

Kairos Prison Ministry

March 2021 Newsletter

From the Chair, Dr Vern Harvey

Our prayers and blessings to all our supporters for a better 2021. Thank you for your continued support through an extraordinary 2020.

We ended 2020, and started 2021 on a high note with a programme at Wolston Correctional Centre in Brisbane. This was our first programme since March 2020, and ran over the Christmas holidays from 28 December to 1 January.

It makes sense if you know the programme is only allowed to run when the inmates are not working.

Our COVID Response Centre, created at the start of the pandemic to manage the Ministry's response, is now receiving applications to recommence the Kairos ministry in some prisons across Australia.

Progress is slow and uncertain but it is progress. How fortunate we are in Australia to have had virtually no infections in the 40,000 inmates in our correctional institutions.

Sadly, the situation in the USA, the home of Kairos Prison Ministry International, is far worse as described on page 4 in this newsletter.

Please pray for the inmates and the 30,000 Kairos volunteers in the US for whom there will be a long wait to return to their ministry.

The State Corrective Service departments set the COVID safe procedures for our programmes inside but the conditions are going to differ from place to place and be different to before. The same will go for Kairos Torch, our programme for those in youth detention.

Kairos Outside for Women (KOW), for family and friends of those inside, runs all its programmes in community locations.



Changing Hearts, Transforming Lives, Impacting The World

It is important to maintain our own, high standard, COVID Safe procedures for the safety of the participants and our volunteers. It can get complicated as we need to stay aligned with the changing community requirements in each State.

During the pandemic, the Board and management of Kairos in Australia have been busy keeping up with the potential changes in prison technology.

NSW has been the leader in the introduction of digital technology. This allows inmates to have virtual visits and access to approved websites.

These approved websites provide information to help inmates with their learning programmes and their pre-release preparation.

Behind the changes is a Premier's project to reduce reoffending by 5% by 2023 which is described on page 3 of this newsletter.

Understanding how these developments will impact on the future Kairos Inside programmes is very much in our prayers. Perhaps there will even be some new initiatives.

*"I know the plans I have for you,"
announces the Lord. "I want you to enjoy
success. I do not plan to harm you. I will
give you hope for the years to come."
Jeremiah 29:11 (NIRV)*

Thank you for your continued support and your prayers. You are appreciated.

God bless,
(Dr) Vern Harvey
Chair of the Board, KPMA





Kairos Inside Women participant

"I loved my Kairos Ministry weekend. I went to prison in July of 2009. I applied for their weekend and got accepted. I couldn't believe it because only a limited number were going to be accepted.

The prison had almost 1100 women there at that time. Kairos held a 4 day weekend only twice a year. May and November.

This ministry is so full of love, acceptance, grace, mercy. It's God giving and the men and women receiving the gift of salvation, freedom, and internal transformation. I love you all very much.

May God heal our land and this ministry once again be able to spread the message of your love, forgiveness, and mercy and many give their lives to you for the building of the Kingdom of God."

Kairos Inside Men participant

"I completed the Kairos program in 2019 whilst serving 12 months at Park Lea Correctional Centre. I've just finished 15 months of parole since being released without any re-offending or relapsing. When I met a Minister outside, the words he spoke to me gave me a sense of peace and redirection. The frequency Alex helped me resonate on has never left me and i've never felt lonely or without a purpose again.

The Kairos team ARE channeling Gods energy throughout the world and it's really great. All the best with future kairos programs, i know that more people will be pulled from the darkness due to your programs' help."

KOW Wide Bay Capricorn Newsletter (extract)

"Many thanks for your lovely card. May God Bless Kairos-Outside (Wide Bay Capricorn). It is so good to know that people care for me.

Many times I go through the box, where I have everything from that weekend, and feel the LOVE again.

My heart rejoices when I think about it. God's LOVE was present in that time. Thank you so much."

KOW Guest



KOW 'Zoomers'

"Our Journey time on a Monday is a different creature altogether these days: this creature I call 'a zoomer'. Sometimes it cooperates, sometimes it thwarts.

What a blessing to have such accessible technology in this pandemic.

Team members from both past and future courses can link in when we:

- *'pray-and-share'*
- *'listen, listen, love, love' one another*
- *get replenished with scriptural devotions*
- *and pray for the well-being of all those in the Correctional Centre*
- *We have had to ditch the music interlude a couple of times, but we read a couple of favourite songs from the Kairos song book!*

We pray with thanks in faith, that the love of God the Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is enjoying free rein inside."

Kairos Outside Men participant

"I had a really good time at KOM 9 and learned a great deal that I am processing and also passing on to others as part of my ministry around "forgiveness".

You all did such a wonderful job in elucidating the centrality of "forgiveness" in tracking a different course going forward "above the line"."

Chaplain - Kairos Outside Women weekend

"Kairos for me is the purest form of church that I have ever experienced. I have been humbled by the deep love of GOD that I have witnessed.

I have witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit in action as women who are downtrodden, often full of guilt, anger, fear, pain and hurt or shame from other people's choices in life."

NSW Government Initiatives



Gladys Berejiklian, Premier of NSW has declared a number of priorities for her Government.

Among the actions to deliver these priorities is:

Reduce adult reoffending following release from prison by 5% by 2023.

[Excerpts from material on NSW Department of Communities and Justice Website]

The rate of reoffending among our most serious offenders is on the rise. In 2017, 26.8% of those released from prison reoffended within 12 months. This increased again to 29.4% in 2018.

This is not an easy target as the reasons for offending are very complex and cannot be addressed by justice agencies alone.

Work is underway to try to turn this tide and provide effective rehabilitation to reduce the rate of reoffending in NSW.

We are now working on ways to ensure that prisons provide an environment that better supports and enables rehabilitation.

[Among other things] We are investing in technology and increasing the reach of our programs with a focus on delivering programs and services to those offenders who will benefit most from them, to help them stop reoffending.



Transforming prisoner rehabilitation through digital technology

This is just one of the initiatives underway, and aims to improve productivity during the considerable amount of time people spend in cells. This also includes improving access to services and providing improved connection to family and social supports, all of which are proven to provide significant benefits.

Digital technology, including providing tablets with opportunities to practice skills used in programs, enables this time to be more productive. The initiatives will also allow more people in custody to participate in programs remotely using digital technology and maintain family contact.

Improvement in reoffending rates requires better opportunities while time is spent inside as well as more favourable opportunities in the return to community. Kairos operates in the first space.

We are excited about the new opportunities which will arise for Kairos through digital technology and are learning more about how Kairos can fit in with the Department's plans.

Kairos and COVID in the USA

Kairos Prison Ministry International (KPMI), founded the programme 40 years ago. This has grown to over 350 regions with 30,000 volunteers in 35 US States. COVID has hit the US harder than many other countries and prison inmates even harder.

A December 2020 study revealed that the infection rate was three to four times higher in the prison population than the general public. Some States were even higher. The mortality rate in prison was also double that of the general public. At least 275,000, out of 2 million incarcerated people have tested positive for COVID-19, and more than 1,700 have died. The true toll is likely to be higher still due to data problems.

Prison facilities are often overcrowded and poorly ventilated. Dormitory-style housing, cafeterias and open-bar cell doors make it nearly impossible to quarantine. Health care behind bars is notoriously substandard.

I keep in touch with the CEO of KPMI regularly and all they can do is wait and pray for some light to shine on the future of their whole ministry field. Please pray for the inmates and staff as well as their families and the volunteers waiting for improved conditions.

Peter Woodward, our spiritual director on the Board of Kairos in Australia, has prepared a meditation and prayer for this purpose. Please use it personally and speak to your church leader to see if it can be added to your corporate prayers.

Meditate on Psalm 27:1a and Isaiah 40:31

*“The Lord is my revelation-light
to guide me along the way;
He’s the source of my salvation
to defend me every day.
I fear no one!”
Psalm 27:1a (The Passion translation)*

*“But those who trust in the Lord
will find new strength.
They will soar high on wings like eagles.
They will run and not grow weary.
They will walk and not faint.”
Isaiah 40:31 (New Living translation)*

Prayer for the Kairos Community in the USA

*The Lord is my light, my light and salvation.
We are blessed to be called to the Kairos
Prison Ministry.*

*We pray for our brothers and sisters in
America, for those who feel the weight of
COVID19 constraints and limitations.
Sustain tired and anxious people with
assurance of your never-failing love.*

*As we join our prayers with theirs, we pray
your blessing on all who feel dislocated and
uncertain to know that in your amazing
grace we are never alone.*

*And we pray for prison residents, their
families, the chaplains and the gaol staff - the
blessing of Jesus Christ crucified and risen.*

Amen.

***Kairos Prison Ministry Australia is an interdenominational Christian ministry
reaching out to incarcerated individuals, their families and those who work with them;
to bring sustainable meaning and hope in the place of loneliness, isolation and despair.
Building Christian Community.***

<http://www.kairos.org.au/how-you-can-help/online-giving>

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