

# A Chaplain's Guide to Kairos Inside

## What is Kairos?

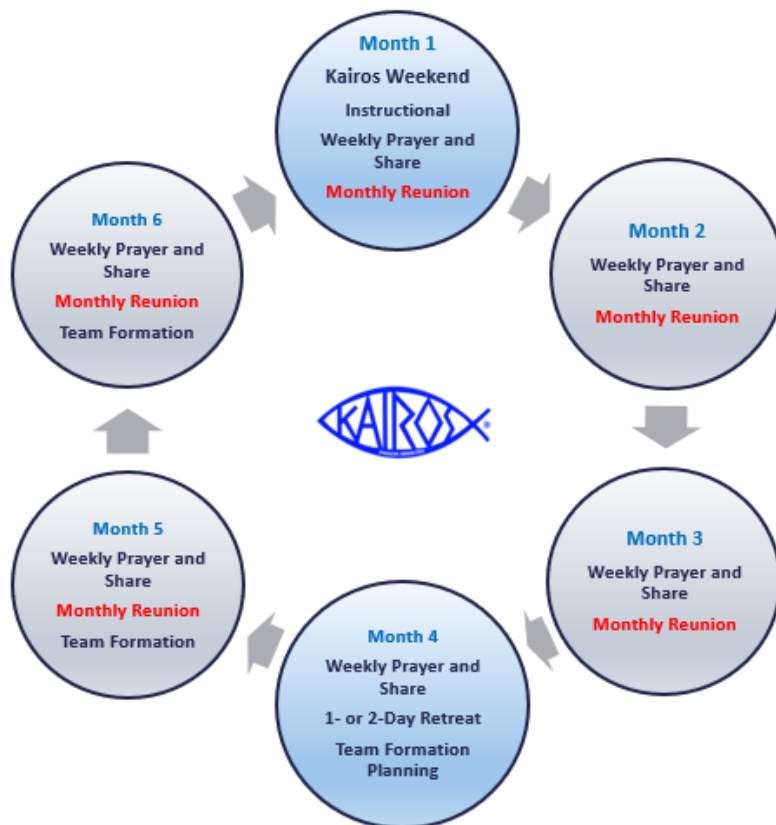
Kairos is a Faith-driven initiative with the mission to impact incarcerated men, women, youth as well as their families to become loving and productive citizens of their community. This is accomplished by inviting leaders (both negative and positive) to attend a Kairos 3 ½ day event (traditionally called a “Weekend” since it is typically held Thursday to Sunday). This is followed by consistent, encouraging weekly and monthly Kairos programming that creates life change and positively reinforces that change via on-going accountability groups.

This life change not only impacts those attending the Kairos Weekend, 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 Weekend was held in 1976 and Kairos is now active in 37 US states and 9 other countries. 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 you and your support, we cannot achieve the goal of changing the hearts of residents 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 facilities consists of five equally important parts:

- **The 3 ½ Day Weekend** – Usually conducted twice yearly, 6 months apart. This is the entryway to the on-going portions of Kairos, called ‘Continuing Ministry’. Continuing Ministry consists of:
  - **The Instructional Reunion** – A one-day class that teaches and trains how to participate in the heart of Kairos, Prayer and Share.
  - **Prayer and Share**– A weekly, structured small group gathering for Kairos graduates, typically lasting one hour and a half or less. This is the central core of Kairos, encouraging ongoing accountability with other Kairos graduates that brings change in resident behavior.

- **The 1 or 2-Day Retreat** – Held in-between 3 ½ Day Weekends and open to all Kairos graduates.
- **Monthly Reunion** – A once a month gathering of Kairos graduates (you can also invite some non-Kairos graduates, not to exceed 50% of the total) and outside volunteers to show the larger community and give a sense of belonging to something bigger than them.

You are the connecting link between Kairos and the institution for all aspects of its ministry. Each institution has a Kairos Advisory Council to run and manage its ministry. One of its members is assigned as Institutional Liaison between the Advisory Council and you and the institution 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 centered life-view (as opposed to the normal self-centered one displayed by those incarcerated). The outwardly focused life comes with a need to help others, which breaks criminal thinking.

Trauma Healing: Everyone incarcerated has experienced trauma. Oftentimes it is the root of their incarceration, anger and poor behavior. If not addressed, it will negatively impact them and everyone around them, including prison staff. Trauma healing may take a long time; you have to start with knowing yourself, accepting yourself and engage in the process of forgiveness – which often only happens through acceptance of others. Those issues are a focus of the Kairos program.

Forgiveness: Kairos places such a premium on forgiveness, that one whole day of the 3 ½ days 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 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 success rate of re-entry increases.

## **Digging Deeper**

Each 3 ½ Day Weekend 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 Institution). The team is required to attend 34-36 hours of team training. The Weekend Leader is required to attend an additional 20 hours of leadership training. A Weekend 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 builds upon each other, residents are required to stay for the entire program and cannot return if they leave for anything but being called out by the institution or for medications. Depending on institutional requirements, food and cookies/snacks may be provided by the team.

This 3 ½ Day Weekend is the beginning of an individual's journey into the heart of Kairos. An in-depth description of an entire Weekend (its schedule, scripts of the talks and mediations, etc.) is contained in our Kairos Inside Program Manual, pages 119 – 271.

What sets Kairos apart and helps make it so successful in changing hearts and the environment is that following a 3 ½ Day Kairos Weekend, 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 Weekend event.

### **The Instructional Reunion**

While Prayer and Share is touched on during the 3 ½ Day Weekend, the Instructional Reunion teaches new graduates the methodologies and processes Prayer and Share uses. It should be held within two weeks of the Kairos Weekend 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 273 – 304.

### **Prayer and Share**

This is the true heart of Kairos. It consists of small, 3-to-5-person accountability groups meeting on a weekly basis, praying together, and sharing their past week's experiences by answering five basic questions about how you have helped someone, what you have learned, where have you messed up and how you are thankful. Each meeting typically lasts an hour and a half. Depending on institutional requirements, this may need to be conducted in a supervised manner by a few Kairos volunteers. This event is essential and what makes Kairos so successful in changing hearts, minds and behavior over time. Prayer and Share is described in depth in our Program Manual, pages 305 – 317.

### **1 or 2-Day Retreats**

These one- or two-day retreats are conducted in-between 3 ½ Day Weekends and are open to any Kairos graduate. A small volunteer team comes into the Institution to present the Retreat. These are not as scripted as Weekends, 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 328 – 343.

### **Monthly Reunions**

Reunions are an essential part of the Kairos ministry. They provide a 'safe place' for the Kairos graduates to belong to community and receive wider support and encouragement, so not to feel alone. These are scheduled with the institution to occur once a month, usually a Saturday or Sunday, and typically last two to three hours. They are open to any graduate of a 3 ½ Day Weekend.

Volunteers who have been cleared and approved by the institution come to fellowship, sing and pray with them. A Monthly Reunion is led by a Kairos graduate selected in advance by either the Chaplain or the Inside Resident Community Council (see below) under the Chaplain's direction. There are recommended guidelines for a Reunion's content and schedule in our Program Manual (pgs. 318-326) and in the Inside Resident Community Council Handbook available for download on the Kairos website <https://www.mykairos.org/downloads.html>.

### **Inside Resident Community Council**

Just as each institution has a Kairos Advisory Council to ensure the program is conducted well, we ask that each Chaplain create an Inside Resident Community Council. While not a Kairos requirement,

this Resident Council can aid both you and Kairos in conducting all aspects of our program and help create a positive community in the facility. A Kairos volunteer may help facilitate meetings. There are suggested guidelines for a Council both in our Program Manual (pg. 327) and a more detailed document in the Inside Resident Community Council Handbook available for download on the Kairos website <https://www.mykairos.org/downloads.html>.

### **Selecting Resident Candidates for Kairos**

You are the major decision maker concerning which residents are invited to attend a Kairos Weekend. We ask that you invite resident leaders in the general population of your institution, both positive AND negative. Selection should also be made from those not necessarily members of Christian programs or worship. The Kairos Weekend 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 an institutional environment. We also request that this selection process begin not less than 30 days prior to a 3 ½ Day Weekend. The Kairos Inside Program Manual contains our recommendations on pages 41 through 44 in what we call the “Prison Impact Plan.”

### **What We’d Like You to Do**

- Establish regular and on-going communications with our Advisory Council Institutional Liaison.
- Enable all 5 of the Kairos events to happen (The 3 ½ Day Weekend, the Instructional Reunion, weekly Prayer and Share, Monthly Reunions and 1- or 2-Day Retreats.)
- Approve call-out and gate releases for all the Kairos events.
- Arrange or facilitate necessary Department of Corrections training to create a Kairos volunteer base.
- Help establish an Inside Resident Community Council.
- Build a list of both positive and negative residents you believe should be invited to each Kairos Weekend knowing who can help change the institutional environment.
- Invite the requested number of residents (based on the number of volunteer team members available on the team— see page 88 of the Program Manual) at least 30 days prior to a 3 ½ Day Weekend.
- Attend closing on the final day of the Kairos Weekend and give a short encouraging talk.
- Be available for some portion of each 3 ½ Day Weekend.
- Enable formation of weekly Prayer and Share groups in accordance with institutional guidelines. If one or two Kairos volunteers must be present for call out, we will set a volunteering schedule.
- Help communicate the message of the importance of getting female loved ones to attend Kairos Outside to create healing and forgiveness within families.