

PROTOCOL FOR INVITING KAIROS LETTERS OF SUPPORT FROM CHILDREN

These guidelines are designed to give protection and privacy to children when they are invited to write a letter of support to a Kairos program.

Children's letters have a special quality of encouragement, but they also open the children to the possibility of exploitation in the mind of certain offenders in correctional centres.

No child should be exposed to such exploitation. The involvement of children in Kairos should only be countenanced in a supportive Christian community where encouragement to grow in faith in God is the underlying dynamic of children's letters.

1. The aim of letters is to bring support from Christian communities to Kairos candidates. In that respect the primary source of children's letters is from church communities. In the first instance this is a Sunday School where the ministry of Kairos is understood and welcomed by the church.

2. Where letters are invited from day schools, the primary source is from church schools where the invitation to write has the approval of the supervising priest/pastor and school principal as a part of the overall ministry of the school.

3. Where letters are solicited in State Schools it can only be with the approval of Principal and parents. A letter of explanation with a permission return slip is to be submitted to parents.

4. Any Kairos letter from a child is to protect the child's anonymity, in name, age and school and/or church attended. If a name is on the letter it is to be first name only. No ages are to be noted.

5. Letters are to be short and should be words of encouragement to an inmate rather than about the child, such as favourite sports, pets etc. This is to prevent an inmate from fantasising about the child through his or her self-disclosure.

6. Decorated posters are a recommended substitute for personal letters. Suggestions for simple text can be given, such as "Jesus is our light" or "Go with God". These can be distributed between Kairos candidates in the same manner as personal letters as well as being posted on a wall. A laminated, coloured place mat is also recommended.

These guidelines are to be submitted to all Kairos team members, their churches, and all avenues from where support through letter writing is requested. The Protocol should be included in the Blue Manual where the role of Agape is explained.