

Women [[who (=women) form relationships with prisoners]] often believe they alone understand the men, and can reform them. "They say "I know this guy; I know he's good." It's partly a nurturing instinct but some prisoners are also very physically attractive and charming', notes Sister Janet Glass, who works with a Catholic chaplaincy team at Sydney's Long Bay jail.

'Often these women are attracted to prisoners because they have just ended a relationship,' Glass adds. 'They're empty and want some sort of emotional fillip. The prisoners are probably lying to them, but they appear gallant and masculine and women believe them.'

Prison Fellowship is an interdenominational organization with its own programs and volunteers. Although seen as independent, PF has received financial support from the Baptist Church and its director, Ross Coleman, was a welfare worker with Baptist Community Services. Coleman says PF volunteers must provide character references and undergo a training program before starting the work. Volunteers use pseudonyms in letters and prisoners' replies are sent to PF headquarters and then redirected. The forming of emotional attachments is forbidden.

Coleman admits that volunteers [[who transgress]] 'would only be detected if they told us, so sometimes that could happen and we were oblivious to it, which is a risk...' He says PF is 'particularly concerned' with prisoners, or prisoners [[who have found Christ whilst in prison]].

Not unexpectedly, mainstream churches criticise the influence of Pentecostal or charismatic Christian groups within the penal system. 'Some PF volunteers want to baptise prisoners after one week,' says Sister Glass. 'Some Pentecostal types raise emotional levels to an extraordinary degree, then leave prisoners to deal with the realities of prison life, which can be dangerous,' says Sister Glass. 'Born again prisoners believe they can wipe out all memory of their crimes, because Jesus has forgiven them.'