

The Kingsway Banner



Our Mission:

“Ministering through the heart of Jesus to the broken hearts of those impacted by the criminal justice system, both those incarcerated and re-entering and their families.”

Chartered 1983
501 (c)(3) tax status



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JUL 2023

From The President of the Board of Directors

Wow! Can you believe that this is July already? Kingsway is starting to gear up for the busy season ahead, Christmas. We have Inmates' Christmas as well as Apple Tree for the children of inmates. For the Inmate Christmas, Kingsway is asking for toothpaste ... nothing larger than 6 oz. Kingsway tries very hard to make sure the inmates in the same space receive the same size toothpaste, but every so often one will get a larger size, and then conflict begins and since this is the season of peace, we want peace to be with the inmates as well.

Kingsway can no longer send #2 pencils, so please do not send pencils. Since Covid-19, Kingsway has had to make adjustments. Kingsway now orders the mini legal tablets as well as chapstick rather than ask for your help with that, because it was difficult to find the tablets and chapstick was expensive. What we are asking for now though, is for your financial support to be able to order these items, so the inmates are sure to receive them in plenty of time for

Christmas.

Apple Tree Christmas letters will be coming in the mail very soon. If your church has been involved with this mission or you have done this mission over the years, Kingsway thanks you. This is so important for these children to be able to open gifts from their mom or dad on Christmas.

Another way you can help right now is to donate gift cards to Kingsway. So many of the folks are coming out with the bare necessities. You can also collect hygiene items: shampoo, soap, razors, deodorant, etc., or even toilet paper, laundry detergent, dish detergent, or anything of this sort.

Again, Kingsway and I want to thank you so much for your generosity. For 40 years, YOU have not let Kingsway down and in doing so, you have “loved your neighbor.”

Serving Him,
Vicki Barb, President, Board of Directors

UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS!!!

Annual Benefit Banquet in August 2023

Louise Jennings' Birthday Bash & Benefit Concert in October 2023

Watch Kingsway's website (www.kingswayoutreach.org) and Facebook Page (Kingsway Prison and Family Outreach) for forthcoming details!

The Banner is published as a bridge between you, the Kingsway supporters, and the hands-on prison and family outreach ministry of Kingsway.

The Banner welcomes your comments, suggestions, questions, testimonies, and article submissions. If there is something of interest you would like to know more about or have included in this newsletter, please let us know.

Please send all submissions and communications for this newsletter to the Editor at kingswaybanner@gmail.com

TESTIMONIES

A RESPONSE

I feel compelled to respond to the testimony shared in the April 2023 Banner. It notes a lot of negative truth about what was lacking in prison and community life in 2006. It began with this note, "Prison accomplishes very little." As one incarcerated since 2013, I fully agree, and I wish to share my observations as an older senior citizen on why little continues to be accomplished.

Prisons are called correctional centers. Every day, I wonder who needs to be corrected the most - prisoners or staff. Consider the following analogy. How is a child growing up as an adult starting a job trained? It is done with consistency by the ones responsible, namely parents or supervisors. Consistency has been very lacking in prison by staff, which creates a deeper problem of who is in charge - staff or inmates? The situation deepens as understaffing continues, and as younger officers are hired to correct people their own age. The end result is inevitable: more defiance than compliance toward correctional

rules. Too often I've observed too many inmates being allowed to get away with their defiant attitudes, which is accentuated by their use of language not used in church.

Not all inmates deserve to be targeted by negative opinions toward felons, accentuated by a high rate of recidivism. Some of us deserve another chance at becoming responsible and respected members of society. Recall Ephesians 4:32: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you." (NIV)

There is a light at the end of our tunnel of darkness, though dim. It needs to be brighter. In Isaiah 6:8, Isaiah said, "Send me" in his response to God's call.

I give thanks to God for the ways Kingsway has answered the call to be a light in the darkness for 40 years. The 21st century needs more people like you to brighten the path beneath our feet.

-Anonymous

A LETTER

My name is Matthew Grubb. I'm at Pocahontas State Correctional Center, Kairos #19, Family of Mark.

I attended Kairos for the first time this past weekend and wow! I had an amazingly hard time. If I'm being honest, I didn't expect much out of this weekend. I have never wavered in my faith, but I'd be telling a lie if I said that I attended Kairos to strengthen my relationship with God. I honestly thought I'd just eat some cookies, drink some coffee, and enjoy some time with my friends.

I could not have been more wrong. I very quickly realized that these men were not very different from myself. It had never crossed my mind that these men, from the outside world, would not only care about me, but understand me. I never thought that I'd meet so many men of God that come from the same background as me.

On Friday, May 19, 2023, something happened that shook me to the core. A man by the name of Jim Osmonson suffered from a seizure and two things became perfectly clear to me.

As I watched Jim start to shake, I ran to a CO and told him to call for medical. I was scared. I didn't know what to do. I returned to the table I had left Jim at, and I saw the most amazing thing. I saw several inmates had rushed to Jim's aid. And as he is lying on the floor, I witnessed real Christian love and faith. These men, these incarcerated men, gathered around Jim and began to pray over him. I could feel the love pouring off of these incarcerated men as they prayed over a virtual stranger.

After Jim was taken out of the gym, I couldn't shake the feeling that I was supposed to see something. I was meant to take something from what had just happened. I'm ashamed to admit that I didn't realize what that was until I was lying in my bunk

that night. The reason I didn't see it immediately is because I have never seen it before.

Matthew 25:36 says, "I was in prison and you visited me." Jim did that for us! He knew he had health problems and he still came to show God's love with us. Jim sacrificed his health for a group of men he had never met, because he truly believed God's word. And I owe Jim for what I'm about to share with you. It was Jim that opened my eyes to what God needed me to do. I owe this lesson to Jim Osmonson. Thank you, Jim. I love you.

I've held on to so much pain and anger, aimed at not only the world but also at myself. I haven't truly been able to have a relationship with God, simply because I didn't feel like I deserved one. I felt, deep in my heart, that God would not forgive me. I felt that I was to be condemned for my part. This weekend, I learned something. I learned that, like any good father, God had already forgiven me. I was in my own way. I didn't feel God's forgiveness because I hadn't forgiven myself. I was able to finally forgive my worst enemy. I was able to forgive myself this past weekend and in doing so, I felt God's love wash over me for the first time in a really long time. I feel so much closer to our Lord God. My time at Kairos was incredibly powerful. I laughed. I cried. I found love within my Christian family. And I cried several more times.

My purpose for writing this letter is simple. I feel the need to continue to be a part of Kairos. I feel the need to bring more people like myself to Christ. I want to help other people who are incarcerated feel the same fellowship and love that I felt over the weekend. I would eventually like to share my story. I would like to show others that even people like us can find forgiveness and love in the Lord. I want to lead by example.

My release date is June 20, 2023. Thank you!

Jordan Grubb

TESTIMONIES

LETTER FROM DAVID BRAXTON

Dear Louise,

Thank you so much for supporting me and ordering my book. That means a lot to me. I will make sure to introduce myself again when y'all come on Fridays.

Per your request, I have enclosed something for your newsletter. I hope it's not too long. I consider it an honor to share with everyone what God has been doing in my life. I appreciate the opportunity. May God continue to bless your ministry.

Sincerely,

David Braxton

Author of *The Girl In The Hoodie*

A TESTIMONY

My name is David Braxton, and I'm an inmate here at Augusta Correctional Center, which happens to be the place where Kingsway volunteers share the Word of God with us. I've been blessed by their ministry for the last 4 years and have been given this opportunity by them to write something for their newsletter. All of them and my brothers in Christ at this facility have become like family to me and I'm grateful for that.

If you would allow me, I would like to share with you what God has been doing in my life and then end with a word of encouragement to all those who may read this. Recently God has blessed me by allowing me to self-publish my first children's book on Amazon.com. It's called "The Girl In The Hoodie"; it was created with the intent to bring awareness to bullying, and open up a dialogue between parents and their children about a topic that is often difficult to speak about. Having gone through bullying as a kid, I know the harmful effects it can have on a young mind and how it can play a part in bad decision making as one grows older. By addressing this issue at a young age, it's my hope to prevent violence and give us an opportunity to teach our kids about compassion and forgiveness. Especially God's forgiveness.

Not to be taken for granted, it's also an opportunity to share your testimony with them and others about what God has delivered you from in your life. For me, writing has done just that: through the avenue of writing, God has helped me use my past mistakes as a teaching tool to help others. It's given me a voice beyond these walls, helped me make a difference in the lives of others, and most importantly, helped me share my faith. My

encouragement to anyone reading this is not to bury your talents (Matthew 25:14-30), but to use the talents that God has given you to help others and store up for yourself some real treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21).

Never in a million years could I have guessed that one day I would be writing children's books; that's how I know God is behind it all. What are the odds that someone like myself who suffered from dyslexia as a kid, who could hardly spell at the age of 16, who didn't get his GED until age 20, and who was given a life sentence (310 years) in prison, would ever think about writing a book one day. But with God, all things are possible. He is amazing. He not only transformed my mind and soul from the corrupt uneducated person I used to be, He put the right people in my life to help me accomplish the goals I set out to achieve. So always remember, my brothers and sisters, that nothing is impossible if you believe and trust in God.

Lastly, I want you to know that it's never too late to change your life around for the better, and don't let the talents and gifts that God has given you go to waste. I'm 48 years old and have been incarcerated for 25 years. I know I'm not a spring chicken anymore (smile), but I feel like I'm just hitting my stride in life. Dream big and do great things in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You can have an amazing life despite where you are at or what you have been through.

May God continue to bless you. Amen.

David Braxton



In April, State Farm Correctional Center hosted a Victim Awareness 5K for the National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW). Discussions included the harm to victims, and the impacts of crime on communities. Almost 100 inmates participated in the event to raise victim awareness.

Randall, the son of Kingsway volunteer Carol Kelley, pictured here on the left, and the offender pictured on the right did all the artwork on this banner for this event.

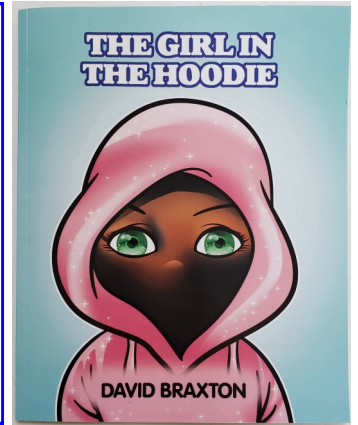


Two Happy Ex-Offenders Doing Well!

Richard & John with Louise. Both spent over 30 years in prison. Both are doing well and have good jobs, thanks to the STEPP program in Lexington.

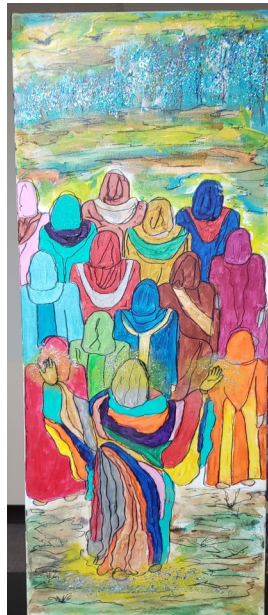
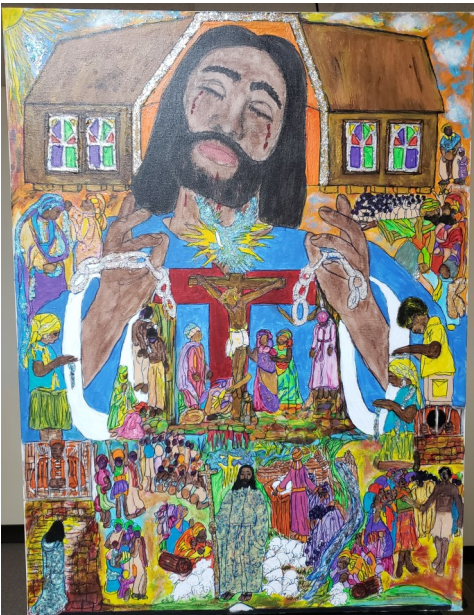
David Braxton, an inmate at Augusta Correctional Center, wrote this book, *The Girl In The Hoodie*, a story about bullying and discrimination. The book is available on Amazon at [this link](#).

(See David's testimony on Page 3.)



The artwork below was done by the talented folks inside Augusta Correctional Center

The paintings below were created by Rev. Furst Agape Love Jenkins, a Kingsway volunteer.



Artist: D. Cary
Augusta Corr. Center



LEFT:
On April 27, 2023, Board Vice President Jeanne Carter, Director Louise Jennings, and Jen Jones attended the Harrisonburg Chamber of Commerce Awards Celebration.

BELOW:
On May 29, 2023, Kingsway hosted an information table at the 8th Annual Steve Wingfield Ministries Memorial Day Celebration.

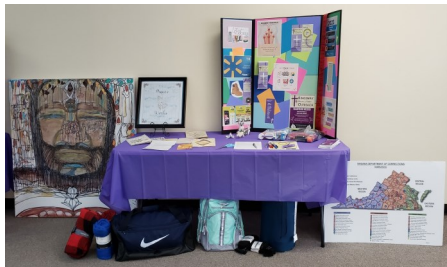
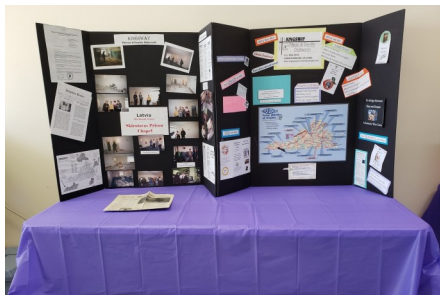
Top Photo: Board Secretary Sandy Pless, Director Louise Jennings, and Board President Vicki Barb.

Bottom Photo: Board member/Webmaster Pappy Pless was asked to carry the US Navy flag during the recognition of the veterans.

BELOW:
On June 11, 2023, Kingsway celebrated its 40th Anniversary in prison ministry.



Each table represented a decade of ministry work.



RIGHT:
Founder and Director Louise Jennings, cutting the celebration cake.



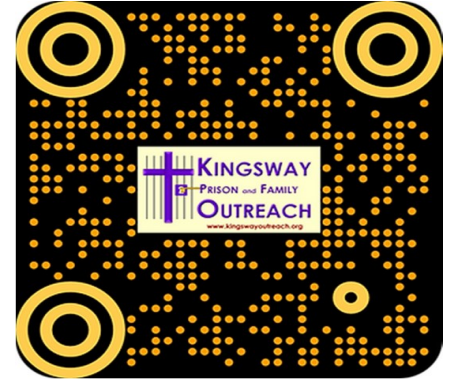


Louise's Corner

Every once in a while, we see a really heart-breaking situation with an ex-offender whom we are working with and helping get established. We had just helped Jeremy get what he called the job of his dream. He was working, attending Kingsway's Fellowship services, staying clean and sober in the sober living house we were able to get him in, and happy. **Things changed quickly.** Riding his bicycle on his way home from work a few weeks ago, he was struck by a vehicle in a hit and run incident. Jeremy is now in a body cast and a wheelchair, unable to work. He was told by his doctor he will be in the brace for about 3 months. This young man has no immediate family, just his Kingsway Outreach family, as his parents died when he was incarcerated. He is also new to the Shenandoah Valley.

Kingsway does not have the funds for this type of situation. Jeremy has several needs as well as financial needs. I am sure he would like to meet some good Christian men in our area also. If you feel led to help Jeremy, please contact me at info@kingswayoutreach.org or call 540-830-7000.

The Banner provides a means of raising funds to carry on the work of Kingsway. Donations can be made by mail or online by scanning this QR Code.



KINGSWAY PRISON & FAMILY OUTREACH

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Save the Date

**Kingsway's Annual Banquet
& Fundraiser**

Thursday, August 24th at 6:30pm

At the Weyers Cave Community Center

Kingsway has been serving inmates, their families and former inmates for over 40 years. Please join us for an evening of testimonies about the huge impact Kingsway is making in our community.

For more information: 540-433-5658 or info@kingswayoutreach.org