**THE CHURCH**

**LAY TALK 20 minutes including introduction, prayer, etc***.*

***Note to Speaker:***

*The objective of this Talk is to present the Church positively to the Participants participating in Kairos, many of whom have little or no acquaintance with the Church or might even hate the Church. The YOU ARE NOT ALONE talk focuses on general agape, which gives them something positive about the Church with which they can associate. This talk ties it together.*

*(Note outline style change in opening sections from topical outline form to presentation of specific question. Statements and questions appearing in quotations should be given exactly as printed or as nearly so as possible while being comfortable for the speaker.)*

PRAYER: Kairos Community Prayer, pg. 11, Freedom Guide

***Speaker introduces self, telling name, whether lay or clergy person and giving name of talk.*** *This information should also be displayed on a poster board, flip chart sheet, or written on chalk board.*

INTRODUCTION:

Did you hear or learn something in that last talk which was a surprise to you? Something which you did not expect? What was it?

Was it surprising to hear that God actually **wants** friendship with you? It was to me when I first heard that statement.

Does Friendship with God make you feel a little bit light‑weight for such a heavy friendship? It does me!

And yet, if we are to believe the scriptures, there can be no doubt that God actually loves us, and wants us, and pursues us, and comes to us through others that we will come to know as "The Church."

Many of us have withdrawn from the Church. Many of us have withdrawn from almost everybody. Many of us were a little uncomfortable this morning to hear that We Are Not Alone...

I. There are some good reasons why we withdraw from others and build walls around ourselves. Some of these reasons are:

A. Fear of what others will think.

B. Fear others will find our weaknesses.

C. Memories of betrayed confidences.

D. Memories of old hurts.

E. Inability to trust others.

F. Fear of being "used" by others.

G. Fear of loss of power, of control over turf.

H. Need for privacy.

II. Some of the ways in which we build walls to hide behind are:

A. The acquisition of material possessions.

B. Attaining physical superiority over others.

C. Threatening others.

D. Faking... conniving.

E. Collecting friends with power, influence.

F. By knowledge. "The know‑it‑all."

1. Law.

2. Institutional regulations.

3. Scripture.

4. "The system."

G. By withdrawal. The lone wolf, avoiding any real intimacy with others, who maintains, "I don't need any body."

III. *Speaker should choose one reason from section I and another reason from section II to give a personal witness of how these kept him/her isolated from Christian living at one time in his/her life... BE REAL.*

A. Personal witness.

B. If this isolation hurts but we're still afraid to let go of it, what do we do about it?

1. Gentlemen/Ladies, this is the most important question any of us ever face. Kairos is here because we believe God offers His people the answer to this concern.

2. In his letter to the Romans Paul, one of the greatest of the early Christians, says, "What an unhappy man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death? Thanks be to God who does this through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Romans 7:24‑25

IV. Let's look more closely at God's answer for us.

A. God offers us a relationship with Him which we can trust as we heard this morning in the FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD talk.

B. God provided us with natural Families hoping that we could find trusting relationships there. But even members of natural Families, then and now, often fail to provide the security we need. Don’t forget that Cain killed his brother Abel. Genesis 4:8.

C. God sent His Son, Jesus, the Christ, to make a way for us to be adopted as brothers and sisters of Jesus, thus making us part of the Family of God.

D. We call this Family "the Church."

V. What is the Church?

A. It is that Christian community which has arisen in response to Jesus' new commandment, when He told His disciples: "And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples." John 13:34‑35

B. The Church is the Body of Christ - one body with many parts. *(Speaker reads aloud 1 Cor. 12:12‑21)*

* 1. No one is to be excluded, no matter how different or untalented.
  2. The Church consists of God's people. It is not organizations, denominations, buildings or creeds.

C. Men/Ladies, we are the Church! *(This is the most important statement in the talk.* ***Do not have them repeat the “We are the Church” phrase yet as it comes later in this talk.*** *Participants in correctional institutions suffer from a very strong sense of rejection. This point must be emphasized, enlarged upon and repeated throughout the talk.)*

VI. How do we get out from behind the walls to BE the Church?

A. God, through His Holy Spirit, changes us so that we are able to begin to trust others, first with little things, then with bigger ones later on.

B. In this same process, we begin to become persons whom others can trust.

C. The love of Jesus draws us together in a group where we can share ourselves and our gifts in spite of the differences among us.

1. **(Men’s version)** We need to be connected. If we're not, it is like having all the spare parts which would take to make a car just sitting separately on shelves in the Auto Parts Department. Without connecting them together we'll never have a car which we can get in and drive away.

2. **(Women’s version)** We need to be connected. If we’re not, it is like having all the ingredients to bake a cake sitting separately on a counter. Without mixing them together, we’ll never have a cake to enjoy.

D. When we say we are the Church, we are talking about us as a community, the Body of Christ, more than a crowd... like an automobile (or a cake), not just a collection of parts (or ingredients).

E. ***Speaker asks: "WHO IS THE CHURCH?" and continues to ask until all respond loudly, "We are the Church!"***

VII Christian community pays a key role in the life of any Christian.

A. God wills community.

1. Jesus modeled life in community for us.

a. In a small group with Peter, James and John.

b. In a larger group with all 12 disciples.

2. Jesus, when the disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray, did not say, "My Father, who art in heaven...", He said, "**Our** Father..."

3. Jesus promised His disciples that "Where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them."

B. Christian life is triangular: God, ourselves and others.

1. It is like the cross which symbolizes it.

a. It has a vertical relationship, that between a Christian and God. Jesus mentioned this often.

b. It has a horizontal relationship, that between a Christian and his or her brothers and sisters. It was the way Jesus lived, accepting all who came.

2. There are no Lone Rangers in Christianity. The isolated Christian is a paralyzed Christian.

*Speaker witnesses to his/her own life in the Church and to the support received through the Body of Christ. Tying the witness to the “You Are Not Alone” talk, remind the Participants that lots of people in the Church love them.*

It is Jesus, through those people in the Church, who sent in this Team to offer this Kairos Weekend.

***Speaker should close by again asking*, "WHO IS THE CHURCH?" *until a resounding* "WE ARE THE CHURCH" *response is received*.**

Please bow your heads for 2 minutes of silent meditation. *(Speaker walks* *away.)*