

Almost There!

Still Time for Your Year-End Gift!



At the time this newsletter went to press, our staff reported that we were within \$20,000.00 of our year-end fundraiser goal of

\$72,000.00! We praise God for that, and thank our many kind, compassionate and generous supporters. Your late check, issued before the end of the year, can still help us reach the goal. Your gift will enable the work of HFP to continue uninterrupted from now until our spring fund-raising event. Thousands of Michigan prisoners thank you!

What Your HFP Gift Does

- HFP responded to 11,000 pleas for help from incarcerated persons residing in Michigan’s prisons in 2024, when they didn’t know where to turn!
- HFP’s client list now exceeds 10,000 names, nearly 33% of the entire Michigan prison population!

An HFP Victory!

Mr. Malone had his sentence commuted by Governor Whitmer on July 4, 2024. He was subsequently released from the MDOC in September after spending 17 years behind bars for a drug-related conviction. He had special words of thanks for our HFP staff as well as volunteer, Harley Trecy, for assisting him with his commutation application. Congratulations and welcome home, Mr. Malone!

Prisoners Respond to HFP’s “Action with Compassion”



Our office received more gifts from Warden’s Forums in various Michigan prisons in 2024 than in any previous year! Each Michigan facility

From the Desk of Doug

Christmas

Just Another Day for Some



Many agree that, on the day after Christmas, there’s a let-down. Regardless of religious beliefs, Christmas is still a time of feast and family, gifts and gift-giving, for most of us.

That’s not true in prison. Most occupants will tell you that it’s just another day. Perhaps a slightly improved meal. Perhaps a slight consumption increase of spud juice (the term for home-made liquor) to celebrate. Perhaps a slight reduction in the fighting, yelling and rancor. Perhaps some kinder words from overworked officers. But mostly, same old, same old. As our team took the day off to celebrate, holiday requests continued. I’m reminded of this poem:

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among people,
To make music in the heart.

— Howard Thurman

That’s the calling of the HFP gang: to compassionately remind prisoners that they matter, not only at Christmas time, but every day of the year. This is what we do. This is where we belong.

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” Frederick Buechner

— Doug Tjapkes, Founder

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has a forum consisting of staff members and elected inmates, who decide how money will be spent from what is called the Prisoner Benefit Fund. Dollars come into this fund from the prison store and the prison vending machines and are often used to purchase additional equipment for the benefit of the incarcerated. *But*, committee members may also donate to approved charitable organizations. In 2024, HFP received \$10,500, thanks to the efforts of our clients behind bars. The grants ranged from \$500 to \$2,500 and came from six different state correctional facilities!

That’s only part of the story. In addition to those collective gifts, HFP received donations from more than 15 incarcerated clients (whose wages may be 70 cents an hour!) in 2024, totaling more than \$375.00!

HFP Celebrates Good News!



After he spent over three decades in prison, HFP was finally able to celebrate the release of Shawn England (center) in late 2024. HFP Executive Director Mark Hartman (right) and former HFP Board Member John Rottman (left) were honored to be a part of that special moment! Our congratulations and best wishes to Shawn!

Music supports the work of HFP

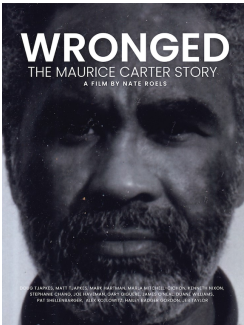
“If music be the food of love, play on” — Shakespeare



A new CD featuring old hymns, played by HFP Founder and church pianist Doug Tjapkes, is now helping to support our work. An open house to launch the album “In the Garden” was sponsored by John and Lisa Mulder of Spring Lake, whose generosity led to the production of the recording. All proceeds from the open house went to HFP: \$3,000+! Now, the recording is available to the public at no charge, but, again, a donation to HFP is requested. Send your donation to the HFP mailing address, PO Box 687, Grand Haven, MI, and specify that your gift represents a request for the CD. The album, which features piano improvisations on 21 favorite old hymns and gospel songs, will be in the mail to you!



Upcoming Documentary Showings



Wronged — The Story of Maurice Carter is a powerful documentary, telling the story of a wrongful conviction and how HFP actually got started 23 years ago. The 45-minute film is available for showing in your church or civic group. Contact the HFP office.

Upcoming showings:

- Feb. 6, 2 pm, Porter Hills Village, Grand Rapids
- Feb. 24, 1:30 pm, Holland Home, Grand Rapids, Resident Enrichment Academy of Living (REAL) series
- March 17, 2 pm, Marge’s Donuts, Grand Rapids

I Have A Name
By Jim Samuels

My parents didn’t name me Defendant
But it’s what I’m called now.
Defined by the deed,
They see nothing else.
No need to, no desire to look beyond the deed
To see a living breathing person
Who is a dad, brother, husband, son, friend.
Who knows sorrow and sadness
And sometimes fleeting joy.
Who hurts when someone he loves is hurting
Who feels like he is propping up
The entire world when a loved one
Has lost their way.

To be reduced to a shallow, demeaning title
That fails to reveal the essence of me
Is the “unkindest cut of all.”

My name is not Defendant.