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Kairos Mourns the Loss of Founder, Tom Johnson

Tom Johnson began Kairos Prison Ministry in 1976.

WINTER PARK, Fla.— Kairos Prison Ministry volunteers are saddened by the news that the beloved founder of the ministry, Tom Johnson, passed away Monday, June 10, 2013.

In the fall of 1976, at Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, FL, Tom Johnson's hard work became a reality when he and fellow Cursillista presented a three-day spiritual renewal retreat for inmates. From there, the program grew and within the next two years ministry volunteers, led by Johnson, were conducting Cursillo short courses in prisons in more than a half dozen states.

Johnson, joined by eight other men, known as the "Nine Old Men", presented the three-day retreats inside the prisons. These nine men, from all different walks of life, worked together tirelessly to foster the spiritual needs of incarcerated men and later expanded the ministry to also minister to women, youth and their families.

Along with Johnson, the "Nine Old Men" included: Cleve Bell, John Caldwell, Dick Day, John Divito, Ted Glocker, Joe Gurtis, Clarence Hodges and Nils Schweizer. They are responsible for the remarkable growth that the ministry has experienced over the past thirty-seven years.

By 1979, after realizing the need for more structure and organization to continue growth, the Kairos name was adopted and the ministry became an independent, non-profit, ecumenical, Christian organization.

Today, Kairos Prison Ministry International, headquartered in Winter Park, Florida, is comprised of over 30,000 volunteers and ministers in 366 communities/institutions in 34 states. Internationally, Kairos is active in 9 countries: U.K., Canada, South Africa, Australia, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic and Peru and ministers in 71 communities/institutions.

The need for this prison ministry program is great and Kairos is constantly expanding to assist the incarcerated and their loved ones, as well as reduce recidivism and lay the groundwork for success upon the inmate's release. All of this became a reality because of the Christian dedication, vision and compassion that Tom Johnson had for our incarcerated brothers and sisters and their families.

Kairos Prison Ministry International is “Changing Hearts, Transforming Lives, Impacting the World” by taking the love, grace and forgiveness of Jesus Christ to incarcerated adults and youth and their families. 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 430 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.kpmi.org or call 800-298-2730.

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