

# God's Special Time

Kairos Prison Ministry

Quarterly Newsletter of Golden State Kairos

September, 2003

**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**

## ***Kairos #1 at Calipatria***

The first Kairos weekend was held at Calipatria State Prison on March 6 - 9, 2003. There were twenty-eight candidates for this first weekend in a level four prison and all twenty-eight graduated. It was truly a spirit-filled weekend and the Lord moved throughout the prison during that time. The closing on Sunday was attended by approximately 100 visitors from the outside community and truly showed the inmates the love of Christ. There were some really amazing testimonies from the candidates. One of the candidates said he forgot that he was in prison during the time he spent in the chapel. Another said this was the first time he had been in the visiting room in five years and it was because Christ was working in his heart. The closing was also well attended by the prison staff, and there were some correctional officers that stated they were praying for us during the whole weekend.

Calipatria K-2 is on November 13-16.

Ralph Hogan, Rector, Calipatria K-1

## ***Yohann Anderson "Singshop" in Alabama***

Kairos Alabama is hosting a Music Leaders Workshop, a.k.a. "Singshop," led by Yohann Anderson (publisher of the new Kairos Songbook), on December 5-6, 2003. The Deadline for Registration and Payment is September 3, 2003.

Where: Camp Sumatanga, outside of Birmingham, Alabama (Free airport pick-up/redelivery if adequate notice of arrival is given.)

Cost: Active Members of the Kairos Community: Commuter (Registration and 3 Meals): \$65.00.

All others, there is an additional \$5.00 charge.

Registration, double occupancy in Lodge, 3 meals \$ 80.00

Registration, double occup. in Retreat Center, 3 meals \$ 87.00

Registration, single occup. in Lodge, 3 meals \$ 95.00

Registration, single occup. in Retreat Center, 3 meals \$102.00

Includes: Overnight (double occupancy) and three meals.

We have overnight accommodations for the first 88 people to register.

Accommodations Contact: Bill Farrar at farrarwe@bellsouth.net, Phone & Fax: (205) 871-0679

All are welcome. Yohann says, "The more the merrier," and he says can handle up to 200 (although we are limited to about 100)!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me (Wilson) at 256.328.4699

Wilson Webb, State Chair, Kairos Alabama

## ***San Quentin***

Vic Perrella, Rector for the next Kairos, (October 10-13) stated that there are 42 candidates signed up and also a waiting list for those who want to attend the weekend. Currently there are 40 team members.

Patrick Hall, Chairman of the San Quentin Advisory Council, passed out last year's letter requesting funds from those members who have worked on prior Kairos weekends. It was mailed to about 400 households, and brought in \$2,000 to \$3,000 approximately. The letter was reviewed by the Board and in their opinion was so successful we should use it again.

We are awaiting the new Catholic Chaplain who will be here in September. There will be no new brown cards issued until he approves.

The Board is considering buying its own tables instead of renting them. This will be discussed at our September 10, 2003 Advisory Council meeting. Don Zamacona

## ***Kairos Outside Desert***

Kairos Outside Desert weekend this fall will be November 7-9, 2003 at the Valley Mission Program site in Coachella. Pat Hogan

## ***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!)

### ***Kairos Insurance***

In answer to questions about liability and insurance, posed by a Kairos representative from Ohio, Kairos National Director John Thompson wrote the following:

I am enclosing the four page summary of our insurance coverage: (1) We have General Liability coverage of \$ 1,000,000 plus a \$ 2,000,000 excess policy. This coverage is to protect non-ministry persons who might be injured by our volunteers. It protects the volunteers if they injure another person, but not if they themselves get injured.

(2) We have property insurance for our National office and our computer equipment.

(3) We have \$ 3,000,000 coverage for Directors and Officers insurance for our National Board which oversees the corporation, Kairos Prison Ministry, Inc.

Remember our State committees are not incorporated, and do not have executive authority as such. This is one way we sought to protect the State Committees; they are all volunteers not directors or officers of the corporation. I don't believe they need or should spend money on Directors insurance. Remember, people are always responsible for their own conduct, but the state committee, since it is not a legal entity, should not be liable for a volunteer who behaves stupidly in a prison or at a church. I would say we should weed these people out, but your volunteer state committee should not be responsible for them. We have recently been able to obtain \$ 1,000,000 coverage for Employment Practices which we didn't have before.

(4) We have added \$ 100,000 Dishonesty Coverage for the National office staff. The total premiums for these coverages is almost \$ 10,000.

We could not get Dishonesty Coverage for our various advisory council and state treasurers because (1) we don't know how many people we have handling money (2) the states have never provided consistent and reliable financial information (3) the board has never adopted uniform standards for depositing and paying out ministry funds (4) we don't have ministry-wide audits to test our accounting integrity. So, no company will insure us until we get our act together. As long as people insist that it's "their" money, and are unable or refuse to make this stuff a priority, we will be uninsurable. I could only get \$ 100,000 for the National office, if I agreed to have our CPA come here quarterly to reconcile our general ledger. We have made good progress in these two years, so we should be hopeful.

John Thompson, Kairos National Director,

### ***Welcome Home Fundraiser***

Welcome Home's 4th Annual Fund-raiser will be held at Good Samaritan Church in La Jolla on September 27, 2003, from 5 to 9 p.m., silent auction and dinner. Tickets are \$35.00.

Those who may not be able to attend and still would like to donate to this worthy cause, please contact Della Ferguson, Fund-raiser Coordinator at 619-469-6409 (home) or 619-988-0958 (cell). All donations are appreciated and are tax deductible. What type of items are we looking for to auction off? I have one friend who makes beautiful bamboo plants, incredible baskets, and shadow box pictures that are wonderful. I also had another friend who mailed a check. We will accept cash donations. So whatever you are led to give, please remember that this is a worthy cause. Welcome Home assists women and men re-integrate back into the community after incarceration. It

was started almost seven years ago by a local woman, Carmen Warner-Robbins, who was the Chaplain of the Vista Detention Facility. Carmen and her husband John Robbins have also been very active in Kairos, and Carmen in Kairos Outside.

Since the inception of Welcome Home, Carmen Warner-Robbins has referred many of the Welcome Home women to Kairos Outside. Not only have these women been affected directly by incarceration, they also have loved ones on the inside still doing time. They have to learn how to integrate back into the community as well as deal with their incarcerated loved ones. Carmen has been very instrumental working these two ministries together. Today many of the women who work in Welcome Home also work in Kairos Outside and if needed for Kairos they are willing to jump in and help Kairos as well.

Welcome Home has helped hundreds of women and is run by former state and county prisoners. Last year Carmen Warner-Robbins and the women of Welcome Home received the Channel Ten Leadership Award, among many other recognitions this wonderful program has received. San Diego Sheriff Bill Kollender is a faithful supporter. Think about it: most of us have been affected one way or another by incarceration. Please share what you can. Thank you!

Della Ferguson, Fund-raiser Coordinator

### ***Kairos Outside, Southern California***

Kairos Outside-Southern California #25 was held May 30th-June 1st at Trinity Methodist in Pomona. The weather was great and the weekend was blessed with 27 of the most beautiful ladies of Southern California. The theme for the weekend was 'You Are Mine.'

From the start of team meetings, God shed His glorious light on all the team members. The team bonded very well and by our last team meeting we were eager to meet our guests. We were ready to Listen Listen Love Love.

Our guests were greeted cheerfully, escorted to the reception area where they enjoyed light snacks and friendly conversation with other guests and team members. Then, it was to the dining room for dinner and the start of the weekend. The weekend had its share of snags but through the grace of God this wonderful team pulled together to resolve the issues and the weekend proceeded as if nothing out of the ordinary ever happened.

God gives us the grace to become volunteers to do His work. Through this grace we are able to pass on to our guests love and acceptance resulting in a transformation much the same as a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly. Though our ladies were beautiful when they arrived, by Sunday afternoon they were at 'overflow' with God's unconditional love. To see this transformation right before one's eyes is so overwhelming. We know that the weekend was successful when we see these beautiful ladies at closing blossoming and glowing and ready to face everyday challenges with a whole different attitude.

I was truly blessed to be the leader of this wonderful team and to have these beautiful ladies as our guests at Kairos Outside-Southern California #25.

Helen Castaneda

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](mailto:journewj@sbcglobal.net) or mail the change to the PO BOX on the address area of this newsletter.

### **Acceptance Comes Before Understanding**

That acceptance must come before understanding defies logic for most of us. It's been hard for me to even consider this principle, let alone embrace it. My whole life I've sought to understand before I could accept anything. I've wanted to see first before believing. I had forgotten that I had loved my children even before they were born.

Life, however, has a way of forcing one to look back and see with a new perspective. I've come to know peace and serenity where there was none. But getting here has not been easy. I've even questioned God, asking Him where he has been in my hour of need. Why my family, my boy? What do I do? Where do I go?

At times, I felt I was all alone -- as if I had the whole world on my shoulders. I've always been self-sufficient -- looked for the answers and solved the problems for my family. Being co-provider and nurturer prepared me to go it alone after my first husband passed on. I'm grateful.

The answers have not come easy. I've had to search, work hard and be open to receive them. I've had to face myself. The best way I can explain it is by looking at my life as if it were a tapestry -- many colors and shapes forming a very complex design. Some of the colors are vivid and bright, others, dark and depressing -- everything contributing to the magnificent design. Many shapes make the front; but when the tapestry is turned around, there are hanging threads and knots that are necessary to secure the multifaceted, intricate design.

There seems to be a thread that binds a life together -- reasons why things happen the way they do. My journey began many years ago when I made my Cursillo. It was the connection I needed to remember a sweet and loving God. I committed myself to a relationship with Our Lord. Little did I know that as in any other relationship, my commitment would be tested.

After my husband's passing, I visited my younger sister who lives in Hesperia, California, in the serene High Desert. The nights light up with stars and one can see the Joshua trees sprinkled over the hills. It was a sanctuary where I could ponder the gifts of Our Lord, and where my life was going.

One night I felt the yearning for something to read -- something soothing to my soul. I looked at many books in their home library. A little booklet slightly stuck out on the shelf as if it were there especially for me. I started to read "Power in Praise" (a sequel to "Prison to Praise" by M.R. Carothers). The author emphasized the need to be grateful for everything in our lives, in any circumstances. In the midst of these words there was a phrase that still plays in my mind and sustains my heart: Acceptance Comes Before Understanding. I nearly jumped out of my chair! I looked up at the sky that was lit up with a million stars. I took it as a wake up sign, but told myself This is not what the scientific method teaches us. How can one accept without understanding first? It got fixed in my mind and played over and over. I didn't know what I was in for!

In 1987, Miriam, a good friend, asked me if I would be interested in bringing The Good News to the women incarcerated at the Federal Prison in Dublin. Without hesitation, I answered yes. My rational thinking said: "What are you doing? Going into a high level prison? What are you thinking?" Somehow, I knew that even though I did not understand, it was something I needed to do, accept my calling. That was the beginning. I fell in love with the ministry and the transformation the women went through. We cried and laughed with them, heard their concerns and sorrows at not being with their loved ones. In those moments, I could not fathom the possibility of one

of my children being incarcerated.

While I was serving inside the prison, Our Lord gave me a rare opportunity to become ill which helped me to understand how the women may feel. I found myself surrounded by some of the women who were trying to care for me, and I ached for them. What happens when they are ill? Who holds their hand to let them know that everything will be well? Then, thoughts of their loved ones came to me. Who takes care of them, holds their hands and lets them know that this too shall pass? There must be someone outside to take care of their loved ones. There has to be someone, a Kairos Outside!

Then the answer came. Miriam (who had become a sort of messenger from God) asked if I could help to translate the Kairos Outside Manual into Spanish. With the manual translated, the ministry could be done for our Spanish sisters in the Bay Area. I was delighted and said I'd help, without knowing how big the commitment would be.

We went to Pomona to observe. Miriam said I needed to observe the English Kairos Outside at Holy Redeemer in Oakland to familiarize myself with the site and the methodology, as the first Spanish Kairos Outside would be held there at the end of 2000.

I told Lou, my present husband, of my plans. He agreed. Just a week before going, we received a phone call. My step-daughter screamed hysterically: "Daddy, Daddy, they've taken my brother and I don't know why! A couple of investigators took my brother to prison!"

The next day we followed up, hired a lawyer and started the road of finding out how the prison and the judicial system work. What a nightmare!

The following week, I went to "observe" the Kairos Outside, only to find out that the design was taking a different turn. Our Lord had a different plan for me. When I arrived, I could feel the difference. Instead of being just an "observer" I became a "guest." I felt shame and uncertainty. It was hard for me to face others. Part of me did not want to be related to anyone in prison. The course was one of humility, and I'd been signed up! This surely was a big knot in the tapestry, in the design of my life.

The tapestry continued to be threaded. Lou came to see me for Mañanitas on Sunday morning. He left right afterward to see his son. There were no words to be said; we both knew how we felt. It was one of those moments -- Kairos had given me a new perspective. I was able to tell him: "Just let your son know that you love him, that you're here for him." That is all Our Lord asks of us, to love one another as He loves us. That afternoon, after the closing, we went to the chapel. Standing in front of the altar, we promised we would serve in the Kairos Outside Ministry. And the design in the tapestry took a different, greater shape.

As first observer for the Spanish Kairos Outside I had the privilege of serving and listening to stories the guests shared. I held each one of them in my heart and prayed that my own son would not go through anything like this. It was hard enough having to stand in the waiting line under the rain or the sun for hours just to have a one-hour visit with my stepson.

Life had a different plan for me. Not long after this, I too received a phone call. My son was calling from the local jail and told me: "Mom, I'm trouble--in big, big trouble." I asked what happened, but he couldn't remember, everything was fuzzy to him. There had been an accident, his friend was dead, and somehow he was being blamed.

I remember my daughter holding my hand, and my world  
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seemed to collapse. What to do now? Lord, please, don't abandon me now! The family closed ranks. I called a parole officer friend of ours and he walked us through the process--what happens, who the best lawyers are, how could I see him, etc. Here was another nightmare, and we were still going through the first. Another knot to secure behind the bigger design.

When I finally saw my son, I could only talk to him through a phone that barely worked. Part of me wanted to scream, but I was praying all the way there and remained calm. My good sense prevailed and I looked at him to let him know: "I love you--no matter what." He was bewildered, and said; "Mother, you love your ministry so much that maybe that's why I'm here." I responded, "On the contrary, God has been preparing me to serve and here I am. I am here for you unconditionally as He was for us." All I could remember was: Acceptance Comes Before Understanding. It's really a path to humility and surrender--another stitch, another knot as the tapestry unfolds.

Every Sunday for the next 26 months we were in line, in the rain, cold or hot weather, waiting to visit him, first at Elmwood, later at San Quentin; then at Susanville, and finally at Sugar Pine where he was fighting fires!

For a while, our Saturdays were spent going to Red Bluff to see my stepson, and Sundays to see my son. Our Lord is good. He made it possible for us to visit even though it was costly (not only financially). We learned much at visit time and have been able to bring it back to our Kairos Outside ministry. In the midst of the chaos in my family, Lou's surgery, storms and other obstacles, I was able to fulfill

my promise to serve, and with Our Lord's help, I led the second Spanish Kairos Outside weekend in 2001. Many of the women who came are now serving alongside us for the next weekends. We've grown strong in our faith and in our family ties and are glad to serve our Kairos family in Kairos Outside.

Now, three years later, our sons are back at home, working and living their lives. Some adjustments had to be made. Questions and answers will come in time. Respect is all that's needed. Only Our Lord knows what colors, what shapes their lives will take. My son knows his mother is here no matter what. With love and respect, we carry on. My stepson also has his own place and doing just as well. He manages production at an auto plant. They are healthy, minding their own business, following the plan. What more can we ask? We get together usually on Sundays to barbecue, laugh and reminisce a little. Mostly we give thanks and appreciate each other and the varied designs of our lives.

Indeed, acceptance comes before understanding, and Our Lord has a plan. Only He knows the design of each of our lives. All I can say is trust in Him! Sometimes the lessons are hard, but not when we let go and let Him do the sewing. I ask Him for strength to continue in my service in spreading The Word, in accepting the knots, and the challenges that come with my design. Kairos Outside has been a Godsend; we've made many friends who support us in His time. We must believe to be able to see, for Acceptance Does Come Before Understanding!

R. Melendez, Kairos Outside, San Francisco Bay Area