

A Prison Management's Guide to Kairos Inside

What is Kairos?

Kairos is a Faith-driven initiative with the mission to impact incarcerated men, women, youth as well as their families to become loving and productive citizens of their community. This is accomplished by inviting leaders (both negative and positive) to attend a Kairos Short Course-held over approximately 35 hours generally beginning on a Monday ending Thursday or Friday depending on the face-to-face time allowed by the Centre. This is followed by consistent, encouraging program held depending on the Centre weekly, fortnightly or monthly, that creates life change and positively reinforces that change via on-going accountability groups.

This life change not only impacts those attending the Kairos Short Course, but also those around them and those who 'follow' them (if leaders are chosen to attend). In the short term, individuals change, and prison culture can improve; in the long term, families can be healed, and recidivism is lowered.

The first Kairos Short Course was held in 1976 In Florida, USA, and Kairos is now active in 37 US states and 9 other countries. In Australia the first Kairos Course was presented at Parramatta (NSW) in 1995 and it now operates in all states and territories except Tasmania and the Northern Territory. It is an evidenced based, interdenominational wraparound program with three main components: Kairos Inside for the incarcerated in men's and women's prisons, Kairos Torch for incarcerated youth and Kairos Outside for non-incarcerated women impacted by their previous incarceration or a loved one's incarceration.

Without the support of Centre Management, we cannot achieve the goal of changing the hearts of inmates so that they become participants in building a positive community in your facility and have an impact on lowering violence levels there.

How does Kairos Inside Work?

The Kairos ministry conducted inside correctional centres consists of five equally important parts:

- **The Short Course** – Usually conducted twice yearly, 6 months apart. This is the entryway to the on-going portions of the 'Continuing Ministry' which consists of:
- **The Instructional Reunion** – A one-day workshop that teaches and trains how to participate in the heart of Kairos, Prayer and Share small groups.
- **Prayer and Share**– A regular, structured small group gathering for Kairos graduates, typically lasting one and a half hours or less. This is the central core of Kairos, encouraging ongoing accountability with other Kairos graduates that brings change in inmate behaviour.
- **The 1- or 2-Day Retreat** – Held in between Short Courses and open to all Kairos Graduates to reenforce the Kairos ethos.
- **Journey Program** - Regular meetings (weekly, fortnightly or monthly, depending on each particular Centre) of about 2-3 hours – held in-between Short Courses and open to all Kairos graduates who may invite a limited number of non-Kairos graduates.

Prison Management working through your Chaplains, is the connecting link between Kairos and the Centre for all aspects of its ministry. Each Centre has a Kairos Regional Committee to run and manage its ministry. One of its members is assigned as Centre Liaison between the Regional Committee and the Management/Chaplain, communicating on a regular basis.

Why does Kairos Work?

The outcome of the Kairos program is that graduates have started a process of trauma healing and also of forgiveness, which leads to a more outwardly centred life-view (as opposed to the normal self-centred one usually displayed by those incarcerated). The outwardly focused life comes with a need to help others, which breaks criminal thinking.

Trauma Healing: Kairos Prison Ministry Australia, its board and members all recognise that trauma counselling requires professional qualification and experience. Kairos will not assume any such role.

Kairos, nevertheless, has observed over many years that those incarcerated have often experienced trauma, which could even be the root cause of incarceration, anger and poor behaviour. If not addressed, it is likely to negatively impact them and everyone around them, including prison staff.

Kairos programs simply assist with a caring focus on encouraging inmates on a healing process that starts with knowing and accepting themselves and engaging in the process of forgiveness - which often only happens through acceptance of others.

Forgiveness: Kairos places such a premium on forgiveness, that one whole day of the Short Course is devoted to it culminating with a 'forgiveness ceremony.' The day is spent talking about the importance of forgiveness. The result can be that the anger that possibly brought them to prison can dissipate as they forgive those they hate, those who 'did them wrong', those who caused excruciating pain and most of all, themselves. They learn forgiveness is not so much about the other person, but about letting go of the need for revenge and healing inside themselves.

Family Relationships: A Chaplain at San Quentin Prison in California USA, saw that Kairos graduates were ready to 'do something' with respect to changing their thought patterns about their families. Kairos Outside, a program for females impacted by incarceration, was born with healing of family relationships in mind. With this wrap around program, there can be forgiveness, a shared experience, new common goals, and the recidivism decreases among Kairos graduates.

Digging Deeper

Each Short Course has an assigned Leader and multiple volunteers to conduct it in accordance with the Kairos Inside Program Manual (which is followed so there are no surprises for the Centre). The team is required to attend 34-36 hours of team training. The Short Course Leader is required to attend an additional 20 hours of leadership training. A Short Course consists of a series of talks followed by discussion, meditations and other structured activities. It is not a Bible study or series of sermons, and you don't have to be Christian to be a participant. The talks and meditations are mostly scripted with places for personal experiences by the presenter that are designed to give hope. Because each talk, meditation and activity build upon each other, inmates are required to stay for the entire program and cannot return if they leave for anything except being called out by the Centre or for medications. Depending on Centre requirements, food, biscuits/snacks and refreshments may be provided by the team.

This Short Course is the beginning of an individual's journey into the heart of Kairos. An in-depth description of an entire Course (its schedule, scripts of the talks and mediations, etc.) is contained in our Kairos Inside Program Manual, pages 107-247. Copy of the manual may be made available to Management upon request.

What sets Kairos apart and helps make it so successful in changing hearts and the environment is that following a Short Course, Kairos volunteers regularly come back to establish an on-going presence that keeps Kairos graduates connected to the program and to each other. The on-going presence is what brings about life change, otherwise Kairos would be just another great event.

The Instructional Reunion

While Prayer and Share is touched on during the Short Course, the Instructional Reunion teaches new graduates the methodologies and processes Prayer and Share uses. It should be held within two to four weeks of the Kairos Short Course and lasts approximately six to seven hours. Participants practice active listening, walk through the steps of Prayer and Share and get to practice participating in it. The Instructional Reunion is described in depth in our Program Manual, pages 248-278.

Prayer and Share

This is the true heart of Kairos. It consists of small, 3-to-5-person accountability groups meeting on a regular basis, (preferably weekly) praying together, and sharing their past week's experiences by answering five basic questions about how they have helped someone, what they have learned, where have they messed up and how they are thankful. Each meeting typically lasts an hour and a half, depending on Centre requirements. This is essential and it's what makes Kairos so successful in changing hearts, minds and behaviour over time. Prayer and Share is described in depth in our Program Manual, pages 279-291.

1 or 2-Day Retreats

These one- or two-day retreats are conducted in-between Short Courses and are open to any Kairos graduate. A small volunteer team comes into the Centre to present the Retreat. These are not as scripted as the Short Course, and each Leader will select topics and talks appropriate for a Christian gathering. 1 or 2-Day Retreats are discussed in depth in our Program Manual, pages 301-316.

Journey Program

The Journey Program is an essential part of the Kairos ministry. It provides a 'safe place' for the Kairos graduates to belong to community and receive wider support and encouragement, so not to feel alone. It is scheduled with the Centre to occur at regular times (weekly, fortnightly or monthly) and typically lasts two to three hours. It is open to any graduate of a Short Course. Graduates are encouraged to invite a limited number of non-graduates with a view to those invitees being part of a future Short Course.

A number of volunteers who have been cleared and approved by the Centre attend the Journey Program.

Selecting Candidates for Kairos

The Chaplain is the major decision maker concerning which inmates are invited to attend a Kairos Short Course, with the invitees being approved by management. He/she will invite inmate leaders in the general population of the Centre, both positive AND negative. His/her selection will also be made from those not necessarily members of Christian programs or worship. The Kairos Short Course will not create change if it is used as a reward system for people attending Chapel events. The impact of Kairos on those who attend, especially the negative leaders (even gang leaders), has been proven to quickly have significant impact on a Centre's environment.

How Management Can Help

- Establish through the Chaplain regular and on-going communications with our Regional Committee Centre Liaison.
- Encourage the Chaplain to enable all 5 of the Kairos events to happen. (The Kairos Short Course, the Instructional Reunion, regular Prayer and Share groups, Journey Program and 1- or 2-Day Retreats.)
- Encourage the Chaplain to build a list of both positive and negative inmates they believe should be invited to each Kairos Short Course knowing who can help change the Centre environment.
- Support the Chaplain inviting the agreed number of inmates, including some on a reserve list should the original invitees wish not to attend.
- Attend the closing on the final afternoon session of the Kairos Short Course and give some short words of encouragement.