



ANGEL TREE®

A Program of Prison Fellowship

ANGEL TREE CHRISTMAS

# CHAPLAIN QUICKSTART GUIDE



# THANK YOU

for taking the time and the energy to bring **Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree** to the prison where you serve.

It is our prayer that this program will bring hope to the incarcerated parents and healing to their families. We also hope that it will energize all your chapel programs, bringing you new participants and forging new relationships with local churches and community organizations.

**Your partnership is critical to the success of Angel Tree, and we want you to know how much we appreciate all that you do.**

## What Is Prison Fellowship's 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. Founded in 1982 by a former prisoner who witnessed firsthand the strained relationships between prisoners and their children, Angel Tree is now the largest national outreach to children with a mom or dad behind bars.

During the sign-up period, incarcerated parents enroll their children in the program. They have the option of selecting among a variety of gift types for their children, and they can write a brief personal message to be included on the gift tag. Children are then matched with thousands of local churches and community organizations, whose volunteers purchase and wrap gifts, presenting them at Christmastime in the name of the incarcerated parent and strengthening the parent-child bond. In addition, our ministry partners often meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of both children and families through year-round ministry such as camping and mentoring. Over the years, millions of children and families have been touched by the love of Christ shown through Angel Tree.

## Why Should I Participate?

When chaplains allow Angel Tree into their prisons, many new opportunities present themselves:

- Angel Tree helps build the chapel program. Since the chaplain sponsors Angel Tree, participants look upon the chaplain as a supporter. Prisoners are more inclined to participate in chapel programs when they have been involved in Angel Tree.

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- Angel Tree reinforces the parent-child bond that is severely strained when the parent is incarcerated. When prisoner-parents suggest and give gifts to their children with the help of volunteers, the children understand that the parent still cares. Participating in Angel Tree can open the door to further family-oriented programs and reconciliation.
- Angel Tree changes minds. When volunteers buy presents and deliver gifts with Angel Tree, they begin to change their ideas about prisons and prisoners. Many become more willing to volunteer in the prison. This provides the prison ministry with enthusiastic helpers.
- Angel Tree changes lives. The Gift Guide given to prisoners by Angel Tree also includes a sensitive presentation of the Gospel message. This opens the door for prisoner-parents to understand the true meaning of Christmas—perhaps for the first time—and to begin a process of reconciliation with their family.
- Angel Tree offers opportunities for developing year-round relationships with Angel Tree children and their families through activities such as Christian summer camp, mentoring, and Crossroads Prison Ministries correspondence courses, to name a few.

## How To Participate In Angel Tree

There is no cost associated with participation in Angel Tree. Prison Fellowship supplies you with the Chaplain Resource Kit, containing this guide and all the materials you need to implement this program. Many of the materials are available in both English and Spanish. The kit includes:

- **Angel Tree Participation Forms** for prisoner-parents to complete.
- **Information Update Forms** to submit address, phone number, and email changes after the participation form has been submitted.

- **Quickstart Video for Chaplains**, which explains the program and assists the prisoner-parents with completing their participation forms. You may want to view it while going through this guide.
- **Chaplain Fax-Back Reorder Form** to order more materials.
- **Bulletin Board-Sized Posters** advertising sign-ups for Angel Tree.
- **Gift Guides** allowing prisoner-parents to suggest gift types for their children.
- **Crossroads Prison Ministries Applications** allowing prisoner-parents to enroll in Bible study correspondence courses.
- **Brochures** providing suggestions for incarcerated parents to stay connected with their children while they are in prison.

### What You Need To Do:

- **STEP 1:** Review the materials included.
- **STEP 2:** Spread the word about Angel Tree by displaying the posters on bulletin boards.
- **STEP 3:** Set a completion date for collecting participation forms or set up a date for signing up prisoner-parents for Angel Tree. All forms **must be postmarked by Sept. 8, 2020** and shipped to the Angel Tree processing center to guarantee processing.
- **STEP 4:** Distribute the gift guides and the participation forms to prisoner-parents.
- **STEP 5:** Assist with completion of participation forms. Receiving accurate and complete participation forms from the prisoner-

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parents is perhaps Angel Tree's greatest challenge. Just one piece of missing information can delay gift delivery, or even make it impossible. That's why it is so important to give the prisoner-parents as much personal assistance as you possibly can. To make it easier, we have provided step-by-step instructions in the video, which is designed to play continuously at a special sign-up event. (See the next section for details.)

- **STEP 6:** Return COMPLETED participation forms to Prison Fellowship's processing center prior to Sept. 8, 2020. Please use the pre-paid labels and envelopes provided. Maximum of 100 forms per envelope.
- **STEP 7:** Encourage prisoner-parents in relationships with their children and with God by inviting them to get involved in chapel Bible studies, completing Crossroads Prison Ministries correspondence courses, or trying one or more of the many suggestions offered in the brochure on how prisoner-parents can stay involved with their children.

## Completing The Prisoner Participation Form

### Help with the Angel Tree Participation Form.

There are a variety of ways to help the prisoner-parents complete their participation forms accurately. A combination of these ways has proven best to ensure the greatest number of prisoner-parents are served. Having Prison Fellowship volunteers involved serves a dual purpose: you will have extra people to help and extra sets of eyes to check the participation forms for completeness before they are sent to the processing center.

### Some things you can do:

- Use the video to train key prisoner-parents/chaplain's aides. These key prisoner-parents or chaplain's aides can then help the other prisoner-parents with completing the form. The enclosed Quickstart/Prisoner Training video accompanies this guide to train you or your aide to run Angel Tree and to train individual prisoner-parents on the correct method for completing the form.
- Have Prison Fellowship volunteers train your key prisoner-parents/chaplain's aides to assist other prisoner-parents. Continually show the video to prisoner-parents during "sign-up" times.
- Allow Prison Fellowship volunteers to come in during designated "sign-up" times to assist prisoner-parents. Hold a weekend rally specifically for Angel Tree sign-up, staffed by Prison Fellowship volunteers. Call **800.55.ANGEL (26435)** for more information on scheduling an In-Prison Sign-Up event.

### Step-By-Step Instructions For Completing Participation Forms

1. Read the paragraph at the top of the participation form, which states that you are the parent of the child(ren) listed, that the child(ren) are not older than 18, that there is no court order or administrative rule preventing you from contacting the child(ren) or caregiver, and that you have the legal authority to authorize use of the information on the form by Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree program. Sign on the signature line, and enter the date in the "Today's date" boxes, indicating that these statements are true. **Please note: We will not process any forms that do not have a signature.**

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2. Send your child(ren) a message of love in the *Message* box at the top of the form. This space allows you to write a message to your child(ren) that will be included on each gift tag.
3. Fill out the *Your Information* section, including your Prisoner ID (DOC) number, your date of birth, your first and last names, your expected release date and your relationship to the child(ren). **Please note: The only relationships listed are Father, Mother, Stepfather, and Stepmother. If you are not related in one of these ways, we will not be able to serve the child(ren), due to program and resource limitations.** Under the *Prison Information* section, the name of your facility should be pre-printed on the “Name of Prison” line. If it is not, you may write it in the space provided. Please also fill in your “Prison Inside Address” in the appropriate boxes. (This refers to your specific unit/section/block/bunk information [where you get your mail], and may help the church or organization who serves your family get back to you to share about the experience.)
4. Fill out the *Children’s Information* section completely, with each child’s first and last names, gender, date of birth, age, and the address where the children live. **Please note: You will need to complete an additional copy of the participation form if you have more than three children, or if your children live at different addresses. Make sure you obtain the number of forms you need, and sign and complete each one in its entirety.**
5. Using the *Angel Tree Gift Guide* provided by your chaplain, you may suggest one gift “type” for each child, and enter the corresponding code into the spaces provided. Your suggestion will be verified by the child(ren)’s caregiver.

6. Complete the *Caregiver's Information* section, including the caregiver's first and last names, his or her home phone, work or cell phone, caregiver's email address, the language spoken in the home and his or her relationship to the child(ren).
7. If you have an additional contact who may be able to get in touch with the family in the event that the church or organization is unable to get in touch with the caregiver, please provide that information, including first and last names and phone numbers, in the *Additional Information* section.
8. Make sure that all sections are completed. Providing as much information as possible is key to helping make sure that a church or organization is able to connect with and serve your family.
9. Return your form(s) to your facility chaplain or Angel Tree contact, or you can mail them directly to: **Angel Tree Christmas, P.O. Box 1478, Bartlesville, OK 74005-1478.**
10. Check with your chaplain or program coordinator for your facility's deadline.

## How Angel Tree Works

When you send the completed participation forms to Angel Tree, they go through a series of steps. Each of these steps takes several weeks to complete, both at Prison Fellowship and at the church or organization that will serve the children.

1. The participation forms are assigned to churches or organizations as close to the children as possible.

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2. The Angel Tree coordinator assigns a volunteer to contact the family.
3. The volunteer calls the family, verifies contact information, and discusses the gift-type suggestions made by the prisoner-parent. The caregiver will confirm or revise the specific gift recommendations.
4. The gift wishes are transferred to paper angel tags that hang on a tree at the church or organization for distribution.
5. Individuals then select these angel tags and purchase the requested gifts or something similar if the requested gift is unavailable.
6. Gifts are returned to the church or organization, sorted for distribution, and wrapped.
7. The ministry partner delivers the gifts to the families in the final weeks leading up to Christmas or at an Angel Tree party or event.
8. Along with the gift, a presentation of the Gospel is given to each child and family.

## Beyond Christmas

**Angel Tree doesn't end with Christmas.** That first Christmas connection can be the beginning of a rewarding, ongoing relationship with these children and their families. As Angel Tree ministry continues throughout the year, God will use churches and other helpful organizations to implement a variety of ministry ideas, programs, and resources to help these children and their families grow in their faith, strengthen their relationship with the prisoner-parent, and foster transformation and reconciliation in their lives. To find out more about year-round ministry opportunities, please contact Prison Fellowship at **800.55.ANGEL (26435)** or log on to our website at:

**[prisonfellowship.org/resources/going-beyond-christmas](http://prisonfellowship.org/resources/going-beyond-christmas).**





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