

Aftercare – Men

Pray for D. He couldn't cope being homeless on the streets and is back in prison.

Thank you for praying for R. He is free from court and all outstanding cases. This is the first time he can ever remember this happening.

Pray for K. He is studying and training for a new job. Give thanks for employment opportunities for those released from prison looking to get back into the workforce.

Prisons

Remember J who had surgery recently which hasn't been a complete success. He is currently awaiting further surgery to improve his quality of life.

Pray that God would continue to work through the speakers that come into Magilligan.

Pray for men who have made a commitment to the Lord, both those inside and who are getting released. Pray that they get into the right fellowship.

Please pray for the ongoing work among the women and young men in Hydebanks in the new year. Pray for those who are on waiting lists for Sycamore Tree across the three establishments and for us as a team as we plan and prepare for Sycamore courses starting again in 2025.

Aftercare - Women

Many women are struggling financially. It is difficult seeing so many who are finding it hard to pay the bills, especially during winter. Pray for them.

Some women are desperately fighting the battle of addiction. Pray for strength and determination.

Please pray for all staff and their families after a very busy season. Pray that they are refreshed and rested for the new year. Ministry to prisoners can bring its demands, so please pray that each staff member would know the presence of God with them at this time.

Family

Pray for families as they prepare for the release of a family member this year. Pray for grace and healthy relationships.

Please pray for parents trying to navigate the truth of a prison sentence with how much to share with their children.

Give thanks for all the contacts made with families through Christmas Hope.

Pray for good connections with families as we phone them post Christmas Hope and that we will be able to offer ongoing support to those who want or need it.

Volunteers and General

Please give thanks for the life of Gillian Spence, for her heart for Prison Fellowship and a life dedicated to serving God through the ministry of PFNI.

Praise God for His faithfulness in providing all that we need to carry out His work. We are grateful for continued answered prayers.

Please continue to pray for staff speaking at meetings and who encourage people to support the work of PFNI.

Praise God for Hunter and Wilma and for the use of their centre for our Christmas Hope project. Pray for the Lord's blessing upon them.

Visit pfni.org/news for more items. Thank you for your prayerful support.

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Visit pfni.org/subscribe or telephone **02890 243691**

"If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!" **2 Corinthians 5:17**

OFFERING HOPE & A NEW BEGINNING

Everything for Jesus

"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Colossians 3:17

It is such a privilege that God has chosen and appointed us to be His hands and feet. Wherever and however we serve, may we always strive to reflect Jesus and bring glory to His name.

We are especially thankful for *Christmas Hope 2024* — for every supporter who gave and every volunteer who served. As God's people went out in Jesus' name to deliver hampers across Northern Ireland, we trust that the families they met felt the compassion and love of Jesus through every warm word and action.



As we at Prison Fellowship close 2024, we do so with grateful hearts and look forward to 2025, expectant for all that God will do through us in the year to come.

Natalie

Thanksgiving Evening

It was such a joy to gather and celebrate how the Lord has blessed and worked through the ministry of Prison Fellowship Northern Ireland over the past year. Each staff member, along with our volunteers, gave brief updates on

the ministry, highlighting moments where we clearly saw God's hand at work. We praised God for His goodness, His faithful provision, and His ongoing answers to our prayers.

We heard about the impact of *Sycamore Tree* in our prisons and the many prisoners who have participated in these courses across all three facilities. Walter and Paul - two of our dedicated volunteers - spoke about the powerful experiences they've had and the privilege it has been to facilitate the groups. Lyn Connolly, a victim of crime, joined us and revealed how much the *Sycamore Tree* programme means to her and how the Lord has enabled her to share her story with prisoners throughout the UK.

Staff and volunteers conveyed updates from our prison outreach, aftercare programmes, and family work — recounting the lives that have been impacted. Each person revealed their experiences of the faithful visits and support that so many men and women, both in prison and in our communities, have received as they journey through the dark and challenging road that imprisonment brings. We also shared our hopes and vision for the future, praying that the Lord would continue to guide us clearly in His ways.

The evening gave us an opportunity to reflect on the past year and look forward to the next season of ministry. We are deeply thankful for our volunteers, prayer supporters, and donors — without you, we wouldn't be able to reach so many with the hope of the gospel. We are grateful to be a part of God's work, ministering to those affected by crime and imprisonment across NI.

Grace



Welcome On Board

It was during the 1980s that I was first introduced to Prison Fellowship NI when the late James McIlroy visited my home church, Woodvale Presbyterian, to speak about what was then pioneering work in Northern Ireland. His insights into the needs of those in prison resonated at a time when many from my local area, including some I had gone to school with, were finding their way into the prison system.

My interest in prison life and the plight of those residing in our prisons was further encouraged when I found myself working for the NI Prison Service from 1991-97, from 2010-13 and from 2017-23. I was to realise that rehabilitation must always be the cornerstone of the work within our prisons. It was President George W. Bush who said: "When the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life."

I have seen firsthand the impact PFNI staff and volunteers have within our prisons: the friendships developed and the encouragement given, often in times of loneliness and desperation. PF staff and volunteers, working alongside Prison Chaplains, should never be underestimated. Their care for prison staff who undertake what is complex and challenging work is also something I greatly appreciated.

The Sycamore Tree project, a restorative justice programme delivered by PFNI, is making a very significant contribution in challenging behaviours and focusing individuals on the impact of their actions and the importance of true remorse and new beginnings.

Christmas Hope is a practical demonstration of compassion and concerns for those in prison and their families that is making a real difference.

Someone once said that, "people don't care what you know until they know that you care."

Prison Fellowship staff, volunteers and supporters really care and that is why I was delighted when I was invited to join the PFNI Board. I look forward to serving with you in the days ahead.

Ronnie Armour



Hope Behind Bars

Four months into my prison sentence, I found myself at the back of a PF meeting. My faith had always been there, but it wasn't strong. For a long time, I felt something was missing from my life. All I ever craved was happiness, and after each meeting, I felt joy and a sense of belonging.

I kept attending and, in May 2024, gave my life to Jesus. I knew I was on a new path of salvation, but I also felt God urging me to forgive my abuser. Without forgiveness, I couldn't fully change and would keep making the same mistakes. With the Holy Spirit's help, I was able to forgive.

These PF meetings have brought peace and purpose to my life. For the first time, I have good people around me who truly care—my brothers and sisters in Christ. Christianity has given me hope and shown me that my life has value. Because of Christ, I'm no longer consumed by hate, vengeance, or trauma.

The story of Joseph is my favorite Bible story because I relate to his journey: abandoned, imprisoned, and forgotten. Yet, his faith carried him through, and after years of torment, he overcame with God by his side.

Romans 12:17-21.



Fermanagh Prayer Group Visit 39

On the 8th of November, we hosted the Fermanagh Prayer Group at No. 39. After the long bus journey to Belfast, we began our time together with a cup of tea and lunch. As it was the first time many of the group had visited us, we made sure to give a tour of the centre. Robin shared areas of the work that needed prayer. Dean, Joanne and Natalie shared more of what our roles entail here at Prison Fellowship and then the group prayed over each of us. There is nothing more encouraging than hearing people pray for you and we as a staff left built-up and encouraged by their visit.

We give thanks to God for our *Prayer Groups* and for their faithfulness in bringing the ministry and the people we serve before the Lord.

If you feel led to join a local prayer group or start one in your area, **please email info@pfni.org**



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

Sycamore Tree Project

When I was first sentenced, my thoughts were to keep my head down and get my time done. I knew I had committed an offence but, in many ways, I thought of mine as a victimless crime, supplying willing users with a product they desired.

On completion of the Sycamore Tree course, I now understand the wider effects of my actions; how it affects communities, especially those more vulnerable and underprivileged, and how it has a direct negative impact on my family and friends.

I can only recommend Sycamore Tree to other prisoners which I believe will bring them to a place to reflect on their actions. I only wish I had taken this course many years ago. Thank you, Paul, Claire, June and all the PF staff.



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

Minister Visit

It was very encouraging to have Justice Minister Naomi Long attend the final session of Sycamore Tree in Maghaberry along with a delegation from the Dept of Justice/NIPS.

She sat in on Session 6 and listened to the men give an overview of the previous weeks and what they had gained from attending. She then listened to each of the ten participants' letters either read personally or by a PF volunteer or staff member. This was particularly poignant as none of the men were aware who would be visiting until five mins before the guests arrived.

The minister then presented the men with their attendance certificates and spoke personally to each one, congratulating them on their achievements and hard work. She was also very encouraging to PF staff and volunteers,

thanking them for delivering the programme, but also saying that we need to be able to move restorative justice work forward.

We pray for the Justice Minister and that God might bless the work of *Sycamore Tree* as it continues to transform lives within and without prison walls.

"Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."
Romans 12:17-21

