

THANKSGIVING THROUGH SERVICE

Winter 2025

The Power of Prayer

Have you ever sat in a prayer meeting where there is a real sense of God's presence, as everyone expresses the depth of their relationship with their heavenly Father? Where God's Spirit is so close you could reach out and touch Him?

With over 650 recorded prayers in the Bible, we see Abraham praying for Sodom and David's psalms of forgiveness, praise and guidance. Esther asked for strength as she went before the king, and Hannah prayed for a son. Peter prayed in desperation as he sank into the waves, Paul prayed for the growth of the young church, and Jesus prayed for His disciples to sanctify them.

I have been privileged to sit with our Lifesplan groups where men call out to their heavenly Father. Many are simple prayers of praise and confession where they acknowledge how good God has been despite how they have failed Him. These prayers are often raw and honest, heartfelt pleas. Once again, I sensed the presence of God in these meetings.

Recently, I had the joy of joining a local PFNI prayer group. People prayed with a real sense of trusting the Lord to move in our mission, giving thanks for the opportunities we have in prisons and to help families and those released. Prison Fellowship depends on prayer for all we do, so thank you to all who actively support us in this way.

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas, He who made it possible for us to pray directly to our Heavenly Father, we remember those for whom this time of year is very painful and often bleak. Pray for the openings created through Christmas Hope to bring the light of Jesus into homes and families, not just in December, but into the New Year. Pray for staff and volunteers and the Prison Fellowship Board, and pray that God's hand would direct PFNI into 2026 and beyond.

Robin Scott

CEO Prison Fellowship Northern Ireland

Supporters of Prison Fellowship come together to celebrate all that God has done over the past year on a very special evening

Lynne led PFNI staff, volunteers, friends and family in worship before we listened to stories of God's grace. Prison workers Joanne, Paul, Michael, and Dean shared the struggles of high inmate populations and the impact that has on mental and spiritual health. Yet the reactions to Sycamore Tree, Facing Giants and Lifesplan have brought a new lease of life behind bars, something that only the Holy Spirit can achieve.

Sandra, Claire and Natalie outlined the family work ministry and the plan for Christmas Hope this year. Neil interviewed a new volunteer, Gareth, about his faith journey and what led him to devote his time and abilities to PFNI. We heard from Grace and also Bryan, our new Operations Manager, while Robin, Gordon and Ronnie rounded off the evening in prayer.

We want to thank those who could attend, but also to everyone who supports Prison Fellowship NI, be that through your time, donations, or prayer. Be encouraged by all that God is doing through PFNI.



Randy and The Crew

Why does Randy Kerkman, a PFNI volunteer from the USA who lives in the Republic of Ireland, travel to Belfast twice per week to work on the aftercare team?

What led you to volunteering with PFNI?

I've been involved in ministry since the early '80s with people on the "edge of society". I attended a church near Chicago that had homeless people needing food and shelter. My wife and I became full-time musicians and after eight years, we came off the road. I became a Denver County Deputy Sheriff assigned to the correctional facility, and I shared my faith with inmates in crisis over eleven years.

I was diagnosed with PTSD due to the many fights and I never wanted to enter a prison again. Yet, the memories of sharing my faith with those men felt significant. God had brought my wife and me to Ireland, and I attended the Irish Bible Institute. Staying in a "comfort zone" did not feel right, so I worked with Release Ireland in Dublin, fostering relationships with "lifers" through music at Mountjoy Prison. I also helped facilitate the Sycamore Tree course across the Republic.

In 2024, my wife mentioned PFNI in Belfast. I met with Grace and was invited to help with aftercare. Thursday has morphed into

"The Crew"—a smaller group that is willing to clean and repair the PF building. I am thankful for the staff and the opportunities to serve the Lord and his people through PFNI.

Any standout memories from serving with the aftercare team?

The first Wednesday, when I led the worship. Not knowing the guys or their expectations, I was a little anxious. However, they are very willing to make a "joyful noise".

Tell us your heart behind The Crew.

I am blessed to be in a supervisory role with The Crew. The guys show up with (mostly!) great attitudes, and we stress the importance of blessing others and taking care of the building that God has provided for us. They work hard and take pride in their work and enjoy being trusted to do so.

How can we pray for you?

I have been having issues with my wrist and knee which have led to missing some weeks. I would appreciate prayer for healing or wisdom on how to overcome this.

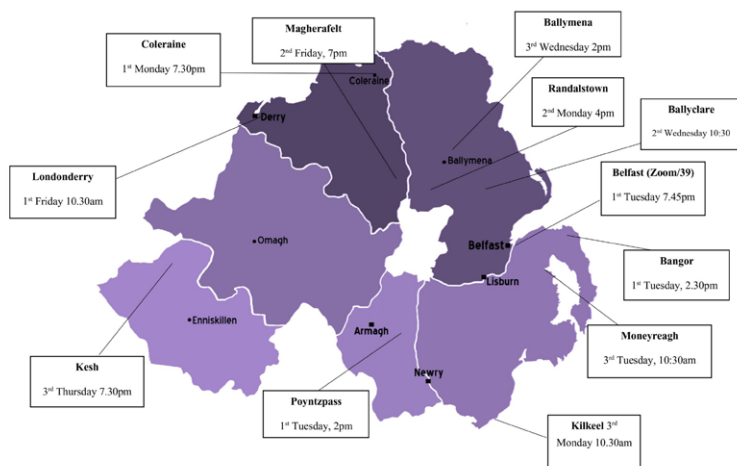


PF Prayer Groups

Without prayer, PFNI's ministry cannot function. We are eternally grateful to those who meet regularly to bring this work before God's throne of grace in PF Prayer Groups around the country.

We are delighted to welcome two new groups to the PF Prayer Group family: Ballyclare and Poyntzpass. Ballyclare started last month through their local church and are led by Jean and Callum. Poyntzpass began in October with the goal of recruiting members through their local churches.

If you live near a group and wish to pray for PFNI, contact Natalie on 028 9024 3691 or info@pfni.org



Bangor Prayer Group

One member of the PF Prayer Group in Bangor shared why the ladies come together to pray for Prison Fellowship Northern Ireland.

"Prison Fellowship NI Prayer Group Bangor meets on the first Tuesday of every month and is hosted in the home of a group member.

There are seven women who support this ministry and all attend local churches, ranging from Presbyterian, Congregational, and a Covenant Church brought together by two congregations: one from the Methodist tradition and the other Church of Ireland.

Our meetings always begin with a warm cuppa! We then share what is happening in each other's lives. It's important we have a safe space to explore what is on our hearts and minds.

Some of our members have experience of contact with the Criminal Justice System, so the PF Prayer Focus directs our prayers. Prayer is the bedrock of the group as we seek to stand in the gap for people supported by PF and their families as well as the PF staff and those working within Criminal Justice. We are motivated by a desire to see people become the best they can be and to reach their full potential.

Our meetings last for approximately an hour and we see this time as a privilege to intercede for the work of PFNI. We are blessed by knowing that prayer works, albeit sometimes in mysterious ways."

Carol

INTERESTED IN PRAYING FOR THE WORK OF PFNI?

Visit pfni.org/pray

Placement interview: Deborah

The Holy Spirit opened doors for me to do my placement at Prison Fellowship after waiting for His call. God led me to Isaiah 61: 'release from darkness for the prisoners'. Through no contrivance on my part, He linked me with PFNI.



My placement is in Hydebank, where I shadow Joanne, the prison worker. We spend time with the women and young men, showing them love and value, often by simply listening.

I had been in Hydebank years prior while training as a solicitor, but it was wonderful to return in a different capacity. Honestly, I didn't have any expectations. God had spoken to me about treasuring whomever I met there like beautiful but fragile pieces of china to be treated with the utmost care. It is hard to describe how at home I feel there.

There have been countless precious moments, but one that comes to mind is when a young woman asked 'why would you

want to come here to people like us?' I replied that she was so special, and it was my privilege to come, but it hurt to hear the wrong view she had of herself. It was like I could feel God's heart beating for His children to know the truth.

Please thank God for the joy I feel when I'm in prison. Please pray that He helps me to proclaim His banner of love over everyone I meet. Isaiah 62 speaks about 'being given a new name, that the mouth of the Lord will bestow'. Please pray that I can communicate this to the women and young men, even when I don't speak any words.



When Ricky Taylor first heard God's call into ministry, he never imagined it would lead behind prison walls as a PFNI volunteer. We sat down to discuss his time in Bible College, how he first heard about Prison Fellowship, and how God is using him in PF's ministry.

During the COVID lockdown, Ricky felt prompted to visit the Elim website. That simple act began a series of events confirming his pastoral calling. "Two friends who hadn't spoken to each other both told me they'd been praying for me for a year and believed I would become a pastor," he recalls. "That was my confirmation."

While studying for ordination in the Belfast School of Theology (formerly Belfast Bible College), a verse from Matthew 25 leapt from the page: 'When I was in prison, you visited me.'

"That hit me hard," he says. He learned about Prison Fellowship NI and reached out for a placement opportunity. After meeting with Grace, the Volunteer Coordinator, he started his journey to working inside prisons and with the Aftercare team that helps to rebuild lives after release.

"I've learned more here than I did in Bible College," he admits. "It's about listening, not judging—walking beside people as they find hope again."

"I've never served any time, but I'm one of them"

Pastor Ricky Taylor

For Ricky, prison ministry is a living expression of the Gospel. "We can't just stay in church singing hymns," he says. "We have to get our hands dirty. The Church must stand with Prison Fellowship—100 percent."

You can watch the full video interview with Pastor Ricky on our website: pfni.org



Prayer Focus January 2026

Prisons - Female

Please pray for the women in Hydebank that this would be the year each of them encounters Christ, either for the first time or afresh.

Pray for the programmes planned for 2026, that God will bless the ladies who take a step of faith.

Praise God for open cells and open hearts throughout the past year in Hydebank. Pray for the prison staff who interact with the ladies on a daily basis.

Aftercare - Male

Pray for the staff and volunteers as they spend time preparing for the year ahead and getting the PF Centre ready for the new year.

Please pray for Hope Works, an outreach to men in the evenings. Pray for help as we look into getting this started in 2026.

Pray for W. Last year was a very difficult year for him. We are worried he may choose to go his own way and not follow his Saviour. Jesus is all he needs.

Family Support

Follow up calls to those who got the Christmas hampers will take place this month. Pray for openings for family workers to give support to those who need it most.

C. struggles with her physical and mental health. Pray for strength for her as she travels weekly to the prison to visit her son.

Remember all the children whose fathers or mothers won't be with them on Christmas morning. May they find peace in God's love during a difficult time.

Prisons - Male

As we begin a New Year, we give thanks for all we hold dear. We pray for those in prison, that they may feel God's love even in the darkest places. Help them to find peace and strength in You and guide them to a better path.

Please pray for the five Sycamore Tree courses that are currently happening between now and February that God would bless all those who are in attendance.

Remember the prison staff who have had to work over the Christmas holidays. Pray for their families and loved ones and for their mental health and physical safety.

Aftercare - Female

Pray for N. who has been in and out of prison over many years. She is due release this month and keen for Christian support. Pray that this will be her time.

Pray for Lynne and the volunteers as they meet this month to chat through progress/debrief and make future plans.

Pray for both Instilling Hope groups meeting this month (Lurgan - 1st Thurs, Belfast - 2nd Tues).

Volunteers and General

Please pray for a time of rest for our volunteers as we head into the new year. Pray that God would use this time to bring a fresh vision and renewed energy to our volunteer force.

Pray for the impact of Christmas Hope on the families and prisoners we have contact with and for PF's capacity to follow up with those we connect with.

Give thanks for all our volunteers who have faithfully served over this past year. Pray that as many take a break over Christmas they may be refreshed spiritually and encouraged as they look forward to a new year of ministry.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

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