



# Lockdown Christmas

In recent months we have had very little contact with the men and women in Scottish prisons, so we were excited at the end of last year to have a conversation with **Junction 42**, one of the organisations we partner with, about how we might bless those in prison. Junction 42 has been sending 'Faith Packs' into the prisons since last summer and initially, we joined in with their Autumn Faith Pack, providing a card assuring all those in prison that they are being remembered in prayer. Then our conversation developed, and we started thinking about what we might do at Christmas.

Christmas can be a difficult time in prison as people think about their families and spend more time realising what they are missing. We were very aware that this feeling of isolation and loneliness would be felt even more strongly this Christmas as it came on top of long periods of lockdown.

Fast forward to Christmas and, after discussion with **Prison Chaplains**, working alongside **Junction 42** and supported by **Connect to Community**, approximately 7500 packs were given to men and women in prisons across Scotland. These packs contained the necessary chocolate bar, a Christmas card they could keep, as well as one to post out, a craft item, a booklet on advent from the Scottish Bible Society and a leaflet we had written for us on the real meaning of Christmas.

It was a huge privilege for PFS to be part of this. Please continue to pray for those in prison, especially that they would take time to read the booklets given to them and through this, they might gain a greater understanding of God's love.

## Chaplains Feedback...

### HMP Low Moss

*The Christmas faith packs went down very well here. Yes, it was a lot of work putting them out, but they were very well received. The KitKat certainly helped but I think the guys were moved just knowing that people had gone to all this trouble and been generous enough to give them something.*

*So, a big THANK YOU from Low Moss. We're very grateful to PFS and J42 for doing this.*

### HMP Edinburgh

*The packs were well received and a good idea. The guys were happy to be remembered and very glad of cards to send, and the chocolate!*

*We used it as an opportunity to personally visit every cell to deliver and carry out a "welfare check". This gave us the chance to connect and pray with every prisoner (if wanted).*



## PFS Turns 40 This Year



**Would you like to get involved?**

See back page for more details

## A Word From The Chairman

As we start our 40th year of service we asked our chairman to reflect on our work. Below he keeps our eyes, hearts and minds on Jesus:



**Kenneth MacKenzie**  
CHAIRMAN

This is our 40th year of service in fulfilling the Mission and Calling. What is the heart of our Mission? We are Christocentric. Christ is at the heart of our mission. Let's always remain there. Let me quote from a book recently read and deeply appreciated: From Glory to Golgotha.

2,000 years ago, our Saviour was hanging on the Cross and called out "Eloi Eloi lama sabachthani" (Mark 15v 34). Up to this point, the story is of His physical suffering. The words are an Aramaic-tinged quotation from Ps 22, His mind breathes the psalter at His lowest ebb.

He bore in His soul wrote Calvin, 'the terrible torments of a condemned and lost man'.

### What was happening?

**1. Against all Hope.** The forsaken cannot mean the Trinity was broken, or that the Father ceased to love the Son, and they are not a cry of despair. Despair would have been a sin. Even in the darkness, God was My God.

**2. Truly Forsaken.** Yet there was real forsaking. Not just felt, but actual forsaking. When He had cried, God closed His ears. This time no word came from heaven

to remind Him that He was God's Son. No dove came. No Angel came to strengthen Him.

**3. Bearing the Curse.** He cries out in Aramaic, but not this time Abba. Even in the anguish of Gethsemane distraught and burdened, He had been able to use it. (Mark 14v 36) But not here. Public though the cry was, it expressed the intensely private anguish of a tension between the sin-bearing Son and His heavenly Father: God forsaken by God.

**4. Why oh Why?** The why of protest? Or incomprehension? Or of amazement? As He confronts a dreadfulness He could never have anticipated. Never before had anything come between Him and His Father, but now the sin of the whole world has come between them, and He is caught in the dreadful vortex of the curse. It is not that Abba is not there, but that He is there, as the Judge of all the earth, who could condone nothing and could not spare even His own Son. (Romans 8v 32)

**5. The Cup is Drained.** Now Jesus mind is near the limits of its endurance. We in the gallery of history are sure of the outcome. He suffering in human nature the fury of hell, is not. He is standing where none has stood before or since, enduring at one point in space and one moment of time all that sin deserved. The curse in unmitigated concentration. Then suddenly it is over. "Father into your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 23v 46)

We have no means of knowing what intervened between the two cries. We know only the cup is drained and the curse exhausted, and that the Father now holds out His hands to the Spirit of His Beloved Son.

The price is paid... Onwards...

## Angel Tree 2020

Every year in Prison Fellowship Scotland we look forward to our Angel Tree project. It is an opportunity for us to work with our volunteers and



supporting churches to give gifts to the children of men and women in prison. Although for many, 2020 has been all about keeping our distance and dealing with lockdown, we still wanted to ensure we could find ways of helping these children who often have little to look forward to. We knew, for them, Christmas wasn't cancelled and it was hard to picture Santa Claus wearing a mask!

This year we partnered with **Action for Children, Crossreach** and the **Family Contact Officers** in the prisons to help ensure gifts got into the hands of the families who needed them most. In some cases this allowed us to provide vouchers directly to these families with hand-written messages from the prisoners themselves, some saying:

"Daddy loves and misses you"

"To my little princess, have a happy Christmas"

"Daddy is sorry he can't be there"

"Lots of love and kisses, Daddy"

Many of the messages had small drawings and artwork on them; others were written in a calligraphy style, one prisoner drew holly and Christmas decorations on his message, taking the time to colour each item in. The amount of love and affection put into these messages was very moving.

We were also able to directly support a few families having a particularly tough time at Christmas thanks to Chaplains making us aware of these family's needs.

Overall we were able to support all 15 prisons, with over 1600 gifts provided to children affected by imprisonment.

*We would not have been able to achieve this without the goodwill and amazing generosity of our supporters.*

*Thank you.*



**Rev. Stephen Smith**  
CHAPLAIN

In December 2020 Rev. Stephen Smith took on the role of Chaplain at HMP Greenock, a prison with a long history of Prison Fellowship work. We asked PFS volunteer and former director, Billy Paul, to talk to Stephen about his appointment.

**Billy:** On behalf of Prison Fellowship Scotland, Stephen, congratulations on your appointment. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

**Stephen:** My employment background was in sales and marketing. First in housewares then a successful career in the Jewellery Trade. During 2000 I felt the call to full-time ministry, and duly attended Regents Theological College. Following my training I was appointed Assistant Pastor in the Elim church in Motherwell, followed by a move to the Elim church in Clacton-on-Sea. After this I was the Minister of the Elim church community in Eastbourne, where we developed a retirement apartment complex; a children's day nursery; community outreach

initiatives; a successful property management company, and the church! In 2018 we returned to Scotland for my wife Elizabeth's health and to be closer to family.

**Billy:** In light of your history and experience, what attracted you to the post of Prison Chaplain?

**Stephen:** For 2 years I was in what I would call the "waiting room", developing my life, ministry and focus from pastoral work to a concern for homeless, poor, and addicted people.

The Scottish Prison Service Chaplaincy opportunity came to me unexpectedly and it has given me the opportunity to work with marginalised, broken, and addicted people on a daily basis.

I am delighted to be working in HMP Greenock and I also get to partner with Graham Bell at HMP Glenochil as one of the Chaplains there!



**Billy:** What are your first impressions of prison?

**Stephen:** Prisons are full of opportunities to demonstrate compassion, deliver hope and exude authentic Christianity. I find that the men and women in prison are open to talk and some need to talk - so I see and speak to the people God has called me to every day.

The Governor in Greenock has encouraged me to provide a weekly service sheet for all 190 prisoners. This consists of a Prayer of Thanksgiving, a Prayer of Intercession, a Short Message a Word Search and Chaplaincy contact details.

I was delighted to lead a Christmas Eve service with the women in Greenock.

This was a wonderful opportunity where the Greenock Governor and senior managers attended too!

**Billy:** How do you see the role of Prison Fellowship Scotland and our volunteers in supporting the services you provide in HMP Glenochil and HMP Greenock?

**Stephen:** Prison Fellowship volunteers are a vital support to the work of chaplaincy. In lots of cases PF volunteers come in at different times to the chaplains. They bring different perspectives and programmes. Essentially, we are partners in ministry.

**Billy:** Do you have anything else you would like to say to our supporters and volunteers?

**Stephen:** These are days when, despite the far-reaching restrictions on services and, in particular, on outside ministries within prisons, there is increased opportunity to positively impact both staff and those in our care. We are at the front line, and due to your prayers and support, we as Chaplains can continue to find favour, to minister freely to hundreds of people. Please pray for the Governors of Greenock, Karen Smith and Glenochil, Natalie Beal. We look forward to welcoming you back to each of the establishments very soon!

**Billy:** Thank you, Stephen. We wish you a very happy and fulfilling 2021. We will be remembering you and your work in our Tuesday prayer meetings.

