

Prison

“Prison is just the opposite of reforming. They call it the Department of Corrections, but it does just the opposite. Prison is really designed to make you a better criminal, to make you hard and calloused.”

—Comments by Michigan inmate Val Marcus, from the opening scene in Nate Roels’ award-winning film **BEHIND OUR WALLS!**

The first viewing of the film in Ottawa County was attended by nearly 200 persons at Grand Central Place in Grand Haven on October 27, sponsored by HFP!

A New Direction for HFP

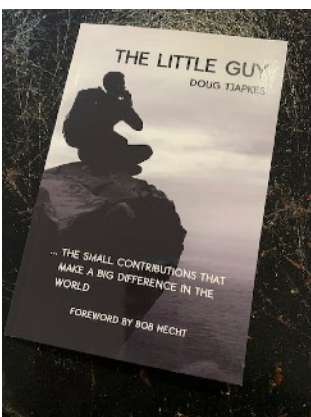
Office Manager Susie Greenbauer explains



“A very important new direction we are taking: We are trying to help inmates learn to problem-solve for themselves... to make sure they’re using the remedies

available to them. We’re providing numerous resources for them and their family members so that they can actually be a part of this work. That way, we can spend our time helping even more people. One thing has NOT changed: We are listening to them! So many people don’t have anybody. So, we respond, we listen, we say, “you matter,” and that’s really altering for some people. And sometimes maybe that doesn’t seem like much (OK, now I’m gonna cry)... maybe that doesn’t seem like much, but it is a lot!”

Just in Time for Christmas Giving



A new little book called *The Little Guy*, from HFP Founder and author Doug Tjapkes. Published by DPZ Technology, LLC, in Grand Rapids, the book can be purchased online at www.dpztechnology.com/store.html#!/The-Little-Guy/p/579128632

From the Desk of Doug

**Thankful for prisoners? No!
Thankful for their friendship? Yes!**



Thanksgiving is a particularly difficult holiday under the incarceration umbrella.

I have difficulty wishing prisoners “Happy Thanksgiving!” What do they have to be happy about? What do they have to be thankful for? Certainly not the Thanksgiving dinner many of them will receive. When Maurice Carter was still behind bars, he complained about the Thanksgiving dinner. A published menu showing the public that prisoners were fed well, showed a turkey dinner. As it turns out, the meat on plates of prisoners was turkey all right...turkey bologna!

At Thanksgiving time, 2023, I certainly cannot say that I am thankful for prisoners. But I can say with certainty that I am thankful for the friendship of many, many people who reside in MDOC cages. I can’t begin to list all of the messages I have received from persons behind bars, both by mail and by email...and all signed with the words, “your friend,” (name).

I explained in a recent blog entry that some of the nicest people I know live in correctional facilities. And, some of my best friends are prisoners.

Back to Thanksgiving, in conclusion... many residents of correctional facilities have learned by example from former prisoner, the Apostle Paul, who, with his friend Silas, prayed and sung hymns while behind bars, giving thanks under all circumstances.

To my incarcerated friends: A blessed Thanksgiving!

— Doug Tjapkes, Founder

Comments from Behind Bars

Jake explains why he donates to HFP

"I want to thank all of you for all the help you do for all the men in here, their families, and especially for all you have been doing for me. God has allowed me to bring new ideas to men in here on how to prepare for being released. All the information you have been sending me is truly a treasure! I make hobby craft items to help cover expenses. I know \$10 is not much. I just really wanted to thank you for your help."

Douglas shares his faith

"Last night was Keryx Ultreya, it's like our weekly Christian accountability group except we have lots of outside volunteers come in and share as well. I was asked to give a testimony on faith, so used the examples of how parole denials and the death of loved ones can cause such crushing despair. These are the moments of growth or decline. As my old boss Chaplain Jones used to say, everyone wants to be at the top of the mountain, enjoying the clean air and beautiful view, but it's really in the knee-deep mud of the valley below where faith is tested and only there does it grow. My training dog behaved himself all the while I was running my mouth and to his credit didn't even flinch when people clapped and shouted."

Hartman's Face on Prison Poster!



Mark's photo is popping up on posters in Michigan prisons these days. It's not a "wanted" poster, or anything like that. Hope College student William Cooke had asked permission to use the photograph, on behalf of the Hope/Western Education Program. Cooke says his group is working on

a project to present prisoners/students with several examples of formerly incarcerated people who are now in successful vocations, due, in part, to a college education. Hartman, who has spent 12 years behind bars, was one of the first graduates of the Calvin Prison Initiative program.

UK Org Seeks Doug's Testimony



Anthony Nealy on death row

Doug Tjapkes was recently interviewed via Zoom by representatives of Reprieve, a nonprofit organization of international lawyers and investigators based in England. Reprieve is preparing to launch a new report identifying a number of striking issues and trends regarding the death penalty. One of the most significant and novel finding was that Black people were much more likely to suffer a botched execution relative to white people over the period studied. This new research is intended to build on existing literature which shows that the death penalty is infected with racism at every stage of the process — from the time capital charges are filed through to the moment the lethal drugs are administered in the execution chamber. Harriet McCulloch, Deputy Director, Death Penalty, contacted Doug because of his personal experience on death row in Texas in 2007. HFP client Charles Anthony Nealy was executed, at the age of 42, while claiming wrongful conviction. Doug was Anthony's spiritual advisor at the time of his death, was the last person to meet and pray with him, and witnessed his execution. Said McCulloch: "We are hoping to collaborate with people with lived experience of this issue as part of seeking national and state media coverage of the report's findings in late 2023 or early 2024."

Maryann Pays a Visit



We've known and loved Maryann Gorman, of Royersford, PA, for years! Her friend Troy Chapman, who resides in the

Muskegon Correctional Facility, was one of our very early clients. Late this year she assumed the major role of assisting our team in the printing of our monthly newsletter, the HFP Communicator. Prior to her retirement, she had been an editor for 30 years and served as editor in chief of a trilingual association magazine for 20 years; she also published their monthly email employee newsletter. Mark and Doug met with Maryann to thank her for her wonderful assistance!

