

## OFFERING HOPE & A NEW BEGINNING

### Thank you, Norman

Several years ago, \*Tony found Himself in the awful situation of going to prison. It had a huge impact on his life and on his family. His first thought was, *how am I going to survive this nightmare?* Tony always had a strong faith in God, so he prayed, asking God to help him through this ordeal. He settled into prison routine as best as possible and became a Listener, spending many hours with prisoners who were worse off than himself. While inside, he got to know Norman, and they became friends.

It was through this friendship that Tony attended some PF meetings. He listened to gospel groups and speakers invited into prison to tell their personal stories. When released, Norman regularly visited Tony and his family which they really enjoyed. They were able to discuss issues with him in confidence and felt comfortable and supported in doing so.

'Prison Fellowship,' says Tony, 'should be very proud of the valued and outstanding work that Norman carried out. I am confident that any prisoner or ex-prisoner was glad to have a listening ear and such a friend as Norman in their lives.'

Norman's ministry over 29 years has been life-changing for many inmates in Magilligan and those released in the community. Many came to faith and the men were grateful for his genuine care and kindness. There has been an outpouring of gratitude for his service, from PF staff and supporters to Prison Service personnel and inmates. 'We are going to miss Norman about the wing,' says one of the guys. 'On a Tuesday, he used to greet us with a big smile and a good handshake. We really hope all the best for him in his future endeavours.'



Norman McCorkell  
and Gordon McIlroy  
(Chairman PFNI)

Prison Fellowship Board members are also thankful for Norman's selfless dedication to those often forgotten by society. **Ronnie Pedlow** shares his privilege of knowing Norman:

'I have fond memories of visiting HMP Magilligan with Norman, supporting the annual mission in the prison and seeing him working at close hand.

Norman's dedication to his work and his passion for the men with whom he came into contact was very evident, as was his ability to develop and maintain good relations with the staff, chaplains, and above all prisoners. He made a great contribution to the work of Prison Fellowship and to the temporal and spiritual wellbeing of all those he met.

Norman's contribution to the work of Prison Fellowship over 29 years has been immense. He has been a valued member of the PFNI family and can rest assured that he has been a good and faithful servant to the work of PFNI and to the spiritual wellbeing of those he served in HMP Magilligan and the Northwest.

Thank you, Norman, and enjoy your retirement.'

*\*prisoner's name has been changed*



## Welcome, Paul Darragh

For several years, Paul has volunteered in Magilligan serving alongside Norman and learning how to interact with prisoners and prison staff.

On 24th October, Paul was appointed as our new Northwest Support Worker. Since then, he has 'hit the ground running' with prison visits, Friday evening meetings, and Christmas Hope.

As a member of the Board's interviewing panel, **Jenny Holley** shares that 'it was humbling and so evident to hear Paul speak of his heart for Prison Fellowship's work with the men in prison and their families. His interview answers showed such empathy for the prisoner serving the sentence for his crime.

Paul's heart is to share the love and Good News of Jesus, for He only can change and transform lives. Conversations take place on a landing or in a cell, but Paul begins his journey by being a listening ear for that man in despair.

Paul's daily witness for his Saviour, whether in Magilligan or with families, has gained trust and respect. We are thankful for his servant-heart and ask for wisdom and discernment as he settles into his new role. May God continue to grant him His favour in this new season of opportunity.'



## 40 Years of PFNI



What a memorable evening we had in Glenabbey Church on the 8th of October, celebrating 40 faithful years of ministry! It was a blessing to have over 300 friends join together from various locations to celebrate all that God has done over 40 years and all that He continues to do.

It was a joy to have Philip Yancey share his inspiring stories of prison visits from around the world. He challenged us to keep pressing on in sharing the grace of God through the Gospel to the very outcasts of our society. It was his message of the Hope of seeing our King that left many in silence, even in tears. We then enjoyed beautifully hand-crafted cupcakes, the icing on the cake, as it were, to a wonderful time of celebration together.

**Grace Stewart (Volunteer Co-Ordinator)**

## An Evening in Hydebank

As part of the 40th Anniversary Celebrations, around 60 guests from across the Prison Service, the Department of Justice, and partners in the voluntary and community sectors gathered on Tuesday 10th October, at the Education Centre at Hydebank Wood. Robin Scott welcomed everyone on behalf of Prison Fellowship.

A female and male student presented their experiences of Prison Fellowship. They were effusive in their praise of the PF staff and the difference PF has made in their lives. They have been able to build relationships with people who genuinely care about them and their families during particularly challenging times.

Ronnie Armour, Director General of the Prison Service, and Naomi Long, Minister of Justice, thanked Prison Fellowship for the significant contribution the organisation had made over many years and how it helps women, men, and young people turn their lives around.

Philip Yancey noted that he had visited prisons from around the world and was very impressed by the Hydebank Education Centre. He recognised that the quality of the surroundings was an indication of how much the work was prioritised in N. Ireland. He reminded everyone that our God is a God of second, third and unlimited chances and that this work is close to His heart.

Everyone enjoyed the supper provided by staff and students while sharing experiences of working together and how they will ensure this continues.

**Helen Dunn (Board Member)**



**Robin & Gordon with Andy Corley (President & CEO of PFI), Ronnie Armour and Naomi Long.**

## Bringing Hope to Families

Our Christmas Hope project begins with requests for hampers from each of the three prisons, families, and released prisoners. PFNI then calls the referred families to ensure that they're happy to receive the gift and to confirm their address. Some are reluctant to answer an unknown number and for some English is not their first language. Yet, over the past two months, PF staff have phoned 273 families and have had some amazing conversations.

**Dean** had a few days left to phone the ones he was assigned to, but something prompted him to call one family right away.



'God is amazing in the way He works. I called one lady, and after checking her details, I asked, 'Are you okay?'' After a brief silence, she broke down crying. She explained that before my call she had a huge row with her sister who had been living with her, but she left, taking all her belongings.

'One of the things she and her sister always did together was to put up the Christmas tree. Yet, sitting staring at the fairy lights, it didn't look the same. She felt so alone. It was at that time I called. We spoke for 45 minutes, and she allowed me to pray with her. "I believe in God," she said, "but I've never made a commitment. The fact that you have called at this exact time makes me think that maybe God really does care for me and that He sent you when I feel so lost and alone."

Please pray for this lady and the 564 families receiving hampers this year that they will realise just how much God loves and cares for them and that He will always be there in their times of need.

## A Simple Greeting Card

Can you imagine a home this year without a Christmas card and a message inside saying that someone cares?

This tragic picture is all too common at this time of year, with many who receive no cards from family or friends.

In support of Prison Fellowship's Christmas Hope project, a group of volunteers from our church at Woodlands Presbyterian Church helped to write 2200 Christmas cards for men and women who will be in prison this Christmas.

Through a simple greeting card written by a stranger to another stranger, our prayer is that someone will meet our perfect friend and Saviour.



## Family

Give thanks for all those who supported our Christmas Hope Project through their prayers, giving, and volunteering. Pray for our family workers, Sandra, and Claire, as they follow up with phone calls to families who received the hampers. Ask God to guide them towards those who want and need support.

Pray for those living with long-term illness. Pray for resilience and grateful hearts for the support of medical staff, and their carers.

Some mums, whose children have addictions, have no idea where they are. They worry constantly. Pray for peace and the possibility to be in touch.

## Prison

J is a Christian and is due for release early this year. This is causing him stress and worry as he is afraid he will fall into the cycle that finds him back in prison. Pray for support on his release and that he finds a church that will walk alongside and guide him.

T has spent another Christmas inside. Pray that she would be receptive to the Good news of the Gospel message as we continue to support her.

Pray for peace for V as he struggles with self-harm. Pray that he gets the support he needs while knowing God's love and hope. Pray that he stops listening to the lies of the enemy.

W has recently been released. Pray as he adjusts to life outside that he would be able to make the right choices and manage well.

## Aftercare - Men

Please pray for the work of Aftercare, the Aftercare worker and all the volunteers. We need refreshing, replenishing, and reviving after a tough year.

Pray for all those who are struggling right now, with debt, poverty, hunger, and shelter.

Pray for J and his Mum & Dad. They are special to us, and we know that God will bring them through this difficult time. Ask God for His protection, peace, comfort, and healing.

## Aftercare - Women

N has been difficult to contact, and Lynne is worried about her. Pray that she will be able to make contact with N and give her the help she needs.

S has just lost her granny and is feeling devastated. Unfortunately, this period of grief has caused a spiral back to addiction. Pray she will feel determined to make good decisions and for Lynne as she tries to encourage her.

P is now living in a lovely flat but due to health issues is struggling to maintain it. Pray that suitable help would be provided, and that P would continue to feel loved and supported.

## \*Date for your Diary\*

We are pleased to invite you to an Open Day at our newly redeveloped Centre at 39 University Street, Belfast on Tuesday 24th January between 10am – 4pm and 6pm to 8pm.

Come and visit us as we begin the next chapter in our new facility. God has richly blessed us through your generosity in making this project possible. We want to share with you what He has done and pray for all those who will use the Centre in the future.

