

Prayer Focus - October

General

Many families are dealing with chronic illnesses which have become increasingly challenging. Please pray they will know grace and strength for each new day.

Pray for H a believer, who lost his wife of over 50 years recently.

In October and November, family workers and volunteers will be phoning families of people in custody in relation to them receiving hampers and toys through Christmas Hope. Pray for good connections and conversations.

Aftercare – Women

Pray that the Lord's will be done with female aftercare work as we plan future activities and programmes.

Our female aftercare group Instilling Hope meet in Lurgan. Pray each woman's heart be touched and they leave feeling encouraged.

Please pray as Lynne and her aftercare team plan Instilling Hope meetings (established and vision planning) and think about Christmas Hope. We want to hear His voice and are excited by the opportunities.

Prisons

Please pray for A and his family. His constant offending, going to prison, and getting released are taking not only a toll on him but also on his father's mental health. Pray for strength for the whole family and that A will break the reoffending cycle.

Pray for C who is struggling to get back to normal life after his time in prison. He has been finding things difficult since his release; pray for him to find the support he needs to address his addiction.

Thank you for your continued prayers for Sycamore Tree. We have four programmes running this month.

Aftercare – Men

Please pray for the centre each week, especially on a Wednesday, Thursday and Friday when it is busy. It is great that many released prisoners feel welcome and safe in our centre. Please pray for their continued attendance.

Pray for R. He is trying to change his life around but many things in life drag him down and pull him away from doing well. Please pray for his church, new friends and pastor as they help him.

Pray for volunteers to deliver aftercare in our centre. We need help with worship, befriending, serving and providing meals to ex-offenders each week.

Volunteers and General

Please pray for a busy season with PW meetings and Christmas Hope and for protection over all the staff and volunteers involved in the work. We need to remain close in our walk with God as he directs each of us in this work.

Please pray for all the new volunteers in Aftercare as they work alongside men and women released from Prison. These key volunteers will help in invaluable ways to those we support.

Pray for all our faithful volunteers who serve God in each of their areas of ministry. Pray they would be strengthened and encouraged.

Please visit pfni.org/news for more information. Thank you for your prayerful support.

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May the favour of the Lord our God rest on us;
establish the work of our hands for us - yes, establish the work of our hands - **Psalm 19:17**

News Focus

Autumn
2024

OFFERING HOPE & A NEW BEGINNING

Welcome to Lifesplan

After finding myself in prison, I really started to question my understanding of faith. I realised I was blaming God for things going wrong in my life. I was in a very dark place when I was introduced to Michael from Prison Fellowship. Soon, I began to understand that God was not the reason I was in prison, but that God was actually my answer.

Michael gave me a Bible and other Christian books to read and on the 18th of January 2024, I committed my life to God, accepting Jesus as my Saviour. After attending *Lifesplan* group based on the 10 commandments, I was released from prison at the beginning of April 2024. I was then invited to the Prison Fellowship Hub where I met Neil and Robin. I was invited to *Lifesplan*, which became a great place to meet with people who have been through similar experiences. The fellowship, praise and exploration through God's Word have done wonders for my faith. I have been introduced to some great people in this group and the discussions have helped my understanding of God's grace and purpose for my life.

I will finish with a few words from a favourite song we sing in *Lifesplan* 'Lead On Good Shepherd' by Lynda Randle and my favourite verse in God's word:

*You've walked me through the valley
But you never steered me wrong
So, lead on good shepherd
Lead on.*

Seen some mighty deep canyons
That you brought me through
Seen some mighty big mountains
That just up and moved
Glory, glory hallelujah.

Ephesians 2:8-9 *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."*

Establish the work of our hands

"May the favour of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands." Psalm 90:17

So much has been happening here at Prison Fellowship. We held a mission week in Magilligan, completed our football programme in Hydebank, opened up the men's Bible study *Lifesplan* again in the centre, and we are currently running four *Sycamore Tree* programmes in all three prisons.

We see the hand of God at work as we reach and serve prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families. We give thanks for the people God has placed in this ministry, enabling us to carry out His work. And we praise God for those who pray and volunteer to serve where needed, those who prepare much needed food, and for those who willingly donate to support this ministry.

Our desire at PFNI is that as we plant and water, God will grow this ministry for His Kingdom and His Glory. **You can help by supporting our Christmas Hope programme.** Please read our special Christmas Hope leaflet or visit pfni.org/christmas-hope for more information and to watch an uplifting video.

Natalie



"The Lord's favour is evident" Mission week in Magilligan

Every May in Magilligan, God gives us the opportunity to hold a mission week. We are very thankful to the Prison Governors and staff who help us plan and prepare for this event. In prison, it takes a lot of organising to bring everything together and it's during these times that you really sense the hand of God leading and directing. The Lord's favour is evident.

The mission is God's work and has His truth at the centre. It is very encouraging to see God moving in men's lives during this time. We are reminded in God's Word to "know the truth and the truth will set us free". That's what prison ministry is all about. For some men, it's their first opportunity to hear truth from scripture and for others it's a reminder of something they heard in the past.

We give thanks for all those who testified, ministered and prayed with the men throughout the week. Some men have remained in contact with our speakers and we believe this is God continuing a work He started in their lives. Many men responded to their need for Jesus and committed to changing their lives. Pray that they will grow in knowledge and in their relationship with God.

Men in prison are broken; they know they have made a mess of their lives and can't fix it themselves.



If you are a Christian and reading this, you will understand that's exactly where you were before you got saved. We know Jesus loves each of those men in prison and we also know He is the one who calls, convicts, converts and keeps: "look unto me and be ye saved" Isaiah 45:22.

Always remember the light shines brightest in the darkest places. We are carriers of light in a dark world. I believe prison ministry is only possible by God's will and the prayers of His people. Thank you for praying and I believe one day many others that you may never meet here will thank you too. Keep praying for this work and praising God that we are all part of it together.

Paul

New Volunteer Neil

Hi, I'm Neil. I enjoy running, surfing and hanging out with my horse. One day last year while reading my Bible, I felt challenged by the verse, "I was in prison, and you came to visit me."

I felt frustrated; why would I want to help prisoners? I asked God to soften my heart and help me understand. At that time, Instagram started sharing videos from 'God Behind Bars' showing prisoners worshipping God, repenting and giving their lives to Jesus. Though quite different to PF, it really inspired me. I began to google and came across Prison Fellowship. Soon after, I met with Grace and signed up to volunteer with a specific desire to serve in the prisons.

I started off by helping to run *Sycamore Tree* in Hydebank. On the way there, I prayed for courage, safety, and the words I was to speak, believing that I was a vessel for His works and that God would be working through me.

Meeting the lads, hearing their stories, and getting the opportunity to share the idea of a life outside of crime, hopefully with Jesus at the centre of it, really encouraged me. We also shared basic truths about the consequences of their crimes and the ripple effect they have.



On week six, some of the guys read out very personal and heartfelt apology letters to their victims. I was blown away by that as there were prison officers there. We celebrated with a huge lunch which gave me another opportunity to get to know the lads a bit better.

More recently, I was part of a group of six guys that played football against the students in Hydebank. The lads loved to rake around and have a laugh but halfway through the matches we would sit and listen to a PF volunteer share their testimony or word from God. The prisoners, from all different backgrounds, religions and faiths, were all incredibly respectful. They listened intently, clapped and encouraged the person sharing. I couldn't believe how well they received the good news of Jesus. It's just finished but I'm already looking forward to next year!

Neil



Interested in becoming a volunteer or praying for the work of PFNI?
Visit pfni.org/volunteer

"Do it cheerfully"

"If it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently, if it is to show mercy do it cheerfully." Romans 12:8

During one of our meetings in Magilligan, I asked the men, "what do you think of the chaplains?" Their unanimous reply was that the chaplains would do whatever they could for you, help however possible, be there when you needed support, and were always ready with a cheerful word of encouragement. These men, by their own words, are encouraged, treated generously with due diligence, and all of these things are shown in a cheerful manner.

I have been volunteering once a week in Magilligan since 2018. My day involves a walk around the blocks and calling into the cells for a chat, followed by an afternoon meeting in the worship centre. Afterwards, I visit the Foyle View area, where depending on numbers, we have

another meeting. Should the men not be back from their work, we visit the rooms and check in with them.

I also help to run *Sycamore Tree* which has proven to be of immense benefit to the men. The understory of Zacchaeus comes through and each participant is clearly moved in the most personal of ways. The afternoon then allows us the opportunity to visit some of those who took part, looking to put into practice more of Romans 12:8.

Ken



Visit pfni.org/christmas-hope
to help bring hope into people's lives this Christmas

Christmas Hope 2024

"Christmas magnifies."

The words of a man who comes regularly to the PF centre. The warm, joyful feeling you get from having a home filled with family, exchanging gifts and sharing a meal is heightened at Christmas. For those who have no home or family with an empty chair at the dinner table, struggling to buy food let alone Christmas gifts, heightens the feelings of isolation, loneliness and anxiety.

Our hope is that the food and toy hampers sent into families' homes help to ease the pressure this season can bring. We want those who receive the hampers to know they are seen and not forgotten.

PFNI's *Christmas Hope* project is an opportunity to show people the love of God through the simple yet important act of giving.

Please take the time to read our enclosed leaflet and consider getting involved with *Christmas Hope 2024*. You can help by purchasing toys and food hamper items, volunteering to deliver gifts, praying, donating and much more. Please visit our web page pfni.org/christmas-hope to learn more. Thank you.

Natalie

