

Kairos Prison Ministry celebrates 80th Weekend in 40 years at prison where it began in 1976

19 hours ago



Kairos Prison Ministry International

DeBary, Fla. – Kairos Prison Ministry International, Inc. (Kairos) held its 80th men’s ministry Weekend in 40 years at Union Correctional Institution, a maximum security facility in Raiford, FL, April 21-24, 2016. Kairos began at Union Correctional Institution on September 30, 1976, when it held the first Kairos Weekend with 37 volunteers and 42 inmates participating. Kairos has held two Kairos Inside Weekends every year at Union ever since, ministering to over 3200 inmates in that time.

“Kairos has been faithful for 40 years to minister to inmates in Union Correctional Institution and around the world,” said Joe Henkle, Senior Chaplain at Union Correctional Institution. “We as chaplains are grateful for this Christ centered dedication that has led to our 80th Kairos Weekend. Thank you to Kairos, and may God use you for many more years.”

Kairos Prison Ministry is a Christian faith based ministry that addresses the spiritual needs of incarcerated men, women, youth, and their families. By sharing the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ, Kairos changes hearts, transforms lives and impacts the world.

The 80th Weekend took the 42 participants on a journey of self-discovery and relating with one another through the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. The program consists of carefully structured talks, meditations, and individual and group activities led by same gender volunteers.

At the Closing Ceremony, open to pre-approved guests, one inmate recalled that he chose not to go to the first Weekend in 1976. "I spent 40 years wandering in the desert," he said. "But look around and see what God can do. I came in brokenhearted, but now I have a new perspective."

"We are delighted to celebrate and continue our 40 year relationship with Union Correctional Institution," said Evelyn Lemly, CEO of Kairos Prison Ministry International. "It is an amazing testament to the power of God, working through ordinary people, that Kairos has maintained this unbroken cycle of impact at Union Correctional Institution. We hope to minister there for another 40 years and beyond."

The Kairos program concept is to build a Christian community inside the prison, where the Kairos Community prays and fellowships together on a regular basis. These "Prayer and Share" Groups meet weekly. In addition, each month volunteers return for a "Reunion" of the entire Kairos community, creating positive accountability groups and modifying behavior.

As the Kairos Christian community inside a prison grows and begins to gain influence via the positive and negative leaders changed by the Kairos experience, the incidence of prison violence decreases.

Kairos reduces recidivism rates. In a study of 505 inmates released from Florida prisons, the recidivism rate was reduced by half for Kairos graduates who took part in continuing ministry – dropping as low as 10%, compared to 23.4% for non-Kairos participants.

Kairos also includes two other programs: Kairos Outside, for women impacted by incarceration, and Kairos Torch, to help youthful offenders realize their God-given potential and make better choices for their lives.

It has over 30,000 volunteers in 35 states in the U.S. and 9 countries, and serves nearly 500 prisons and communities annually.

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About Kairos Prison Ministry International:

Kairos Prison Ministry International is “Changing Hearts, Transforming Lives, Impacting the World” by taking the love, grace and forgiveness of Jesus Christ to over 27,000 incarcerated adults and youth and their families each year. From simple beginnings as a short course in Christianity inside a Florida prison in 1976, Kairos has grown into an international ministry serving more than 480 facilities in 10 countries. More than 30,000 volunteers give over three million hours of service each year. To learn more about Kairos or to donate to its ministries, visit www.kairosprisonministry.org or call 407-629-4948.

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