

# INSIDE OUT



Newsletter of Prison Fellowship New Zealand

October 2009

## “A view from above the wire”

Robin Gunston, National Director



I have been in this role for just over 3 months now and it has been an extremely hectic time. We are faced in New Zealand with an expansion of our prison numbers to a projected high of some 12,500 souls within the next 8 years, and it could rise higher than this if we don't get a strong grip on recidivism, which means having far more effective rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, especially ones run outside prison.

This is a huge challenge that we in Prison Fellowship must not only face, but I believe we must change the paradigm that we have to punish so many people by sending them to prison. I have recently called on the heads of all New Zealand Churches to rise up and back us as we seek to be national leaders on this issue. I am glad that there are other strong voices like that of the Chief Justice and the Principal Youth Court Judge who are starting to say the same things.

Behind the wire things are not in a very good state regarding volunteers and their ability to serve those in prison. Cost cutting means less unlocked hours to meet with prisoners, and also reductions in essential programmes like ESOL that apparently are no longer felt to be necessary and “could be picked up by volunteers” according to one Corrections source.

I would like each one of you to join those of us on the Board and staff as we pick up this challenge. Please PRAY, as you have never done before, for strength to arm us for what will be a battle ahead, for wisdom for new directions and for large increases in funding. I believe that we must start to meet some of the dire needs that we as communities are going to have to face as more prisoners leave prison inadequately equipped to sustain their journey back into society. So many are failing in the first few weeks out and we do not have the resources to help them – yet ! Please also use your influence with local MPs, Mayors and Councillors, businessmen, charitable trusts etc to gain traction on the key message THE PRISON POPULATION MUST GO DOWN.

Thank you to the many people that support our work with your time, prayers and giving, we appreciate each one of you. I will be writing to all of our supporters in the next month about the different projects we need sponsoring financially to continue making a real difference in people's lives- I trust you and your friends will be able to help us in some tangible way.

## ANGEL TREE

*They're paying for crimes  
they didn't commit*



*You can bring joy  
to a prisoner's child  
this Christmas.*

*By supporting the  
**ANGEL TREE  
PROGRAM.***

*Providing gifts  
for the children of  
prisoners*

## Its Angel Tree time

Less than 3 months to Christmas and its time for the Angel Tree programme and its many “big angels” to start the processes going. Chaplains are out in the prisons getting “orders” from prisoners, with posters in cell blocks

whilst out in the regions co-ordinators are enrolling churches to get their trees up and angels will soon be appearing. Barry and Caroline Timms have done a huge job ensuring that the process runs even smoother this year, and we aim to distribute some 3600 gifts to those victims of crime we often forget about- the children of prisoners.



If you would like to make a special donation for Angel Tree we need an extra \$2000 this year for buying those last minute presents to ensure no-one misses out.



## A Chaplain's tale

A major part of our work is to support of Chaplains as they meet the spiritual needs of all prisoners, here is an (anonymous) view of the current difficulties one is facing...

"One of the very real problems Chaplains have is the limited unlock time now available to prisoners , 9 am till 11am and 1pm till 4pm . Within those times there are a limited number of other classes also going on. Prisoners are now spending nearly 16 hours at a stretch - double bunked . I do not know whether this is the same in other prisons but it does make it very difficult to run Bible studies etc . The only free time prisoners get now seems to be half an hour before lunchtime lock down and from 3pm until 4.30pm. At our prison guitars are no longer allowed in cells . All personal guitars are put in storage and only the few chaplain's guitars are now available. The only time these can be used are for services and any other organised music event would be rare.

The lock down increasingly precludes any self-made music in case someone uses the guitars for hiding things or the wires for tattooing or to injure someone . Things have changed significantly in the last nine months None the less we capitalise on the opportunities that are available and that is all we can do. I could use a dozen very good mentors who would regularly visit prisoners and help them deal with their issues-especially the spiritual ones ."

## From the Boardroom

Prison Fellowship has a well regarded Board which governs what we do. At our last meeting it decided that:

- The in-prison environment has changed considerably hence we need to look at changes to our programmes accordingly
- We need to play to our strengths in programmes like Sycamore Tree, Faith Based Unit, Victim Offender conferences and seek to expand these
- A major future focus will be on Target Communities work
- We need to examine new structures for our Regional Prison Care Groups and establish stronger links with Churches at a national and local level
- We need to establish strong collaboration with other NGOs and particularly with Maori and Pacific organisations that work in this sector
- We need to take a stronger stance with regard to Criminal Justice reform, and to lead new initiatives. We will use our National Conference in 2010 to challenge the status quo and promote new approaches to criminal justice.
- Our current funds were in good shape but we needed to be quite aggressive in our fundraising strategy for the future
- We will publish an annual report this year to inform supporters and stakeholders of what we do
- We will take a more active stance on Public Relations and advocacy to lawmakers, in conjunction with rethinking Crime and Punishment
- The Board would self assess its own performance



Board members present: L to R

Graham Rattray, Robin Gunston, Matt Hakaia, John Jamieson, Ian Elliott (Chair), Stan Thorburn, Janice McJorow, Kim Workman, Kilian de Lacy, Basil Wakelin.



## Radical Change

When I shook his hand it was cold and sweaty. He was clearly nervous to meet me - much more than I was to meet him. I was impressed that he had waited for me. The others had all gone out for their allocated 'yard time'. Just one hour a day in Maxi - quite a lot to give up on the off chance that he might be included in the programme. Interviewing him was difficult - he was so desperate to be on the programme that he was almost paralysed with nerves. Every now and then he forgot what we were talking about and I became concerned that he might be unstable. As a new facilitator I did not want to have a safety risk on my hands, so I said no to him. However, this decision didn't sit right with me. I felt uneasy, sad... wrong.



Hon Simon Power, Minister of Justice making a presentation at the last Rimutaka Prison Sycamore Tree

The social worker emailed me "he must be on the programme" she wrote. "No", I wrote back "I wish you had told me about this before the interviews, but we could risk a fight if we bump someone for him now". Three days later the social worker informed me that someone had 'voluntarily' dropped out. HE was back in. I was to find out later that he had paid that 'someone' a packet of biscuits for a place on the programme! He was a model participant. Honest, earnest and a quick learner. Halfway through the programme he told his story. Shame oozed out of him - from his red face and downcast eyes through to his shuffling feet. But he left no detail out... how he had followed an eighteen year old woman home from the pub one night. How he had grabbed her and pulled her down an embankment. How he had raped her.

This was not the first rape confession we heard that week. But it was the most honest. He told us how he had thought about raping someone for years. How he had not known what to do with these thoughts which clouded up his mind - thoughts which had become more and more powerful until eventually he had given into them.

He was deeply ashamed. He believed he deserved his prison sentence - and any other punishment we, as a society, would want to inflict on him. He believed he deserved to be beaten up in jail - and frequently was. He believed he had been created evil.

Two of the victim participants had been raped. It was painful for them to listen to his story - they cried as he spoke and one of them shook uncontrollably. Even though it was so difficult, it was also healing for them to be able to let him know how this type of crime had affected them. One woman had gone from relationship to relationship -- never really finding true love (the kind that accepts you no matter what). The other woman had given in to various addictions in order to dull the pain of her brokenness.

During the programme he wrote to the victim of his crime, the young girl he had raped. He told her how sorry he was for what he had done and that he deserved to stay in jail until he was completely rehabilitated. He promised to do every programme and get all the help he could to make sure he would never rape again. He told her that he was completely responsible for his actions and that he had no excuses.

And he told her how he had done a Sycamore Tree Programme which had put him on the road to radical change. The most radical change was that he now had hope. He had hope that he could be a different man - a man of honour, gentleness, kindness, self-control, strength, honesty and love. He wasn't there yet. But he had hope....

Six months later I bumped into one of the two victim participants. She told me that she had quit her job after the programme... "I could not do the same old thing after Sycamore," she said. "I have been empowered to BE more and to GIVE more. At last I am free and I want to do something meaningful with my life now!"

...And a couple of weeks ago I interviewed a young lady who wanted to volunteer as a victim participant in a Sycamore Tree Programme. She told me that when she was eighteen she had been raped while walking home from the pub one night... She said her offender had written to her and told her that he had done a Sycamore Tree Programme. That he had had to bribe his way onto the programme with a packet of biscuits, but that it had been well worth it, because he was on a road to radical change. A road of hope...

Amen!

(Written by Sandi Hawnt - a STP facilitator at Paremoremo Prison)





## Prison Fellowship Hawkes Bay celebrate 10 years of volunteering

Hastings District Council hosted a civic celebration for Prison Fellowship Hawkes Bay on 17th August attended by some 60 volunteers, and PF national staff.

They were welcomed by Mayor Lawrence Yule and thanked for their selfless community contribution by going into the difficult area of the local prison, a place that many people did not want to go into and bring hope.



Following the mihi from Prison Senior Chaplain John Flavell, local PF volunteer and committee member, Alan Joule read a congratulatory letter from the founder of PF New Zealand, Graeme Taylor.



Janice McJorrow the local PF co-ordinator remembered all those people who had worked hard over the years to keep up faithful service to the prison and its inmates often in trying conditions.



The assembled crowd were then challenged by new PFNZ National Director Robin Gunston to think about the state of imprisonment within New Zealand. He called for a reform in the entire approach to criminal justice so that our prison populations went down rather than continued to increase. He remarked that there would be nothing better than that PFNZ had nothing more to do!! He asked the Council to consider making the prison, its staff and the released inmates a more integral part of the community and to consider the prison within its community planning.



Prison Manager George Massingham had earlier in the day commented at the prison, that he highly valued the excellent way in which chaplains and the many prison volunteers worked together and that he looked forward to an ongoing relationship in the same vein, perhaps bringing new services to the inmates, especially those that encouraged activity.

After the celebrations a special anniversary cake was cut by one of the longest serving volunteers, and devoured appreciatively by all the guests!

Prison Fellowship Hawkes Bay is one of the more successful, organised regional committees in the PFNZ family but can always utilise the skills of many more Church based volunteers, if you are interested contact 0800 166 771.



## Coming up this month

Auckland- Thursday 22nd October 7.30pm "The future of prisons" by Robin Gunston, National Director, PFNZ. Greenlane Christian Centre. All welcome.

## Future Events 2010

### Volunteer Conferences

Upper North Island – Friday 5th March pm – Sat 6th March pm , 2010 – probably Auckland  
Lower North Island – Friday 16th April pm – Sat 17th April pm – probably Hawkes Bay  
South Island – Friday 7th May pm – Sat 8th May pm – probably Christchurch

### National Conference

"An alternative criminal justice system" Silverstream, Wellington Wed 6th October 6pm to Sunday 10th October 12 noon. Saturday and Sunday concentrates on Volunteers and NGOs work

(watch [www.pfnz.org.nz](http://www.pfnz.org.nz) for confirmation and booking details)