

## Prison Ministry – Kairos

By Rosemary Koina

This is an offshoot of Cursillo and Antioch. My involvement arose from friendships that came from Cursillo.

Kairos - A time with God - Or God's special time. *"I was in prison and you visited me".* Matthew 25:36.

In Kairos Outside, I have found a ministry where I feel at home. I feel total acceptance and totally loved, warts and all. I have never found a place that is so full of joy and love of God. Despite all of the muck that is still in each persons life. In Kairos I have found true love.

It is a ministry of love and support for prisoners, that's Kairos Inside; and Kairos Outside is for those family and friends whose lives are affected by someone's imprisonment. It is Kairos outside where I have become involved. It has been in Canberra for about 15 years.

My involvement has been with Kairos outside for women as part of the team. We invite guests to come and experience love, hope, peace and joy that can be yours with a life that has Jesus at its centre.

It is not a course, not an attempt at conversion. It is a reaching out in love, compassion to hurting people without judgement, and without questions. The guests are often not Christians. It is an ecumenical

ministry. It is trying to help guests to see that there is another way to live, that they do not have to go it alone. Friendships are started and support continues beyond the weekend experience. It is grounded in our faith and knowledge that God loves and cherishes each one of us, that we are all worthy.

I personally love the ecumenical aspect - women ministering to women. Women ordained in other Christian churches sharing their beliefs. There is so much to learn from the richness of their lives and how they share and practice and live their faith. Women loving and caring for women, ministering to women is incredibly powerful and special. I think that we lose so much by not having women able to do this in this way in our Catholic Church ... but, that is another issue.

I have listened to Pentecostal women, Anglican, Baptists, Uniting Church and Roman Catholic women - some of these women who are ordained to minister to others. We all share the same belief we just get to where we are going in a slightly different way. Each one of us has found a meaningful way of living our faith for ourselves and there is total respect for

the different churches that are represented in Kairos. On a team, about 30 to 35 women, there must be mixture of different Christian churches ie not all Roman Catholics.

A Kairos weekend involves music, sharing stories from ones life, meditations but no church services. It is supported by a team of chaplains. The team undergoes several weeks of training prior to the guest

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weekend. Talks cover topics such as Choices, Church, anger, forgiveness, relationships, etc. Each person on the team must be Christian. It is intense but very special ... and there is some fun too!

A central idea is to listen, listen, listen and to love, love, love. And, forgiveness is fundamental to the whole weekend. And through this barriers come down and the Holy Spirit comes in! It is so amazing to see this happening! The weekend is upheld by prayer from all around the world.

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I have been deeply moved by the love I felt for women with whom I never thought I would have had anything in common nor would I have thought that I would have had as part of my life. I have really understood so much more deeply that we are all the same - we all love, we all struggle, we all feel pain, anger despair and hope, we all need to forgive and be forgiven. It is a ministry to women who come from all walks, of life - professionals to some of whom are quite marginalised, but nearly all are afraid to talk about what has happened to people they love or care about. In this sense they too are in prison.

Those in jail are someone's son, daughter, brother, sister, friend etc, and these women experience isolation and their own type of imprisonment too. For these women their imprisonment might be anger, shame, pain, rejection, guilt, fear, isolation - Kairos hopes to show them that there are people who can and will love

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and support them and that faith can keep alive hope. On the team there are Women of faith many of whom often have had similar experiences. Kairos shows them that they are worthy of God's love, a new concept for many of them, for others it is a rejected concept, for others it is their faith undergoing a transformation. Kairos gives complete unconditional love and acceptance.

The acceptance and tolerance in Kairos is amazing and I have never seen or experienced this to such a degree anywhere else. Last year one of the guests said "*if church was like this, I'd never have left; I want to find church that is like this*".

Well, Kairos for me is the purest form of church that I have ever experienced. It is loving one another as we are loved by God.

I would like to share this song from Kairos with you as it sums up Kairos perfectly, far better than any words that I could use.

(Song, played)  
*"In this room."*