



Discover Kairos Prison Ministry

You're invited to discover the life changing impact of Kairos Prison Ministry!

Several fellow parishioners, including Gene Plevyak, Harry Stice, Dan Bryant, and Jeff Moe, are dedicated Kairos volunteers. With Fr. Hao's encouragement, we've created a 15-part series of short articles for our weekly parish bulletin sharing how Kairos deeply impacts incarcerated men and women transforming the lives of both those receiving and those serving.

Through this series, we truly hope our parish community will engage in supporting this ministry.

We invite you to pray for the Kairos team, for the incarcerated individuals attending the 3-day weekend retreats, and for the ongoing gatherings that keep the ministry strong and faith alive inside the prison.

We also welcome your support in other meaningful ways. You can write prayerful "Hands of Love" messages, offering words of encouragement. You can also sign up to pray for specific hours during an upcoming Kairos weekend, covering the retreat in a blanket of prayer.

Finally, we humbly ask our parish family to consider supporting Kairos financially. Your

contributions help cover the costs of meals, materials, and transportation, allowing this vital work to continue and expand.

We genuinely encourage you to read each article in the series. It's a wonderful way to understand the full reach and profound importance of Kairos.

If you have any questions, please reach out to:

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What Is Kairos Prison Ministry?

Have you ever wondered about the incredible impact of God's love, even in the most unexpected places?

Allow us to introduce you to the Kairos Prison Ministry, an ecumenical and non-denominational Christian outreach that stretches across 38 states and into Central America, Australia, and South Africa. At its heart, Kairos aims to build vibrant, small Christian communities within prisons. Imagine sharing God's boundless, unconditional love and forgiveness with individuals who are incarcerated, transforming lives one weekend at a time. That's the immediate goal of our dedicated Kairos Weekend Retreat volunteers!

As we share a series of articles in the coming weeks, you'll discover the full scope of the Kairos program, understanding its various components and the steps we take to nurture

these blossoming Christian communities. Next week, we'll delve into the fascinating origin story of the Kairos Prison Ministry.

We look forward to sharing this inspiring journey with you!

Origin of Kairos

Have you ever been curious about the inspiring roots of the Kairos Prison Ministry? It all began with a beautiful spiritual movement called Cursillo, a Catholic layperson's journey aimed at fostering a profound "change of heart and mind directed toward God"—a *metanoia*—to empower Christian action in everyday life.

Its full name, Cursillo de Cristiandad, means "A Short Course in Christianity," and it originated in Majorca, Spain, and blossomed throughout Spain after World War II.

Fast forward to 1976 in Florida, where a small group of nine passionate Catholic Cursillistas (as Cursillo graduates are known) felt a call to bring this transformative experience into a prison setting. They held their first "Cursillo in Prison" at Raiford Prison, and it was met with such incredible success that, by 1978, the ministry had spread to prisons in six different states!

As this powerful movement grew, it became clear that to truly reach and serve incarcerated individuals from all Christian denominations, other faiths, or even no religious background, some adaptations were needed. So, in 1979, with the blessing of the Cursillo governing body in the USA, the ministry adapted a Cursillo parallel format, embraced a new identity and a new name: Kairos.

What Are the Characteristics of Kairos?

At the very heart of Kairos Prison Ministry is our inspirational motto: Listen, Listen, Love, Love. In environments where incarcerated individuals often experience a scarcity of love and rarely encounter non-judgmental listening, we, as Kairos volunteers, strive to be their beacon of hope. Our deepest desire is to help rekindle their sense of self-worth and demonstrate, through our own personal witness, that God's boundless, unconditional love and forgiveness are just as available to them as they are to us outside. We invite them to truly embrace these precious gifts!

How can we achieve this? Through a thoughtfully structured program filled with inspiring talks, quiet meditation, uplifting music, and vibrant table discussions. Imagine the joy of "poster parties," where each "table family" – a small, supportive group – creates and presents posters showing what they've learned from a talk. They introduce themselves from, for example, the "Table Family of St. John," and are met with heartfelt applause as they share how each person contributed to their collective understanding.

Every aspect of the Kairos Weekend Program is carefully designed to guide participants towards a *metanoia* – a profound change of heart and mind directed towards God. Our ultimate goal is for these table families to blossom into supportive, small Christian communities, forming lasting bonds. Kairos calls these impactful groups "Prayer and Share" fellowship meetings, and we'll share more about them.

Components of Kairos Ministry

The Kairos Prison Ministry offers a transformative five-component journey for incarcerated individuals.

1. The **Kairos Three-Day Weekend Retreat**:

This initial retreat serves as the entry point, immersing participants in God's love and forgiveness.

2. The **Instructional Reunion**: One week later, graduates reconvene to learn "spiritual listening" – sharing and listening with an open heart. This session invites them to ongoing Prayer and Share meetings.

3. **Prayer and Share Fellowship Meetings**:

These weekly, graduate-led gatherings are the core of Kairos, providing continuous spiritual connection and nourishment, showcasing their growth and leadership.

4. The **Monthly Reunion**: A larger monthly gathering of graduates and volunteers, also graduate-led. It includes scripture reading, personal reflections, and small group discussions for insights and prayer.

5. The **One-Day Retreat**: Held midway between the longer weekend retreats, led by the upcoming Kairos Weekend leader. Volunteers give short, inspiring talks, prompting discussions, blending the Monthly Reunion's spirit with the full Kairos Weekend essence.

Preparing for a Kairos Retreat

First, at each institution where Kairos Prison Ministry serves, a volunteer Advisory Council is formed. This group guides the ministry at that location. They arrange with the prison administration to conduct Kairos activities

there. They also act as the main contact for the institution through an Institutional Liaison.

A key part of their work is raising money to cover weekend costs (approaching \$10,000 at some California prisons).

The Advisory Council also trains volunteers for leadership and chooses the Leader for each Kairos Weekend Retreat. Next, the Leader for a weekend forms a team. This "Inside Team" includes 28 men and clergy, plus a "Support Team" of 6 women and 1 man. They are chosen from our list of current volunteers and new volunteers who want to help.

Since getting seven ordained clergy for each team is challenging, it is common to have about 3 ordained clergy on the team. Experienced volunteers step in to serve as clergy at the other tables. These tables welcome 42 candidates and 21 volunteers.

The prison Chaplain or Sponsor for Kairos at that institution then selects the 42 candidates who will attend the Weekend Retreat. If there isn't a sponsoring chaplain, the Advisory Council helps train and guide past graduates to form an "Inside Kairos Council" and recruit candidates for the Kairos Weekend.

Kairos Retreat Roles & Responsibilities

Step behind the scenes of a Kairos Weekend and discover the heart of our team! Every weekend is made spiritually rewarding by our Core Team, alongside the Table Leaders, Assistants, and Table Clergy at each table. Our Core Team is a group of dedicated individuals:

1. The **Advising Leader**, the Leader from the previous Kairos Weekend, offers invaluable guidance.
2. The **Current Leader** enthusiastically forms our volunteer team and guides the weekend's journey.
3. The **Observing Leader**, provides support to the Leader and prepares to lead the next weekend.
4. Our **Chapel Coordinator** thoughtfully arranges prayers and clergy meditations.
5. The **Agape Leader** tirelessly gathers "hands of love" supportive notes, posters and a powerful "Prayer Scroll" from our wider community, adorning our meeting spaces with these symbols of support.
6. The **Prayer Leader** guides a group of resident graduates in offering heartfelt prayers for everyone involved specially each speaker.
7. The **Head Servant** leads a team of graduates who ensure everyone is nourished with beverages, snacks (especially those beloved cookies!), and meals.
8. The **Inside Coordinator** warmly greets candidates daily, handling logistics with care.
9. And our **Runner** ensures all approved supplies, food and beverages arrive smoothly.

Kairos Retreat Day 1: Day of Trust

While it's known as a three-day journey, it actually spans four, beginning on a welcoming late afternoon.

As invited prison residents, called candidates, arrive in the chapel or gym, a Kairos volunteer will warmly greet each one, provide a name tag, and lead them to a comfortable seat. They'll be offered a refreshing beverage and some

delicious cookies as the volunteer sits across from the candidate, engaging in a friendly chat.

This is a chance to share what brought the candidate to the retreat and to have any questions answered. Living the Kairos motto of "Listen, Listen, Love, Love," the volunteer aim's to create a truly inviting atmosphere, ensuring the candidate feels comfortable and eager to return for Day 2.

After a fun "ice breaker" where everyone introduces themselves, the Leader gives an opening talk, offering a glimpse into the weekend's activities and assuring them that each day will be even better than the last. Then, all adjourn to the chapel for inspiring meditations and homilies from our ordained clergy, including reflecting on the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son (or Daughter for women's retreats).

The day concludes with a brief wrap-up from the Leader, a friendly reminder to the candidate to bring their name tag and "Freedom Guide" (Kairos prayer book) back tomorrow, and given a delicious bag of cookies as they depart.

Kairos Retreat Day 2: Day of Faith

The Day of Faith is a deeply enriching experience focused on self-discovery and building connections within the "Table Family." The morning begins with warm greetings and introductions to Table Leaders, Assistant Leaders, and a compassionate Clergy person.

Throughout the day, a blend of talks, meditations, and music helps participants understand themselves and their relationship

with God more profoundly. Each inspiring talk is followed by quiet reflection, then lively table discussions where candidates, guided by volunteers, share insights.

A creative highlight is when each Table Family collaborates on a poster, visually representing their learning. Refreshments are provided to maintain energy without disrupting the flow.

The day is filled with inspiring talks, heartfelt chapel prayers, and uplifting music, encouraging joyful participation.

As the day concludes, the Leader delivers a closing talk, reminding candidates about name tags and their "Freedom Guide" (prayer book) for the next morning. Participants leave with two bags of cookies—one for themselves and one to share, symbolizing the day's themes of discovery, community, and the gentle unfolding of faith.

Kairos Retreat Day 3: Day of Love

Our second full day together is a truly profound journey of connection and unconditional grace where the candidates discovered more about themselves and their Table Family, coalescing and embracing one another across all backgrounds. Today's talks and meditations lovingly turn our focus to Jesus Christ. We explore how to come to know Jesus more intimately and how to welcome Him into our lives as a guiding light and master. It's a day where everyone truly discovers the incredible truth that God's love is boundless and His unconditional forgiveness is always available to those whose hearts are open to receive it.

In an encouraging moment, each candidate and every volunteer receives special dissolving rice paper, inviting them to write down all the names of those they hold in unforgiveness—perhaps, including themselves. Our forgiveness talks warmly guide us through Accepting God's Forgiveness, Forgiving Ourselves, and Forgiving Others. The day unfolds with moving talks, meditations, heartfelt table discussions, and creative posters, all beautifully interspersed with wonderful music and joyful singing.

One of this day's most powerful features is Personal Agape: heartfelt, handwritten letters from each team member to each candidate, overflowing with love and encouragement for their spiritual journey. After talks, we enjoy a lively "poster party," followed by a truly special "open mic" where each candidate is warmly invited to share their Kairos experience so far—a powerful moment of vulnerability and connection.

This day culminates in our intense and moving Forgiveness Ceremony. Candidates and volunteers are individually prayed over by a clergy person and a senior volunteer. Then, in a symbolic act of release, they drop their rice paper into a bowl, watching it dissolve, followed by a prayer for the grace to truly forgive. It's a profoundly freeing experience. After a brief closing talk and gentle reminders, candidates are dismissed to quietly leave, receiving three bags of delicious cookies: one for themselves, one for a friend, and one for someone they've hold in unforgiveness—a beautiful symbol of spreading love and grace.

Kairos Retreat Day 4: Day of Hope

Day 4, "The Day of Hope," culminates the Kairos Weekend Retreat with a profound graduation celebration. This day equips new graduates with tools for integrating Christian love into their lives within the institution and deepening their faith. The invitation to "Make a Friend, Be a Friend, Bring a Friend to Christ" sets the tone for continued spiritual growth and outreach.

Inspiring talks and meditations, like "Bury the Rooster," address themes of releasing past burdens. Table discussions shift focus, empowering graduates to take ownership of their spiritual journeys. The Leader extends a personal invitation for each graduate to attend the upcoming Instructional Reunion, emphasizing continued community support. Each new graduate also receives a "Christ is Counting on You" cross and their well-deserved certificate, symbolizing their commitment and new beginning.

The heartfelt Closing Ceremony is a highlight. Each Table Family shares their Kairos journey by responding to three profound questions, fostering collective reflection. A moving testimony from a former Kairos graduate offers encouragement, followed by an open invitation for current graduates to share their deeply insightful experiences with volunteers and guests.

The day concludes with brief remarks, a large circle holding hands, and a unified singing of "Surely the Presence," creating a deeply moving experience. Graduates depart with embraces and love, carrying forward the light of hope.

Instructional Reunion

This special gathering, a week after the Kairos Weekend Retreat, is open to all Weekend graduates and as many Weekend team volunteers as can attend, promising a day of meaningful connection and spiritual growth.

The reunion will feature the familiar Table Family format and several short, inspiring talks by team members designed to spark engaging discussions. The graduates will also participate in spiritual listening exercises, conducted in groups of three graduates: a speaker, a listener, and an observer. The speaker will be given a thought-provoking question to encourage vulnerability and foster trust with the listener. The listener's role is to offer heartfelt attention and positive affirmation through body language and encouraging phrases. Meanwhile, the observer will provide constructive feedback to the listener, ensuring a supportive and enriching experience for all.

These three positions will rotate, allowing every graduate to experience each role with a new question for each speaker. We'll conclude by inviting graduates to enroll in the weekly Prayer and Share fellowship meetings held at the institution, continuing the journey of community and shared faith.

Prayer and Share

Recent Kairtos Weekend Retreat graduates experience the power of connection and faith at our weekly Prayer and Share fellowship meetings. Held at the prison where the Kairos Prison Ministry Weekend and Instructional Reunion were held, these gatherings are a

wonderful opportunity for Kairos Weekend Retreat graduates to continue their spiritual journey together.

Each session is compassionately moderated by Kairos volunteers, guiding discussions based on a special grouping card received at the Instructional Reunion. This card features five thought-provoking questions designed to help the graduates reflect on their relationship with Jesus Christ over the past week, and to share any spiritual or personal concerns they'd like the group to pray for.

These hour to hour-and-a-half sessions foster a supportive and caring environment. We conclude with heartfelt group prayer for individual requests, culminating in the unifying recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

Monthly Reunion

About three months after the Kairos Weekend Retreat graduates and dedicated Kairos volunteers come together at their Kairos Prison Ministry institution for a One Day Retreat that is open to all Kairos graduates at that institution.

These inspiring One Day Retreats are planned and directed by the Leader of the succeeding Kairos Weekend Retreat. The Leader recruits Kairos volunteers, especially those who served on the preceding Kairos Weekend Retreat. The format is the same as the Weekend format, consisting of 7 tables and up to nine graduates and volunteers. Refreshments are served and lunches shared among the volunteers and graduates. The Leader assigns a number of talks to the volunteers that cover a common theme and the table groups discuss what they heard in

the talk. Again, spiritual listening skills are practiced. A musician is generally in attendance, so there will also be joyful singing. As is the Kairos practice, the One Day Retreat concludes by forming a circle, all holding hands, and singing "Surely the Presence" as our heartfelt closing prayer.

Kairos One-Day Retreat

Generally, three months after the Kairos Weekend Retreat, graduates and dedicated Kairos volunteers are invited to gather at their Kairos Prison Ministry institution for this special day, a One Day Retreat, open to all Kairos resident graduates from that institution.

These inspiring retreats are planned and led by the Leader of the succeeding Kairos Weekend Retreat (the Observing Leader at the preceding Weekend), who recruits volunteers, especially those who served on the previous retreat. The format mirrors the Weekend itself, with seven tables, each hosting up to nine graduates and volunteers. Attendees enjoy refreshments and shared lunches, fostering a sense of community. Volunteers deliver a series of talks centered around a common theme, such as thematically related Scripture passages, prompting engaging discussions at each table where spiritual listening skills are actively practiced. We are usually blessed with a musician, ensuring joyful singing throughout the day. True to Kairos tradition, we'll conclude by forming a circle, all holding hands, and singing "Surely the Presence" as a heartfelt closing prayer.

Thank you for reading this series of articles about the Kairos Prison Ministry.

We hope you have enjoyed learning about Kairos and will support this ministry in the best way you are able.