

OFFERING HOPE & A NEW BEGINNING

A New and Living Way

Have you ever considered the privilege we have to live in a time after the cross? Today every believer has immediate access to God through Jesus. No longer do we need to observe any religious ceremonies before coming to Him. Wherever we are, whatever the time, we can call to Him in prayer for forgiveness and help.

For those who lived in Old Testament days this wasn't the way. The law said exactly who could approach God, how it was to be done and when. Any Israelite could come to the temple to pray or bring an offering but only the priests could sacrifice animals on the altar or burn incense in the Holy Place. The Holy of Holies was entered once a year and only by the high priest to offer blood for his sins and the sins of the nation.

There were over six hundred religious laws to adhere to. Every time someone failed to keep just one they had to offer an animal sacrifice to make amends. This led to people trying and failing; feeling guilty and trying harder; failing again and making more sacrifices. It was a never-ending cycle.

Yet God broke that cycle by sending Jesus. Through his death and resurrection He has opened up *a new and living way* for us to have a relationship with God and know His forgiveness for sin. Give thanks He is breaking that cycle among the people we work with.

Sharon has been homeless for most of her adult life because of severe alcohol addiction. She has been banned from



suitable hostels in Belfast and as a result ends up sleeping rough. When she was in prison she engaged with PF. Joanne encouraged her to reach out to her daughter and pray for her, which she did. Recently her daughter has been in contact for the first time in a long time.

A few months ago Sharon called PF. 'I went to meet with her in her cell', Joanne says, 'not really knowing what she wanted and really a bit fearful. To my surprise she said, "Joanne, I want what you have." I wasn't expecting this, I thought maybe she was having difficulties with the other inmates but she genuinely wanted to know the way to Jesus. I then had the opportunity to lead this lady to the Lord in her prison cell.'

Sharon was released recently, excited about the prospect of meeting with her daughter and grandchildren and looking forward to attending a local church. What a privilege we have at Prison Fellowship to be able to share this *new and living way* with prisoners, their families and ex-prisoners. What a joy it is, that many have found it.

Father & Son Find New Life in Magilligan

As part of Norman's work he visits men in their cells, on the landings and in their places of work in Magilligan. Often accompanied by volunteers, they have great opportunities to help the men practically. On one occasion a prisoner's wife was seriously ill in a nursing home and after a brief conversation with the governor, a visit was arranged for the prisoner to see his wife. This was so meaningful for them both, as his wife passed away shortly after that.

'I find it most encouraging on Tuesdays,' Norman says. 'I start the day in a classroom, meeting new inmates and giving an induction session of PF. For those in for the first time they sit quietly, confused, downcast, and you can see the fear in their faces. I then visit prisoners, drawing alongside them and witnessing as appropriate. One day, along with Willis one of our volunteers, we were visiting in 'the blocks'; a secure part of the prison. As soon as one of the men from the travelling community saw us he came rushing up the corridor. He was very anxious. I had previously talked to Thomas before so he recognised me. 'Could you come to my cell for a visit. I would like to get my life sorted out,' he said. Once there he started to open up about his life and problems within his family. His father was also in the same prison and he asked if his dad



could come and join us. We agreed and so there in that tiny cell we had father and son together, sharing their past lives.

This gave us a wonderful opportunity to introduce Jesus into the conversation. Thomas asked if he could become a Christian. After explaining the gospel Willis prayed with him and led him to Christ. 'Could I do that also?' his father asked. We were so thrilled with what the Spirit was doing in each of their hearts. Norman had a very sincere talk with the father and after they prayed he also accepted Christ into his life. What a blessed morning when two more men found this new life in a prison!

During the month of May Norman will be having a Mission Week. Pray that more men will know that this 'new and living way' is open to them.

Giving a Life Line

The impact of a prison sentence has consequences for every family. Although their situations may be different they often go through similar experiences. Apart from facing the emotional distress of having a loved one absent from family life they can feel isolated and stigmatised by the offence.

Jane is a mother of two boys. Her husband is serving three years in prison. On the very first visit Jane shared how she felt ashamed and hurt when her husband was placed in custody. Many of her friends had walked away from her, she was suspended from her job and lost respect from her colleagues due to the crime committed; a crime that was proven in court but something she had no part in.

For many like Jane, left lonely and isolated, they want an end to the misery. 'As I listened to Jane that morning,' our family worker says, 'it became apparent that she was suicidal. We began to explore these thoughts and talk about the fact



that there is another way, a better way. I have no doubt that morning was a lifeline for Jane.'

From that visit Jane has been able to open up about other issues that have held a grip on her life, things she hadn't shared with others, things which led her to think that suicide was her only option. The connection with PF has allowed Jane to face the problems in her life by availing of our support and that of other organisations. Her troubles won't be fixed overnight but thanks to the support of PF she has been able to get help before it is too late.

Our Thursday night *Hope Works* was a bit different last month. Instead of the usual get-together we had a group of six guys from a church in Bangor come and speak on the subject of 'living out our faith'. It was their first time to do this kind of thing but after welcoming everyone and introducing ourselves they got to know us and we enjoyed having them.

On the first evening three of the guys shared their testimony in sixty seconds. They were open and honest about their backgrounds and we had the chance to ask questions. After the first session I asked one of them what he thought about the evening. With a smile he said, 'I really enjoyed the chicken goujons, burgers and chocolate gateau. It was very interesting, they were able to tell me what happened before they met God and how their lives were dramatically changed. They put it in a way I could understand.'

On the second Thursday they shared the importance of how to live our faith before others. From the Bible the guys used verses, challenging and teaching us why we are to live our faith, the way we can live to glorify God and be a light for Him on this earth, showing others the difference God makes in our lives when we trust in Him.



Now it's up to us to LIVE IT and lead others to the One who changes lives, giving people who have no hope, a Hope and a Future (Jeremiah 29:11).

'R'

His Way Gives Real Life

During Jesus' thirty-three years on earth He set us an example to follow. He made it clear that our motivation in life should be 'compassion' for people. Jesus spent time with the 'least of these'. His heart reached out to the marginalized, the broken, the vulnerable. Therefore, it's simple: ours should too. I am so thankful for a job which allows me to love broken people every single day, pointing them to Christ, reminding them that there is always hope and that His grace is always enough.

I grew up in a very privileged, loving family. We weren't rich by any stretch but we always had enough because mum and dad made sure we worked hard. I am thankful for the many opportunities I've had to travel the world and see real poverty and I am so glad that this transformed my life forever.

I have had the huge privilege of working with those experiencing hardship in our own country. Their stories sound like daddy is an alcoholic; mummy is a drug addict; daddy sells drugs from my baby sister's pram; I already smoke and I'm only nine; daddy's in jail and my brother is too. I visited that particular child in Hydebank. Unfortunately he was always destined to end up there.



This is real life for many and it's right on our doorstep. Jesus said 'I have come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly.' Will you help us through your prayers, support, or volunteering with PF to bring this life that Jesus offers and help people to turn their lives around?

'Lynne'

Jesus how wonderful You are,
For Your precious love is everything.
You're a precious light that glows so bright,
Our mighty and glorious King.

Easter is a time we all remember,
The suffering that You did embrace.
When You died for our sin and shame,
You're a love with a mighty grace.

Sin and shame You took upon yourself,
And You did this all for me.
You broke the chains that held me in darkness,
Your love that set me free.

Unconditionally You died for us all,
For a debt we could never pay.
But death could never keep You down,
As You rose again on the third day.

So we thank You Lord Jesus,
From our hearts to You we pray.
By Your wounds we are free,
You are the door and the way.

B. Wiggins

Support Prison Fellowship

Prison Fellowship relies completely on donations from individuals, churches, companies and trusts who believe in the work we are committed to. During the year staff and volunteers have conducted 5,616 prison visits, 426 families received personal visits in their homes and 1,539 former prisoners were supported through personal visits and practical support. One of those who received help is Terry.

"It has been a blessing over the past 4 years knowing the PF guys. The support has been a great help in my life."

With your donations we have been able to offer spiritual, practical and emotional assistance to those in need but have you considered supporting Prison Fellowship on a regular basis?

For the price of a takeaway meal we can ensure people like Terry receive personal visits and help them know they are not forgotten. Please complete the Standing Order form enclosed or visit our website www.pfni.org.

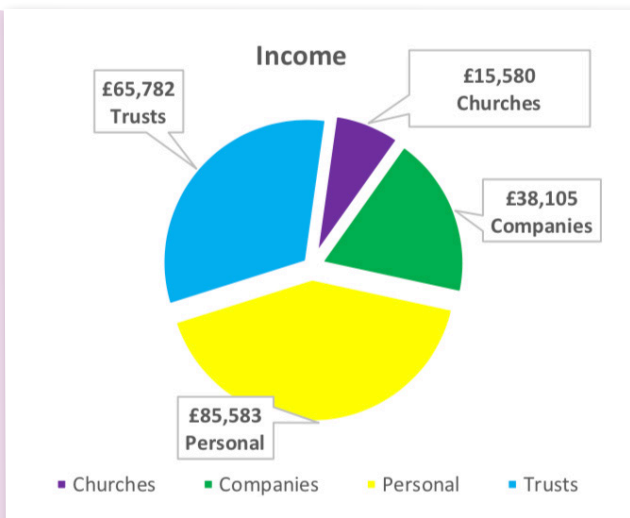
Leaving a Gift in your Will.

None of our work would be possible without the generosity of our supporters. Leaving a gift in your will to Prison Fellowship NI will help us to continue sharing the gospel with those impacted by crime in the prisons, among their families and following release.

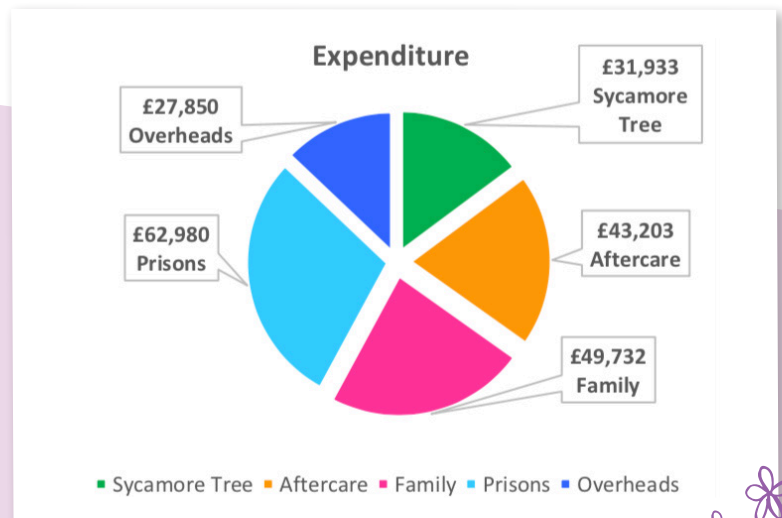
To receive further information please complete the form enclosed or contact the office 028 9024 3691 or email info@pfni.org.

Finance Summary for the year to 28th February

This summary is provided to indicate to supporters how funds were obtained and spent during the 11 months to the end of February 2019 (based on draft and unaudited figures).



Total income received £205,050



Total expenditure £215,698