

# The ADVOCATE

Queen of Peace Quarterly Newsletter

Fall 2022



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**Editor's Note:** *The Fall issue of The Advocate includes articles on the Just Faith program as it broadens its past discussion on systemic racism to address the growing division in our society; OLQP outreach to Afghan families; a church member who gifts her homemade quilts to peace and justice workers; and two brothers (and OLQP members) whose love of birdwatching has led to a guide for birding in Arlington Parks and advocacy for habitat preservation. Also, a compelling piece on the dark history of colonialism in Haiti and an inspiring account of the prison ministry work of Kairos International.*

*Paula Cruickshank  
Editor, The Advocate*

## Just Faith — Conversations about Race and Belonging

By Kathy Desmond

JustFaith, an adult ministry of OLQP, is a justice-oriented formation process empowering those who participate to develop a passion and thirst for justice by studying scriptures and the Church's social teachings and wrestling with what these mean in their lives and our society. It is not meant for the faint of heart!

In 2018, about a dozen parishioners and five OLQP facilitators began a conversation about race and belonging to raise their own awareness and commitment to this work. They now want to share it with the parish.

"The course was a conversion experience for me," said participant Gary Gardner. "The reading educated me on the through-line of racism across our country's history, from the colonial-era slaveholders to election officials suppressing the vote today. The pattern is one of persistent resurfacing white supremacy across our history."

On a personal level, he continues, "my transformation was profound. I always supported civil rights, but I was comfortable and distant in my progressive views, which meant I didn't have to wrestle with stereotypes I hardly knew I carried. Now my views are shaped by compassion rather than stereotypes. It's such a humbling transformation. But that's the loving method of our God, isn't it?"

"We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist," famed writer and activist James Baldwin asserts.

As participants wrestle with hard questions, they discover that faith enlightens and builds community leading to transforming themselves and society. "Faith is a helpful salve in challenging discussions," Gary continues.

The facilitators, led by Michele Chang, Finnie Caldwell, Sally Diaz-Wells, Rebecca Grant Jenkins (and Patrick Julius in the first year), used a curriculum on race and equity developed by JustFaith Ministries, based in Louisville (<https://justfaith.org>), to guide their reading and discussions. Due to the pandemic, 90-minute sessions were held during the school

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## Just Faith

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year over Zoom. All sessions included prayer, dialogue, active listening, and relationship building and some included videos. Books, articles, and guest speakers challenged participants “with stories and concepts to transform their understanding of racism and privilege in their local and national contexts.”

The first course, Faith and Racial Equity: Exploring Power and Privilege, was designed for 8 weeks with homework assignments between weekly discussion sessions, which often included confidential personal experiences. But most needed more time to complete the readings and assignments. So, for the second course, Faith and Racial Healing: Embracing Truth, Justice, and Restoration, the schedule expanded to include a preparation week, with biweekly Zoom sessions from September through June. Now a close-knit cohort, participants returned for the third course, Faith and Racial Justice: Changing Systems and Structure, completed in June 2022.

I asked participants: What were your main take-aways? Peg Butner grew up in a small town with only white people. She came to understand that people of color grow up with very different experiences of discrimination. Readings in *White Fragility* and *The New Jim Crow* coupled with group discussions were especially helpful in her learning how “color blindness” is misguided and harmful. “If you don’t see skin color, you don’t see all of whom a person is,” Peg said. Learning about redlining was another

eye-opener. “It was a helpful, timely experience.”

Anne Murphy describes her learning style as coming from people’s real experience. She prefers to talk, listen, and engage in conversation with others. Growing up in a large urban area, she was familiar with the issues, but the experience gave her a deeper consciousness, especially reading books that offered perspectives of people of color. *I’m Still Here* (by Austin Channing Brown) “exploded her head.” Talking about the readings in group discussion was key to her new awareness. The course highlighted how much she didn’t know and how insufficient her educational background was, including the realization that in too many places the Catholic Church is Missing In Action on racial justice. Anne concluded, “I learned that I must take responsibility for not knowing what is going on with people.”

Despite his Jesuit education and progressive background, Gary now sees race relations in the US differently, less a story of progress to one that is much more complex, more a battle between forces of progress and backlash with every step forward

followed by a counter reaction. Now he understands voter suppression not as the work of a few bad apples, but as the resurfacing of a longstanding, systemic problem, racism. “Too often, many do not want to see people of color as full people.”

While the facilitator team was primarily people of color, the participants were white. Facilitator Michele Chang explains that this is nei-



*Clockwise from top left: Rebecca Grant Jenkins, Michele Chang, Patrick Julius, Sally Diaz-Wells, Finnie Caldwell*

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## Just Faith

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ther unusual or problematic and describes how voices and perspectives of color are abundantly available through film, video, literature, and poetry. “We welcome all parishioners to this conversation, and all stories are valuable and valued,” she explains, “but we can and should do the work without laying additional burdens on our brothers and sisters of color.”

What’s next? The facilitator team is re-forming to lead a new group of parishioners in Fall 2022. They are adapting the program to incorporate the lessons learned over the past three years. This program will create even more opportunities for self-awareness and reflection and practicing relational listening and

conversation. “It doesn’t just focus on racism and systemic racism,” says Michele, “but also looks at what lies at the heart of the growing divisiveness in our society, addressing the need to listen to one another.”

We often ask, “What can I do?” on tough issues. We feel overwhelmed. One answer is: Educate yourself. And the parish is hoping to help with this new program scheduled to launch in Fall 2022. Like the Just-Faith program, it is designed to be very supportive and friendly, while still challenging. “It will be life-changing,” participants promise. If you are interested, contact Sally Diaz-Wells ([sdiazwells@olqpva.org](mailto:sdiazwells@olqpva.org)).

## Queen of Peace Outreach to Afghan Refugees

By Jack Sullivan

OLQP has a tradition of assisting refugees escaping violence or persecution. When South Vietnam fell in 1973, the parish welcomed a three-generation, extended family of Vietnamese refugees, found them temporary housing, and funded their support until the men found jobs.

Through the years the parish has assisted refugees from Central and South America. The fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban more than a year ago, however, offered challenges of a scale not heretofore encountered. Once again, OLQP parishioners have responded.

By the summer of 2022,



Two volunteers sorting Matt 25 clothing donations for Afghan families

some 70,000 displaced Afghans had come to the U.S. A significant portion of them relocated in the Washington D.C. area. Under the auspices of a State Department program, some 180 organizations nationwide have participated in the relocation effort. Among them is the Diocese of Arlington’s, Catholic Charities’ Migrant and Refugee Services.

“The Queen of Peace program began very informally when one family came looking for help,” according to Pat Vinkenes, a program coordinator. “New families just show up at the parish or contact one of us personally. The number of families has grown by word of

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## Afghan Refugees

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mouth. Currently about thirty families, including one with sixteen members, is being helped.”

“The activity is not a separate ministry,” Pat noted. “With Sally Diaz-Wells, Social Justice Minister, as a main point of contact, several existing ministries are involved.” They include: The Food Pantry; Matthew 25; and Gabriel Project.

Pat explained that at the food pantry, Afghan families either come to OLQP to pick up groceries or volunteers deliver the food to them. The [Matt. 25] shop volunteers receive, organize, and sometimes deliver clothing, household goods, shoes, backpacks, and school supplies and the Gabriel Project provides new moms with baby furniture and clothing, Pat said.

Individual parishioners are recruited to pick up and drop off supplies, deliver food and furniture, and provide transportation, Pat noted. This once meant

driving a couple to the hospital for the delivery of their baby. Other volunteers assist with immigration paperwork, school enrollment, job searches, and applying for Virginia rental and heating/cooling assistance. Because Afghan women usually do not work outside the home, parish volunteers are helping them earn money by providing sewing machines and fabric.

In carrying out the Afghan program OLQP is asking for parishioner's time and specific goods and services, not money. Cash donations can be sent to the Diocese of Arlington's, Catholic Charities' Migrant and Refugee Services. That agency has an existing process for handling and disseminating funds.

Individuals who wish to participate in the Afghan program should review the Signup Genius via the link in the weekly bulletin. They may also contact Pat Vinkenes or Frances Michalkewicz at [OLQP4Afghans@gmail.com](mailto:OLQP4Afghans@gmail.com),



### Eileen Melia Prays Through Quilting

by Sue Carlson, M.D.

Eileen Melia is a long-time parishioner of OLQP. She is a wife, mother, grandmother, retired nurse, and educator. She is also a peace activist and an advocate for civil rights, the LGBTQ community, and for people with serious illness or disabilities.

In the mid 1990's, Eileen founded Affirmation Quilt Ministry which uses quilts to recognize and affirm the good works of others. She has awarded over 400 of her creations to social justice champions, educators, peace activists, people with health challenges, and others. Eileen gifted a quilt to Pope Francis, some bishops, priests, nuns, Nobel Peace Prize laureates, authors, people assisting in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 tragedy, family members, and many more.

For Eileen, each quilt is a “sewn prayer” that affirms and thanks the recipient for her/his work on behalf of the community and of others.

Every quilt has a theme to match the recipient's accomplishments. Some themes include the “World Peace” quilt, the “I Spy God In Many Places” quilt, and the “Loving Hands of Sisterly Support” quilt.

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## Quilting

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Eileen writes a meditation about each creation and its recipient, describing the quilt's theme, texture, pattern, and colors and how they relate to the receiver's contribution to humanity. These prayerful thoughts focus on the quilting process, the finished product, and the symbolism as it relates to the quilt's recipient.

"When the quilt is used, it is a reminder of all the recipient has done to advance the cause of peace and justice. It lets her know that others appreciate her work," Eileen explained.

The warmth of the quilt and the warmth of the meditation enhance each other in an affirmation of

the receiver. "They provide others with an opportunity to see the holy in the mundane," she noted.

In addition to gifting quilts, Eileen gifts her talent by teaching informal quilting classes to various groups, including people in low-income housing and women in substance abuse rehabilitation programs. With each class Eileen strives to live the gospel as she respects and places value on the lives of others.

Thank you, Eileen, for your commitment to peace and justice, and for sharing your sewn prayers with so many. Thank you for acknowledging, healing, and empowering others. Thank you for inviting all of us to join you in promoting peace and justice in our world.



Eileen holds her "I Spy God In Many Places" quilt



Eileen shows some of the fabric she uses when making quilts



By Paula Cruickshank

*"All things bright and beautiful.  
All creatures great and small.  
All things wise and wonderful.  
The Lord God made them all."*

*– Cecil Frances Alexander*

When COVID-19 hit, it changed the lives of students everywhere and literally overnight. Danté and Max Julius, who are members of OLQP and students in Arlington Public Schools, were no exception. However, what was exceptional about them was what the two brothers chose to do once their virtual classes were done for the day.

Arlington County is blessed with many wooded parks, ponds, and streams and Dante,' 15, and Max,17, were fortunate to be within walking distance of many natural surroundings. So, with extra time on their hands, both boys were able to spend more time outdoors.

For Danté, that meant more time for bird watching, a passion he had developed a few years before that fateful day in March 2020. For Max, it wasn't long before he caught the bug, too. In fact, so much so, that the brothers launched a website <https://sites.google.com/view/chipperbirders/home> and published a local bird guidebook. The Guide to Birds of Arlington VA <https://sites.google.com/view/chipperbirders/guide>.

The guide is designed to give the local community a trusted source of information about the birds inhabiting Arlington County parks. But while its purpose is a serious one, Max and Danté do not take themselves too seriously in sharing their discoveries, even using a nickname, "The Chipper Birders." ("Chipper" as in happy and as in their nickname for Chipping Sparrows).

Simply put, the Chipper Birders modestly explain on their website that the guide was "created, managed and maintained by two brothers who enjoy birding in their local parks and want to share tips and tricks of how to identify and find the bird." Putting on their professional hats, Max lists himself as the Website Designer, Photographer, and Videographer. Danté is the self-described Bird Expert, Field Notetaker, and Artist.



Even Chipper Birders (Max and Danté Julius) take a break sometime.

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## BIRDERS

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Then Max and Danté spell out their broader mission: “to unite our local community to restore our environment so that it is suitable to creatures who are here currently or have been here. We also want to make people aware of how quickly our planet is dying and how ... we can make a big difference.”

Recently the two brothers teamed up to raise funds for the annual Birdathon sponsored by the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia. Their challenge was to see how many species of birds they sighted throughout the day, from 7 am to 8 pm, on May 17, 2022. An article about Danté and Max (<https://www.audubonva.org/news/a-birdathon-story-the-chipperbirders>) noted that the Chipper Birders spotted 85 species at five locations and exceeded their goal of \$1,500, raising \$1,785.

Proceeds from the Birdathon will help to support citizen science and habitat conservation in the lower Potomac River Important Bird Area, promote native plants to help the birds, and support an educator at Hog Island, which is known for its waterfowl and wetland species and opportunities to view and photograph them.



Spotted Sandpiper

A little closer to home, Max has led nature tours at the annual OLQP picnic. Observing and identifying the many living creatures around us, Max said, “adds to the beauty of nature and life.”

Fr. Tim often challenges us to reach out to those we consider “the other” and treat everyone equally. He has also reminded us of the words Jesus preached that made clear humankind is all part of the same body —different, but equal parts. “If one part is honored, every part shares its joy.” (1 Corinthians 12:26)

Although Max and Danté did not cite Bible verses in their interview for this article, they offered a similar message about all living creatures, how we should respect them, and that it is up to us to protect and preserve their natural environment.

“This care should apply to individual creatures, too,” the brothers emphasized. “We should not think of [them] as lesser beings,” Danté said and Max added, “They all have a purpose here and they [all] have a life.” It’s clear that both brothers, by their words, deeds, and advocacy, make a convincing case that all creatures — great and small — deserve one.



Scarlet Tanager





## Haiti: A History of Exploitation

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by Sue Carlson, M.D.

During the 25 years that OLQP has been twinned with St. Joseph parish, we have witnessed the resilience of the people of Medor and are aware that resilience is a word that is often used to describe the enduring strength and spirit of the people of Haiti, despite the many challenges they face.

We see Haitian resilience in daily activities that many of us have never experienced even once — carrying water to their homes, walking great distances because there are no passable roads, going outside to use the bathroom, to name several examples.

Haitians have demonstrated immense resilience over the past two centuries as they struggled for equality and justice as a result of the continued economic colonization of their country. When Haiti won its war of independence from France, it was uniquely denied the ability to invest in its people and its infrastructure because of the unprecedented reparations that France forced Haiti to pay the enslavers for their lost “property”.

Most Haitians and many of those who work in solidarity with them know about this history, but the majority of the world does not. The *New York Times* recently published “The Ransom: Haiti's Lost Billions”, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/05/20/world/americas/enslaved-haiti-debt-timeline.html>, an article analyzing the centuries of economic oppression suffered by Haiti at the hands of its former colonial power.

Below is a thumbnail summary of the *New York Times*' article, focusing on France's demands for money from a newly independent Haiti and the ongoing results of that demand.

Haiti won its hard-fought war of independence from France in 1804. This revolution of enslaved people resulted in the formation of the world's first Black republic and the first country in the New World to abolish slavery. This model was so feared by the international community that it did not recognize the country and boycotted Haitian commerce.

The French returned in 1825, demanding that Haiti pay reparations to the former enslavers or else face invasion. Haiti is the first and only country where formerly enslaved people and their descendants paid an indemnity to the enslavers and the enslavers' families. This continued for generations.

The price France demanded from Haiti, 150 million francs, was far beyond Haiti's ability to pay; the first installment was about six times Haiti's income that year.

To put it in perspective, the amount of the indemnity was nearly twice as much as France received from the United States for the sale of Louisiana, which at that time spread over all or parts of fifteen modern states. Haiti was 1/77 the size.

To make the payments, Haiti was forced to take loans that charged exorbitant interest rates. Haiti's “double debt” (the reparations plus the interest rates on the loans taken to make the payments) enriched France and set Haiti on a path into poverty and underdevelopment. In some years, France's profits from the “double debt” exceeded Haiti's entire public works budget.

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## Exploitation

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The US invaded Haiti in 1915, seizing control of its finances. This resulted in decades in which New York banks and Wall Street collected up to 25% of Haiti's revenue. Many Haitians actively resisted the American invasion and 19-year occupation. U.S. occupying forces brutally suppressed dissent.

It took Haiti over 130 years, until 1957, to pay its international debts. The country's ability to prosper was severely damaged as a result.

If those funds had remained in Haiti, they would have added an estimated \$21 billion to the Haitian economy over the last two centuries. The lost economic growth Haiti experienced as a result is likely in the \$115 billion range. If Haiti hadn't been forced to pay reparations, some analysts assert that its economy would now mirror the growth of its neighbors throughout Latin America.

By forcing Haiti to pay for its freedom, France essentially ensured that the Haitian people would continue to suffer the economic effects of slavery for generations. Today the poor of Haiti continue to pay the double debt because the country has never had enough schools, clean water, electricity, hospitals, and other basics.

In order to understand why Haiti is in its current state of impoverishment and underdevelopment, one must examine the social injustice created by the debt that was hoisted on it, and the corruption that resulted as it was paid off. Sadly, Haitian elites have often been complicit with foreign interests in exploiting the Haitian people.

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Poor governance has been a persistent problem throughout Haiti's history, and one especially tragic example is Haiti's 1822 invasion and oppressive 22-year occupation of the Dominican Republic. It is a legacy that mars relations between the two island neighbors to this day

Our Haiti Committee commits to strive toward understanding the impact of these historical injustices and to stand in solidarity with the people of Medor. Our OLQP parish and St. Joseph parish work together to bring social change that liberates the people of Medor through their active participation in, and transformation of, their reality.

Our church is honored to work with the people of Haiti, an exceptional place whose revolution inspired abolition movements across the world and was pivotal to ending slavery globally. The recent *New York Times* article made the facts about Haiti's history widely available.



Mountains in St. Joseph of Medor Parish

## Exploitation

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It is our hope that this information will spur the world to support Haiti in its endeavor to recreate itself as a country freed to reach its full potential through local

innovation and agency, the fundamental building blocks for development that it has previously been denied.

### Kairos International Prison Ministry

By Kathy Desmond

*"I was in prison and you came to visit me." — Matt 25:36*

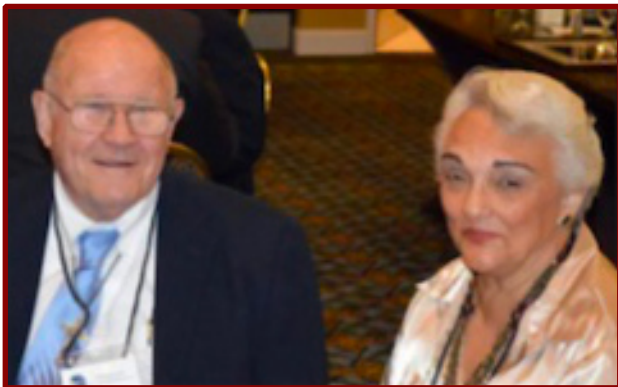
Deacon Jim and Diane Bayne, former members of OLQP, have been involved with the Kairos prison ministry for 20 years. Jim works with the Kairos team that serves at Buckingham Correctional Center, a state prison for men in Dillwyn, VA. Diane worked for many years with the Kairos teams serving the Virginia Correction Center for Women in Goochland, VA and at Fluvana, the women's Correctional Center in Troy, VA.

Kairos International Prison Ministry ([www.Kairosprisonministry.org](http://www.Kairosprisonministry.org)) started as a Cursillo weekend with people doing prison ministry in Ohio who decided to bring the movement to prisons ([www.natl-cursillo.org/what-is-cursillo](http://www.natl-cursillo.org/what-is-cursillo)). Following that initial experience, a small group developed an ecumenical structured program in the mid-1970s that spawned the teams now serving in some 400 correctional institutions in 35 states in the US and nine countries.

Female Kairos volunteers work in women's prisons and male volunteers work in men's prisons. The Virginia Kairos group works in 13 state prisons for men and 3 prisons for women. In addition, 3 other men's prisons are visited monthly so that the men who made the Kairos weekend can stay connected.

Kairos also supports a program called Kairos Outside, for family members of men and women who have experienced Kairos on the inside. The Virginia group produced several videos and posted them and a PBS program on their website ([www.Kairosva.org](http://www.Kairosva.org)). The site also lists ways we can help, from becoming a member of a Kairos team to baking cookies.

"The mission of Kairos Prison Ministry is to share the transforming love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ to impact the hearts and lives of incarcerated men, women and youth, as well as their families, to become loving and productive citizens of their communities."



Jim and Diane Bayne

Kairos is an ecumenical, Christian faith-based ministry. For example, in the Buckingham program, volunteers from 4-5 denominations work together (<http://www.Kairos-bcc.org>).

Beginning in 1979, Jim and Diane spent 20 years leading family retreats for the Arlington diocese and for the Christian Family Living (CFL) Center in North Topsail Beach, NC. Diane was first to join the Kairos program. Jim said he was

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## Kairos

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“terrified” when he first visited Buckingham, but the terror turned to love within the first two hours.

Each Kairos team puts on two 3.5-day Weekends per year. Most new attendees have experienced years of neglect and lack of love, but they quickly learn they are worthy of God’s love, forgiveness, and grace. Some 25-30 Kairos volunteers from the “outside community” organize a weekend. Often they are supported by Kairos graduates on the inside. Some act as table servers, bringing drinks and cookies. Others serve in the “chapel” laying hands on and praying over each speaker before his/her presentation. All resident graduates are invited to participate in the closing event. On an average weekend at Buckingham, 40 residents “graduate,” 14 serve as helpers, and another 40-50 come to the closing to support their new brothers in Christ.

Each volunteer is asked to bring 100 dozen home-made cookies to help attract prisoners, and to express the love of the greater Christian community. Thus a three day weekend averages from 2500-3000 dozen freshly baked cookies. Each resident and staff member at the institution receives at least one dozen cookies. The overwhelming love that participants experience from this gesture motivates them to continue in the program after the weekend.

“We treat them as brothers and this has a powerful effect on men who have long been treated as worthless.”

The program continues with a follow up meeting the next weekend to help the new members of the “inside community” set up Prayer and Share groups of 3-6 members. These weekly Prayer and Share groups are the heart of Kairos. They are how the men and women build small Christian communities inside the prison. By participating in them, members nurture each other in their faith journey and foster accountability.

Outside volunteers return for the monthly Reunion of the Prayer and Share groups. A resident leader selects a theme based on a scripture reading and in-

vites three other residents to share how the reading and theme are working in their lives. These sharings are often very moving. The support of their Kairos brothers in the prison augmented by the outside team helps convince the men that God really loves them.

Finally, a 2-day Retreat is held approximately 3 months after each three-day weekend. These retreats are led by a small team of about ten outside volunteers and are open to all residents who have experienced a three-day weekend. Normally about 40 residents attend each two-day retreat.

Over time, the results have been striking. Wardens seek to bring the Kairos program to their prison because of the profound changes where it has been active. Discipline problems decline. There is less violence than before.

In a study of 505 inmates released from Florida prisons, the recidivism rate was 15.7% among those who had participated in one Kairos session, and 10% among those who had participated in two or more Kairos sessions. The non-Kairos control group in the study had a recidivism rate of 23.4%.

When asked by a resident why he does this, Jim replied. “It goes back to what Jesus said in Matthew 25: If you want to experience the kingdom of God on earth, visit me in prison.” Jim told of his friendship with one inmate now in his 70s who has been in prison off and on since he was 15. He went to a different church each time he got out, but was rejected because he had been in jail. In Kairos, he found “someone who would accept me as I am.” Like others, he found the Kairos program “life changing.”

Jim’s closing words to the OLQP community: “If you want to experience the Kingdom of God on earth, try serving on a Kairos team.”

*Editor’s Note: This article was first published in the Spring 2016 issue of The Advocate.*



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