

Love in Action - July 08

Kairos

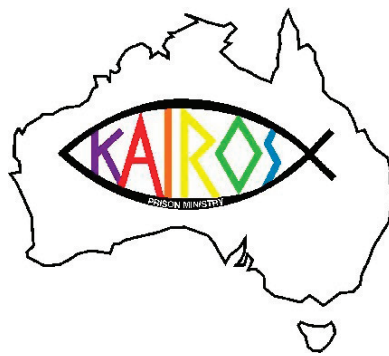
Kairos is an interdenominational Christian Ministry to people in gaol and their relatives on the outside.

During an intensive 3 ½ day 'Short Course' for prisoners, or a 2 ½ day Weekend for their relatives, the Kairos program re-builds people's self worth and their capacity to trust and to re-engage in community. The Short Courses and Weekends are followed up by regular visits for 6 months (until the next course or weekend) to continue to demonstrate that there is a better way to live. The Short Courses, Weekends and Journey Programs are delivered and funded by volunteers.

Kairos has been operating in Australia since 1995 and is now active in 14 gaols in NSW, VIC and SA and 11 Kairos Outside regions in QLD, NSW, VIC, SA and WA. This year it will start in Brisbane, and then in Perth and Tasmania. It is instrumental in reducing the rate of recidivism (return to custody within two years of release) from 43% to 34%. This means for graduates of a Kairos program, there are 9% fewer criminal offences, policing needs, court costs and custody and parole costs. These savings indicate that for every \$1 invested in Kairos, there is a Social Return on Investment of \$15.

Most of the people in gaol and their families, have never known supportive, nurturing relationships. Being in gaol rarely if ever, improves anyone, and the effect on families is often catastrophic. On the inside, isolation deepens with fear, competition, control, cynicism, lack of trust..... so that people withdraw and avoid meaningful relationships. On the outside, wives and families become social outcasts simply because someone in their family is in goal. New patterns of behaviour are learned very quickly, both inside and out. The longer the new patterns are practiced, the more it re-shapes the character and soul of the individual, the harder it is to come back to an integrated, wholesome and abundant life.

People who have experienced Kairos in gaols, God's special time in their lives, have given countless testimonies to having new hope, a new future, fellowship in a new community.



Kairos Outside Guests testify to a realisation of being valuable members of God's family, replacing isolation and loneliness, anger, resentment rejection with a new sense of self esteem in relationship with each other. At the heart of Kairos are two instructions.

Matthew 28:19-20 Matthew 25:36

Lesley Carter has been engaged in Kairos Inside in Mullawa and Dillwynia women's prisons, and Keith Roberts and I in Silverwater men's prison. Teri Kempe, Megan Norris, Robyn Lyn, and Kath Henry have been engaged in Kairos Outside programs for women in Sydney.

What is exciting about it? To see new hope being born as people are invited into a Kingdom they never thought possible. To understand what Jesus really meant when he spoke to those who are 'poor in spirit'. To be together as individual but connected pieces of a larger picture of the Divine Conspiracy, empowered to do what we really want to do in harmonious union with the infinite power of God.

Opportunities to be involved? Yes there are. If God is calling you to do something, speak to someone who has engaged with a Kairos Team, and ask them if, having put their hand to the plough, they have wanted to turn back.

Tony Carter <><
CEO, Kairos Prison Ministry Australia



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Love in Action Kazak style...

In this issue, Ty Soupidis shares about his (fairly) recent trip to Kazakhstan and his experiences with Andrew and Sarah's team. Read on...

Last year I got a gentle prompting from God about going to visit Andrew & Sarah and their team in Kazakhstan. I was not sure who to take or what to do, so I went with it for a while trying to understand better. Initially I expected to take a young adults team with me. This was definitely to be a "tea and hugs" style mission trip rather than a "serve and provide" one. This door closed for me as we decided as Northridge Staff that the timing was better for a small group of people rather than a team to go. So the team shrank to a small group, then the small group shrank to...me. Though daunted by the idea of travelling that far alone, and for such a short period of time, God was very good.

I had many people give me words of encouragement to pass on to the team. I went with a sense that despite my own feeling of limitations, God was going to use me powerfully in that short time to bring encouragement, hope and strengthening.

So on May 9th I headed out from Sydney Airport bound for southern Kazakhstan. Close to many of the other countries in that region, southern Kaz is well placed as a distribution centre for goods. Andy and Sarah and their team have been working in the region for 4 years with partner organisations, supplying their needs as Papa provides.

It was a long trek to get to there, but 24-ish hours later I arrived and was greeted by Andrew, Matt McKenzie and Andrew Ross (he and his family were over there for a "tea and hugs" time of their own, and were delayed in returning home). It was so good to see them again. Over the next 6 days we lived, worked, ate, walked and talked about life for them and the hand of God. It all flowed so naturally, woven together as the Master Craftsmen does so well. We talked about the past, present and future, about the hopes and dreams for the work there. We talked about what was happening in the team itself, the dynamics and journeys of a growing team.

Very encouragingly, the team consists now of mainly local workers, with only Andrew, Sarah and Matt being foreigners. They are so blessed by the spirit of the Father's love which exists in the team environment.

I spent most of my time with the "foreigners." We went trekking in the beautiful mountains nearby one day. Matt and I travelled to the local "Bazaar" to buy gifts and spend some time together. I went running a few times with the excessively fit Andy and Sar. We ate and drank at the local restaurants. And underneath it all, God was very much fulfilling the purposes for which he sent me over. I left 6 days later having seriously blessed the team that is there, thanks be to God. I was able to speak words of encouragement and challenge to them. I was able to take over 10kg of gifts from Australia, which was wonderfully overwhelming for them all. I was able to take letters from some of you to loved ones in Kaz. It is wonderful when we put our small offering into the hands of God he multiplies it. I feel that I was able to contribute far beyond my own limits because of the limitless nature of the God. Thank you to all those who contributed so generously to the gifts for the team, they were totally blessed.

x Ty



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The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital

The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia, co-founded by Dr Catherine Hamlin AC, treats 1,400 women suffering obstetric fistula every year. The Hospital and its supporters help some of the most destitute women outcasts in one of the poorest countries in the world.

Background

It is estimated that throughout the world, one woman in every twenty will have difficulty in childbirth. Modern medical care and treatment, with easy access to hospitals and doctors, has reduced this threat in the West. But this is not so in developing countries. The joy of parenthood is frequently marred in the aftermath of obstructed labour. Days in obstructed labour can cause a hole or fistula to the birth passage, the bladder and sometimes the rectum. As a result, the woman leaks urine constantly. She then has an offensive odour. Her husband will leave her and her family and friends will avoid her. Many a young girl with fistula injuries has suffered a fate worse than death, experiencing a life of rejection, separation, loneliness and "shame".

In 1958, two Australian doctors Reg and Catherine Hamlin, went to Ethiopia to train midwives. Seeing the plight of these poor women, they became determined to help them. They developed a delicate surgical technique that, in most cases, will result in a complete cure. Then they built the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. Since then more than 24,000 women have been treated and cured. The Hospital now trains doctors from other developing countries. The effect of their work is spreading world-wide, restoring new life and dignity of thousands of young women.

Sarah Kirsop writes "I was drawn to help these particular women as I was deeply touched by their plight after reading the account of Dr Hamlin's work in the book "The Hospital by the River." I was able to picture the women, destitute, smelling of urine and suffering humiliation and rejection. I have received wonderful Obstetric care and had 3 Caesarian sections and this could so easily be me. I was humbled by Dr Hamlin's vision from Matt 25:40 and, having had the opportunity to meet her I appreciate her humility and commitment to her patients".

The proceeds from Sarah's books go to support the hospital. She writes: "I compiled my first little collection of writings in 'Heaven's Scent' to reflect the sense of renewal experienced through natural beauty and stillness. Catherine also loves gardening and at the hospital the girls spend a lot of time in the gardens whilst awaiting surgery or recuperating..."

Sarah has also written a book of poems "Raw Silk and Pearls - Poems to celebrate life".

To find out more about the work of the fistula hospital, and ways you can support the work, see www.fistulatrust.org, or speak to Sarah (skirsop@bigpond.net.au).



Would you like to get involved?

If you are involved in a Love in Action activity with other Northridge folk (locally or abroad), and would like to share your story or highlight an upcoming event - we'd like to hear from you! We would also love to help if you have been touched by a story here, (or elsewhere!) and would like to get involved in some way, or if there is a way we could help support what you are already doing.

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