

Humanity for Prisoners

Thanksgiving, 2018

Dear Friends:

This letter is going to violate rules!

As you may recall, we decided to have a consultant assist with our year-end letter last year. It was full of pious phrases, had a collection of Bible verses, and begged for money like nobody's business! But, it wasn't us.

I just want you to know that, as an old news writer, I can't give you the big sales pitch. But I can give you straight talk. It may violate the rules of fund-raising, but I'm counting on the truth to convey our message.

Here's what we have going on: For the first time in our history, we have matching donors providing funds for up to \$50,000 in contributions that we receive this December! And those matching gifts couldn't have arrived at a better time!

For the first time in our 16-year history, our office is being contacted over 500 times a month. That's 16 pleas for help a day, 7 days a week (we don't close on weekends)!

Keep this in mind. There are some 39,000 people in the Michigan prison system. Only 12% of them will ever get a visit. 95% of them will get out someday.

Why are those numbers so important?

Well, granted, we cannot make actual prison visits, but for that huge majority of inmates who receive no visits, the very fact that HFP is there for them, to help whenever possible, when they don't know where to turn, is huge! The word is spreading like wildfire behind bars. Someone cares.

HFP diligently meets individual needs, one-on-one, freely distributing *action with compassion*. To assist us with this, we have a panel of experts that reads like a **Who's Who** of professionals...doctors and lawyers in a variety of specialties who believe in our mission, and who are willing to help us on a daily basis in delivering desperately needed assistance to people created in the image of God.

It's the kind of stuff you and I take for granted.

We helped Brian get his CPAP breathing device after a 3-year delay.

We helped Joyce get visitation rights restored, something that had been banned due to unpaid traffic tickets. She can now visit her two sons.

We helped David get his polygraph test results to aid his legal case.

We helped Johnny find his long-lost daughter.

We got Julie's sentence reduced after the State forgot to give her an attorney.

The blind, the deaf, and physically and mentally handicapped knock on our door daily!

We promptly respond. No time-delays in this office.

"I would like to thank you for your support throughout this experience. You have not only helped me, but also been a major support for my family."

In response to this phenomenal growth, we've added new and exciting names to our Board of Directors, we've beefed up our list of staff members and volunteers. Among our challenges for the new year: finding more office space, and figuring out how to pay for all this. And that's where you enter this picture.

Your questions are similar to those we've heard before. **Why aren't you teaching Bible lessons?** (Someone is already doing that.) **Why aren't you helping prisoners with reentry?** (Same answer.) **Why aren't you lobbying for prison improvement and reform?** (Ditto.) We collaborate with all of them, but there's no point in duplicating services.

A Christian consultant for prison ministries puts it this way: ***No one is doing what you are doing. No one wants to do what you are doing!***

I have a secret. I love prisoners! Theologian Fredrick Buechner describes it as ***The love we feel for certain people, some of them people we scarcely know, some of them people who do not suspect our love and wouldn't know how to respond to it if they did.***

A prisoner once bluntly asked me, "Why are you doing this?" The answer: Hebrews 13:3: ***...remember those in prison as if you yourselves were together with them.*** Our new board chairman Russ Bloem calls this "The HFP Golden Rule."

There's another important reason: **If 95% of these people are going to be released someday, we want them to stay out, and we want them to be good neighbors!** More's the chance of that happening if we give them humane and compassionate treatment now.

In summary: **we're substitute visitors; and, we're preparing citizens for a fresh start. All in the name of Jesus.**

Your partnership has never been so important! We cannot function without you. I can't think of any other charity where your dollars so directly and dramatically touch lives. And remember, as you consider end-of-the-year giving, your gifts are being doubled up to the first \$50,000! At this moment ***your dollars are touching the lives of more than 2,000 Michigan prisoners!***

With your love, prayers and financial support, our compassionate assistance to "the least of these" will continue uninterrupted! If you cannot help financially, you can still pray. We don't underrate prayer. *It's my personal belief that prayer has been exceptionally instrumental in our success. Not just the prayers of supporters...the prayers of prisoners!*

There you have it. No gushy words and catchy phrases from the professional letter-writer. Just heart-felt straight talk. Thanks, in advance, from our Board, our team, our volunteers, our professional assistants, and hundreds and hundreds of prisoners!

Finally, before you make your decision on year-end giving, please give me two more minutes. I want to talk to you personally. Go to www.humanityforprisoners.org and click on Videos. When you get there, click on "Doug's year-end video."

Peace and love in the struggle,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Tjapkes", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Douglas J. Tjapkes
President

PS Please take a moment to write out your check, or fill out the credit card information on the enclosed response envelope. It's your loving response that prompts this inmate to say: ***Your organization came into my life when all hope was gone and I was ready to give up. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I firmly believe you are saving lives!***

Enc Donation envelope