



Prison Ministry

For the Lord hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners.

- Psalm 69:33

Why We Do It

Elder Dr Lee Soo Ann of Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church has once shared: "While some of us go to church in our Sunday best, often to be seen. For prisoners, going to chapel on Sundays for Bible study or chapel worship is for one Audience, and that is God." Mention "prison ministry" and often the first thing that comes to mind would be "Why do I want to help people who have committed a crime when there are so many others that I can help such as the sick, the poor and the handicapped?" So, why Prison Ministry? Pentecost Methodist Church's Prison Ministry aims to be an authentic community that embraces and impact the hearts and lives of prisoners, ex-offenders and their families by bringing God's light into darkness through the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ, turning their brokenness into wholeness. Through talks, discussions and life sharing, prisoners will come to the knowledge that they too are worthy of God's love, forgiveness and grace. That, no matter who they are or what they have done, God forgives them.

Our Volunteers

So what is our mission?

To engage and minister to the prisoners, ex-offenders and their families, enabling them to be a blessing to the society.

Who can volunteer?

Anyone!

What will I get out of the volunteering experience?

Our volunteers all choose to put their faith into action, for a variety of reasons. Many feel inspired by seeing the change God brings into the lives of prisoners. Others may see volunteering as their chance to use their skills and experience to give something back to the community. Volunteering can also be a very social activity and a great way to meet new people.

Will I receive training?

New volunteers will receive basic training and induction. On top of that, in desiring to nurture you, we partner with Prison Fellowship Singapore to organise various training and equipping sessions throughout the year in the areas of character development, practical skills and acquiring knowledge about prison ministry - all of which will help you grow and enrich your ministry experiences.

In Prison Ministry, we provide different cares to different needs, namely In-Care, After-Care, Family Care and Angel Tree Project.

In-Care -

Involves participating in chapel services, conducting Bible classes and one-to-one counselling in prison.

After-Care -

Volunteers involved in after-care befriend ex-offenders and journey with them through the men's and ladies' support group. They lead Bible classes, organise outings and celebrations, and offer emotional supports through pastoral counselling.

Family Care -

Here, volunteers reach out to spouses, parents and children of inmates. Children of inmates are also supported through financial aid provided by PFS to meet the academic needs of children and youths.

Angel Tree Project -

An annual programme in which churches and volunteers raise funds and deliver food hampers to families of inmates, with the objective of helping families to reconcile. Volunteers have been equally blessed by the stories of reconciliation that take place.

If you have a burden for prison ministry and felt called to serve, we invite you to be part of this important ministry, and share our mission in bringing the Gospel and love of Christ into the lives of the last, the least and the lost.



TESTIMONIES *

Once a prodigal son, now a father of hope.

Someone once asked me, what is the one thing that I regret the most.

This question made me open my heart and scrutinize my thoughts. I grew up like other children from a big family. Being the youngest, I never failed to gain attention from my parents and siblings. When I was in my teens, instead of putting effort in my studies, I went astray, hanging out with friends in the neighborhood and started to smoke and stay out late at night. All the advice from my family members fell on deaf ears. It was not long before I picked up the habit of drug abuse and I went in and out of rehabilita-

tion centers, halfway houses and prison. I had never held a full-time job to feed myself. Yet, my family did not give up hope on me and believed that I would change one day. Sadly, that day didn't come soon enough. I remember there were occasions when I needed money badly to sustain my drug habit; I had to seek my mother for help. In one of those instances, my mother told me that she was penniless, and if I insisted, I could take her jewelry. Despite tears in her eyes, I paid no attention to her and really took her jewelry to satisfy my drug addiction. Subsequently, instead of changing for the better, I became worse and even resorted to drug trafficking to redeem my mother's jewelry and to be able to pay for more drugs. In 2002, my Mum had a stroke. But even then, in her heart, it was not her health that mattered to her. She was worried for me. Despite her ailment and her disabilities, she made it a must to will the house to me so that I will not end up homeless when she passed on. At that time, she already knew that I was back to my addiction again. One night, as she was lying on her bed, she asked me a question which I did not even take to heart. She asked me, would I ever change my bad habits or would I only do it after she has died. I brushed her off abruptly and thought nothing of it. Each time, when she wanted to start a conversation with me, I would rudely turn my back to her and leave the house. didn't even spare a thought for her weak and sickly body. All I cared about was maintaining my addictions. I remember asking my brothers to take her to their homes as I had no capacity to look after her. I tried to avoid visiting or answering her calls. Many times, she wanted to talk to me, but I would react with much frustration. She would just keep quiet even when I behaved so rudely.



Two years later, my Mum passed on. In order to support my addiction, I resorted to selling the house she had given me. I used all the sale proceeds on drugs. I gave myself a lot of excuses – that I was unable to endure the stress, so I turned back to drugs. I only felt remorseful for what I have done when I was caught by the authorities again and sent for rehabilitation. At that time, I finally realized that I have hurt someone who loved me so deeply and unconditionally. I did not fulfill my filial piety duty and did not even take care of her when she was ill. Looking back, I really feel a sense of loss and I am shameful of what I have done. My Mum brought me up with all her tender loving care, but what I have given her in return was only pain and sorrow. This is my greatest regret. I dreaded the time that I was alone in prison, because I would think of her. I could not comprehend why I did all that I did. But I knew for sure that no matter what, I would not be able to bring her back to life. I would not be able to hug her dearly and tell her gently how much I have loved her too.

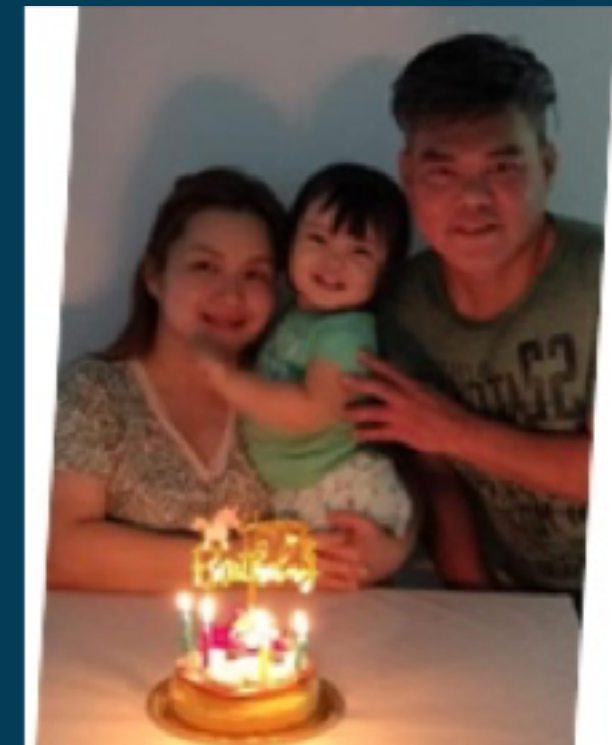


The feeling of letting my family members down again was something hard for me to cope with. Would my siblings be able to forgive me? How would I let them know that I was indeed remorseful for my wrongdoings and sincerely wanted to change for the better? What would the days after my release be like? Could I adjust back to society? Would I truly be regarded as part of the family again? Would I be able to gain their trust and respect? I was despondent and downcast. This had to be my last detention by the authorities. I had to keep to my promises and achieve this seemingly impossible resolution. My mind was overwhelmed with anxiety and pressure. During this time of imprisonment, I came to know Jesus. I redirected my attention to learning the Bible and taking up courses. Gradually, I learnt more about myself, my addiction and the need to break free. I reflected with deep remorse on my shameful deeds. I was truly sorry for being unfilial to my mum. Unlike the previous times, I was determined to make a complete change. I had wasted too much time going in and out of prison. I wrote a few letters during my prison stay to all my brothers to tell them how deeply sorry I was to have let everyone down, but I was so touched that they never at any point of time made me feel worthless. By God's grace, I managed to reconcile with my siblings. When their children learnt the truth about their uncle, not only did they not ostracise me, they gave

me the much-needed respect and support, even visiting me in prison to offer words of encouragement. On the day of my release in 2010, my sister, pastors, counselor, brothers, sisters-in-law and nephew waited outside the prison gate for me. Never before had so many people welcomed and anticipated my release. I felt loved and accepted. One reason for being able to stay out of prison is: PFS helped me a lot during my time in prison. They have helped to correct my way of thinking, and I know that I need to stay close to the right people. I was helped in my journey of faith when I was incarcerated, through the love of Christians who served faithfully in prison ministry. Likewise, I want to love and help others who are going through similar experiences. My conviction to work in Prison Fellowship Singapore (PFS) comes from Luke 22:32b: "...and when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." God blessed me with a life partner in 2015, and in 2017 my daughter Natalie was born. I lost my mother, who never knew how much I loved her. So I promised myself that now, I will let Natalie know each day how much she means to me. For those who are facing similar challenges, my word of advice is: In life, everyone makes mistakes, but what is important is the willingness to learn from the mistake, to be determined to live on and change for the better. Equally important is the love and support from family and friends. Therefore, never condemn your loved ones. When you, as family members, open your hearts to give your loved ones a second chance to live life right, as I was given by my family, there will always be hope for change.

Psalm 40:2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.

By Jensen Lee



Mum of Serial Offender: “我捡回了一个儿子” (I've gotten my son back)

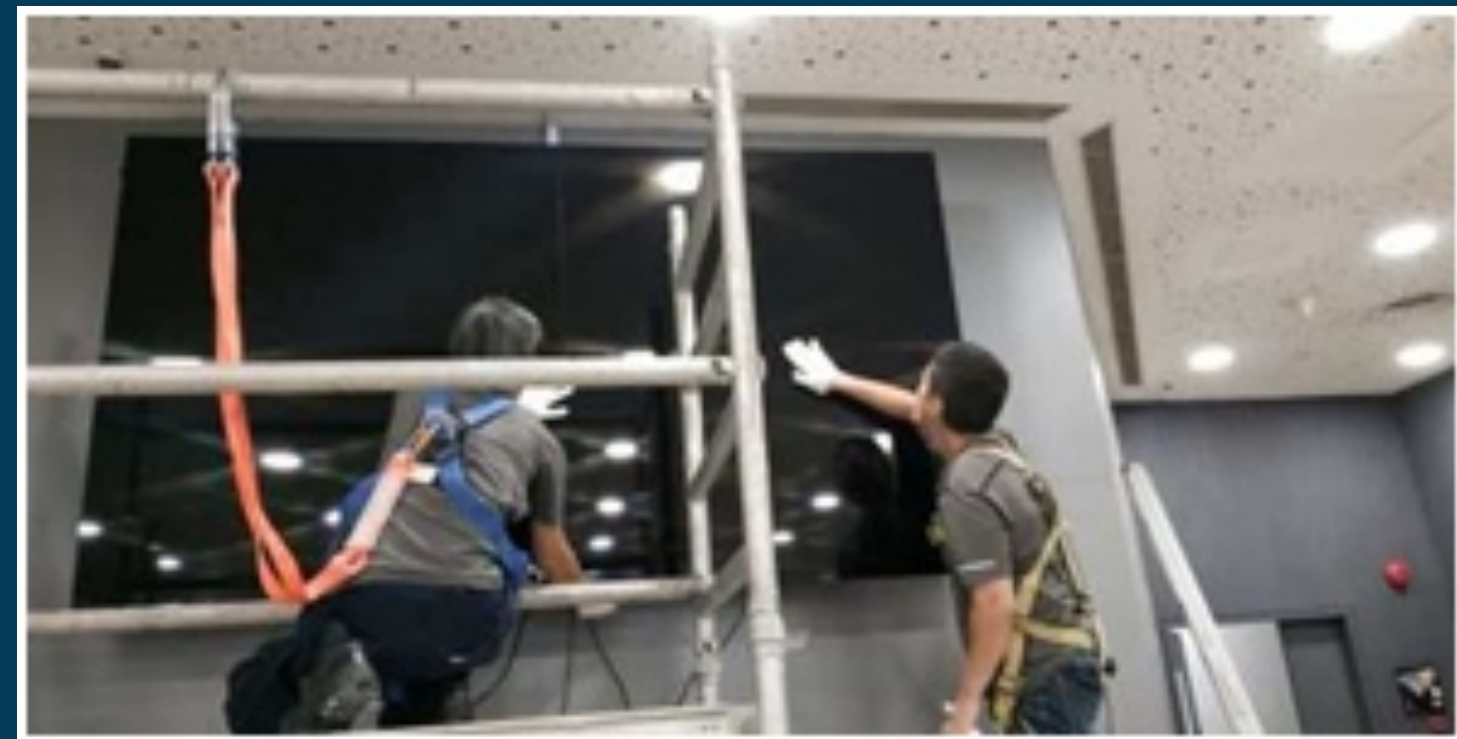


At his most desperate, serial drug abuser and compulsive gambler Glenn Zhang, now 38, was chased out of his home by his father and had to sleep on the streets. His mother, Madam Loi, was harassed by money lenders (loan sharks) day in and day out for debts that Glenn had accumulated, while he survived by borrowing money from strangers at bus stops to satisfy his drug craving and stealing from provision shops when hungry. His mother had already given him all her life savings to help with the debts, but still it was not enough. He was in his mid-twenties then, and had already been in and out of prison three times at that point. “My parents accepted me back home every time I came out of prison,” says Glenn. “When in prison, I told my Mum I would change when I got out, but when I got released, I forgot about my promise and actually became worse. So my father chased me out.” Seeing no hope, Glenn went up 17 storeys of a HDB flat in Toa Payoh, and wanted to end his life. But sitting on the parapet and looking down, fear overtook him. “It takes courage to jump,” he says. How did he get to this point of being addicted to drugs, gambling and even wanting to end his life? Glenn says it started from young because

of low self-esteem, due to his slight facial deformity. “I was laughed at a lot since young, due to my looks. So I wanted to protect myself,” he shares. Glenn joined a street gang when he was in secondary school. It gave him a sense of belonging, he says. At 17, he inked his entire back and upper arms with tattoos. “In the street gang, there were a lot of drug abusers. I knew taking drugs was wrong, and I told myself I wouldn’t take it,” Glenn recalls. But joining them at clubs and discotheques and watching his buddies get high while he was the only sober person proved too great a temptation. He started taking ecstasy, ketamine and methamphetamine. Eventually, he “upgraded” to heroin, a highly addictive drug. All in all, Glenn spent 10 years addicted to drugs. Glenn’s final arrest was at a clinic in Bukit Timah, where he was sent for a urine test during a routine check by the Central Narcotics

Bureau when buying cough syrup. He tested positive for a controlled drug and was sent to Selarang Park Drug Rehabilitation Center. Again. "In prison, I had no intention to change. I joined the usual clique inside. But, I got to know another group of friends, who invited me to the Christian chapel service run by Prison Fellowship Singapore (PFS). We spent 23 hours a day locked up, so the only chance to get out is to go for chapel, and I can meet my friends. So I didn't really listen to the preacher," says Glenn. But when the PFS preacher and volunteers started singing worship songs during chapel, Glenn found himself being increasingly drawn to it. "I started looking forward to every Saturday. I was very moved by the worship songs. I could hear the cries of repentance and hear people crying out for God, though I didn't really understand what the preachers said."

漫漫长夜 遮盖眼前的路 The long dark night
masks the path ahead 这是我必经的路 This is a path I must take
但祢是我的灯 我路上的光 You are the lamp unto my feet
祢把黑暗全给驱散 You dispel the darkness
不再怕黑暗 不再怕路途太长 I'm no longer afraid of the darkness, or the long journey ahead



不再有伤感 因我有耶稣作伴 No more sadness, because I have Jesus (Lyrics 词曲：林义忠 ; Translation: Sharon Lim) During the last six months of his sentence, Glenn went to The Helping Hand (THH), a Christian halfway house for the rehabilitation of former drug abusers. "It was a new start. I felt hope at The Helping Hand." It provided Glenn with a very systematic environment that included daily chapel service, house-moving work in the day and counselling at night. For the manual labour of house-moving, Glenn received an allowance of \$250 monthly –and it was the first time he gave his mother an allowance. "I realized I can actually live like a normal person." It was then that he started to reflect on his life, read the bible and learn to pray. "I thought very hard about why I

ended up like that. How did I end up so immoral? Why did I live so meaninglessly? How did I end up being controlled by drugs and gambling? Was it because of my low self esteem? Was it the environment? Was it my parents?" "From the bible, I found the answer. I am a sinner. I am utterly a sinner. From the bible I saw clearly that I needed the grace of God and the redemption of Christ." "After years and years of low self esteem, God's word has affirmed me. God looks at our heart and not our appearance. I won't waste time focusing on the people mocking me. I used to be concerned about how people look at me." "Now, I can finally say I'm comfortable in my own skin," Glenn shares. Once, Glenn's father went to THH to listen to his testimony. After that, his father was convinced that he has changed for the better, for real, and allowed Glenn to return home. At THH, Glenn started to lead others. Once, he had to accompany one of the brothers to court and he bumped into the 'boss' of his former gang just outside the court. To his surprise, the gang leader said to him: " 好好做, 'mailaisiaosiao'" (loosely translated as "do things well, don't mess around anymore"). Feeling ready to venture out into society, Glenn left the safety of THH after five years and began to look for work. He was left with one power drill in his set of belongings, so he went door to door at new HDB flats to ask if anyone needed help to install television brackets. He had to deal with a lot of rejection, but knew he had to start somewhere to earn a living by himself. Being resourceful, he even designed his own flyers and pasted them in the lifts, and sales improved. That was in 2013. Now, Glenn owns a business with four staff, not just installing televisions, but selling his house brand of TV brackets and providing commercial



display solutions. His mother Madam Loi, who is now 71 years old, never thought her son who had given her so much heartache and anguish would one day run his own business. “ (loosely translated as ‘I’ve gotten my son back’),” she now says to her friends. In fact, Madam Loi has gotten more than just a son back – she has also been blessed with a daughter-in-law and grandchildren. “Even after knowing Christ, I never thought I would have my own family. I’m not good looking, got tattoo, got criminal records. But thank God, through church I met my wife, a teacher from Klang, Malaysia,” shares Glenn. His wife moved to Singapore and married him in 2015, and they now have an 18-month-old and a second one is on the way. Now, Glenn also volunteers with Prison Fellowship Singapore regularly, and meets his former buddies who are incarcerated. “We need to share the gospel when they are in prison. It gives hope and life lessons. When they come out from prison, we need to follow up because the real challenge is after they step out of prison. How do we continue the journey with them?” On top of running his own business, attending to young children and counselling inmates in prison, Glenn is also now a deacon in his church. “One day I asked myself, if God didn’t give me this career, family, a stable life, would I still trust him? And love him? Do I trust him because of all the blessings? But I know deepdown that even without these blessings I must and will still trust Him. Because Jesus Christ is Lord.”



*The Testimonies are taken from the Prison Fellowship Singapore's website and reused with their permission.

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Come find out more at the Outreach
& Social Concerns Ministry booths.

<http://pmc.org.sg/coscrecruitment>



You can sign up with us via google form
<http://bit.ly/OSCvol-interest>

All volunteers will need to go through a
screening process before being accepted.