

Volunteer

We have many individuals coming forward to volunteer. Pray for opportunities to introduce them into the ministry during a very challenging time. We need God's help to navigate the way forward with new volunteer applications.

Pray for all the links in the chain that enable a volunteer access into prison. Pray for the relationships between DOJ and Prison Fellowship.

Pray for the volunteers who have applied for prison pass renewals over the lockdown period. Ask that God would continue to grant PF access into prison.

Pray for encouragement over each of the PF volunteers. Many are finding it difficult not being able to minister to those they have grown so fond of. We ask for God's perfect timing for 'open doors' back into prison and family homes.

Pray for Grace as she goes on maternity leave this month. Please pray for the safe arrival of baby and the transition to life with two children.

Family

Please pray for broken relationships within families. Ask the LORD to heal and divinely intervene between parents and their child/children, siblings, husbands and wives, etc.

Give thanks for technology that allows virtual visits to take place and helps maintain good contact between family members and friends.

Pray for families as they await the sentencing of their husband/partner, son/daughter, brother/sister. Pray for peace of mind for everyone involved, for the practical implications that a prison sentence will mean: loss of income, separation from a loved one, lone parenting.

Pray for those, who due to COVID, have not been able to visit their family member in prison and who do not have the technology for virtual visits. Pray they may find contentment during this time as the only contact they have is a phone call.

Pray for the appointment of a Family Worker this month for the North West; pray for a candidate with a heart for bringing God's love and restoration to prisoners' families.

Prison

Pray for wisdom for prison Governors and leadership as they gradually remove restrictions in place for families to visit and organisations to run programmes. Pray for effective measures to protect all residents and staff from an outbreak of COVID-19 inside.

Pray for those who seem unable to break the pattern of crime and violence. Pray they will see that this life-style is very wrong and has caused hurt and damage to others. Pray for repentance and a desire to leave this life of crime behind and choose Jesus' Way.

Prison chaplains have an opportunity to minister to prisoners and show them the love of God. Pray for grace for them as they challenge offenders to address the often ignored spiritual issues deep inside.

Aftercare

Pray for the new men that contact PF when released from prison and for the work of Aftercare supporting them spiritually, emotionally, socially, and physically.

Depression, loneliness, and suicide affect many of the men we care for. Please pray for good to overcome this evil, and a hedge of protection around them. Pray for Neil as he deals with these difficult areas and the spiritual strength needed to help those in need.

General

PF regularly applies to various Trusts for funding. Pray we will find favour with them and funds for different ministries will come in to enable us to take the work forward.

10th October: World Mental Health Day.

Pray for those with mental health challenges who feel isolated, anxious, and helpless. May they know God's Peace and Hope and find the necessary support to heal and flourish.

Pray for our Christmas Hope Project that we will be able to overcome the challenges brought about by COVID-19. Pray for peace and safety as we work together to make this happen and that we will trust it into God's Loving care.

OFFERING HOPE & A NEW BEGINNING

Family Visits - Socially Distanced

Maintaining relationships with a family member in prison is challenging at the best of times. Add COVID-19, and it only increases those difficulties.

When lockdown began in March, all visits were suspended. At the peak of the crisis, prisoners were confined to their cells to prevent the spread of the virus.

We asked families how they coped during this time, and now that visits have recommenced, how things have changed.

"The importance of visits for us as families," says Mary, "cannot be underestimated. It provides us with an oasis to be with each other. Even in a room with lots of hustle and bustle we have the opportunity to be together. These times are precious.

In mid-March we were told 'visits are the last thing that will go.' The next week they were suspended. This came as a blow, but it was understandable.

Following that, the only contact we had with our loved ones was by phone and letter. It was very difficult and frustrating and sometimes the phone system was down.

To help keep families connected, a virtual system was set up in April. This enabled us to see our loved ones without having to travel to the prison.

Visiting areas were fitted with computer screens. Initially there were teething problems with poor connectivity and a lack of privacy as some rooms hosted two visits simultaneously. For many, it was a great help to keep

in touch and see each other, particularly those with relatives not living in Northern Ireland.



There were many other positives: no time or costs incurred in travelling; people with poor mobility or ill health could now 'visit'. One man was able to see his dear wife after years of only phone contact. Virtual tours of homes and gardens have been enjoyed and let's not forget seeing the family pets! Although children didn't tend to engage with these visits as it's just not the same as an actual face-to-face visit."

Social visits play a significant role in the well-being and rehabilitation of prisoners. As one mum said, 'Seeing a family member in person helps to keep my son's spirits up. It encourages him to keep trying, to look forward to doing something more positive with himself. They need it and so do we.'

On the 27th July, in-person visits were resumed but with changes and restrictions. Only one immediate family member is allowed, and visits are once a month but aren't guaranteed. Extra safety measures have been put in place too.

Mary says, "While these are in effect no-contact visits, for family members to actually see each other in the flesh, life became 3D again. For one couple it was the first time they've been on their own since the sentence started. The silence was golden!"

Farewell to Tracie

Family Work is a significant part of Prison Fellowship's ministry. It's often a lifeline to many families struggling with the issues and stigma of having a loved one in prison. As one mum said, 'The relationship I have with my family worker has been crucial to getting me through this awful time. My family member in prison is supported by PF staff and that's helped us stay connected.'

So, it's with a heavy heart that we say farewell to Tracie, our North West Family Worker. She not only impacted the lives of the people she has ministered to for seven years but also those of the staff and volunteers who have worked alongside her.

'I came to know Tracie', says Angela, 'on the day I was introduced to PFNI as a Family Volunteer. She took me out for coffee, and we had a lovely time as she talked me through the role of what was involved.'

I would describe Tracie as a person very much in love with Jesus. She has great patience and is caring, loving, genuine, full of the joy of the Lord. It was fun taking Margaret, the lady that I visited, out on a shopping spree. Margaret loved a bit of banter and Tracie was the right person to get it going.



Tracie has impacted my life by the way she connected with Margaret. Margaret wasn't easy to understand as she suffered from Parkinson's and it badly affected her speech. Tracie made every effort to understand what the dear lady was trying to say. Her care and patience were amazing. The lesson I have learned from Tracie is to go the second mile and give a hundred per cent in whatever God has called me to do. In other words, roll up your sleeves and get on with it!

Christine Thompson

Faithful Ministry

Tracie began to volunteer with PF Northern Ireland in 2006. She then joined the team as the North-West Family Worker in 2013. When we met, I was intrigued by this lovely lady from Londonderry with the broad Aussie accent! I remember her sharing her testimony. Everyone listened in awe as she told how God had used some painful experiences from her teenage years to bring her to Jesus, then equip her to minister to hurting families. She could definitely testify to the certain hope and the new beginning that are in Christ.

Tracie quickly got to grips with her role. On occasions, she would willingly drive 100 miles a day to bring encouragement, prayer, and practical support to the families of prisoners. Many became her firm friends.

Christmas is the time when PF workers pull out all the stops! The Haven at Templepatrick is a hive of activity, with church folk dropping off groceries and toys to be sorted and stacked. Each year Tracie would pack a bag with warm clothes and go to stay with a relative nearby in order to put in the long days necessary to have everything ready in mid-December.



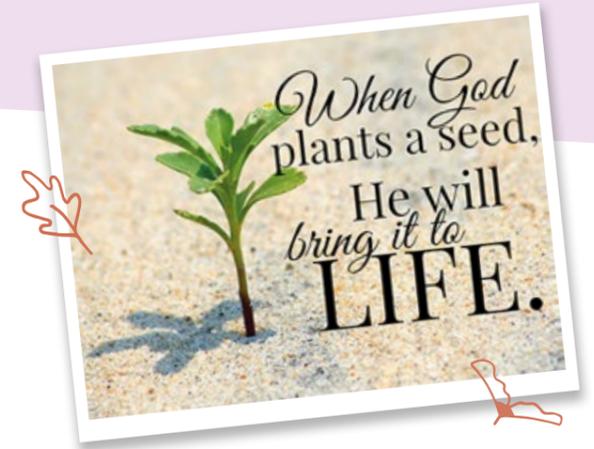
There have been times of great sadness when Tracie has lost an ex-prisoner or their loved one to suicide. Yet they were balanced by the great joy of helping someone find the Saviour. She will be greatly missed from the PF team. We pray God's rich blessing on Tracie and Brian as they enter the next season of ministry.

My Miracle Plant

After a very stormy night in January, I saw a small stick on my balcony which is a miracle in itself as I live on the 6th floor of an apartment block. It looked like part of a plant, but with the strong winds the previous evening it had become detached and lifeless.

I left it there for several days but then felt sorry for it being out in the wind and the cold. So, I brought it inside to the warmth and pulled off the dead leaves. It remained lifeless. I decided to talk to the Lord about it and ask Him if maybe He would make it grow again. That may sound foolish, but He cares even about the little, insignificant things and I knew if anyone could restore this back to its natural beauty again, He could.

To my surprise, a tiny green shoot appeared a few days later. Then more appeared. Now seven months on, with re-potting and plenty of love, my plant is taller than I am! God heard and answered my prayer and as it stands at the door of my balcony I'm reminded of God's love and faithfulness not only to my miracle plant but also to me.



I may have planted it, watered and cared for it, but He made it grow.

'Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and has made the Lord his hope and confidence. He is like a tree planted along a riverbank, with its roots reaching deep into the water—a tree not bothered by the heat nor worried by long months of drought. Its leaves stay green, and it goes right on producing all its luscious fruit' - Jeremiah 17:7-8

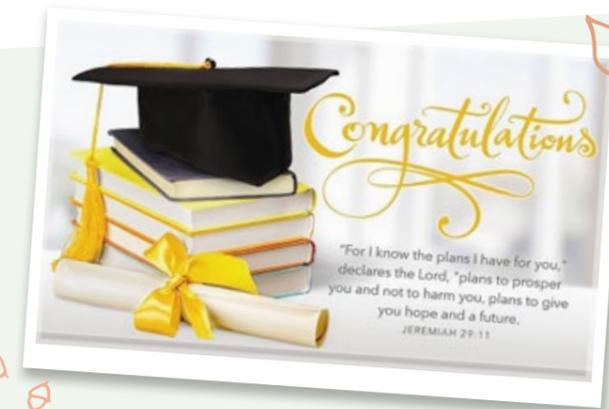
Derek

An Incredible Journey

In the midst of all the recent difficulties, it's wonderful to be able to celebrate special occasions. Romans 12:15 reminds us 'to rejoice with those who rejoice' and we want to congratulate Benny on his achievement of graduating from the Irish Baptist College with a Diploma. It's been an incredible journey and we asked him what he learned from his experience.

'While I was at the College, I got to know a lot of people and it was a good opportunity for me to get a deeper insight into God's Word. There were so many essays to do on subjects I had never studied before. My favourite module was Discipleship because there was so much in my dark past that gives me the heart to reach out to people now. I enjoyed myself at the college through the fellowship, learning new things, and meeting new people who have become part of my life'.

Benny's love for Jesus and his testimony of what God has done for him has been a blessing to those he interacted with.



'Three years ago,' says Edwin Ewart, principal of IBC, 'Benny signed up for the Irish Baptist College Diploma in Christian Education with a measure of trepidation and uncertainty.'

The prospect of three hours of concentrated study every Monday night, not to mention essays, seemed a daunting task. However, God has been faithful. Not only did Benny thoroughly enjoy the course and benefit from it but his infectious faith and enthusiasm proved a great encouragement to others. On Saturday 5th September, Benny graduated with his Diploma. We offer our warmest congratulations to him and attribute all the glory to God'.