

Human Kindness Foundation

A Little Good News

Holy Days 2015



SERVICE CHANGED MY LIFE: RICHARD'S STORY

While volunteering at HKF a few months ago, Richard simply and humbly said "service changed my life." That was the moment I knew I wanted to share his story with all of you.

We first met Richard in 2011 when a few HKF volunteers visited a Buddhist group inside a North Carolina prison. Richard was a member of the group, which met weekly to practice meditation and to talk about Buddhist principles. Gabe, one of the visiting volunteers, had paroled in 2010. You may know Gabe through some of the letters he writes (you can read one on page 5).

In August of 2015, Richard called to ask if he could come visit. He had been out of prison for about 2 years and was successfully building a new life with family and friends. Shortly before Richard's scheduled visit, we realized we didn't have enough help for that week's trip to the post office, so we asked Richard if he would come earlier than planned, to help out. He enthusiastically loaded a van full of mail sacks and boxes, then unloaded them again at the post office. It was obvious that he means what he says: service is his path; helping others brings him joy.

Below is a letter from Richard to Gabe, written shortly after the 2011 visit where they first met. See page 2 for Sita's conversation with Richard, and page 3 for some ideas about what changed his life: Service.

Dear Gabe,

What's up brother? I hope all is well with you and yours. I wanted to thank you for coming back inside to visit with our group. You made a huge impact on me just by being there. When you introduced yourself it struck a chord deep within me, and I discovered just what I needed to keep moving forward. Thank you.

When you started, you spoke from the heart and pretty much said it's a struggle and you still have doubts. Me too brother. Some days I don't have a clue what I'm doing and others I wonder what's it all for anyways. You may not realize it, but you answered those questions. You said you get up and do what needs to be done and that's it. Whether it works or not you do it anyways. That's the answer. Just do it. There's nothing to doubt or figure out. Thank you for showing me doubts don't stop me unless I let them. You helped strengthen me in ways I can't explain. Times are hard on me right now and in 26 months, I'll be home having harder times. It scares me and I don't have a clue about living in the



*Catherine, Gabe, Sita,
and Richard at the end
of the workday at HKF.*

real world. I'm making it now which counts for something. The rest I'll leave up to LOVE. When I said **LOVE is the name I give God**, I saw some understanding in your eyes. I wish I could explain myself in a better way. Sorry. Just know that you helped bring the Love I put in the world come full circle. You proved that even in hard times and my mind being full of doubts, it's gonna be all right in the end. It's worth all the trouble in the world if I help one person. Please know that you gave me that, and keep doing what you're doing. It's worth it in the end. I'll be in your corner cheering for you. Thank you again. Love, Richard



Sita's conversation with Richard: God is LOVE

Sita: Tell me about what kind of guy you were when you went inside.

Richard: When I first went in, I was tired of being lonely, sad, angry at the world, and a drug addict. I turned myself in on the 2 year anniversary of my little brother's death. I knew if something didn't change, I would be next. I just hoped I wouldn't be lonely and would actually be loved one day. My attitude had been "FTW" (F*** the World). But I hated feeling that, and I knew there was something greater out there. I could not understand why I always felt so much emptiness and felt I never belonged.

I decided to accept whatever happened in the courts and to figure out what really mattered to me. I wanted to be clean and stay clean. I wanted to try and better myself in every way possible.

My charge is not equal to the crime, but I am okay with it and I am happy that everything happened the way it did, because I used that time.

Sita: Do you relate to the term "transformation?" Do you feel you've had one?

Richard: I do relate. I think I've had a lot of them. I'm pretty sure there are many more to come in the future.

Sita: What do you consider the beginning of that transformation?

Richard: When I got involved in drug treatment programs. I was able to hear other people's stories and I realized that I was not alone. In groups, I found that talking to these people helped me and in turn helped them. When I helped other people, I got a "high" feeling that was better than any drug I've done.

I started off by learning about religions and taking any educational class I could take. I attended church and NA. I tried to surround myself with people who actually lived spiritual lives. It did not matter whether they were Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, or Wiccan. I started writing a journal and came to the realization that there was one ultimate truth that all religions teach. LOVE. God is LOVE and LOVE is God.

Sita: Do you feel that the transformation happened to you or were there some hard decisions you had to make?

Richard: It was a gradual process and I had to learn as I went. I had to do a lot of studying to find what worked for me. I had to learn that I had to love some of my friends from a distance, if they were still in addiction.

Sita: Any thoughts about your future?

Richard: I just want to be able to take care of my family and friends that are still lost in addiction. The happiest I've been in my life is when I've been able to help.

Loading the HKF van.



After this blue jay collided with our window, Sita carefully moved him to a place where our dogs and other animals wouldn't bother him while he recovered.



Richard and his brother helping in the HKF office.



PRACTICE: SERVICE

After talking about service with his meditation group and HKF volunteers, Richard decided it was time to start taking more specific action. Looking around the prison where he lived at that time, he noticed a way he could be of service: sorting recyclables out of the trash. Richard was not part of a recycling program, and didn't talk much about this act of service, he just noticed a way to help and started helping.

Here at HKF, we frequently get letters that say something like "when I get home, I'm going to help my community." That's great! But don't wait until then. Why not start right now?

Here's what Bo had to say about being of service:

"It's surprisingly easy to begin doing something helpful, something that will bring rich satisfaction into your life and improvement to the world we share. Our attitude has always been: The simpler, the better. Nearly everything needs to be done better, but trying to do everything will accomplish nothing. Focus on one small step at a time. Just ask yourself what it is that you are most able and inclined to do, and then go about doing it."

Here are some examples to get you thinking:

- Write a letter to someone who is lonely.
- Take time to really listen to someone. Listen with compassion, not judgment.
- Read aloud to someone. Many people tell us they can't get reading glasses, and they are unable to read without them. Others are not able to read English but can understand if it's read to them.
- Pick up trash, or find other ways to make your unit look better.
- Purchase canteen items for someone who is sick.

- Pray for specific people in your unit or at home.
- Smile at someone, or give a simple nod of your head as a friendly "hello."

"There is no spiritual practice more profound than being kind to one's family, neighbors, an unexpected visitor, the con in the next cell, or any other of the usually 'irrelevant' or 'invisible' beings who may cross our paths in the course of a normal day."

—Bo Lozoff





**"Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble.
Then your light will shine out from the
darkness, and the darkness around you will
be as bright as noon." Isaiah 58:10**

**on the business aspects of HKF to help with some
hands-on work: cleaning the office.**

**In September, the Human
Kindness Foundation
Board of Directors took a
break from its usual focus**



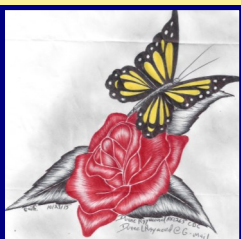
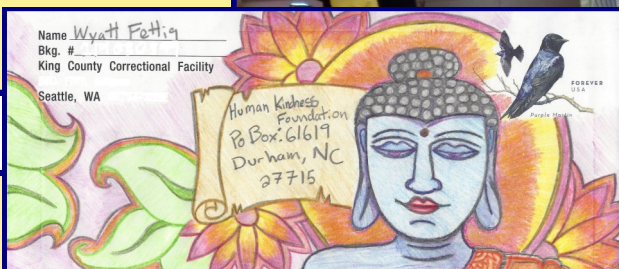
**When done with love, any
helpful act is a powerful
practice of
unselfish service.**



**"When you only
care about yourself
and your own suf-
fering it causes others to suffer. But when you put others
before yourself that's true happiness. Everything good
in our lives is because
we have put others
first. Your organiza-
tion is a good exam-
ple of serving others.
That's what I want to**

do. There is no greater joy."

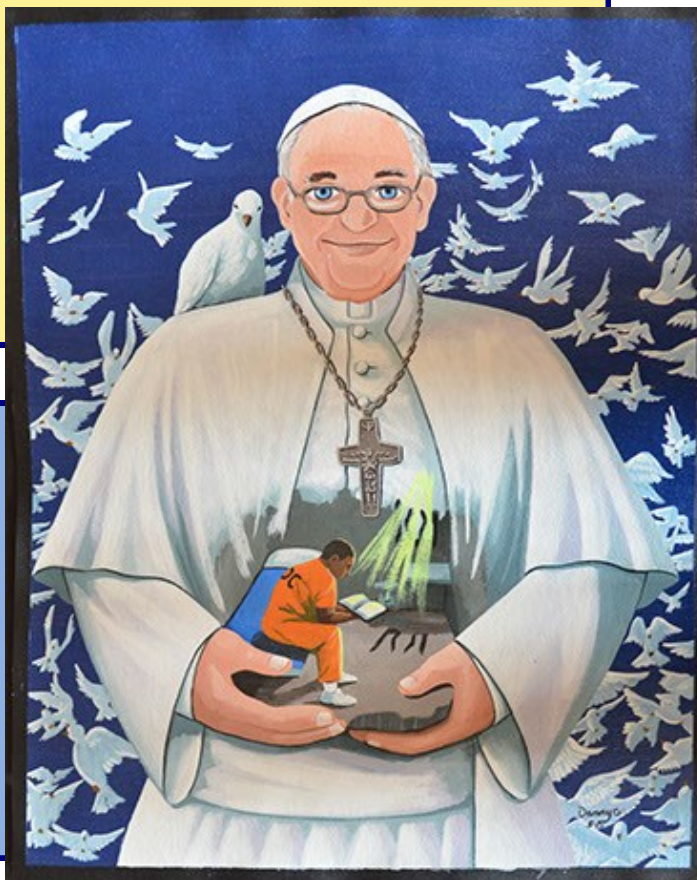
**Tony,
Allred Unit, Texas**



**"All it takes is
one good person
to restore hope."**

—Pope Francis

**Painting, "A Man For All People," by
Daniel Gwynn © courtesy of Art for Justice
www.artforjustice.org**



Letters

Dear Sita,

I hope all is well with you and HKF. I've been writing you for about fifteen years now, and I'm so glad you still love me. I try to be worthy of the prayers I receive.

I've been doing this time for 24 years now, and when I first started writing you, I was so full of self pity. I couldn't stand to be around me. Bo's books turned that all around.

In 2012, I got a date from the parole board and the governor pulled it. I really wanted to express that frustration, but once Bo has turned your life around, there's no going back!

I went to the board again in 2013 and was denied, but I dug in and worked harder. I'm in a wheelchair. I went from being the guy who couldn't stand himself, to being the guy the caregivers stand in line to help.

I went to the board again in 2014 and was found suitable. The board members were so cool. I presented them with so many pages I had written. After a few questions, they realized I knew all the topics I wrote about and was sincere. I actually felt they were helping me to get everything on record, so the governor will have no reason to pull my date this time. If all goes well, I will be released to a program in a few months.

Yes, I'm all happy and smiles. **My life here is all about being of service. I may be in a wheelchair, but I can offer education,** and I give it with all the love of a Lozoff.

I spent 2 days reading and rereading *Deep & Simple* before going to the board. *Deep & Simple* is my bible. If people want to know how I got a parole date as atrocious as my murder was, the answer is I became Deep and Simple. I watch what I think because thoughts become words, words become actions, actions become habits, and habits become my character. People ask how long I've been down—I'm not down—life is fun, I'm incarcerated.

Keeping it simple. Dale

[Editor's note: Dale has made parole and is out of prison.]



Dear Sita, Gabe, and all of the Wonderful People at HKF,

I thank you all for the books. I have read them several times and I'm combining what I learn into a spiritual regimen. The path has been, thus far, uphill. I hold no grudges, but the conditions here are a war-zone, with a dorm designed for 15 people now housing 45.

My daily asana and meditation practices seem to draw people like flies to honey, not so they can eat, solely so they can disrupt. How am I to continue projecting love and peace through spiritual practice when to do so just spreads discontent and disharmony? I have already shifted my schedule to be up when as few others as possible are up, abandoned lotus position as to attract less attention, and abandoned any hope of discussing the path, to avoid being called blasphemous by the "Christians" and freakish by the others. What am I to do knowing that I could be in this situation for years?

With all my love, M

Hello M,

This is Gabe. I just thought I'd send a little encouragement and love back your



way. I hear your struggles, brother, and I really do know what you're going through, so please know you're in my heart and prayers.

I got locked up when I was 19, served 19 years, and I was pretty much in the same situation you're in. I somehow made it through that time and have no doubt that you will too. You've got something I didn't have at that time..., well a lot really. You've got HKF, Bo's books, me, and most of all you've got the fact that you know you're on a spiritual journey and are doing something about it. It sounds like you're doing as well as anyone could with all that's going on. Bo never claimed that making deep changes and living a spiritual life would take the pain away or make things easy. But your daily practice, prayers, quiet mind, and open heart will help you make the choices that are best.

There is no easy way and no easy answer. Give yourself some more time to establish yourself as the spiritual person you want to be. Don't feel like you've got to explain everything to others. Just stay low-key with your practices and beliefs at this point—no one needs to know how you're working on yourself. Sooner or later it will show. Most people will come to respect, at least to some degree, who you are. Of course there will always be some guy telling you you're sinning or calling you freakish, but you'll learn the best way to deal with that. Be patient with yourself and others.

An important thing to remember, M, is that all those guys are on their own journey as well. Dudes just doing what they know best to do. As Mother Teresa reminds us, it's never between you and them anyway, it's between you and God.

I really do respect the life you're building, as I know how hard it is right now. Keep rereading the letter sections of Bo's books. I always found a lot of help and guidance in his responses. Read it like he's writing you a response to this letter. Look hard enough and you'll find something to help get you through. **Keep praying and practicing.** This is your journey, M, not just something in the way of it. As lost as you may feel, to me, you really do seem to be doing what it takes. Keep up the work friend. So glad to share this journey with you.

Many Blessings, Your friend, Gabe



"I can honestly say that **all is well**. Many will point to my 33 years of incarceration and ask how I can make such a statement. Well, **I am able to express love and kindness** to my fellow prisoners. There is so much suffering here, especially loneliness. The **small things make a big difference**, such as a kind word,

a smile or a hug. I have the freedom to express joy, love and happiness to others!!!" Urbano, Miami, FL

Dearest HKF family,

I just received the books, and read the first part of *Just Another Spiritual Book*. Those pages really hit a home run with me. I hope I can be just a bit kinder like Aldous Huxley said. I have such deep compassion for others. I'm not trying to sound all boastful in any way. I've always, all my life, hurt when others hurt. I've been locked up for 24 years total. It bothers so bad to see others hurt by acts of cruelty. I've never understood why someone would hurt a child or harm an old person. I've heard the excuse of "I was sexually abused as a child." Bullshit that's no excuse at all. Hell I was raped by neighborhood boys when I was 5 and 6 years old. I've never had the desire to molest some kid. The federal system is full of those people now. I can't harm them for what they've done. It's not my place to punish them although I want to at times. I've strayed off what I was needing advice on. I have so much compassion for others but yet again I have so much hate for myself. Is that possible? Or am I some ole crazy hill-billy? Please if possible give me some input on this.



Won't be long until Spring. Can't wait to see the trees green out and the robins come back to nest (they're my favorite bird). Love to ya all, D

Dear D,

It's wonderful that you have such a deep, natural compassion for others.

That's a great quality, and a sign of an open heart that will serve you well throughout your spiritual journey. We're glad to hear from you; glad you've connected with Bo's books and with HKF.

I want to challenge you a little, since you sound mature enough to handle that and motivated enough to want honest feedback. I don't think you "strayed" from your main question at all. I think that so long as we're holding judgment and lack of compassion for anyone, we're unlikely to be able to have the deepest compassion for ourselves. Even though you know that it's not your place to punish child molesters (congratulations on that wisdom, D), you seem to believe it's ok to lack compassion for them.

I agree: what they did is wrong. I agree: their own childhood abuse is not an excuse that makes it ok. And still, if we want the deepest Peace of having compassion for EVERYBODY, including ourselves, we're going to have to have it for them, too.

Your letter made me think of Mark, who has volunteered in our office for about 7 years, so I shared it with him. He asked me to share this with you: "My case did not involve a child, but when I was in a Sex Offender program while in prison, many of the guys did have children victims and yes many of them were abused as children themselves. These men were in the program voluntarily trying to work on themselves, and taking responsibility for their actions by breaking the cycle of abuse. They were trying mightily to change. And that, at

the end of the day, is what the spiritual path is all about: deep transformation and making real and lasting change so that they and we do not harm others or ourselves ever again."

D, I want you to know that we support you 100% in your goal of having compassion for yourself. You are important, lovable, and worthy of compassion. We don't want anybody to hate you, and that includes you. I don't think you're crazy. I think you're a spiritual seeker who has gotten stuck on self-hatred, like so many of us get stuck in so many ways. I also think you're a spiritual warrior who has a lot of compassion, which is a great gift. Thanks for sharing some of that with us here at HKF. I'm glad you'll be enjoying springtime and the robins soon.

Peace & blessings, Catherine

Dear Catherine & Mark & the whole family,

I read your letter several times. I fully agree with what you all are saying about showing compassion for all people including the child molesters. But first I want to ask you both a personal question before I go on. Have you ever been molested? You see I have had that experience. It happened to me. That monster hurt me so bad I couldn't cry. Me being only 5, I believed what he said and I always felt dirty. I just didn't feel like I was worth anything, after what he did to me. I still have nightmares, and it's been 47 years ago. There is no excuse what so ever for someone to assault a kid. Sorry to sound so evil and full of unnecessary hatred. It's eating me up and I just can't seem to shake it. I guess I'm doomed until I leave this life. Can't wait until the next life comes. I do know that we get reborn or reincarnated. I'll not go into why I know but just believe me I do know.

Death don't really scare me. I hope I can do a better job in the next life. Keep me in your prayers and likewise I will do. Love you all very much, D

Dear D,

Thank you for writing back in such an open, honest way. You don't sound at all "evil" to me, brother. You also don't sound "full of unnecessary hatred." You sound like someone with a deep wound and an understandable difficulty with people who cause similar wounds.

I wish I had an easy answer to your woundedness, and of course you already know I don't. I do know that when people are able to find forgiveness, they enjoy more peace in their lives. And I know that forgiveness does not mean thinking that the crime was ok or excusable. We know some people whose children were murdered who have found forgiveness for the murderers. They will never think it was ok to kill their children. They will never stop being sad about those murders. Somehow they have found a way to have compassion for the perpetrators.

We've all been hurt, and we've all committed hurts. Anger is normal, and protecting yourself is normal. But if the anger stays with you too long, it hurts you, not the perpetrator. Maybe the reason that you need to stay in this lifetime, instead of moving on to the next, is that finding forgiveness for such a horrible act is important for the development of your soul. I can't know your soul's journey; I'm just sharing how it looks to me. I respect that you've been through something that I have not experienced, and I am so sorry about that pain you have suffered.

You are in our hearts and prayers, Catherine



Artists in this newsletter: Pg 1 & 2: Daniel Lehl, Boise, ID (flowers); Pg 3: Richard Knight, Raiford, FL (Bluejay), Franky Jackson, Stuart, VA (butterfly); Pg 4: Alejandro Ortega Lopez, Florence, AZ (yellow roses), Wyatt Fettig, Seattle, WA (envelope), Duane Raymond, Delano, CA (butterfly with rose), Daniel Gwynn, Waynesburg, PA (Pope Francis); Pg 5: John Lowe, Richmond, TX (elephant/Ganesha), John Wheeler Posing, E. Moline, IL (fish); Pg 6: Kelly Stewart, Portland, OR (Mary, Jesus & Joseph), Donell Tate, Corcoran, CA (mandala); Pg 7: Yao Chen, Corcoran, CA (Parakeets)

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You are invited to join the Human Kindness Foundation family in silent meditation wherever you are on January 10, 2016, from 7:00 to 7:30 pm Eastern Time, in celebration of Bo Lozoff's birthday. You are invited to begin your meditation with

this thought: *"In honor of Bo Lozoff's special love for people who are incarcerated, I dedicate this meditation to the spiritual liberation of all people, including myself."*

This picture of Bo hiking on a lava field was taken a few months before he died in 2012.

