

have experienced in the Texas Criminal Justice System. The format of Kairos aids in a practical presentation of the gospel message which reaches residents where they are. It impacts every facet of their lives: emotional, physical, social & spiritual.

“The philosophy of this program focuses on residents of all races and personalities in an intense setting and lays a foundation for them to begin communicating, relating and working with each other harmoniously in an environment that breeds hostility, prejudice and racism. This ministry permeates both residents *and* staff.”

#### **Correctional Staff members responds:**

**John W. Hawley**, (*Warden, Marquette Branch Prison, Michigan Department of Corrections*)

“Kairos has had more impact on those exposed to it than any program I’ve experienced in a prison setting. Some of these prisoners who have been historically very difficult to manage are now a positive influence on others in the prison through their involvement in Kairos.

“The Kairos experience is a benefit to all involved, including prison staff, community volunteers and prisoners.”

**William G. Nagel**, (*author of ‘The New Red Barn: A Critical Look at the Modern American Prison’ after observing a Kairos weekend*)

“I’ve been in church all my life. I’ve worked in over 500 prisons in this country. I’ve seen more of Christ and more of Christianity this week, in this prison, than I have ever seen in all my life.

“The impact on those who went in that weekend, those from the free world, was something I have never observed in my nearly half-century of prison work. Those Christians who went in there were not shouting fire & brimstone, they were forgiving. They were not sitting at the head of the table but at the foot of the table. They were not being served, but were serving; not rejecting, but accepting; not hating, but loving-they were friends.

“Believe you me, that’s something of a miracle-it was especially a miracle in the setting of a penitentiary.”

#### **How do we know it changes the lives of men and women?**

We know it from their own witnesses. Men and women who experience Kairos in prison are now involved in prison ministries and aftercare. They are also serving on Kairos teams and Advisory Councils in increasing numbers. A recent Florida team had an ex-offender as rector and 4 more ex-offenders filling other positions on the team.

#### **How is Kairos managed and financed?**

The Kairos ministry is directed by an inter-denominational board of men & women from across North, Central & South America, as well as Africa, Europe & Asia.

The ministry is supported by the prayers and donations of concerned individuals, local businesses and churches throughout the world.



“...you came into prison and visited Me.”

*Matthew 25:36*

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#### **“God’s Special Time”**

#### **Kairos Prison Ministry is a:**

**Christian**—Kairos volunteers represent the Christian faith and present a Christian perspective to residents of medium & maximum security prisons in (7) countries and (36) states in the U.S.

**Ecumenical**—Kairos volunteers come from many Christian denominations, but represent only those principles that all share in common.

**Lay-Led**— Kairos leadership is drawn from Lay Persons, although clergy play a vital role.

**Volunteer**—Kairos is an overwhelmingly volunteer organization with 35,00+ volunteers.

**Ministry**—Kairos ministers to incarcerated individuals, their families and those who work with them.

## Why Prison Ministry?

**Dr. Peter P. Legins**, *Professor Emeritus at the University of Maryland, Institute of Criminal Justice and Criminology*, is considered by most people to be the dean of American criminologists. In a meeting with a group of men who were founders of Kairos, he said: “I have known for years, as have most of the leading criminologists in this country, that the greatest hope for an inmate to avoid the revolving doors of our prisons is to undergo a religious conversion experience during their incarceration.”

## What is the purpose of Kairos?

The purpose of Kairos is the building of strong Christian communities within the environment of correctional institutions. This is done through the impact of small, “share and prayer” groups of residents in the institutions. These groups meet regularly to share their lives on a deep spiritual level and to pray for one another, other residents and their institution’s staff.

## How does Kairos begin in an institution?

Kairos is a continuing prison ministry launched with the presentation of a 4-day “weekend retreat” in Christianity in a correctional institution. The retreat starts with an introduction on Thursday morning, and the retreat runs from 8:00am to 4:00pm daily to Sunday afternoon. Kairos in Maine started at the Maine State Prison—Thomaston in November, 1997 and followed when the population was moved to a new facility in Warren in 2002 and continues to this day.

## How do they begin?

The retreats are offered, in cooperation the Prison Chaplain, by an inter-denominational team of some 50-60 men (women are on the Support Team for the men’s team that goes into The Maine State Prison-Warren) and women that go into the Maine Correctional Center-Windham. The teams are made up of both clergy and lay persons from the area surrounding the institution, in our particular state, throughout Maine. The retreat is attended by 24 carefully selected resident leaders in the institution chosen by the Chaplain.

## How do the residents respond?

Usually more than 20 of the residents attending a Kairos weekend will have a major conversion experience during the weekend. For some, its effects will only last a day or two, for some a week or two, for some a month or two. For most however, it will prove to be a *life-changing experience of permanent impact*.

## How does Kairos “continue”?

The primary continuing ministry of Kairos is from resident-to-resident and occurs in the small “Prayer and Share” groups that meet regularly.

Team members who work a Kairos team make a commitment to return to that prison once a month for a reunion with the residents. It is a time of sharing, instruction, worship, fellowship, mentorship, renewal and strengthening—for *both* outmates and inmates.

## How does this Christian community spread throughout the institution?

Kairos weekends take place every 6 months once the ministry is launched in the institution. After these small groups have been meeting regularly and participating in the ongoing worship activities of the institution’s chaplaincy program(s) for about 12 months, members of the group suddenly find their peers in the “negative” sub-culture, in which they may have been leaders, coming up to them and say “*Man, I don’t know what it is you’ve got, but I want it!*”... and they introduce their friend to Christ and the Christian community work of Kairos.

## What is the impact of the ministry?

Even though prison sentences in the U.S. are long in comparison with other countries, most inmates will return to society in less than 3 years. 96% of them will eventually be walking the same streets which we walk.

For a variety of reasons, 30-70% of those released will return to prison again. Continuing studies being carried out in South Carolina, Texas, Colorado and California indicate *dramatic reductions in recidivism* among residents who have experienced Kairos.

Kairos files are full of letters from prison superintendents, wardens, correctional officers, other institutional staff / administration members and the criminal justice system detailing the extremely favorable impact of the Kairos ministry has had on the quality of life in prisons where Kairos is present.

**A resident responds:** *(from Florida’s maximum security Union Correctional Institution known as “Raiford”)*

“I appreciate from the bottom of my heart what God has led you and the other brothers & sisters in Christ to do for me and my brothers here at U.C.I. This is not an easy place to learn to love—but do you know what? Praise God! It’s changing. This garbage dump of the prison system is changing daily. *“The stone that the builders refused has now become the chief cornerstone.” (Luke 20:17).*

“This place, where violence and hostility has been a part of our everyday life here for many years, is now becoming a flower garden of many human miracles. I know you tell us not to thank you and the others for what you do through Kairos for us—but I’ve been here for over 15 years as an inmate, through the fights, stabbings and deaths these many years. And I can truly say that Kairos here at U.C.I. is making real change in the lives of many inmates here. I am a living testimony to that miraculous kind of change. And I see the same kind of change daily in my brothers here. You and the others have been a significant part of bringing about an awakening of the Christ-likeness within a bunch of roughneck convicts at U.C.I.”

“Whenever it’s God’s time for me I’ll leave here, I will continue this walk on the outside. I have something to tell the world outside about a living, breathing Christ.”

## Chaplains respond...

**Chaplain Eldon Cornett**, *Supervising Chaplain of U.C.I.-Raiford, Florida* - “In the 30+ years that Kairos has operated in this maximum security prison, it is the most effective program for prisoners ever held in this institution.”

**Albert W. Holmes**, *Regional Chaplaincy Co-Ordinator of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice—Huntsville, Texas* “Kairos is the most consistent and effective ministry I