



Seeing lives transformed

PRISON FELLOWSHIP

“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God”
(Ephesians 5:1-2).

Angel Tree preparations

PF Cambridge has been running Angel Tree for about twelve years for three different prisons. Preparations usually begin in July with posters, application forms and flyers being sent to the prison Chaplaincies ready for promotion on the wings. Letters are also sent to various churches, updating regular prayer/financial supporters whilst making others aware of the project and inviting their prayer support. After all, where would we be without prayer support?



Wrapping party, PF Cambridge

We normally send 250 – 300 presents each year, and we found that the best way to deal with this number is to send the same gift to a certain age range. For example, all five year old girls will be sent the same toy. Various group members shop for different ages, and we have a very good local toy shop where we receive invaluable help with the suitability of gifts. We find it is always worth taking an Angel Tree leaflet to show to shop managers as some are very willing to offer us a discount (including stationery shops).

Overseas gifts are wrapped and posted by October, whilst the UK wrap takes place towards the end of November in a church hall. Our group members are joined by friends from various churches, many of whom have helped for a number of years, and there are usually about twenty four of us - it's a fun time with a constant buzz of happy conversations. The presents are set out around the hall in age/sex groups and this makes it easier to be sure that the right gift is going to the right child. Most parents also request a Christmas story book, which is a great opportunity for sharing the Good News, and once all the presents are wrapped we pray for the families and the safe delivery of the parcels. It is then off to the Post Office, and following this, to avoid awkward conversations for the prisoners, we write to them explaining what gifts their children will be receiving.

Here is an example of the thanks we have received:

“I thank you so much, this is the first Christmas without Dad and I know kindness like this will help my two girls.”

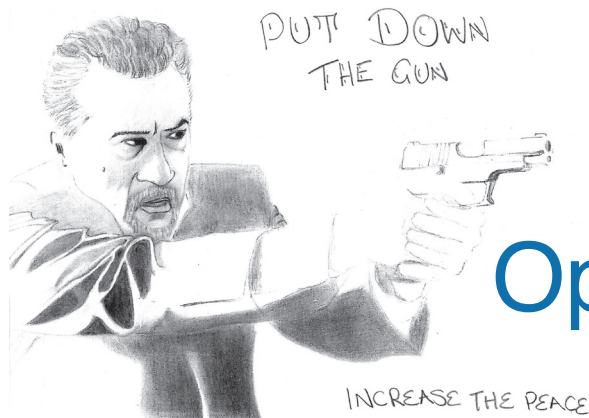
“It's a really wonderful thing, all four children with really super presents, perfect. All I can say is thank you from my heart.”

What a marvellous opportunity Angel Tree is to share the love of Jesus with families who are hurting!

*Wendy Collett – Prayer Group Leader,
PF Cambridge*

To find out more about how you can get involved in Angel Tree, please contact the office: **01621 843232**

Don't forget that we will be holding Letter Writing training days throughout September/October for all those wanting to write to prisoners. If you are interested in becoming involved in this vital ministry, please call the office **01621 843232** or email info@prisonfellowship.org.uk for more information.



Fabulous Opportunity

An Act of Restitution from Sycamore Tree

I first heard of Prison Fellowship when two Gideons came to speak at my church and mentioned a fellow Gideon who volunteered within prisons; his name was Arthur Chapman. After the service, and thinking nothing about it, I mentioned that it all sounded very interesting.

The next day I got a phone call from Arthur inviting me to go into Thorn Cross on week six of Sycamore Tree. I was hesitant, but the Lord works in mysterious ways. After hanging up, I mentioned it to my daughter and asked if she's ever heard of a man called Arthur Chapman. She ran upstairs and brought down a card with Arthur's name and number on it. She told me that a lady from her church had given her the card and said to her, "I don't know why I feel I need to give you this but take it." We were both amazed and I knew it was confirmation from God.

I was the most unlikely person to go into a prison and had some quite strong views on it, but off I went to the final session. I went in thinking I'd never go back. In the Chapel I sat next to a lad called Daniel and I asked him straight, "Was this course any good?" He looked at me and said, "It's not been a

waste for me, I have become a Christian and it's changed my life." That was all I needed to hear; I was hooked. I knew that if Jesus was there then that's where I would be. Even though the course is open to all faiths, it is still a fabulous opportunity to talk to the lads at break time about how the Lord wants to work in their lives and, since starting at Thorn Cross, I have also been into other prisons with Sycamore Tree.

One of the prisons I now volunteer in is a female prison and I really did not want to go in at first. I thought that they would judge me and that I would be really out of my depth, but I have to say it's nothing like I thought.

The women have such sad stories and the remorse they feel is brought out during the course as it makes them face the impact their actions have had on the lives of so many people. On the current course we had Lyn, a victim of crime, in to share her story and we had to hand the box of tissues around. All the woman wanted to hug Lyn and thank her for sharing with them. Being involved in Sycamore Tree really is a worthwhile job and we do it in the Lord's name.

Joining together

Churches on the Kent Estuary, Cumbria, joined together on the village green for an evening of Songs of Praise. We were excited to be joined by the Flookburgh Brass Band and, as the green was just in front of St. Thomas' Church, people who did not normally come into the church building were able to join in and listen (there were about 230 in attendance). The theme for the service was Restorative Justice and there were several speakers, including a retired Chief Superintendent, Mike Crabtree. We also heard testimonies, a deeply moving account of forgiveness from John Mosey who lost his daughter in the Lockerbie Bombing, and the amazing story of Marc Kelly. Marc, an ex-offender, told of how he started the Step by Step Project which helps ex-offenders to reintegrate into society and introduces them to the Christian faith (from this service, £400 was donated to the programme). Marc was also joined by two young ex-offenders who bravely told of their lives of abuse, addiction and crime and their wondrous encounters with God and Marc.

There were also several volunteers from Prison Fellowship who spoke about their different contributions towards the ministry, explaining the impact it has on prisoners



Jill Shaw speaking on Prison Fellowship

and how it has enriched their lives as well. Stephen Hawkins, Regional Coordinator for the North West, spoke about Prison Fellowship in general, whilst the rest of us discussed Angel Tree, Sycamore Tree and prison visiting.

Everyone who spoke during the service chose a hymn which was accompanied by the resounding sound of the brass band, and they each explained why they had chosen it. The response to this service was very positive and people were noticeably moved. I witnessed a flow of people shaking hands, hugging and showing appreciation to the speakers - it was very powerful.

Sue Tallis, PF Kendal

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: London - 12th November 2010
Leeds - 19th November 2010
Manchester - 25th February 2011
Birmingham - 18th March 2011

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

www.prisonfellowship.org.uk/regional-events

Redeeming our Communities

I was joined by some of my colleagues recently at the Redeeming our Communities event in Manchester. We were there to support the work happening in the Manchester area and to promote the work that Prison Fellowship do. It was a great chance to talk with people about prison work and introduce them to the activities that we run in prisons.

Many people stopped to look at information on the stall and there was a positive response from some to become volunteers. They particularly liked the free chocolates!

There were also representatives from many different Christian groups who are working hard to influence their communities, and taking part in the ROC event gave us a good opportunity to meet with these organisations and to see who may want to partner with us in the future; it was a good time for networking and seeing what is going on in the local area.

Although the attendance was slightly less than last year, the content was just as inspiring. It was a huge encouragement to see what other groups are out there

ministering in the streets and suburbs of Manchester. For example, Retrak were there to share about their work with street children in Africa and they had representatives from the Police Force there to tell us how they had got involved in this ministry.



Rosie at the Prison Fellowship Stand

This was just one of the groups represented at this event as the evening was packed with many other stories of success. To find out more take a look at their website:

www.redeemingourcommunities.org.uk

Rosie Wood, Regional Coordinator, North East

We are looking to feature a blog on our website which will give visitors a real insight to the experience of volunteering in prisons. If you feel you could commit to blogging for a period of time, please contact **sashachipperfield@prisonfellowship.org.uk**

'Word for Today' is a very popular resource in prisons and it is also available in Spanish. Spanish prisoners are often faced with a severe shortage of literature in their language and will most certainly appreciate a copy. If you have Spanish-speaking men or women in the prisons you visit, please do make this known to your Chaplains. For free copies of 'La Palabra Para Hoy,' please contact Clive Read (**clive@cliveread.com**) who will be very happy to send copies to any prison in the UK.

Prison Fellowship will soon be publishing an updated training manual which will replace *Equipping the Saints*. This guide will provide important information on volunteering in prisons and will be available to all volunteers.