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"GOD'S SPECIAL TIME"

Volume 13 #1

Winter 1995

"I was in prison and you came to me." Matthew 25:36

THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU

— to all who support Kairos with your prayers, your time, and your donations. We especially want to thank all who are praying for God's healing miracles for Jackie Martinez and Gene Wilkowski, dedicated Kairos volunteers. Jackie's lung condition is no better, but also no worse — thanks to your prayers. She is on oxygen all the time, still working part time, and still on the lung transplant waiting list. Gene had surgery right after Christmas to remove a rapidly growing brain tumor. He is having followup radiation treatments, along with recovering from some brain damage from the surgery itself. He's unable to go out by himself yet, and will really appreciate anyone who can come by (see his phone number in the District Board list) and take him out somewhere for coffee, lunch, a ride, a visit..... Praise God — he continues to be our Territorial Coordinator — the ministry he loves. So, friends, please keep on praying.

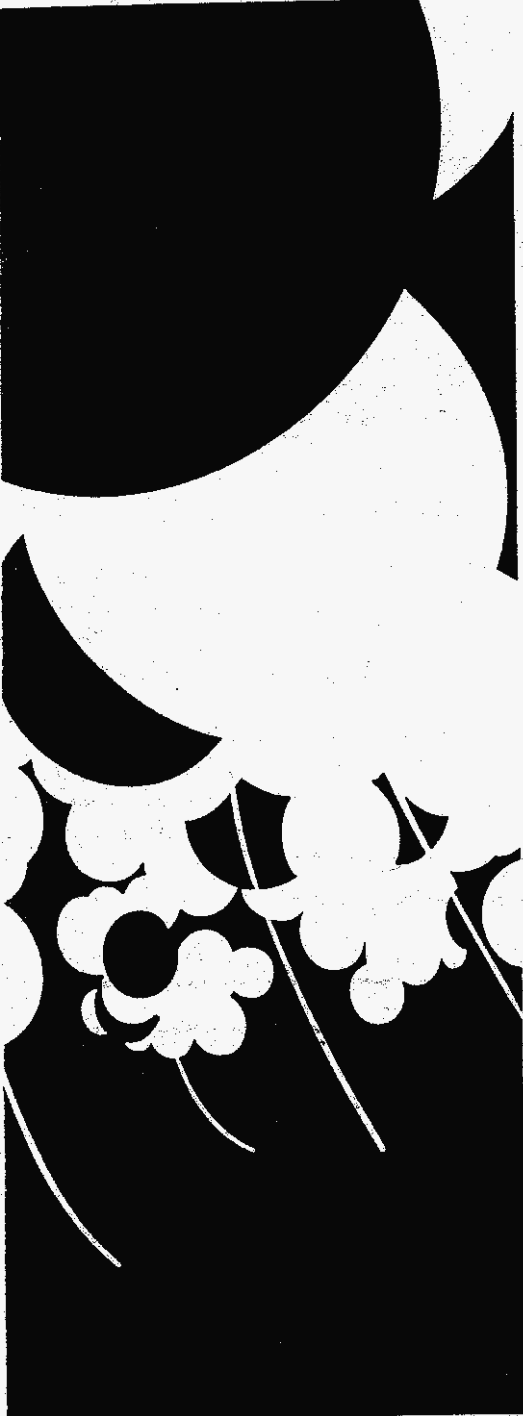
This "Thank you" is also on behalf of the many, many prison inmates whose lives are changed by their encounters with the love of Christ through the ministry of Kairos. We in Colorado are especially touched by local responses such as the following we received from an inmate in the Fremont Correctional Facility: "To whom it may concern: I hope that this small donation can help in some way with the efforts of the Kairos ministries. I could never explain how Kairos has touched my life and attempts at walking the Christian walk. Thank you so much." Donations from inmates are rare, and remind us of the widow's pennies which Jesus praised in Mark 12. See also the inmate's comment in the "Author's note" on the last page.

Your Kairos of Colorado District Board is also very much in need of and grateful for your prayer support. As one Board member reminded us at our last meeting, Satan hates Kairos and will do everything in his power to interfere with our ministry. But, since we know Jesus has the victory, we also know that Satan can only do his dirty work through persons who unwittingly listen to his lies when he twists the truth to try to confuse us. So we fervently ask you to join us as we pray that we will all keep our eyes on Jesus, on His love and purpose in our lives and in this ministry. So, for all your prayers, again we say —

THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU

KAIROS.....God's Special Time

by O. William Cooper



A cold chill shoots down my spine as the heavy steel gates slam shut behind me. I'm inside. This is my introduction to a Kairos weekend in a Colorado Correctional Facility. The experience is frightening at first. But the joy of loving and serving on behalf of Jesus Christ soon replaces the tension.

During the three-day weekend, a 35-member *outside* team conducts a short course in Christianity for 42 *insiders* at the facility. A 12-member inside team, who previously participated in the program, assists the outside team.

There are two Greek words for time — "chronos" is time kept on a watch. "Kairos" is God's time.

The spiritual focus of Kairos is modeled after the three-day denominational programs: the Roman Catholic Cursillo, the Lutheran Via DeChristo, and the United Methodist Walk to Emmaus. None of these programs are prison ministries.

The short course includes 15 talks — ten by lay persons, five by clergy. The participants inside the prison are told that the outside group represents the Christian faith, but that they will make no attempt to change them in any way. The promise is kept.

We return in a few weeks to conduct an all-day training seminar for interested insiders. This seminar teaches the insiders how to form their own support groups and Bible studies.

Several weeks later a two-day training retreat is offered. Insiders will learn how to share their faith. There is a growing Christian community in each facility we serve.

In April, I attended a three-day short course in Christianity. The leader of the weekend received three letters — one from each of three correctional facilities in the state. Inside each letter was a prayer calendar for each hour of this 72-hour weekend. Twenty-four hours a day an insider in each of these three facilities was on his knees praying for us. They prayed for us even while we slept! They didn't even know who we were.

The fact that some in the Kairos community wear numbers and others do not becomes incidental. Their fellowship and concern has given new meaning to Paul's message about being grafted into the family of God. Some of these people have become like family to me.

We focus on being friends to the friendless insiders. The outside team gets to know each resident by name. We pray for each other at the meetings and after we have left the facility.

Three months ago my daughter had a beautiful baby girl. The little one had problems in the birth process. She spent the first six weeks of her life in intensive care. My Christian brothers inside the walls prayed for little Sarah and our family every day during that ordeal. This bond of Christian fellowship is deep and meaningful for my family.

Each month, we share in worship and fellowship with interested insiders. A different insider prepares each service, including singing, a testimony and a devotional talk. This gives them good experience. As the insiders and outsiders share in small groups, we become honest about our joys and sorrows. We share our achievements and failures, great joys and

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devastating pain. We want them to see in us appropriate role models, so they can become role models for each other.

Some knew God only as a term of profanity in the past. In the fellowship of insiders and outsiders, God's love is visible. Each month, we focus on a brief passage of Scripture. We talk about what it means and how it applies to life both inside and outside the facility.

During the three-day course, Kairos provides the noon and evening meals for the insiders. Only the best is good enough. These meals are a taste of home cooking for the insiders. They love it! Each outsider brings at least 60 dozen home-made cookies. The insiders have all they can eat all day and then take a bag of cookies back to their "home" to share with friends.

Each outsider writes each participating insider a personal letter. That's 35 letters for each *insider*. For many it is the only mail they have received during their imprisonment.

A firm handshake, a hug, a hand on the shoulder means a lot to people who otherwise feel abandoned. We never ask "why are you here?" or "how much time are you doing?" That doesn't matter.

They are people whom God loves, and we love them, too. They are lonely, broken, and disappointed. I can be a friend. I try to bring hope and encouragement. At the close of the short course, residents have an opportunity tell what the three days have meant to them.

Some said, "I came for the food and cookies, but I found Jesus Christ in the process." Many say they found a new direction for their lives. One man startled me when he said, "I thank God I am in here, because if I hadn't come to prison, I might never have come to know Jesus Christ." Others admit that they enjoyed the food and the cookies. They know they can be honest with us.

I go to the facility to share tangible

evidence of God's love, and I leave the results to God. Studies suggest that the ratio of residents who return to such facilities, after release, is about 70%. The same studies also show that the ratio of

return, for residents who have been deeply involved in Kairos, is about 15 to 20%.

Some outsiders have memories of days they spent inside. They share that with the insiders. They're living proof that you can make it on the outside after being an insider. They are an inspiration for the insiders who are willing to let God have His way in their

lives.

It's not all excitement and enthusiasm. There are times when I think someone will be different, but I find out as time passes that they're not. It's like being in the local church. I hurt when those disappointments come. I want them to be made new. I want them to change.

Part of abiding in Christ is obeying His commands. I fail God in many times and ways. It is an indescribable joy to do something I know He wants me to do. I get great joy and satisfaction sharing the Scriptures with my brothers.

It took a while. I had to learn to use my eyes. At first I just saw men who had been hurt, disappointed, deceived, abused, and brutalized. As one visit followed another, I was soon able to see the face of one who said, "I was in prison and you visited me."

Have you ever considered serving God in prison? You can! Would you give your pastor time off to serve? There are facilities in Colorado that we aren't serving because we lack the lay people and clergy to make up the outsiders. Several facilities want us to come, but the personnel limitations make it impossible.

We need people willing to participate in these weekend experiences and then go back monthly to share, encourage and

care for the residents. Or you could make the cookies each member of the team takes on the weekend. Maybe you or your church group could sponsor a meal at a cost of about \$150 to \$250.

Your children's Sunday School class can decorate place mats to use at a meal. These are precious to the residents. They take the place mats off the tables and take them back to their "home".

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews wrote, "Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering." Will you bring Kairos time, God's special time, to the residents in a correctional facility in Colorado?



Bill Cooper is a retired minister. He lives with his wife, Ruth in Loveland. Bill keeps busy writing Bible study courses, teaching seminary classes, and taking study trips to the Holy Land.



Greatness is not found in possessions, power, position, or prestige. It is discovered in goodness, humility, service, and character.



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KAIROS of COLORADO is a Christian prison ministry reaching out to inmates in several Colorado prisons with the Good News of God's love, forgiveness, and new life available to all who repent of their sin, and submit to Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Our ministry is all volunteer (no paid staff) and depends entirely on tax-deductible donations to cover expenses. You may use pre-addressed envelope for donations and inquiries, or write to address on this newsletter. *Thank you for your prayers and support!*

1995 CALENDAR

Fremont	#25 --- Mar 16-19	#26 --- Sep 21-24
Women's	#24 --- Apr 20-23	#25 --- Oct 12-15
Delta	#7 --- April 27-30	#8 --- Sep 28-Oct 1
Territorial	#19 --- May 25-28	#20 --- Nov 16-19

Please put these dates on your calendar now. This will help you plan ahead. There is always a need for team members, Closing guests, and pray-ers. Contact any Board member for more information.

LAST FRIDAY REUNIONS

- * Open to ALL
- * Denver area
- * Potluck at 6:30
- * Fellowship
- * Witnessing

This Reunion is held in various churches around the metro area. Call Joe Mares for current location and directions. Bring friends! See you there!

SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING -- FROM INSIDE

Have you ever considered the child who becomes lost in a crowd -- how his face fills with anguish and his eyes reflect fear, when he realizes he is alone amongst strangers? He runs silently in search of his mother. A glimmer of hope flashes across his face as he recognizes the dress she was wearing. As he draws close to the woman in the dress, disappointment sets in, for it is another who wears the same dress. Filled with despair, he sits alone, while tears stream down his rosy cheeks. He wishes with all his child's might, that his mother would magically appear. Time passes, and his hope fades to fear once more. Just as he has all but given up, his mother reaches down and slips his tiny frail hand into the warmth and strength of her own.

How like that child I find us to be. We rush madly through this life, caught up the crowd that chases after the things of this world. As the years pass, trinkets and dreams that we have stockpiled along the way fade into yesterday. Today often seems empty and full of woe, tomorrow unobtainable. We come to fear our own mortality, as we sit and watch others of younger years obtain the goals we only dreamed of. We grasp at the fading threads of our youth, only to realize it also faded with yesterday.

It is then that many of us cry out in despair, while tears stain our withered cheeks. Where did all the time go? Why did we waste it on such frivolous things? Yet for those who

know Christ, there is still time. If we have not completely tuned out the small voice that lives within us. Yes, even now, we can stretch out our frail human hand, secure that we will find the strong firm hand of our Father reaching out to grasp our hand in his. So it is we can become as children once more through the mercy of His saving grace. The question is: Will we stop to listen to His voice, or will the noise of the crowd leave us deaf for all time?

Author's note: Kairos was an opportunity for me to hear His sweet voice. To learn to stretch out my hand to him daily. In doing so my life has been transformed. I invite you to reach for His hand today and every day. The closer we walk, the more distant the crowd becomes.

Excerpts from writings by a CWCF inmate, published with her permission.

MAKE A FRIEND

BE A FRIEND

BRING YOUR FRIEND TO CHRIST