

## **Kairos Prison Ministry Wrap-up**

**by Dave Evans**

I just got home, and I have to write this while everything is still fresh in my mind and my spirit. I am dead dog tired yet wired! WOW WOW WOW, what an amazing 4 days we just had! As I write, the emotions of what I have seen, heard, and felt over the last 4 days are flooding over me. For some background, Kairos is a nondenominational Christian organization that uses volunteer teams to bring the transformational love and forgiveness of Christ into area prisons. 23 team members spent the past 4 days inside the walls of Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (SOCF) in Lucasville. SOCF is a maximum-security prison housing inmates that have been sent from other facilities, and are often viewed as the worst of the worst.

24 inmates or 'residents' as we call them participated in a variety of activities such as listening to talks, table discussions, journaling, poster creation, chapel services, praying with clergy, singing, open mic sharing, and an emotional closing ceremony on Sunday afternoon. Throughout the 12-hour days the residents were waited on, fed delicious home cooked food and an endless supply of cookies, and given individual hand-written letters of support and encouragement from each of the team. All this time, the Holy Spirit was at work in the hearts of every one of us, team members and residents. Some of them came discouraged, suspicious, afraid, broken, indifferent, feeling unloved or forgotten. Some came angry at God, or never taught or exposed to God. Some came just for the food. ALL were transformed in some way.

The Closing Ceremony was both a time of sharing of what had been experienced, and where do we go from here? Residents were asked to think about three questions, and share from their hearts the answers.

1. In what spiritual condition did you arrive?
2. What did you find here?
3. What are you taking with you when you leave?

What we heard brought tears to our eyes and joy in our hearts. One resident shared that he called his dad that morning to tell him about his retreat, and for the first time in his life his dad said he loved him. Others shared that for the first time in a long time they were able to sleep peacefully and wake up with something to look forward to. An avowed atheist asked Christ to come into his life. Others shared how they learned to look at some of their fellow residents in a whole new way. Some expressed their gratitude for being treated as a human being with respect and love, no matter what

they had done. All expressed a profound thanks to each of us on the team and all those behind the scenes who prepared the food, baked the cookies, prayed for them, and sent posters and placemats of support and encouragement. A core belief of Kairos is that all of the thanks and glory belongs to God. We are merely the tools used in His service. I too will sleep well tonight, thankful for the opportunity to serve with such a dedicated group of brothers, and most especially my very good friend Tom Moorman.

### **Shared by Another Kairos Brother**

At age 4, Chris's mother trafficked him for drug money. He's very slow and probably should be in a home rather than prison. But when asked about his Kairos weekend he said in a very deliberate manner, "I believed in God, but I didn't think God believed in me. But he does."

After spending 4 days inside the maximum-security prison in Lucasville, Ohio with 30 men in blue I have come to the conclusion that this ministry is not only about showing these inmates that they are loved by God. It is also about telling folks in society that these inmates are part of the Body of Christ, they are not monsters, their criminal acts do not define them.