

We're committed to the vision – what now?

Consult. Inform. Learn.

Once the concept of Target Community is established as a mission strategy for your community, it's necessary to take your community through an educational process looking at prisons and prisoners. We are led to believe that the public is penal minded, generally wanting to lock up offenders and throw away the key. Our society has an almost built-in fear surrounding the area of prisoners and the media certainly promotes this view at every opportunity with colourful half-truths to support their sales.

Our communities quite often absorb these mindsets but this perspective has to be changed. Community leadership therefore will need to look to informing the worldview of the congregation, i.e. if it is inclined towards the heavy use of imprisonment it should be encouraged to seek more restorative dispositions.

- Leadership should take their people through discussions about what it would mean to bring a released prisoner into their midst with the view to establishing them within the community.
- Reactions will emerge during this process but it's important that people have their say and are heard.
- A part of this is the assurance that leadership will disclose to the community relevant criminal history of the potential community member. This is not to be a detailed account, simply the outline.
 - E.g. A man will soon be released from the Faith Unit. This Rimutaka Prison Unit is run co-operatively by Prison Fellowship and the Department of Corrections. The man in question is considered high-risk in accordance with his official "statistical rating" yet has undergone a great transformation in his life. He is an Elder within the Faith Unit and has made startling changes in his life as part of his Christian walk. A community receiving this man should be aware of his past record (aggravated robbery) but also be encouraged by his walk of faith.

Take 6+ months to bring everyone on board

Prison Fellowship suggests that upwards of 6 months may be spent bringing the community "on board". Some members may choose to leave, but the remainder will commit to the vision and take their part in the mission. The DVD "Setting up a Target Community Presentation" by Pastor Paul Edlin of Wainuiomata Baptist Life Impact, provides a wonderful example of how this can be achieved.

What is a “Circle of Support” that is placed around a released prisoner (Teina)?

The concept originated in Canada, in the field of disability and has been adapted to work with released prisoners. It brings together significant people in a person’s life in a Circle of Support meeting where the individual shares his or her hopes, aspirations and needs.

Many people within our Target Communities have a high level of ‘social capital’ (good standing, respect, contacts etc); are motivated to reach outside their peer group to help others; and already have some contact within the prison environment.

The barriers to these people sharing their ‘social capital’ are perceptions of risk, fear of the unknown, and being unaware of the need. We aim to reduce these barriers by providing guidance, training and support.

- This creates an opportunity for others to offer support, or to contribute according to their own ability and motivation.
- The facilitator clarifies the nature and extent of each contribution so that no one feels required to participate beyond their stated limits.
- Supporters work as a team with the facilitator, reducing the risk of burnout or being overwhelmed by an individual’s needs.
- For released prisoners, a Circle of Support can bring a high level of community support into a period of high need — the transition from prison to community life — in a structured manner.
- A few released prisoners may already have people who are ready, able and willing to be part of this process. Others will find it difficult to find people with this level of commitment, or will in many cases (wisely) seek not to re-establish relationships with past associates.

When putting together the Circle of Support for the Teina, we may want to include a close friend of the Teina if we consider that they are a person of positive influence. (Please note that not all the members of a Circle of Support will be church attendees)

What Prison Fellowship aims to provide...

As stated earlier, Prison Fellowship does not look to hold a proprietary ownership of this project.

Each Target Community will make its own decisions as to how it proceeds and whom they will introduce upon release.

For its part, Prison Fellowship will look to provide (resources permitting):

1. Initial contact with interested communities – we will grow these one at a time.
2. Presentation of the concept to the Leaders (via this document and the DVD).
 - Through discussion, Leadership approves the concept and appoints their Facilitator.
 - The Target Community takes its people through the process of gaining community-wide acceptance of the mission.
3. Prison Fellowship prepares:
 - a. Information on visiting prison as a Specified Visitor from a Corrections perspective, and the process that is involved.
 - b. Coaching training materials.
 - c. Materials on working with a family impacted by imprisonment.
 - d. Employment opportunities (what is hoped for within a Target Community and external avenues) – opportunities within the region.
 - e. Materials on voluntary organisations that operate within the community - these may need to be localised.
 - f. How to work with Probation.
 - g. Wider Community Networks – including W&I, Maori, Pasifika, Service Organisations, recreation providers; Parole, Courts.
 - h. Skills Acquisitions – types of opportunities available.
 - i. Victim-offender conferencing options.
4. Introduction to website materials and ordering.
5. Access to ongoing coaching training days.

Following this, together we look at:

1. Selection of Coaches for an initial Tuakana/Coach Training day.
2. Discuss ongoing connections with Prison Fellowship especially with regard to matching.
3. Steps to go operational.
4. Match a Tuakana/Coach with a potential prisoner.
5. Prison visits / Community Support Plan / Circle of Support / Materials to be used.
6. Family visits (if appropriate).
7. Reporting.

Materials and Programmes

Prison Fellowship has created specially designed materials and released these to support the Target Communities programme. These materials are allocated into the following categories:

Materials Available for general use within the Target Community

These materials are available for providing generalised information about various stages of prisoner reintegration both in NZ and around the globe. They include interviews with released prisoners that provide an understanding of the difficulties faced upon release and indeed, some of their backgrounds that led up to them being in prison.

Materials specifically for training volunteers within the Target Community

These materials are available for preparing volunteers who will work with prisoners either inside or outside the wire. These are the real coalface people who may be taking chapel services, visiting prisoners, providing different activities such as art, drama, bible study etc.

Materials within Prison

These materials are available to be used by a Tuakana/Coach whilst visiting a prisoner. Some of these materials are available in a group format and others available for one-on-one use.

- Group format materials are run in prisons by a trained facilitator with group sizes of around 8 – 10 prisoners. Where these 5 week courses are available within a prison, Target Community prisoners will be encouraged to attend.
- One-on-one materials contain a prisoner workbook and a CD that teaches the material. The Tuakana/Coach may choose to take the teaching themselves or simply use the CD

Materials Available for the Circle of Support and Released Person

These materials are available to be used by members of the Circle of Support to meet with the person upon release.

- These would be supplementary to any of the community's materials that are in current use.
- This includes a local version of the British Alpha booklet, "Caring for Ex-Offenders"

Materials Available for the Circle of Support and Families of Prisoners

These materials are available to be used by members of the Circle of Support to meet with the family members of those who are facing or have faced imprisonment of a family member.

Some of these have been specifically written to impart understanding and knowledge of just what these family members may be experiencing and how best to support them through this time.

A simple overview of each product is available in the Shop.