

God's Special Time

Kairos Prison Ministry

Quarterly Newsletter of Golden State Kairos

April, 2005

Calipatria State Prison

C.I.M. Chino

C.M.F. Vacaville

F.C.C. Victorville

F.C.I. Dublin

F.C.I. Terminal Island

F.P.C. Victorville

Ironwood State Prison

Kairos Outside Desert

Kairos Outside S.F. Bay Area

Kairos Outside Sacramento Valley

Kairos Outside San Diego

Kairos Outside South

R.J. Donovan State Prison

San Quentin State Prison

U.S.P. Lompoc

Valley State Prison for Women

CMF #24

Kairos # 24 at C.M.F. was another humbling experience of watching the Holy Spirit at work through Christian fellowship. The recruitment started in July with an invitation accepted initially by sixty-five willing Kairos members of which forty-five were able to complete the training and team formation. The first of the six team formation meetings began on Saturday September 18, 2004 and concluded on November 6. The topics covered at these meetings were: Vulnerability, the Servanthood of Listening, Compassion, Humility, and Affirmation. We also conducted team training sessions on 'Table Dynamics' and 'Stages of the Kairos Weekend'.

We mobilized for the weekend at Vacaville Christian Church on November 11 where we gathered for the commissioning service. After almost two months of prayer and preparation, God's team was ready to serve on the Kairos #24 weekend.

During the weekend, we experienced the Spirit of God working through the lives of the team members and most importantly in the lives of the candidates. Forty-nine men in blue were invited to participate in the weekend, with forty-three showing up on the first day and forty staying to see the Fourth Day. The three that left during the weekend left for medical reasons.

Once launched, the weekend progressed smoothly. Our team of forty-five free staff (including the Kitchen crew) and twenty inside members proceeded on the faith that God would provide and He did. The Kitchen crew of twelve members deserves special thanks as, without exception, all of the meals were delivered exactly on time.

During the weekend, two logistical problems arose. One was distribution of medicine and the other was the ongoing difficulty in the translation of talks from English to Spanish. Due to a procedural change by the institution, it was not possible for many candidates to gain access to their medicines. But, in the Kairos spirit, our team was able to work out this problem by volunteers from the inside team stepping up to escort several men in blue to the medical distribution windows. Another example of the team spirit was the willingness of a few team members to translate talks before the weekend and their willingness to use special sound equipment to help translate the talks. This type of effort and commitment by our Kairos volunteers is what makes this a truly wonderful ministry.

The table discussions went well throughout the week as evidenced by the high number of candidates who were willing to enthusiastically participate.

Finally, the closing was well-attended with approximately seventy-five men from the inside and twenty-five visiting from outside the facility. The highlight of the closing was when a well-respected member of the inside community spoke on the hope and sense of community that each candidate could find in the Kairos Prayer and Share groups. We closed singing a few verses of 'Abba Father' and 'Surely the Presence' that lifted the roof as well as our spirits.

Kairos #24 at C.M.F. was truly a spiritual experience for all who participated.

R.J. Donovan - An Observer's Comments

These kind words are from Michael Daniels after attending the Closing for Kairos No. 57 at R.J. Donovan State Prison in San Diego on September 26, 2004. Mike is currently studying to become a Deacon in the Catholic Church and is the chair of the St. Brigid Catholic Church, Pacific Beach, CA., Social Ministries Committee. He has given his permission to quote him in the State and National publications. Brian is Brian Devine, the Rector of Kairos No. 57. Fred Williams

Brian and Fred:

All I can say is - if what I witnessed in that prison wasn't a miracle, what was it?! Your efforts last weekend for the men in yard 2 were amazing. Many souls were saved by your efforts. God bless you, and thank you for what you do. It is such an honor for St. Brigid Social Ministries Committee to have your involvement - thank you!
Mike

You can help reduce costs

The cost of disseminating God's Special Time, the Kairos newsletter for California, is decreased when subscribers choose to receive it by email rather than U.S. Post. Please consider sending your email address to Bill Donaldson at: journewj@sbcglobal.net. ... (It's also faster!)

Articles for the newsletter should be submitted to Jack Seybold at gael63@mind.net.

Kairos Outside Southern California (Pomona) #30

On November 5-7, 2004 Kairos Outside #30 took place in Pomona The theme was "I Still Love You." The scripture was Jer. 31:34 "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Our theme song was "When God Ran." Christ had to take me down a long hard journey of forgiveness before I could serve him as a leader of Kairos Outside #30. My desire was to truly be His face to my team and to His guests that

would be coming to meet Him on this weekend. It seemed only right that forgiveness be the overall theme of the weekend.

Forgiveness wasn't the only journey that Christ and I went on over this year and a half of preparation. Trust and obedience was the main journey we were on; forgiveness naturally fell into its place. Because of the trust and obedience, Christ blessed me beyond my wildest imagination, first with my team and then with the guests he brought there.

I picked the team that I wanted and God came in and said "No my dear child, this will never do. Allow me to refine what you have started and all will be blessed because of it." I sat back and watched Him change my core team, drop and add others, move others and change the ladies that would be giving talks.

Thursday, the night before the weekend, a team member who is very special to me dropped from the team, and my heart broke! I decided I couldn't stop trusting now. We had come too far! Christ said to me: "Her talk is for another weekend, at another time. Trust me please, I have the perfect person that I want to give that talk." Well I did trust Him and the person that gave that talk WAS perfect. I have learned that when we surrender to Christ He shows himself in the purest form we can handle.

By the time the weekend came we were ready. On Sunday morning 17 of the 18 guests remained. Yes, one of the guests left on Sunday morning, but my trusting in God couldn't stop once I got on the actual weekend. I have to believe that the talks planted seeds in her that will one day come to fruition with someone else's watering.

The women that did stay for the entire weekend were blessed deeply. They came in with a lot of baggage and left with much lighter loads, in spite of all the food we fed them. They left with the knowledge that they are royalty and that they deserve to be treated that way, by themselves and by others. They left with a new family that loves them deeply and wants them to come back and be an active part of that family. They left with a new best friend, JESUS! So I thank the Lord for the blessings given to each of us on this weekend!

Joanne Gould

An Experience with a Kairos Outside Talk

Kairos Outside is a haven for many women. Not only the weekend retreat experiences, but women talk consistently about the friends and community they find in Kairos Outside. I have been a part of this community for a little over six years, and have found that this community has changed my life, even though I do not have a loved one inside.

Recently, talking with some Kairos Outside sisters, I got in touch with the fact that many of my changes have come about through my work on the weekends, especially through the talks I have been invited to give on those weekends. Through my heart connections with the women I have gotten close to in Kairos Outside, I have gained courage to deepen in my honesty. On the first weekend I worked, I had what I thought to be a wonderful talk prepared. After I heard the two talks on Friday night, I went back to my bed and rewrote my talk because I found that I had gotten nowhere near my truth and my experience. I told my talk to my talk facilitator, and gave it the next day, shaking and sweating, but honestly.

Since that first talk, I accept all talk requests, scared, anxious, and sweating still, but with a willing heart. This is because I am touched by the vulnerability and honesty of many women I hear, and find that there is always someone who comes up to me after my talk to say that I touched them by something I said.

This ministry has enabled me to go deeper and deeper into my pain, my disconnection, and my fear. I have been able to push the boundaries of my insecurity. I never quite feel adequate to the task of giving a glimpse into my real self. I said earlier that I always say yes when I am asked to give a talk. Almost always, I feel inadequate to the request. I have been asked, for example, to talk on Forgiveness. I do not feel I have ever forgiven anyone who has hurt me, and having to search my deeper self about this issue has resulted in a six-year quest to understand what exactly it is that forgiveness means, and what I am able to do in this regard. I believe I am beginning to be able to forgive, because I feel I have begun to understand love and loving others, and

it has been through being a part of the Kairos Outside community that I am beginning to understand this. I believe forgiveness is connected to my ability to love.

Some famous author said, "Writing is easy. I just sit down every morning at my typewriter, and sweat blood." This is how I feel about sitting down to prepare a talk on the weekend. I will say, again, it is the love and support of my Kairos Outside sisters that enables me to "get down" and get honest.

Monica Greene

Ironwood VIP Weekend

Kairos Ironwood was blessed the last weekend of January 2005 when five new candidates for the team joined us at United Methodist Church in Palm Springs for a VIP introductory weekend. We were led by Rector George Williams, who introduced us to the Servant Model and who encouraged us to embrace all our brothers in Christ, in our daily lives and at Ironwood Prison. Clearance for these new men is in process and we expect they will be joining us for our monthly reunions and K-13 at Ironwood, April 28-May 1, 2005. Kairos Ironwood conducts VIP qualifying weekends twice each year, here in the desert in January, and later, in August, at Big Bear Lake.

Tom Green, Ironwood Chair.

From Uncaptive Minds by IAN BURUMA

Education programs used to be widely available in prisons in the United States, especially after the notorious Attica rebellion in 1971, which left 43 dead. Among the demands of the inmates, who were pressing for improved prison conditions, was a better education program. This demand was met, not only at Attica but also in prisons around the country. Over the next decades, prison education flourished. Then, in 1994, Congress effectively abolished all federally financed college education for prison inmates when it voted to eliminate Pell Grants for federal and state prisons, despite strong resistance from the Department of Education. Critics pointed out that education greatly reduces recidivism; only one-tenth of 1 percent of the Pell Grant budget went to the education of prisoners anyway. But Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, a Republican of Texas, argued that it was unfair for felons to benefit from Pell Grants when as many as 100,000 low-income students were denied them each year. Why should prisoners be educated for nothing when so many honest folks failed to get a break? And besides, she said, the federal government already spent upward of \$100 million on prison education and training programs. Today, what federal money is spent on prisoner education goes largely toward vocational training.

Hutchison's arguments arose from a more generalized desire -- not just among Republicans -- to get tough on crime, or more precisely on criminals. Even though crime rates were actually dropping in the 90's, many argued that judges were letting felons off too lightly and that the "rights" of victims needed to be taken into account. Thus, beginning in the early 90's, prison regimes were tightened, even as mandatory minimum sentences and three-strikes laws meant more and more people came into the system and stayed. In this climate few politicians were ready to stand up for higher-education programs for prisoners. Before 1995 there were some 350 college-degree programs for prisoners in the United States. Today there are about a dozen, four of them in New York State.

The Third Day: Kairos #22 at USP Lompoc

The Education Center at USP Lompoc (United States Penitentiary) was made available for Kairos 22. It echoed with every word, with every chair being dragged, every door being shut, every cough, every sneeze, every page being turned. They've allowed a third of the fluorescent fixtures high overhead to go dark. Every door squeaks when it opens and grunts when it shuts. The large room is surrounded by eight smaller rooms, most of which were also available for our use. One had a world map showing the USSR as it was twenty years ago, another had half-erased polynomials on the chalkboard with notes in Spanish, another had cabinets, but they've been gutted. These are classrooms. God transformed the big room into the only safe place the inmates had known for years. One of them said, "God took the eyes out of the back of my head in here." During the course of the weekend, we festooned the room with thousands of letter-sized "shields" hung on fishline: little posters of Kairos 22's banner picture, all colored by children in church Sunday schools and

Christian elementary schools. We fairly wallpapered the room using "agape" letters from other communities such as Cursillo, Walk to Emmaus, Search, and Epiphany. Most had "De Colores" as a headline. Some were from faraway places like Korea, Australia, and England; others were from California penitentiaries, and most states in the union were represented.

"For a little while," one of the inmates told me, "while I was coloring one of our posters, I forgot I was in prison. That's never happened to me before." He's been in prisons thirteen years. He's twenty-eight. Do the math.

On Monday morning, the third day, several of the guys showed up with photos of their families. Beautiful families. One of the men brought magazines in which his artwork had been published. Every man there shattered the stereotypes we've learned from the media. These are real people. I said to one of them, "These are the three daughters you were telling me about."

"Yeah, but they're all grown up now. I talk to them on the phone every day. I get three hundred minutes a month, but that's not enough, so I buy time from some of my friends. The guards told me they know what's going on, but they let it slide. One of them told me he won't turn me in because I've got such a good relationship with my family that he likes to listen in."

At the end of the Kairos weekend we have a celebration called *Closura*, or the Closing Ceremony. It's bittersweet. The transfiguration is ended and we begin the journey down from the mountain. This is the time for the open microphone, a time after all the "candidates" have received their closing packets containing a Certificate of Completion, a group photo taken Saturday morning, a list of names of all involved, and a paperback Bible signed by everyone on the Outside Team. They've come downstairs from the Chapel and are surprised to see wives and families and friends of the Outside Team seated in rows on the right-hand side of the Education Center, and the inmates are seated on the left by "Table Family," without their table leaders for the first time. We're fading back in the hope that they will form their own "fourth-day" groups, because every day after the third day of the Kairos weekend is the "fourth day." We've planted the seeds, the Inside Team will sprinkle them with water, and only God can make them grow.

An hour or so before, every Table Family had been given four questions to answer, and now was the time to respond: the open microphone. I jotted down these responses and the following comments as fast as I could. I missed a lot of good stuff, but I hope this gives a fair representation of what they said. The inmates were asked not to thank us for the weekend, but they couldn't help it. I did not write down any of the comments where they only expressed their thanks. I'm trying to emphasize how God changed their (our) lives during those three days. Keep in mind that the responses to the four questions reflect input from every member of the Table Families, a total of forty men:

1. In what spiritual condition did you arrive at Kairos?

"Lost; agnostic; searching for answers; dormant; stagnant; curious; skeptical; full of the Spirit of Jesus but looking for more; tired of running; thankful; spiritually drained; confused; looking to find something different; fearful; wanting to try an experiment; worried; on fire, still on fire, and hoping to keep up the fire; wondering and wanting to discover; struggling; spiritually hungry; experiencing spiritual warfare; backsliding; in need of healing."

2. What did you find here?

"Revitalization; fellowship; the Bible; the Spirit of God; chocolate-chip cookies; a community of love; brothers in Christ; a closer relationship with God; a spirit I never had before; love put into action; pictures and handshakes; I don't even find this kind of happiness in my family; I feel like we're actually free, which we are."

3. What are you leaving behind?

"My old self; resentment toward my father; my old life; bitterness; pain; sadness; shame; a dark past; anger; Satan; distrust; misconceptions; ignorance; lust and dirty books."

4. What are you taking with you?

"The love of God; brotherly love; a whole new song sheet; the true way; Christ in our hearts; more ways to sing "Amazing Grace" than you can imagine; brothers; calories of Jesus Christ; gratitude; love that knows no color lines;

cherished memories."

After sharing by Table Family, the graduates were given the opportunity to share individually what God had done for them through the Kairos weekend. I couldn't write fast enough, but I tried to catch some highlights:

"We came in lost, but we're gonna walk out of here with the love of the Lord."

"I thank the Lord God for touching my heart. I'm filled with the Holy Spirit. I've never felt like this before."

"God has no color. God has no language. There are many jobs for us to do, and for us here it's the work of God."

"I'm so happy to see the transformation of some of the guys."

"I love you guys. Big Oos told me if I came here my mother would be happy with me, but I'm happy with me too." (Oos is the nickname they have for the Inside Team leader. It means "big brother.")

"Jesus is beyond size. Jesus is constant, Jesus is love."

"When I got the cookies I thought they were bought. But now I see the ladies here tonight, so I believe they weren't bought."

"I've seen grown men cry here. I've seen love. I've seen singing. I came here for the wrong motives because I heard all kinds of rumors, but they were lies. This is real. So I apologize to you all."

"When I got here Friday night I said I wanted to find out who I was. I did. I found out my purpose was to work for God. The rewards are unlimited with God's love."

"It's special. God showed me through you guys what love really is. God bless you!"

"I've seen all different denominations working together in unity, and that's how it should be. Chaplain Nelson, has anybody told you they love you today?" (Chaplain Nelson replied, "Just you, buddy!") "Well, I love you, man!"

"This weekend has blown my mind! I've never seen so much love as in this room. I don't really know what love is. I don't want you guys to leave. Any of you got an empty pocket?"

"What I felt these past two to three days has opened up my eyes."

"I've received a lot of gifts here, but the most important is the love of Jesus Christ."

"I love the Lord. He keeps touching me over and over and over again. Continue to love the Lord your God! We have nowhere to lay our head where we can't take it to the Lord. Put the cross before you and the world behind you like the song says. I looked at that mail bag and it brought tears to my eyes even before I started reading them."

After all the graduates had been given a chance to share, the leader of the Inside Team stood up and said a few words:

"It's a pleasure to be involved in a thing like this that glorifies God. Religion is just window shopping, but this is about a relationship with God. The theme song for the weekend says, "Amazing love, how can it be, that You, my King, would die for me?"

"Our King died for us! God has drawn you to Him. God chooses you to follow Him. There are lots of dark spots in our lives. There are lots of dark spots in my life. We need to release them. Love the Lord with all your heart and mind and spirit! There's a crown standing on those words. This is the royal rule. When you love other people it cleanses your heart. "

"People think, "There's no more love in my life!" They feel abandoned. But God is always there. Remember: God is always there."

The last of the inmates to speak publicly was a man selected to give the final talk of the weekend, "The Fourth Day." The Kairos weekend lasts three days; the fourth day represents everything coming afterward: life in the valley. This talk was given by a man whom I'd known for several years, a soft-spoken man with a servant's heart. A man of few words, and those gently spoken. Words you had to lean forward to hear. But when he finally got up to speak he hardly needed a microphone. The Spirit took hold of him:

"I'm no different than any of you. I put on my pants just like you do: one

leg at a time. I'm up here just because I'm up here. A lot of things move just because of God. You're all going back to your houses after this. You're gonna smoke your cigarettes or do whatever you're gonna do. But God called you here for a reason, so you're not wasting your time if you're doing what He called you here for.

"Remember the part about the transfiguration? Well, Jesus is coming down that hill with you. You can sing that song wherever you are: in your house, in the shower, at your work, wherever. That's the song He gave you.

"There's no color lines. Look at a rainbow! The red doesn't say, "I don't want to be by the blue."

"Jesus said, "When I was hungry, you fed me; when I was in jail, you visited me." When you guys came in here, you fulfilled Scripture. When we pray for you, we're fulfilling Scripture.

"When you get alone in your room, sit down in your chair and pray, "Lord, I don't know how to pray," the Holy Spirit will show you.

My job is to sprinkle a little water on you, then to let God make you grow. When temptations come to you, say to God, "Thank you, God, for your strength."

"One more thing: prayer. God is a loving God, and He is merciful. We call each other brothers. No one can do anything bad—to my brother without me being hurt, too. Your prayers affect these men.

"God has no grandchildren, only children. He wants us to be a family. Like my brother Carlos said, "If I see you in the yard, say hi." Don't you want us to be a family? This is God's army! So when I talk about prayer, that's what I'm talking about: to hold us together.

"Who here is gonna stand up next to his brother? I want them to stand up right now! That's right!

"So when the time comes, stand up next to your brother in prayer. Amen!"

By that time we were all standing, so I couldn't write. I must confess that the apparently disjointed statements of this talk and the rest of the sharing at Closura are mainly due to my inability to write fast enough. Hopefully what I did manage to capture on paper from the open microphone will give a fair taste of what was said, because I'm no court reporter. Maybe I should learn shorthand.

Roy Smith

Those who have address corrections for the Golden State Kairos database should send them to Bill Donaldson at his e-mail address: journewj@sbcglobal.net or submitted to the P.O. Box shown on the address portion of this newsletter.

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Did you miss me ? I don't think so !

Our apology - we did not have a January issue this year - logistics problems arose and took some time to resolve. This year we start publishing on January, April, July and October.