

Key Web Site Links:

- [Hughes Unit Website \(Men\):](http://www.kairoshughes.net)
www.kairoshughes.net
- [Lane Murray Unit Website \(Women\):](http://lanemurray-kairos.weebly.com)
lanemurray-kairos.weebly.com
- [National Kairos Website:](http://www.kairosprisonministry.org)
www.kairosprisonministry.org
- [NEC 2018 Kairos Workshop Handouts:](http://jsrsys.com/kairos/KairosWorkshopHandouts.pdf)
jsrsys.com/kairos/KairosWorkshopHandouts.pdf

Note from Hughes Unit Assistant Warden – Toby Powell

The second line of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) mission statement is to "promote positive change in offender behavior." Without groups such as yours, we would not be able to fully accomplish that part of our mission.

By volunteering your time, you reach these men on a personal level. Without being aware, you give them hope. The hope you give then leads to self-respect, followed by the respect of authority, rules, and other people. It finalizes by the individual becoming respected. That gift has a value that is immeasurable.

The second line deals with the reintegration of these men back into society. Your presence reminds them that they still have a place in the "free-world." By taking time out of your day and entering the prison willingly, you remind them that they are still worth something.

Our mission finalizes by stating that we will "assist victims of crime." What better way to achieve this than by changing a criminal into a respectful and respected member of society.

In summation, please accept my gratitude as an administrator for this agency. What you do not only matters, it works.

Thank you,

Toby Powell
Assistant Warden
TDCJ-ID Alfred D. Hughes Unit
(254)865-6663

... Weekend BLOG | Hughes Unit Kairos #43 Sep 27-30, 2018
Scott Murphy: Team Member: St. Matthews Episcopal Church, Austin.

If you receive this email, you've signed up to pray for me, the team, and more importantly, the 42 "offenders" who will make their Walk with Christ this weekend during the Hughes' Kairos 43 Weekend. Thank you for your overwhelming support of this ministry.

As I've done the past two Kairos weekends, and God willing, I'll provide a short summary of each day's activities at the end of each day. This is intended to provide you context for what is happening, how the offenders are progressing, and to identify specific prayer needs that you can help with.

My role during this weekend is Inside Coordinator. While I've not done this job before, I understand it's to provide oversight of the activities, ensure that material, and most importantly "food", make it into the unit on time. I will also be working directly with the 10 "stewards", offenders who have already made their Kairos weekend and have been randomly chosen to "serve" their brothers in white (fellow offenders attending this Kairos weekend) and the team throughout this weekend. This is an honor to be chosen to serve as a steward and I too look forward to working with them throughout the weekend. I'm particularly excited as three of the ten stewards came from weekends where I served and were part of their table family during the weekend – Jorge and Kenneth from Kairos 39 (October, 2016 – my first Kairos weekend) and Tracy from Kairos 40 (February 2017).

It's Wednesday morning, 9/26, and I'll be departing soon for Gatesville (90 mi north of Austin) where those of us from the team will converge at a local church to begin the "on-location" prep for the weekend. Thank you again for your prayers and support of Kairos.

Pre-Weekend Update #2 | Hughes Unit Kairos #43

Hello prayer warriors,

Well, Wednesday is behind us. Today was a busy day at Trinity Baptist Church in Gatesville.

Kairos literally commandeers the entire parish office area and Sunday school rooms to set up work zones for preparing for the weekend. There's administration where the leaders meet and work out who is "finally" on team (some add, some drop off), the offenders' names, make table assignments, assign prayer partners, accept and pay / manage finances, etc. There's logistics where all items heading into the unit are meticulously counted and staged based on the day and time they're to be taken into the unit. There's agape where your prayer chains are assembled, place mats are collected, and all other forms of agape (physical signs of God's Love) are accounted for and readied to go in to the unit. There's the chapel where we pray, the kitchen where snacks, fruit, vegetables, etc. are prepared, parish hall where we meet as a team for meetings, and then the cookie room where all of the over 3,500 **dozen** cookies are sorted and placed into containers that will eventually make their way into the unit and distributed to all inmates and COs (Correctional Officers).

After a team meal at a local restaurant, we met back at the hotel for a service of foot washing...whereby we humbly "serve" our fellow team members by washing their feet, just as Jesus did with his disciples, as a way to prepare ourselves for the weekend of "service." Don't be concerned as there are several ordained clergy as part of the team (by Kairos rules) so while Kairos is denominationally agnostic, foot washing is a service that's observed across the Christian faith.

Tomorrow morning we begin at a reasonable time back at the church and while the balance of the team converges onto the unit around 3PM, my role takes me there before noon as there is a large trailer with Kairos gear (tables, chairs, partitions, etc.) that needs to be brought into the unit, unloaded, and used to transform the large, open chapel into three distinct spaces – conference center, chapel, and dining area. The offenders will begin arriving into the chapel around 4:00PM Thursday.

That's all for now. More to come tomorrow.

Daily Update | Hughes Unit Kairos #43 | Day 1

Hard to believe Thursday is behind us. Today started out at the church at 8:00AM as we worked to stage more stuff to be hauled into the unit over the weekend. All of the set up for inside the chapel at the unit is provided by Kairos. Remember, the chapel at the unit is basically a large square multi-use building. For the Kairos weekend, we install partitions that hang from the ceiling that divide the room into three separate spaces – dining hall, conference center, and chapel. All of this is packed into a fairly large trailer that was delivered to the unit today around noon.

This trailer has enough tables and chairs to independently facilitate the conference center and dining hall to seat close to 80 people each. Also included are tarps that are used to divide the areas, music equipment (speakers, sound board, cables, etc), banners that are displayed for each of the 10 talks, and tons of miscellaneous items. As inside coordinator, it's my job to inventory all this stuff as it comes off the trailer then again when it's loaded onto the trailer after the closing on Sunday.

I spent the entire afternoon in the chapel helping out the stewards as they transformed the chapel into the appropriate space for the Kairos weekend. We received the first of many supply runs around 2:00PM then the balance of the team arrived around 3PM. We were caught off guard as they begin releasing the offenders / candidates about one hour early – but we were ready for them.

As they arrive into the chapel, each of the offenders attending the weekend are paired up with one team member from the outside as their mentor for the weekend. As each enters the chapel, their name is announced, applause erupts, then the mentor meets him and begins about a 20 minute “meet and greet” session with the inmate. The purpose of the mentor is to help the offender feel comfortable about being there and that they have one person they can do go in case they need help or have concerns. The intent is that the offender's reliance on the mentor wanes as the weekend progresses as the offender builds new relationships among their table family. The table family is comprised of 6 other offenders (total of seven per table) along with three “free-world” volunteers. There are a total of 7 table families, each named after Christ's disciples.

There is a time where each participant, both free world and offender, stands and introduces themselves. After that, the leader discusses instructions and “ground rules” for the weekend. Snacks, juice, finger sandwiches, and coffee are served during this time.

The group then moves into the Chapel where there are some meditations intended to prepare the offenders for what's to come over the weekend. Once finished, the group returns for some final words from the leader then they depart.

Each Kairos weekend there are 42 offenders that are cleared to participate as candidates along with six alternates. We had to use two of the alternates tonight due to two of the originals falling off...for some reason unknown to us. As the inside coordinator, I had to frequently collaborate with the team leader, the CO (Correctional Officer) inside the Chapel that collects ID from each participant, along with the Chaplain to identify those unable to attend and subsequently identify an alternate to take their place.

Finally, we were surprised by three wardens that “popped” in to give the guys a “pep” talk. The unit just received a new Senior Warden, Warden Wallace. He and his assistant, Warden Powell, along with a female warden from an adjacent women’s unit joined. Warden Powell spoke and is very outspoken about Kairos and offers no ambiguity around his support for the program and insists each of the participants must follow the Kairos principles to their fullest to enrich their lives and those around them in the name of Jesus Christ.

Tomorrow the talks begin as the theme is around understanding yourself and your standing with God. More to come tomorrow night.

Daily Update | Hughes Unit Kairos #43 | Day 2

Yet another day has come and gone. Today was a long day. We arrived at the unit at 6:00AM and didn't leave until nearly 8:00PM. After a team meeting back at the hotel, it was time to address each of the 42 letters that were previously written, one to each of the offenders on this Kairos weekend. These letters are given to the offenders on Saturday as a form of personal Agape – messages of encouragement written individually to each offender from each of the team members. It's not until today that we have the "final" list of names of those on the Kairos weekend. The list began with 42 and after some drops and adds, we ended up at 41 – one short of a full roster of 42. Unfortunately, the last dropped out too late today to enable us to pull up an alternate so we closed with 41.

Today, the table dynamics began among the seven table families. There were five talks today beginning to enable the offenders the chance to examine themselves and their relationship with God. After each of the five talks, the table families discussed what they heard then translated this into a pictorial description onto a poster board. At the end of the day, each team had a chance to share one of their posters in front of the entire group. This is always a fun and entertaining time while the depth of their faith, and in some cases, the longing for faith comes out.

There were three chapel meditations and of course lunch and dinner of food these guys just don't get in the penitentiary. Fried Fish and hush puppies for lunch and BBQ brisket with all the fixn's for dinner, not to mention ice cream sundaes after lunch and banana pudding after dinner.

My role as inside coordinator was very hectic and seemed busy all day. Coordinating the deliveries – in and out, along with keeping up with the roster changes, timing for certain "Agape" to be brought into the conference room, and timing for meals kept me busy. The unit is shorthanded relative to COs so it's taking longer to get supplies and food into. Oh well, it's "God's time" so we do the best we can and be extremely flexible.

At the hotel when we met as a team, people were invited to share what they heard or experiences they had among their table families. There were no cases short of fantastic, a great experience, the offenders are beginning to understand God and why it's important to have a good relationship with him, etc. One comment was very moving. This man said that being locked up was the best thing to happen to him. When asked why, his response was that if he wasn't locked up, he'd probably been "shot" on the streets through the gang-related activities he was a part of and secondly, if he wasn't locked up, he wouldn't have had the time, or taken the time to develop a relationship with God. This is the power of Kairos.

Finally, BJ, a former inmate and Kairos member from the Hughes unit, was taken to Galveston on Wednesday for hospice care. You may recall my blog from the last Kairos that BJ was in for a life sentence and was diagnosed with cancer late last year and told he had less than a year to live. They wanted him to remain in Galveston to receive treatment though he refused saying he wanted to go back to the Hughes unit with his friends. BJ is probably in his 70s, been locked up for over 40 years of a life sentence. I've gotten to know him well since I started Kairos two years back. We heard today that they took BJ off all life support so we believe his time on Earth will end soon. One of our leaders said it nicely today...BJ knows where he's going and he'll soon have on "white" but of a different style to that of his prison jumper. Anyway, I ask for prayers for BJ that if his earthly end is near that it's painless and he's received with open arms by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Thanks again for all the prayers – they're working! I'll write again tomorrow.

Daily Update | Hughes Unit Kairos #43 | Day 3

Saturday is finished and one more day to go. Today too was a long day as I had to be at the unit at 5:00AM to work with 10 of our volunteers along with five of the stewards to deliver cookies into the unit. As the inside coordinator, it was my job to assign four volunteers to help deliver cookies on Friday night then ten volunteers to deliver on Saturday morning. All volunteers arrived on time and all the cookies were delivered as expected.

The offenders began arriving around 7:30AM. Today's theme was forgiveness, both the offender forgiving those who have wronged them but also for those who the offender has wronged. There are many meditations throughout the day that focus on forgiveness and why it's important to forgive. During the day, the offenders are asked to write on a piece of paper those who they need to forgive for the wrong that's been committed. Then after the final chapel visit of the day, each family surrounds a small fire pit, prays, then each drops the paper with the names into the pit. The ignited paper symbolizes that these people have been forgiven – or at least, a deliberate start to forgiving the individuals. Depending on the nature of the wrong, it may not be reasonable to expect the offender to be at a place, mentally and spiritually, where they can completely forgive but this process sets them on the path to forgiveness. There were two additional talks today that built on yesterday's talks around the key tenets of Kairos – Prayer, Study, and Action.

The offenders also had time to make chapel visits as a family. This is a quiet, private time where the family meets in the chapel to pray for each other individually – for whatever is burdening them or thanksgiving for something good. Each table family takes with them a table cross that the individual that's praying will hold then pass on the next member when finished.

After the early afternoon chapel time, the offenders are given bags of “personal Agape.” These are letters written to each of them by each team member. The letters are intended to be of encouragement, perhaps a bible verse, of just something personal to help them through the weekend and beyond.

During the chapel visit, the stewards place a single bag of letters, one per offender, at their place in the community room. Once that was complete, they were dismissed from the chapel (the team stayed behind to sing – softly) and asked to return to their seats in the community room.

The leader introduces the bags to the offenders as “personal Agape.” They've seen Agape so far in the form of prayer chains and other Agape, perhaps posters that are signed by a church group or maybe another Kairos community at the same or another unit. But the “personal Agape” is more special due to the individual nature of the letter to the offender.

While the offenders opened their letters, I was in the adjacent partitioned area with the stewards as we quietly sat listening to the team sing. When the offenders rustle the bags with the letters, it literally sounds like doves fluttering their wings. When the offenders begin reading the letters, many actually begin to tear up or even cry at the emotional and spiritual impact that these letters have on them. This is probably one of the most impactful times of the weekend for these men as many will tell you that they've led such tragic lives that some may have never been told they're loved.

As I sat with the stewards during this time, many of them actually begin weeping themselves as they reminisced about when they experienced opening these letters during their Kairos weekend. I have to say I too was teary-eyed with the whole experience.

The day wrapped up with an open mic where the offenders could come and speak for two minutes on what the weekend has meant to them. A few of these men have said they've accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior as a result of this weekend. Most mentioned how spiritual the weekend was so far and that their life will be changed going forward as a result of Kairos.

From a logistics' perspective, the day went smoothly; no glitches. We had visits again by the wardens and in fact, they had lunch with us. We understand a board member from the TDCJ (Texas Dept of Criminal Justice) will be at the closing tomorrow along with the wardens from the unit. We continue to be fortunate that these wardens all highly support Kairos due to the Christian transformation that occurs that improves not only the physical and spiritual well-being of the offender while incarcerated but also positively influences those he/she interacts with both within the unit and outside while reducing the rate at which paroled offenders return to the criminal justice system from 80% to below 30%.

Thanks again for all your prayers – they're working for not only the offenders but also those of us on team and the COs we're engaging with daily.

Daily Update | Hughes Unit Kairos #43 | Day 4

Well, Sunday's over, I'm finally home, had a shower, and ready to relax. Today was a very busy day on a number of fronts.

Today's theme was looking to the future...where the offenders learned how to strengthen their Christian walk once they leave the weekend tonight. There were a couple of talks, chapel, and prayer time. We served them pizza for lunch (they NEVER get pizza in prison...at least to the likings of Little Cesar's).

After the early morning run, received at the prison at 7:00AM, the van used for the transport of supplies and food into and out of the prison broke down. With two more runs today, we were left to use the front gate of the prison to bring the food in and supplies out using another vehicle. Unlike the normal means of taking food and supplies into and out of the prison, the front gate requires us to run everything through X-Ray unit as we compete with visitors coming and going. For about a year, we've used the back gate of the prison where the van is visually inspected and allowed to pass for the internal delivery that is located about 100' from the chapel. The front gate is a good walk from the chapel with carts and requires us to pass through two sally ports where IDs and goods are inspected. Fortunately, we had only two runs that had to process this way. This one particular van was the only vehicle with requisite cargo space that we had registered with the prison so no other vehicle could have been used to enter the prison grounds.

At around 3PM, the candidate offenders are sequestered into a small room away from the area where the weekend took place. This enables the stewards and others, including myself, to literally tear down the partitions and pack tables, chairs, sound equipment, etc. onto carts that are then wheeled to the back gate for pick up by our large trailer (that trailer/truck was operational so could continue using back gate).

Once the chapel was torn down, the stewards place rows of chairs on each side, facing a stage where the offenders would eventually be seated. The left side were for those men in white from within the unit that have attended Kairos and come to support the new candidates and the right side was for all those free world folks who come to support the candidates "in-person."

The candidates came into the transformed chapel to fanfare, band playing, signing, applaud by probably close to 250 people, combined men in white and free world. It's probably the largest contingent of free world I've seen in the two years since I started.

The table families were given time to introduce themselves, say a few words about what they learned over the weekend and what they will do when they return to their houses (cells). The open mic went for over an hour with many testimonies and revelations about what the weekend did for them. It was highly

energetic and encouraging, particularly recalling them when they were introduced just 3 ½ days earlier. Then there was a “4th day” speaker – an offender and former Kairos attendee – Greg. He shared with the new candidates how important Kairos is and will continue to be in their lives within the unit and beyond while Greg shared how Kairos has impacted him.

Finally, I want to share a conversation I had earlier today with the correctional officer that was in charge of the chapel. These guys (and gals) don’t often admit that they really appreciate what Kairos does for the prison population and for them personally relative to their jobs as COs. Though this officer shared with me that there was a candidate that the CO referred to as a “hot-head”, “tough-guy”, and “trouble-maker” that he’s had many run-ins with over the past many years. Though during yesterday’s time when the offenders were reading their letters, this offender broke down crying. The CO I visited with today admitted to me that this was great evidence that Kairos works and works on the toughest guys there. He went on to say that even if Kairos changes the lives of just one person during the weekend, it’s worth it. This is just one of the testimonies and reasons that I continue to return to the prisons to continue this wonderful ministry.

Many of us return to the unit tomorrow, Monday, at 4:00PM for the Instructional where we teach the new Kairos class how to continue their Kairos experience through weekly Prayer and Share and other forms of “Study”, “Prayer”, and “Action.” I’m looking forward to seeing the guys again and in fact, I’m giving one of the talks around “Spiritual Listening.”

Thanks again for all your prayers throughout this weekend. I can’t tell you how impactful your prayers have been for all involved.

PS...Still no word on BJ...so your prayers are still welcome.