



ANGEL TREE®

CHURCH COORDINATOR'S GUIDE



ANGEL TREE®
A Program of Prison Fellowship®

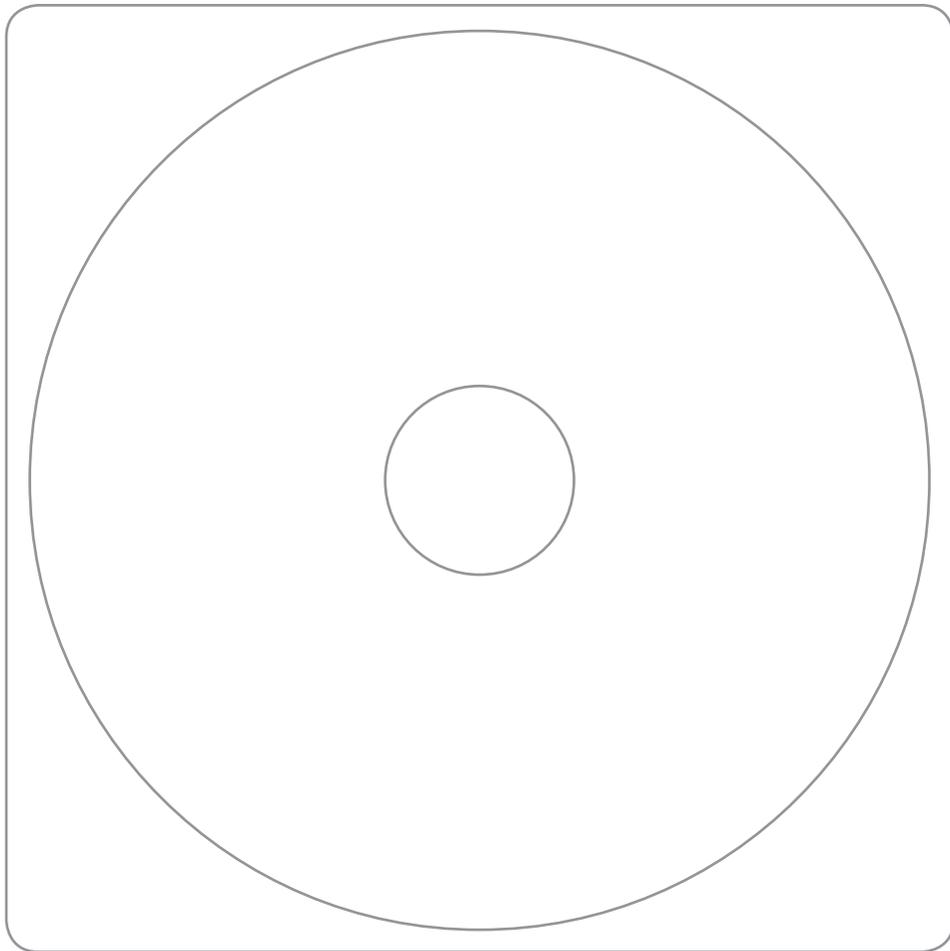
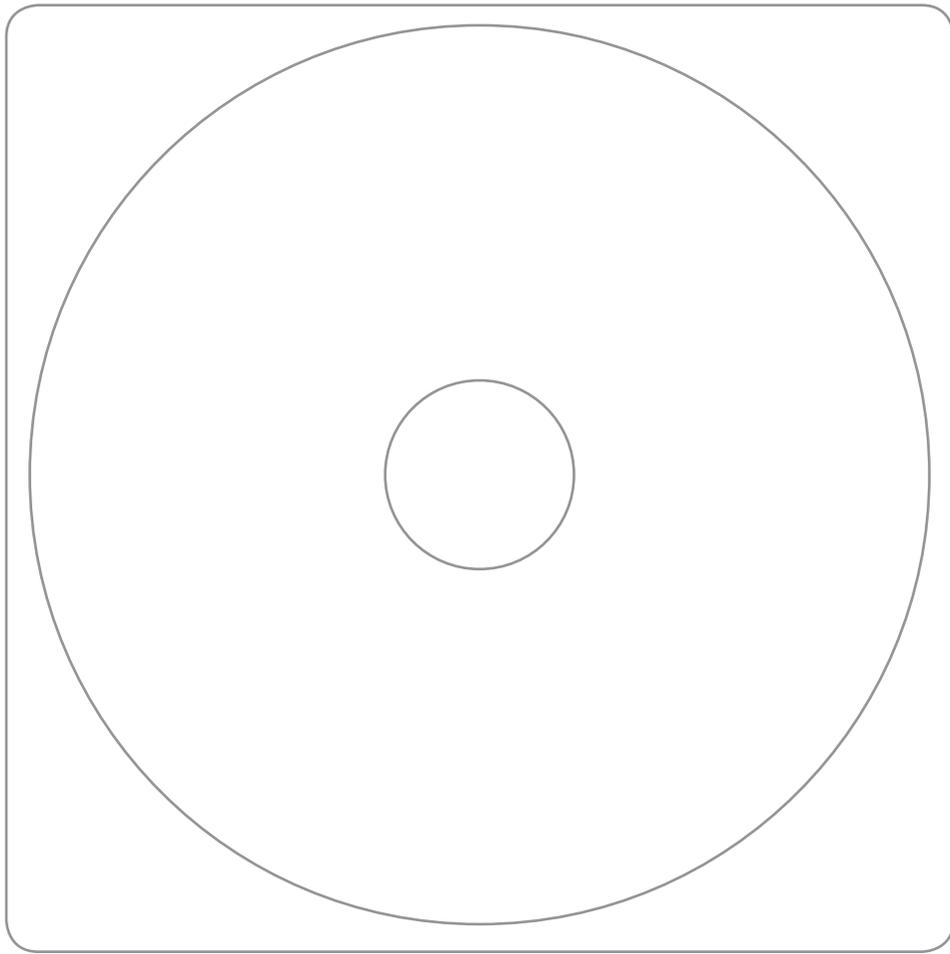




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PHASE 1 | Preparation and Recruitment

WHAT IS ANGEL TREE?

- Angel Tree is a program of Prison Fellowship® that serves incarcerated parents by providing a pathway for strengthening and restoring their relationships with their children and families.
- Angel Tree is a unique program that gives your church or organization an opportunity to share Christ's love with the families of prisoners.
- Angel Tree Christmas connects parents in prison with their children through the delivery of Christmas gifts given on the parent's behalf.
- Volunteers purchase and deliver presents with a loving message from the incarcerated parent, and also get a chance to share the greatest gift of all—the Good News of Jesus Christ.

THE BASIC GUIDELINES

1. Each **Angel Tree** child receives a **minimum** of one gift valued at approximately \$15-\$25.
2. Gifts are kept comparable in families to avoid inequity among siblings.
3. Gifts are typically delivered to children in a couple of ways:
 - Home Deliveries
 - Church Christmas PartySome use a combination or variation of these delivery methods, such as a church open house or other creative delivery approach.
4. Gifts are delivered on behalf of prisoner parents to strengthen the relationship with them and their child(ren).
5. You are not obligated to provide gifts for other children in the household who are not listed on the participation form.
6. When the gifts are delivered, some form of a Gospel presentation should be made.
7. If provided, the prisoner parent's message to their child should be transcribed onto the Angel Tree gift tag.
8. **Screening of your church's or organization's Angel Tree volunteers is highly recommended. Vigilance in volunteer selection helps ensure safety and supports a positive ministry experience for all.**

STEP 1 – PREPARE FOR THE PROGRAM

- Plan for the number of volunteers and amount of time it will take to carry out the responsibilities based on the number of children you signed up to serve.
- Schedule time to familiarize yourself with the materials and tools provided in your kit.
- Call your Angel Tree Program Specialist with any questions or concerns.

As you organize your calendar and prepare to carry out the next steps, be sure to schedule time to familiarize yourself with the materials and tools provided in your kit. Each resource listed below is specifically designed to maximize your church's Angel Tree Christmas experience. The kit includes:



Quickstart Guide

Provides an overview of the basics to implementing the three phases of the Angel Tree program.



Church Coordinator's Guide

Focuses on the step-by-step process of implementing Angel Tree Christmas at your church.



Christmas Promotional DVD

Includes a 3-minute video that is a great tool to share with the congregation, Sunday School classes, youth groups and more as you begin recruiting volunteers.



Angel Tree Resources CD

Includes the forms and letters referenced in the Angel Tree Church Coordinators Guide, the Going Beyond Christmas booklet, and the Hosting an Angel Tree Party booklet. It is identified with this symbol:  Please review the contents of this disk and use the appropriate forms for contacting families and reporting on your experience.



Bulletin Inserts

Flyers to distribute at church services and other church functions to promote your Angel Tree Christmas program.



Angel Tree Posters

Poster-sized (8.5" x 11" and 11" x 17") advertisements to be displayed prominently in your church or community meeting area.



Angel Tags

Peel-and-stick gift tags that are filled out and placed on each Angel Tree gift.



Gospel Presentation Card

Simple resource to share about Jesus Christ and capture the family's interest in church follow-up or additional information.



Volunteer Response Card

Provides the opportunity for volunteers to confirm their gift delivery and Gospel-sharing experiences to the Angel Tree church coordinator. Feedback on these cards is used to complete the End of Year Report, which is submitted to Angel Tree.

STEP 2 – RECRUIT YOUR TEAM

Identify the individuals from your church or organization that you feel will enjoy helping you organize and implement your Angel Tree Christmas program. This is the time to display the Angel Tree posters, distribute the bulletin inserts and present the Angel Tree Christmas Video provided in your kit to your congregation.

Volunteer opportunity examples:

- Contacting families
- Buying gifts
- Wrapping gifts
- Sharing the Gospel
- Delivering gifts
- Prayer team

STEP 3 – CONTACT THE CAREGIVERS

Potentially, the most challenging part of Angel Tree Christmas is making contact with caregivers to confirm information and verify/obtain gift requests so start early! Because you will need caregiver approval and will want the most up-to-date information prior to purchasing and delivering gifts, we strongly recommend reaching out as soon as possible.

- **Phone** (if unable to reach by phone, send a letter)
 - Follow the **Phone Interview Script**  or variation
 - Ask the caregiver if they would like to participate
 - Verify that the prisoner is the parent or step-parent
 - Confirm each child and the gift suggestion category (if applicable)
 - Verify the address and obtain directions (for home delivery)
 - Provide church name, address, and directions (for party or open house)
- **Mail**
 - Use the **Gift Request Letter** and **Gift Request Form**  (remember to fill in the names of the children before mailing) or variation
 - Use the church name, address, and telephone number (not a home address)
 - Clearly mark the return deadline
 - Provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope

Some considerations when contacting caregivers:

- Be sensitive to family situations and understand that a prisoner's family member may potentially respond with apprehension, ingratitude, fear, or even anger.
- A caregiver may refuse to participate because he or she doesn't want to be associated with the prisoner or allow any contact with the children. If so, you may write the prisoner using the

Unable to Serve Letter  to let him/her know the family refused participation. Please list the family on the **Children Not Served Form**. 

NOTE: In the event you contact a caregiver and become aware of a restraining order or other potential legal issue, avoid discussing details of the application with the caregiver and notify your Angel Tree Program Specialist immediately.

Although we do our best to provide current and complete contact information, we must rely on data initially supplied by the incarcerated parent. If the prisoner's family has recently moved, or if they do not maintain regular contact with the prisoner, the information you receive from Angel Tree may at times be incorrect, outdated, or inadequate. For other ways to locate children, please see the **Helpful Hints for A Successful Angel Tree Program** booklet  on your Resources CD in your kit or visit www.angeltree.org.

STEP 4 – PROMOTE ANGEL TREE TO YOUR CONGREGATION

Holding an Angel Tree Christmas Sunday event is an ideal way to promote participation in this ministry throughout your church.

- Prepare the Angel Tags with:
 - Child's first name
 - Gender and age
 - Gift suggestion confirmed by caregiver (include clothing sizes as appropriate)
 - Message from prisoner parent
 - Code number of the gift (this is a code you will use to track the return of the gifts; for coding suggestions, please visit www.angeltree.org)
- Consider using the **Tracking Cards**  provided or a variation to keep a record of the purchaser for each gift tag; this will allow for follow-up for gifts that have not been turned in on time. Gift purchasers fill in their name, address, and phone number and leave the Tracking Cards with the volunteers.
- Set up a tree or other display on which to hang tags. Tree or display should be positioned so that everyone entering or leaving the church will have an opportunity to select an Angel Tag.
- Collecting gifts:
 - Communicate when and where gifts should be returned and specify how they should be brought in (wrapped, in an open gift bag, unwrapped, etc.)
 - Emphasize that the Angel Tag with code should be securely attached (in a manner that works best for your process) to each gift.
 - After the gifts are collected, determine (via Tracking Cards provided or your own method) if any gifts are missing so you can remind the appropriate gift purchasers.

YOUR ANGEL TREE RESOURCES CD INCLUDES:

- **Church Faxback Reorder Form** - Use this to reorder Angel Tree materials.
- **Phone Interview Script for Home Deliveries** - Used by phone volunteers to introduce Angel Tree and request approval from the caregiver, and verify child eligibility, gift choice, and delivery information.
- **Phone Interview Script for Church Parties or Open Houses** - Used by phone volunteers to introduce Angel Tree and request approval from the caregiver, verify child eligibility and gift choice, and invite family to church-sponsored event.
- **Gift Request Form** - Used during phone interview to collect information from caregiver. Also helps phone volunteers organize individual gift requests for each child.
- **Gift Request Letter** - Sent to the caregiver on church letterhead requesting their approval and gift information for participation in Angel Tree.
- **Second Gift Request Letter** - Reminder letter sent to those who have not returned the first mail request.
- **Tracking Card** - Identifies the purchaser for each gift. Also used to track late gifts.
- **Delivery Information Card** - Provides at-a-glance information for home-delivery volunteers.
- **Unable to Serve Letter** - Letter sent to the prisoner parent on church letterhead, advising them that the church was unable to deliver gifts to their children, and the reason why.
- **Children Not Served Form** - Completed by church coordinator and returned to Angel Tree to assist with updating participation records for the current season.
- **End of Year Report Form** - Completed by coordinator to provide feedback to Angel Tree on the church experience.
- **Release Form (for Prison Fellowship use)** - To be completed by subjects of video, audio, digital images, or photos and submitted with such media to Prison Fellowship to be used in publications, advertising, and/or promotional purposes.
- **Hosting an Angel Tree Party Guide and Forms** - Instructions on hosting an Angel Tree Party and forms used to recruit and track volunteers and invite Angel Tree families to an Angel Tree Party.
- **Need Help to Locate Letter** - Letter sent to prisoner requesting additional information when church is unable to contact the family.
- **Helpful Hints** - Provides helpful hints to the church coordinator for a successful Angel Tree program.
- **Church Served Child Letter to Prisoner** - Letter sent to prisoner to let him/her know their child(ren) have been served.
- **Going Beyond Christmas** - Explains the significance of year-long ministry to Angel Tree families. Includes practical information on ministry activities and tips for contacting partner organizations focused on a child's spiritual, emotional, and social development.



PHASE 2 | Gift Delivery and Evangelism

DELIVERING THE GIFTS

Gifts are typically delivered to children in a couple of ways:

- Home Deliveries
- Church Christmas Parties

Some use a combination or variation of these delivery methods, such as a church open house or other creative delivery approach. If you host an event or party, home delivery may be necessary for those families that are unable to attend.

Home Delivery

As you plan your schedule and go on deliveries, be sure to remember these tips and guidelines:

- Keep a record of who will deliver to each family.
- Obtain clear driving and parking directions before heading out for deliveries.
- Delivery volunteers should go in groups of two or more, with at least one adult.
- Try to schedule the family visit during a one- or two-hour time slot to ensure the family is present and deliverers have time in the event of unforeseen delays.
- Try to personally deliver each gift to the child to make the experience special.
- Avoid leaving gifts with a neighbor or on the porch whenever possible.
- Do not deliver gifts or interact with children in any way if the caregiver is not present.

Church Party

Many churches have special programs of Christmas music, pageants, refreshments, or a Christmas meal. You can include Angel Tree families in these events or have a separate party to distribute gifts to them. At your event, have volunteers engage the families in conversation, assess their needs, and offer materials about the church and its ministries.

HOSTING AN ANGEL TREE PARTY

It takes planning, preparation, and volunteers to make a party successful. You will need to start your planning early and make sure you have enough volunteers to help.

Activities are also a wonderful way to interact with the children and their caregivers. Please refer to www.angeltree.org or the Resources CD for suggestions.

CHURCH PARTY TIPS

- Contact families as soon as you receive your list of Angel Tree families. Make sure you require a quick RSVP.
- While most churches will make arrangements to deliver gifts to families not able to make it to the party, make it clear on the initial invitation that the party is how the gifts will be distributed and don't give the families the option of not coming to the party.
- Have transportation available for families unable to make it to the church on their own.
- Send a ticket to each family with their Family Number on it to make gift distribution easier.
- Advertise your party to the church, with a listing of available volunteer opportunities.
- Keep refreshments or meals simple.
- Have counselors and follow-up materials available for the Gospel presentation during your party.
- Always plan for more people and provide for extra family members who show up.
- With caregiver permission, take photos of the child with their gift to send to the prisoner.
- Tell the child and caregiver that the gift is from the incarcerated parent, not from the church and not from Santa Claus.
- Remember to share the Gospel! This can be done through the reading of a story book, a puppet show, a drama presentation, a video, or any other way you can think of. Be creative and utilize the talents of your congregation!
- Keep the program upbeat and happy—not preachy!

Forms to help organize your party are available on the Angel Tree Resources CD and on the Angel Tree website at www.angeltree.org.

If sharing videos or photos of your deliveries or party with your church and/or Prison Fellowship, be sure to get a **Release Form for Prison Fellowship Use** signed by the adults on their own behalf and for their children. The form is available on your Resources CD or can be downloaded from our website at: <http://www.prisonfellowship.org/resources/churchcoordinatormaterials/>.



SHARING THE GOSPEL

While it is important that every church feel free to personalize the details of Angel Tree evangelism, these basic guidelines should be used:

- **Prepare delivery teams in advance to share the Gospel with the families.** Feel free to use any appropriate method and incorporate any evangelism materials your church might be currently using. Gospel Presentation Cards are also included in your Resource Kit as an aid to help volunteers share the free gift of Jesus Christ.
- **Each child is to receive a Bible or other evangelism resource.** Please have sufficient materials for the children you've committed to serving well in advance of your planned delivery date. Visit the Angel Tree website (www.angeltree.org) for more information on discounted and free evangelism resources.
- **It is up to God to set the place and time when a child receives Him.** Your task is to use the occasion of giving a gift to “sow the seed” (Matthew 13:3). Receiving Jesus is the work of the Holy Spirit. Prayer, preparation, and a sensitive, faith-filled heart matter most in sharing the Gospel with a child (see Matthew 19:14, John 6:44, Ephesians 2:8-9).

SHARE YOUR ANGEL TREE EXPERIENCE

- An **End of Year Report Form**  is available on your Resources CD. Please spend a few minutes and answer all the questions and send to Angel Tree. Your input is critical to Prison Fellowship as we minister to prisoners' families. **Volunteer Response Cards** are provided in your kit to help collect this information.
- A **Children Not Served Form**  is also located on your Resources CD and should be completed as well.

*Please return
these forms by
February 1*

ONLINE ANGEL TREE TRAINING

In an effort to better equip you to serve, additional training is available online at:

<http://www.prisonfellowship.org/resources/angel-tree/churchcoordinatormaterials/angel-tree-online-training/>



PHASE 3 | **Going Beyond Christmas**

Angel Tree doesn't end with Christmas. For you and your church, that first Christmas connection can be the beginning of a rewarding, ongoing relationship with these children and their families. Continue your Angel Tree ministry throughout the year and God will use your church to help these children and their families grow in their faith, strengthen their family relationships, and fulfill the purposes that God has for their lives.

Please see the website or contact your Angel Tree Program Specialist for Christian camping and mentoring resources, and other ideas on how to grow your Angel Tree ministry beyond Christmas!



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