

ANGEL TREE

Church Coordinator's Guide



ANGEL TREE®

A Program of Prison Fellowship



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ASSIGNMENT

Assignment of children will begin in **October**. Reports will be distributed as they are completed.

REGISTERED BY:

- September 1
- After September 1

RECEIVE NAMES BY:

- October 31
- November 15

If you have not received your list of names by the “receive names” date above, please call **1.800.55.ANGEL** (26435).

GOSPEL MATERIALS

Angel Tree® and **One Hope Ministries** will provide *free of charge* age-specific Gospel materials. To receive the free Gospel booklets, you **must** request them by contacting your Angel Tree specialist at 1.800.55.ANGEL (26435). The booklets will be sent out after you have received your child assignments.

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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 \$20.
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 partiesSome 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 incarcerated 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 incarcerated parent's message to their child should be transcribed onto the Angel Tree gift tag.
8. **You will need to screen your volunteers. Vigilance in volunteer selection helps ensure safety and supports a positive ministry experience for all.**

Step 1 – Prepare for the Program

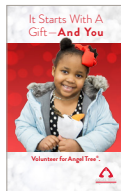
- Plan for the number of volunteers and amount of time it will take to carry out the responsibilities based on the number of children you signed up to serve.
- Schedule time to familiarize yourself with the materials and tools provided in your kit.
- Call your Angel Tree program specialist with any questions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

As you organize your calendar and prepare to carry out the next steps, be sure to familiarize yourself with the materials and tools provided. Each resource listed below is specifically designed to maximize this year’s program. The kit includes:



Church Coordinator’s Guide

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



Bulletin Inserts

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



Angel Tree Poster

8.5”x 11” poster-sized 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.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Available by download at: prisonfellowship.org/resources/angel-tree/churchcoordinatormaterials



Quickstart Guide

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



Angel Tree Poster

11”x 17” poster-sized advertisements to be displayed prominently in your church or community meeting area.



Christmas Promotional Video

Downloadable 3-minute video to share with the congregation, Sunday School classes, youth groups, and more as you begin recruiting volunteers.



Angel Tree Forms and Letters

Tools referenced in the Angel Tree Church Coordinators Guide, the Going Beyond Christmas booklet, and the Hosting an Angel Tree Party booklet. Please review the documents and use the appropriate forms for contacting families and reporting on your experience.



Gospel Presentation Card

Simple resource to share about Jesus Christ and offer next steps to growing in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

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 download and present the Angel Tree video to your congregation.

Volunteer opportunity examples:

- Contacting families
- Delivering gifts
- Purchasing a gift for the caregiver from the church (*optional*)
- Sharing the Gospel
- Wrapping gifts
- Sending a Christmas card to the incarcerated parent (*optional*)
- Buying 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) available at prisonfellowship.org/resources/angel-tree/churchcoordinatormaterials.
- 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** available at prisonfellowship.org/resources/angel-tree/churchcoordinatormaterials.
- 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:

- Many churches text caregivers as either an initial and/or follow up means of communications. Studies have shown that the vast percentage of caregivers have

cell phones and use texting as a form of communication in their interactions in the community. Why?— because it is fast and efficient. Families of the incarcerated often hesitate to take calls from phone numbers that they don't recognize. Texting provides the contact with a concise and timely message that immediately introduces Angel Tree and the purpose of the contact. Texting is also sometimes preferred by caregivers because it doesn't "eat up" their minutes. We encourage you to consider contacting caregivers by text message as an additional tool for reaching your Angel Tree families. Please note you should never include the children's names or addresses on a text. Also, please note you will be responsible for any charges from your phone company incurred by texting.

- Be sensitive to family situations and understand that a prisoner's family member may potentially respond with apprehension, ingratitude, fear, or even anger. Note: The child(ren) may not be aware of the incarcerated parent's status.
- 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**. All forms available at prisonfellowship.org/resources/angel-tree/churchcoordinatormaterials.

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 located at prisonfellowship.org/resources/angel-tree/churchcoordinatormaterials.

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 incarcerated parent

- Code number of the gift (this is a code you will use to track the return of the gifts; for coding suggestions, see instructions located at prisonfellowship.org/resources/angel-tree/churchcoordinatormaterials).
- Consider using the **Tracking Cards** provided at prisonfellowship.org/resources/angel-tree/churchcoordinatormaterials, 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.

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.
- Please use discretion as the child(ren) may not be aware of the incarcerated parent's status.

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. Again, please use discretion as the child(ren) may not be aware of the incarcerated parent's status.

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 prisonfellowship.org/resources/angel-tree/churchcoordinatormaterials 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.
- Ensure no alcoholic beverages are served.
- 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 website at prisonfellowship.org/resources/angel-tree/churchcoordinatormaterials.

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 can be downloaded from our website at: 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, a useful aid to help volunteers share the free gift of Jesus Christ, are available by request by calling 1-800-55-ANGEL (2-6435).
- **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 (prisonfellowship.org/resources/angel-tree/churchcoordinatormaterials) for more information on discounted and free evangelism resources. Additionally, each Angel Tree

household is eligible to receive a FREE Adventure Bible. Please let caregivers know about this offer.

- **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** and **Children Not Served Form** are available at prisonfellowship.org/resources/angel-tree/churchcoordinatormaterials.

Please spend a few minutes to answer all the questions and send to Angel Tree.

Online Angel Tree Training

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

prisonfellowship.org/resources/angel-tree/churchcoordinatormaterials/angel-tree-online-training

Please return these forms by February 1

PHASE 3 | Going Beyond Christmas

Angel Tree doesn't have to 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. God can use your church to help Angel Tree children and their families grow in their faith, strengthen their family relationships, and fulfill the purposes that He has for their lives.

Please see the website or contact your Angel Tree program specialist for ideas on how to grow your Angel Tree ministry beyond Christmas, including Angel Tree Camping[®], Angel Tree Sports Clinic[™], and mentoring.

1.800.55.ANGEL (26435)
angeltree.org



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