

# Kairos

## “God’s Special Time”

The state of California imprisons more people than any other state in the United States. More than 172,000 men, women and youths are behind bars with another 100,000 under the jurisdiction of the courts. Many of these prisoners have a family member on the outside, usually female, and children, who support them financially and emotionally. Who supports these women?

Often, through no fault of their own, these women are placed in a situation of being the sole bread winner and caretaker of the family. The spouses, parents, other relatives and close friends of the incarcerated often “do time” right along with their loved ones. It is important for them to know that they are not alone and that there is a Christian community that cares. Their journey is a difficult one – one that may not be understood by the general public, their own families and in some cases their church communities. Kairos Outside is a nondenominational Christian Ministry that sponsors a “weekend retreat” at no cost to the guest, open to women of all faiths. It is a program designed specifically to offer support and demonstrate God’s love and grace and to provide a safe place where women can share with each other, to encourage the sharing of life’s journey, to offer unconditional love and acceptance in a Christian setting. Kairos also fosters spiritual growth, creates an opportunity for a relationship with God and promotes participation in a small support group.

The weekend consists of a series of talks by women sharing their life’s journey. Women who were previously guest on a Kairos Outside weekend give many of these talks. Each guest has an opportunity to review the talk in small table groups. Sharing is voluntary and is done at a level that is comfortable for each guest. The program is interspersed with good food, wonderful music, prayer, fun activities and numerous surprises. We like those who attend a weekend to stay for the entire weekend as the program is designed to build throughout the course of their time at the retreat. There are many surprises over the length of the retreat and a variety of entertainment. We do not want any woman to miss a moment of this wonderful experience. Guests are not asked to join any church, make any expression of faith or to become part of any religion. Any woman 18 years and older whose life has been impacted by the incarceration of a loved one is eligible to attend a Kairos Outside weekend.

Follow up reunions are held several times a year throughout Northern California to help renew and deepen the bonds of community among those who have a loved one in prison.

The following are selected from the many comments shared by the women attending the weekend.

*“When I came here, I didn’t have a heart to put back together. I had thought about ending my life. I was very angry with God. Now I have renewed my relationship with God, and know that ending my life is not what I want to do. The weekend truly healed my broken heart and has given me a reason to live.”*

*“I needed to talk to another woman whose husband had been released. My family doesn’t understand why our adjustment has been so difficult. They think that because he is out, everything should return to normal. It can’t. We’ve both changed. I was surprised that I could share with someone who understood.”*

*“My daughter-in-law told me I would find forgiveness. I didn’t believe her, but it’s true. I have learned the difference between forgetting and forgiving. I truly found unconditional love here.”*

*“For the first time in my life, I feel as though I have experienced God in the person of all of you.”*

*“I came to Kairos Outside in 2001 as I am a single mother of a son who is incarcerated, after 25 years of this battle dealing with his illness and drug addiction and several incarcerations. I was hurting and felt so alone and didn’t think I could go on. To be honest I didn’t want to but Christ met me there and wrapped his arms around me through the Kairos Sisters and the unconditional love shown to me there through that sisterhood. It has truly given me the strength for the journey to go on.*

In His Service!

Margaret Campisi

Mission Board Member

Our next Free Retreat “Sisters Along the Way” will be September 28-30 at St. Ann’s Retreat Center in San Francisco. Watch the newsletter for more information.