

## **Neil's story**

### **Hello,**

My names Neil...and I am a guest at The Fathers Arms with Jon and Tamsin. They have asked me if I would mind writing a little bit about myself, of course I jumped at the chance to talk about the many ways and myself that through being here God has totally changed my life! ... With a lot of help from them I might add, in fact it was not so much of a massive change as a rebirth!

### **How I came to the Father's Arms**

I initially came to The Fathers Arms from Prison, I never expected anything like Jon to come and see me, and I had a few plans but nothing concrete. The last thing I was expecting was help from anyone, let alone someone to take me in and give me a home! My journey with God first began in prison....

### **... by exchanging the tediousness of cell life to an alpha course**

I was attending the Alpha course in Wandsworth prison. To be honest... at first I was only doing it to get out of my cell in the evenings. BUT I soon discovered that there was more to this "God stuff" than meets the eye! In the beginning it was all very strange to me. People harping on about this guy (who no one can see) and how much he loves us! I was soon to have a rethink about everything, I though I knew about myself. I started to like what I was hearing and the way people were talking about forgiveness, compassion, and LOVE! Things slowly started to fit into place and I began to really look forward to each meeting. I was enjoying the songs, asking more and more questions...showing a REAL interest. I met some AMAZING people there who I will never forget, as long as I live. Amongst these people were the priest Tim, and some of the helpers... Fiona, Rob Hook, Esther, were just a few that I quickly built strong relationships with and had a lot of respect for. There were many other people there and they all mean a lot to me in their own individual ways.

### **Along came Jon**

... I was working as an editor on the prison magazine and was most surprised to have a visitor come straight to my office rather than through the "normal channel" I was introduced to Jon and we got talking about my situation and where I feel I would like to go from my release date (which was about two/three weeks away) and also where I feel my relationship with God was taking me. To be honest, I never really knew! ... I had just taken the ball and was rolling with it! We seemed to "click" just like that and began by talking about music and general stuff really. Jon is real good at putting people at ease.

We started to talk about where I was at with God and what my plans were after my release and I explained my situation. Jon told me a bit about the Fathers Arms and I was sold on the idea instantly. The first thing that attracted me was Jon's "down to earth" approach and relaxed methods. The house sounded like a very friendly place to live and explore my relationship with God. Little did I know how good this place was going to be for me or how great it would be to live life surrounded by "long term" Christians (as opposed to myself in my early stages of life with God) and I gained the ability to freely discover Christ through asking many questions.

Living here is a true blessing, in many ways. We participate in a wide range of social activities, we have a cell group and we have structured bible classes. We also have one to one counseling sessions once a week and healing sessions. I find the one-one sessions very helpful for talking about my stay in the house; it also gives Jon and myself time to talk about house matters. The counseling sessions are of great help as well, they helped me deal with issues within my past and designed to help me develop methods with regards to repairing some of the damage that me and others in my life have created. By talking through past situations and being able to see where God was in those situations (even when I was not aware) I am able to deal with issues around hurt, guilt, loss, and other feelings that arise due to life's ups and downs. The atmosphere in the house is always a good one, the people are friendly, helpful and caring, we build good friendships as well as getting closer to God.

**Thanks Jon, Thanks, Tamsin xXx**

On a final note I would like to give Jon and Tamsin as much recognition as possible for their hard work and genuine caring input. They have been so much help to me that I could never repay them and I will always love them for who they are and what they have done for me. I will be moving out soon to my own place and to start a new life, this I hope will always include Jon and Tamsin. Many thanks to Jon and Tamsin for all they have done for me, had to put up with in order to help me. Thanks for the guidance and ongoing support they give each day...  
May God continue to bless them in all that they do

All that remains for me to say now is this... Praise God for being there for me in my darkest hours... thank you for being there... ALWAYS!