or leaf and attaching it to our prayer tree, volunteers offered their prayers for prisoners at the recent North West Volunteer Fun Day. Please join us in the prayer above.



Brian Drinkwater –
PF Thorn Cross

Angel Tree - HMP Preston

Joanne Mills reflects on what it's like to become a Prison Fellowship volunteer:

It was through accompanying my mum (Lyn Connolly) as she went in as a surrogate victim on Sycamore Tree that I got involved. Since this all began I can't believe how many opportunities I have had to be able to talk to people about God! Even with people who I have known for years, when they ask what I have done that day and I say go into prison it opens up a whole conversation.

As well as Sycamore Tree, I am currently involved in running Angel Tree for HMP Preston and I have been so encouraged by the support we have received. Recently, my mum and dad sent out a newsletter about the work they are involved in (<http://www.impactmerseyside.org.uk/>) and I included a letter explaining about Angel Tree. A few days later we received a card from an elderly lady saying that she would love to offer her support, and she gave us a cheque for £40.00 that we could buy presents with! We



have had two more donations since and it has really encouraged me because I thought we would have to raise all of the money through fundraising events.

As well as financial support, I have also had offers of practical help. I have even had people I work with ask if they can come and help on the wrapping day for Angel Tree! People are really touched by what Angel Tree does and I'm so looking forward to being involved further.

Joanne Mills – PF volunteer

South West and Wales update

Our recent South West and South Wales Regional Prayer Days were a great success!

The South Wales Prayer Day, held in July, brought groups from all over the region to join and seek the heart of God together. It is always a special time when the saints gather together with just one agenda; to seek Him and it was a great day. Peter Amoss was able to attend the event from Parc Chaplaincy, and he kindly offered to lead the group in worship. He was able to share his experience of prison ministry and the challenges it brings from the inside – it was very enlightening!



The second Prayer Day, also in July, took place in the South West. All Prison Fellowship Prayer Groups around the Bristol region were able to meet and seek the Lord together, encouraging each other in this demanding ministry. The meeting was held in Weston-Super-Mare and, after a refreshing time of prayer, there were a variety of inspiring presentations including an excellent keynote speech from Terry Brown the Regional Co-ordinator for South Central.

Many new volunteers attended these meetings and have since written to express their appreciation;

"I just wanted to thank and encourage you for a wonderful day yesterday. We were SO SO blessed and encouraged."

Due to the success of both of these events we will be holding further meetings later this year, this time with a visit from a surprise guest!

Mark Jones, Regional Coordinator for Wales and the South West

