

*St. Giles' Church supports support the work of the Prison Fellowship locally, focussing on the Angel Tree programme. You can find out more about HMP/YOI Littlehey at [http://www.insidetime.org/info-regimes2.asp?nameofprison=HMP-YOI\\_LITTLEHEY](http://www.insidetime.org/info-regimes2.asp?nameofprison=HMP-YOI_LITTLEHEY)*

## **Prison Fellowship**

*"I was in prison and you visited me" Matthew 25.26*

Though Prison Fellowship (PF) is an international organisation, it, like the church, does the meat of its work at local level. In East Anglia, PF has several groups which serve their local prisons in a variety of ways. At HMP/YOI Littlehey we fall under the provision of the Cambridge, March and Brampton groups.

Routinely PF assists us in the Cat-C chapel: **leading the worship** on a Sunday and providing **pastoral care** for the men, listening to them at coffee after the service and often feeding back to the chaplaincy the needs and concerns of the men they have been talking to. Then on most Tuesdays they come in and lead a **Bible Study** with the men, which they enjoy and grow through.

But they also work hard in the background. They run the **Angel Tree** programme and the **Sycamore Tree** course (more later) as well as – through the central office – providing **letter writers** for the men.

**Sycamore Tree** is a victim awareness course – teaching the men about the consequences of their actions on the people around them, and I see men being transformed before my eyes.

**Angel Tree** is an astonishing programme, which provides Christmas presents for the children of prisoners – you cannot imagine the difference it makes. One of the harshest realities of prison, is that it is generally the families of prisoners who suffer the most. Often stigmatised and impoverished a parent's absence, the family can start to fragment. The children, disturbed and feeling rejected by the absent parent can become vulnerable to predators in the wider community (criminals, paedophiles, extremist groups). The parent, cut off from the support of their family, can spiral downwards in a cycle of repetitive and worsening offending.

Angel Tree is a small but significant part of the attempts of church and society to prevent this happening. They send a small, but carefully chosen present, to the child(ren) of 16 offenders, as though the present has come directly from the parent. Prisoners write little messages which are stuck to the message labels by which they can wish their own a Happy Christmas. With the prisoner's permission, PF will also add a little (age appropriate) Christian book.

*'To everyone in the Angel Tree, I just want to say thank you for putting a smile on my kids faces, the present was excellent and made my kids know I have not forgot them.*

*I thank you with all my heart.'*

*Prisoner from HMP Gartree*

Finally, and most valuably, PF groups all meet for **prayer** on a regular basis, to pray for the prisoners and to support the chaplaincy. They are looking for:

*Prayer Group members Sycamore Tree volunteers Angel Tree volunteers Letter Writers*

As well as, of course, financial support to allow them to continue the work they do for the prisons in this region.

Thanks for taking the time to read this.

*Lindsay Llewellyn-Macduff*

*Anglican Chaplain, HMP/YOI Littlehey*