



Pathway To Freedom, Inc.

November 2018

## Christmas Is Coming to PTF! What About You?

As we approach year-end we have two requests for our gracious supporters. **The first is for a generous, tax-deductible gift to our ministry.** We trust we have demonstrated by our stewardship over the years that every dollar we receive squeals for mercy by the time we've finished squeezing it.

You've seen the statistics on men who have graduated and our excellent recidivism rate. We won't recite them again here. It's your partnership with us through your giving that fuels our service to our Lord.

That brings us to request No. 2. Join us in celebrating the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For us, it's a time to rejoice in the stream of new births we are privileged to watch throughout the year.

Come and see for yourself the changed lives your support has wrought. We will have two Christmas banquets for members and their families, on December 7 and 14. We have a limited number of places available for volunteers and donors to serve at the banquets. They're available on a first-come, first-to-serve basis.

**We're also seeking a sponsor to cover approximately \$5,000 in expenses for these blessed events.**

The year 2018 is far spent. Come and meet these men.

See the smiles on their children's faces. If you have never visited, it's high time you did. If you have come before, come again. You'll find it never gets old.

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**Here's another way to help: Make your holiday purchases through [smile.amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) and PTF will receive a percentage of the purchase price. More information on page 2.**



See the lights come on as our family celebrates Christmas

## 'I Knew I Had to Steer Clear of That Trap'

**By Torger Lewis**

I woke up in solitary confinement in the county jail, unable to remember what I had done – but unable to deny I had done it.

I was about to turn 30 and my life was a smoking ruin. I had progressed from alcohol to marijuana to meth, and now to jail. I wasn't violent – angry, but not violent – yet I had committed a violent crime. I knew I wanted something different. I knew about the trap and I knew I didn't want to get caught in it.

Some guys start going to prison and they go and go. It's their legacy. They're carrying on the legacy of their family. I knew that couldn't be me. I was really rebellious as a teenager but I came from a stable home. My father was a pastor. I had been active in church when I was young.

I had made mistakes, lots of them, but I knew I had to find a way to steer clear of that trap. By the grace of God, I discovered almost immediately how to do it. A guy in the jail told me about Pathway to Freedom. He said he hadn't made it through but he still had nothing but good things to say about the program.

That made an impression on me. It was where you went if you were serious about making a change. In fact, you didn't go there unless you were dead serious about changing your life.

I was sentenced to 20 years and I started right away to work on getting into PTF. For guys like me, though, things are never as simple as making a decision, putting a plan in place and working it through. Or for guys like I was then, anyway.

For starters, I wasn't very convincing. Scott McLean was still doing the admission interviews then. He interviewed me and turned me down. He said he didn't think I wanted it bad enough. The next time I interviewed I got in, but then I only lasted a month. I got kicked out for my behavior.

During a shakedown, the officers found some unauthorized non-prescription medication in my stuff. And I was gone. It took eight months for me to get back in. Even then, I wasn't what you'd call a model prisoner. I had bought in to the prison code. So many guys get stuck in that. I didn't see the benefit to community.

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Torger Lewis,  
the Graduate:  
Now free  
on the outside,  
too

**This holiday, make a difference while you shop**  
Shop for holiday gifts and supplies at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) and Amazon donates  
You shop. Amazon donates.  
[amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

Your holiday purchases can help us make a difference in our members' lives and in our state. Please go to [smile.amazon.com/ch/80-0742504](http://smile.amazon.com/ch/80-0742504).

## Torger Lewis: 'They Showed Me Grace Even When I Said Foolish Things in Anger'

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They'd talk about sharing feelings and I thought they were just being nosy. I wondered what people's intentions were. I thought it was all a trick. I was quick with an angry word. But I knew I had to change. I hung in and I was forced to confront those issues I had always avoided. It was like walking on stepping stones, one step at a time, and there was always someone there to help you take that next step, whether another inmate or a staff member or a volunteer.

They showed me grace even when I said foolish things in anger. And we were praising God every day. I was *getting it* in my mind and in my spirit and I didn't even realize it. I did see that the guys who were going home weren't like the newer guys. I could see they had changed. That made me want it more.

That process scares a lot of guys. We all think men have got to be tough. We don't want to admit we're emotional creatures. I didn't always react well but there was always someone to show me grace. It was so different from the way I'd been living. I completed PTF – and I was a new man.

The parole board took some convincing, of course. They turned me down twice. I finally went home in August of last year after serving 8½ years. I'm back in Fort Smith. I had ruined my relationships with my family by the way I was living out here before and then going to prison did nothing to improve matters. One of the blessings of the program is that by the time I got out I had restored those relationships with my mother and father and my other family members.

The re-entry guy for our area, Joe Bruton, got me a job with David Burton, who has been involved with PTF for a long time and owns a swimming pool company. I lead a small crew that sprays on the liner that's the last step in building the pool. I'm the men's minister in a recovery church. I'm 39 and living a life I never thought possible and it's all because of Jesus. That's the thing about PTF, Jesus is all over it.



**A walk in the park:** Executive Director Scott McLean (front, second from left) joins Torger Lewis and members at PTF's annual re-entry graduation.

*A Gift of \$5,000*

*Will Provide a Joyous Christmas Celebration*

*For Our Members and Their Families*



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**A job well done:** Members of Group 22 gather to celebrate completion of the pre-release phase. They're shown with their counselor, Sid Turner.

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