

"Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations...A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory." -Mt. 12:18, 20

Paths of Justice

Helping Children of Prisoners

Our Angel Tree Christmas outreach is just around the corner again. This is the fifth year that Faith Community Church has provided connections between imprisoned parents and their child(ren) through Angel Tree. As the Justice Mission Team began to define "justice", we found that children of prisoners were examples of those in unjust circumstances. A child is born into a situation in which he or she bears no responsibility. If a child's parent breaks the law and is caught and sent to prison, the rest of the family is left with less income, no role model, shame and likely less time with the remaining parent. Injustice occurs when someone with greater power deprives someone with lesser power of freedom, dignity, treasure or livelihood. What does the Bible say about that situation? "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8) Upon further research, we found that Angel Tree is a solid organization to continue serving with. If our church can show love to some Angel Tree children, we may be able to change their lives by introducing them to Jesus and bringing restoration to their families. - Tom

Braille Bible Beats Out Barbie

The Angel Tree outreach is through Prison Fellowship, the nation's largest outreach to prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families. Angel Tree involves sharing gifts and the Gospel with children of prisoners, bridging the gap between parent and child, and introducing Christ's love and grace to hurting families. Many incarcerated parents' hearts are softened by the care Angel Tree volunteers show their families at Christmas, and many Angel Tree churches continue year-round to create a supportive home for these children, caregivers, and moms and dads returning home.

At one church, a volunteer, John, was calling children's caregivers for gift suggestions, and reached the mother of Tiffany, a 14-year-old. He found out that Tiffany has been blind from birth, so he asked if she would like books in braille. "Yes, but books in braille are expensive and hard to find," said Tiffany's mom. "Do you think it would be possible?"

"Madam, nothing is impossible," assured John. He then hung a gift tag that said, "Books in braille" on the church Angel Tree.

Following church services the next Sunday, sisters Amanda and Evelyn went up to the Angel

Tree to choose their tags. Their father, Sean, steered 8-year-old Evelyn to a tag for twin girls her own age, who asked for Barbie dolls and clothing. Those would be easy items to find, he reasoned. Instead, Evelyn kept focusing her attention on the tag with books in braille on it, and after some back-and-forth with her dad, insisted, "This is the one."

Sean and his wife went to work. They called various bookstores on the Internet, but weren't sure about the titles, and none of them could deliver by Christmas. Then they contacted the Braille Institute in Los Angeles, which had a bookstore on site, so their family travelled 50 miles to get there that same day.

Surprised that they had shown up so quickly, the man who helped them, George, asked what Tiffany liked to read. They had to explain that they didn't know and what Angel Tree is. George then told the family that he had heard about a Bible arriving recently—a copy of the King James Version in braille, which they were very interested in. George then called his supervisor, who listened to Sean explain why they wanted to buy a Bible for a blind girl they had never met.

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Definition of injustice: Injustice occurs when someone with greater power deprives someone with lesser power of freedom, dignity, treasure, or livelihood.

"...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

- Jesus, Mt. 28:18-20

Faith Community Church Justice Mission

(Continued)

The Bible they had just received was not for sale, she said. It would be given free in trust. Inside were instructions to return the Bible to the Institute whenever the owner died. When Sean explained that Tiffany was quite young and would likely use this copy for many years, she said they could take "it" right then - all 18 volumes of it/them stored in three hefty boxes!

They were so excited and wondered how it might be received. Their daughter, Amanda, an avid reader who begs for a few more minutes each night before lights out, said: "Dad, she can read the Bible all night!"

"With that," says Sean, "we realized...how fortunate we are to have God's Word so available to us all." On Saturday, Dec. 15, they delivered the Bible and other gifts to Tiffany's home. She was overjoyed, and right away opened one of the volumes and began reading from it.

How much difference does Angel Tree make? There are countless stories that are very moving about how God has worked through it to restore people's relationships with Him, to restore families, and to bring them into Bible studies and church fellowship. Jenna Stiles has helped organize this at Faith Community Church since 2013, and has found it to be a rewarding experience every year. "There's always at least one child, one family, or one inmate who expresses such joy and thanks for this ministry and

for that 'one', it's worth it." The volunteers have had many good interactions with families of prisoners, and look forward to seeing how God will continue to work in the lives of those they serve.

While the Christmas outreach can make a big difference, deeper transformation often comes through building ongoing relationships. Angel Tree encourages this and many churches have been doing it. But we need your help in order to make it happen.

This year, we have been given 11 families who live between 7 and 25 minutes from the church. Whether it's with your faith group, family, or on your own,

would you help to make initial contact with a family of someone in prison, and help with the Christmas event? In getting to know them, if they don't have a church, could you follow up with them after the event? Think about how you would build a relationship with anyone: you could call them to get to know them and their needs more, invite them to church on a Sunday or to the Christmas Eve service, invite them to your faith group, and/or invite them over to your house for dinner.

Angel Tree has already broken the ice for us: would you engage in loving these families and making disciples through this ready-made opportunity? Please email Jenna at jandjstiles@gmail.com to let her know if you or your faith group could help with a family.



Opportunities / Activities

- Please continue to pray for Tosha and her baby boy J'air. Doctors say that scans show he may have some brain damage, but they won't know until he misses milestones.
- We are raising money for the Pregnancy Decision Health Centers through their Baby Bottle Program. All you need to do is take a bottle home from church and add your spare change to it, or cash or checks. 100% goes toward the services they provide for pregnant mothers in need, sometimes fathers, and preventative efforts of going into local public and private schools to provide training about making good choices. Return the bottles to church by Nov. 19th. This is also a great way to raise awareness and to remind us to pray for those in our community with some significant needs that they're helping to meet.
- For Angel Tree, please let Jenna know now if you can help to reach out to a family. She will have a brief training between the service and equipping classes on Nov. 5th, and we will have an Angel Tree Christmas Party on Sunday, Dec. 3rd. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/AngelTreeResources> for more information, training, and ideas about how you can help.
- Could you get more involved with righting injustice? Come to our Justice Team meetings where prayer happens, plans are made, and investigations continue.
- Check with Tom Castor (tcbus7@att.net) or Doug Dunsmoor (dwdunsmoor@hotmail.com) for more information about these and more opportunities.