

# Christmas Appeal



Never before has Prison Network Ministries had a Christmas Appeal. However, this year, unlike the last few, we have not had the benefit of a major fundraiser. One Community Church has put in a fantastic effort resulting in some significant gifts towards our Children's Fund. This has enabled us to send many children on camps over summer and also provide presents for the children we work with who would otherwise go without.

For a number of reasons One Community Church has been unable to assist in this way in 2008. Christmas is a sad, lonely and difficult time for many of those we work with often pushing them to the edge. The demand for our services and drain on our resources over this period is significant. If you feel you can contribute something to brighten a child's Christmas please complete the form enclosed.



## DEAR PRISON NETWORK LADIES,

Just an extremely big thank you for all that your ministry has done to support my two children and I over the years and most recently in the last 5 months.

It's been 3 months since I've been home and have been blessed with much material and physical support.

I don't think I'd be where I am today if it hadn't been rewarded with unconditional friendship which is ongoing through your team members.

I have sustained my new path with a strong positive connection with both Laurel and Katharine.

Thank you to all of the other lovely volunteers who continue to keep lives going.

Kind regards,  
**"Carolyn"**



Prison Network Ministries

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Prison Network Ministries

# INSIDEOUTSIDE

November 2008

## A NOTE FROM THE CEO

A few days ago, a comment made by a woman sitting near me took me by surprise. She was saying how few weeks there were until Christmas!... Weeks! It can't be that close, impossible, surely not, let me count.



I don't know how the nearness of Christmas makes you feel. At first, I realised there was much to do to prepare for the celebrations that surround the event. These concerns were soon displaced however, by the many happy memories I have of Christmas' past and even more by the joy of having received God's gift to us.

How will the women and families PNM support be viewing the approach of Christmas? Are they looking forward to it with anticipation or trepidation? Will it be the same or better than the ones before? Sadly it is one of the hardest times of the year to be in prison and often one of the hardest for women struggling to make ends meet on the outside.

As we visit women and their families this Christmas, can you help us make this a different experience to the one they've had before? Can you help us put joy into their life and a hope in their heart? I believe you can.

Thank you for your support and prayers this year and may you have a wonderful Christmas.

Blessings,

**Deb Redford**

## DOIN'IT FOR THE KIDS

For more years than I can remember, whenever the staff and board have got together for Review and Planning meetings, the highest need expressed on our list has been for a Children's Worker. We are continually moved and anguished by the plight of many of the children with whom we come in contact.

Some of the families we are involved with have up to 6 children. Often the families have a myriad of problems. We have always had the view that if mum is not doing well, the whole family struggles, which leaves us with no choice but to make the mother our focus. However, the children's needs are often serious and complex. At times their mothers are overwhelmed and not coping and it is a struggle to meet even the children's most basic physical needs. As a result their emotional, educational and special needs can be neglected. Our limited capacity to respond to their needs has been a constant frustration.

It is with great pleasure and excitement that we can announce the appointment of a part-time intern, Alex Lynch. Alex will be trained in all areas of the ministry. However, her main focus will be working with the children. Here is a little of her story.

*Since leaving school in 2001, I have been to Thailand 6 times, including a 6 and 12 month stay, working at Agape Home for orphans with HIV/AIDS. I remember being amazed by the fact that these children who had experienced extreme poverty, been outcast,*





**them with various supports and specialist services to assist with their sometimes complex needs, we can help to break the cycle and contribute to giving them a bright future. I'm really excited to be working with an organization that impacts so many lives in such a positive way.**

It has been a huge step of faith for PNM to appoint its first ever intern, but we believe that the need for someone to work with the children had become a necessity. Alex has made a considerable financial sacrifice moving from a job as an Employment Consultant, but in her words "this is not about the money."

If you would like to contribute to Alex's support, we would be most grateful. To do so, please fill out the contribution form enclosed in this newsletter.

**Laurel Gore - Senior Support Worker**

### BOARD PROFILE – TRACEY CHEESEMAN

I'm not sure if it was a case of God's perfect timing, or if I was just a really slow learner – but it took me about seven years after hearing about Prison



Network Ministries before I became involved.

Like many of you, my first contact with PNM was through the one-woman PR-machine that is Laurel Gore. Laurel spoke at a church service I was at and I remember being really impressed by the passion she displayed and how the ministry was answering the gospel's clear call to look after those in prison.

A few months went by and some friends were heading to Prison Network's Inside Stories evening at Templestowe Baptist church, so I tagged along.

Once again I thought this was a great ministry but thought that I couldn't get involved as my university studies meant I couldn't commit to visiting the prison every week. Several years later I attended a UNOH Surrender conference and attended the Prison Network session where I was really moved by a young woman who shared her story about how

the team had supported her family while her mother was in prison.

Here was a group of people sharing God's love in a practical way with some of our community's most disadvantaged. But again I (wrongly) thought I couldn't get involved as by now I was working full-time.

Fast forward to 2007 when my good friend and PNM Board Member Roger Vreugdenhil tapped me on the shoulder and suggested I consider joining the board. At first I felt overwhelmed and ill-qualified, but I soon realised that we each have talents and skills that can be used to build up God's kingdom and that I too could play a role.

Since joining the board in mid-2007 I have been putting my professional skills as a journalist and PR consultant to work to help improve Prison Network's communications including a new brochure, banner, expanded website and more.

The role has been a privilege and a blessing. As a new mum to five-month-old Ellie, I am particularly enjoying keeping my brain busy with PNM work in the midst of nappies and baby talk.

I only wish I had realised earlier that there are many ways to support PNM other than weekly visits to the prison. We are always on the lookout for new board members, people who can provide specialist skills (eg. IT support, printing, fundraising and more), prayer supporters and, of course, donations.....**Tracey**

### THE GIRLS SAY THANK YOU

Earlier this year PNM started to think and pray about running a Christian discussion group outside the prison walls for women post release. At the time there seemed to be interest amongst women soon to be released. So God began his work on this project and before long we were blessed with a home to hold our group in.



**Some of the members of our outside Discussion Group**

In April, Kate, Stella and Jess opened up their home and hearts to us, and our group began to meet on weekly basis.

They have welcomed us in to their home and made us all feel very comfortable. Their generosity has been overwhelming and we are very grateful and glad that they have also become part of our group. Some of the women who attend have babies so it provides a fantastic chance for the mothers and their children to get out of the house and catch up.

We meet at lunch time sharing a meal together which is prepared by one of the volunteers of the group.

After our tummies are full and we've had time to chat we get down to business. Some weeks we have watched DVD's of different speakers ranging from Joyce Meyer to Pricilla Shirer.

On other occasions Laurel has prepared topics for discussion which always inspire us, get us thinking and talking. The group is small and intimate which provides a safe place for us to share our concerns as well as our hopes and dreams.



**Our two youngest members have become the best of friends**

Giving the opportunity for women post release to be able to come together in an environment which is safe and comfortable to engage with others who know how difficult transition back in to the community can be, will only benefit the women who already attend and offers a regular meeting place for women being released to come too.

I believe that God has an amazing plan for our group and it will grow and provide a peaceful place for many to come during an often chaotic time. Laurel and Caitlin do a fantastic job of organizing, collecting women and making sure that it all comes together, so each week we are able to grow in the Lord.

**Karen (One of the Girls)**