

Heartprints

By Patrice Sanders

Susie Joy asked me to share about my experience working a prison ministry called Kaivos. Kaivos is Greek for *God's time*. It is a highly structured program whose focus is to make people who are incarcerated feel Christ's love through the service of Christian Kaivos volunteers. During this event, participants are given the opportunity to experience a religious renewal by accepting God's call to a life of Christian witness and service to one another during their stay in the institution and beyond. After the weekend, participants are encouraged to establish strong Christian communities within their institution.

I have a cousin who was in a federal prison in Texas for seven years. She met Jesus in prison, and has a strong relationship with Christ and her church even after being out for eight years. Her story has impressed upon me how important and life changing prison ministry is. After years of listening to touching stories from friends involved with Kaivos, I went to a closing service and was able to hear the residents talk about how life changing their weekend was.

I worked my first weekend in February and was blessed in many ways. I worked on the "cookie team." I must explain, the residents are inundated with every type of store-bought cookie you can imagine, something they don't get normally. This alone draws many residents to attend the weekend, and is a blessing during the weekend.

I connected with and befriended a number of residents as we worked together. These were women who had previously been on a Kaivos weekend and were living their Christian walk within their prison. These women were hard-working, and such a pleasure to be with. I was also able to listen to some of the speakers and see how the residents responded to their talks.

It was a wonderful experience for me to witness a change in many of the women during the course of the weekend. Some of the women's body language changed from being stoic and stand-offish to smiling, hugging, and laughing. There was one woman I'll call Diane who stood out to me. She shared that she had spent her life trying to hide herself and blend in. That is why she had covered herself with tattoos. She shared that Kaivos was the first time in her life she has felt loved or valuable. Two days later Diane shared that she met Jesus during the weekend and she would never be the same.

We will continue to meet with this group of women once a month for the next year, as well as attend other weekends. Kaivos rules, however, do not permit contact with the residents outside of Kaivos activities. If anyone would like more information about Kaivos, I would be happy to talk to you.