

KAIROS: CANADIAN ECUMENICAL JUSTICE INITIATIVES

Origin: KAIROS, Submitted by Leah Reesor-Keller, Transitional Executive Director

Background

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives is a program of the United Church of Canada that functions as a joint social venture bringing ten Canadian church denominations and agencies to work together for faithful action for justice and peace. Under the direction of The United Church of Canada, the KAIROS Steering Committee, composed of representatives of the member churches and agencies, administers the program. Launched in 2001, KAIROS carries the legacy of over forty years of inter-church social justice coalitions.

Governance and Operations

2024 marked significant progress in KAIROS' journey towards establishing itself as an independent charity. The New Kairos Working Group, formed of representatives from KAIROS members, developed organizational bylaws. The new entity *Kairos: Faithful Action for Justice* was formed and incorporated as a non-profit organization with board members drawn from the current Steering Committee. In 2024, work continued on the application for charitable status. When charitable status is received, KAIROS can then move assets and start the transition process to operate independently from UCC. See diagram below for an overview of the transition process.

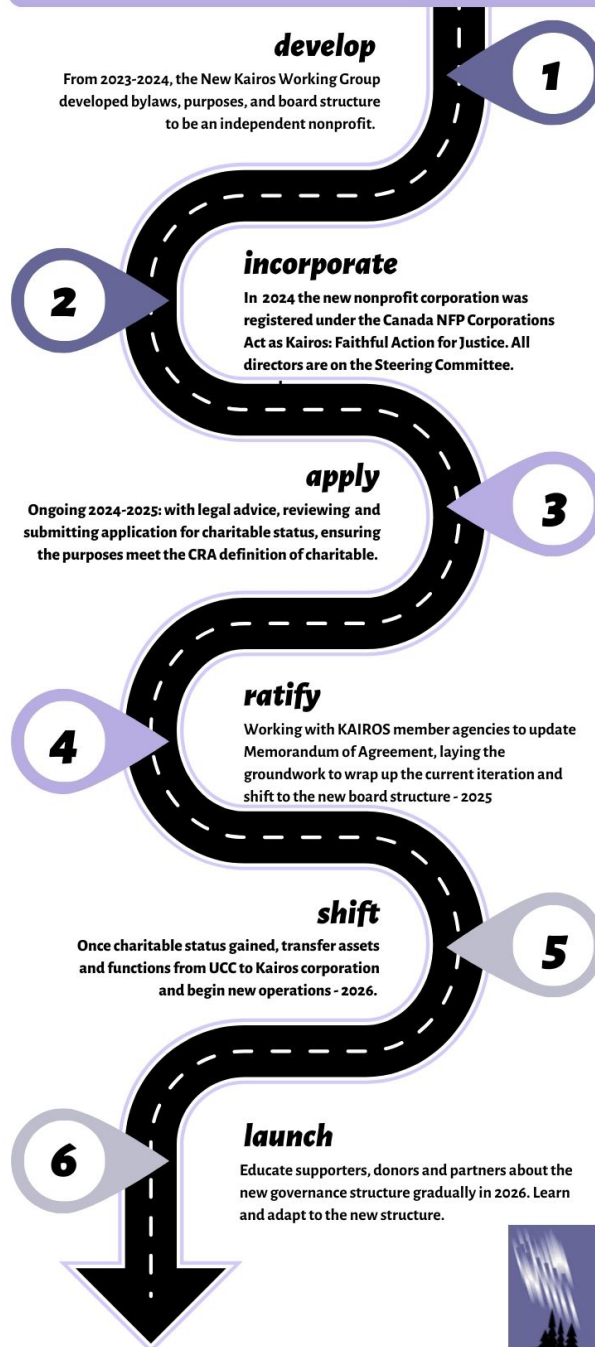
KAIROS continues to operate as a program of The United Church of Canada until such time as the new entity has charitable status, and KAIROS' human and financial resources can be transferred to the new organization. A key step in this transition that happened in 2024 is updating the Memorandum of Agreement between members and The United Church of Canada. Currently, Members are in process of reviewing the updated draft, and signing is anticipated to happen in May 2025.

KAIROS Indigenous Rights Circle (KIRC) and the Steering Committee are in conversation about the structure of the "new" KAIROS organization and how to ensure KIRC's important perspective is embedded going forward.

Interim Executive Director Leah Reesor-Keller's term extended from May 2024 to May 2025 to provide change management and transitional support.

TIMELINE

KAIROS Structure Transition



Program

After a period of consultation and review 2022-2023, the new model for the **KAIROS Blanket Exercise (KBE)** began rolling out in 2024. The new model is a partnership approach, where educational institutions, charities and consultants sign partnership agreements with KAIROS for use of the materials. The KAIROS staff, with guidance from a newly developed Indigenous Advisory Circle, are responsible for maintaining and updating the materials and training resources for facilitators, and the KBE itself is delivered by the partners, not by KAIROS staff. Licensing fees, with varying levels based on partner type and size, will help to sustain the program financially. Licensing fees are waived for Indigenous-owned businesses and organizations who partner with the KBE program. There continues to be strong demand for the program, and many partnership requests.

March 2024 marked the conclusion of the 6-year **Women of Courage** Global Affairs Canada-funded project. This project supported grassroots women peacebuilding organizations in South Sudan, the West Bank, DR Congo, and Colombia. KAIROS' WPS program directly reached more than 30,000 people, and countless more indirectly. Program results include:

- 4,850 women victims and survivors of gender-based violence received psychosocial and medical counselling and care.
- 1,567 women used legal services provided by partners.
- 6,044 women and 3,189 men participate in gender awareness training.
- 312 human rights training sessions were held on national and international frameworks in which 6,184 women and 913 men participated.
- 146 human rights facilitator training workshops were held in which 3,907 women and 147 men participated.
- Partners participated in 303 campaigns advocating for legislation, law reform, and implementation that relate to women, peace and security, and 252 educational campaigns
- directed at male allies in government, multilateral organizations, and media.
- KAIROS published 198 communications and advocacy strategies related to the program including op-eds, letters-to-the-editor, blogs and letters to the government.
- KAIROS organized a total of 183 meetings with government officials, policy makers and parliamentarians on the women, peace and security and partners' priorities.

KAIROS submitted a proposal for a follow-up project in late 2024, and signed a new 5-year project agreement with Global Affairs Canada in March 2025 to build on the success of the Women of Courage project.

KAIROS continued to advocate for ceasefire, an end to occupation and a just peace in Israel and Palestine. Key actions include creating the **Just Peace in the Middle East Ecumenical Hub** to collect statements and resources from member churches and agencies, as well as facilitating the **Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage: Canadian Churches for Just Peace** campaign. Individuals from

150 congregations nationwide walked or rolled all or a portion of the length of the Gaza strip – collectively accumulating 10,000 kilometers. The Pilgrimage culminated in Ottawa on May 22-23, 2024 where church leaders held a vigil on Parliament Hill, participated in press conferences and met with Members of Parliament, bringing these calls to the Government of Canada and Parliamentarians.

Through the **Strengthening Voices for a Just Transition** project, funded by the Catherine Donnelly Foundation, KAIROS convened four intergenerational community dialogues on principles for making the transition away from fossil fuels in a way that supports workers, youth, Indigenous communities, and the people most affected by climate change to build a new economy that works for everyone, where no one is left behind. The project, which wrapped up in early 2025, included empowering a cohort of youth change makers to advocate to their local MPs.

KAIROS continues to provide backbone support to the **For the Love of Creation** collaborative, with strong staff involvement in hosting the communications infrastructure as well as providing active leadership and involvement.

2024 was a year of building and renewing partnerships related to **migrant justice**. Key activities included ongoing advocacy for providing a path to permanent residence for all migrant workers, and for the regularization of undocumented people.

- Attended the Canadian Council of Refugees consultation in Montreal, where staff had the opportunity to reconnect and build partnerships with key organizations working closely with migrant workers. Notable collaborations include Amnesty International and the Association for the Rights of Household and Farm Workers.
- Advocacy for Immigrant Justice: The Migrant Justice Team, along with members of the KAIROS team, participated in the “Say No to Racism! Yes to Immigrant Justice” rally organized by the Migrant Rights Network, joining over 300 allies and workers in support of migrant rights.
- Proposal Submission to Health Canada: The MJ Team successfully submitted a proposal to Health Canada for a project titled **Assessing Climate-Related Health Vulnerabilities and Developing Adaptation Strategies for Migrant Workers in Canada**. This project focuses on the often-overlooked impact of climate change on migrant workers, particularly those in agriculture and fisheries, who face disproportionate climate-related risks. KAIROS will leverage its existing partnerships with migrant rights organizations and local faith communities across Canada, working in collaboration with Ontario Health Clinics for Occupational Workers to center the right to health for this vulnerable population. As of March 2025, still waiting on the results of the proposal submission.
- Collaboration with Churches Witnessing with Migrants (CWWM): Joined the CWWM to collaborate on an event in November in Ottawa. This event focused on knowledge-sharing, education, and collaboration between migrant workers and migrant-serving organizations.

In late 2024, KAIROS took on the facilitation of the Canadian **Jubilee 2025** campaign. KAIROS' Jubilee 2025 campaign emphasizes ecological justice, and the urgent need to address ecological debt—the exploitation of resources and lands in the Global South and in Indigenous communities worldwide. Amplifying Indigenous voices, the campaign also calls for land restitution, climate justice, and the transformation of exploitative systems to uphold dignity, equity, and sustainable development for all. In Canada, KAIROS Canada is leading the campaign in collaboration with Citizens for Public Justice, Development and Peace – Caritas Canada, and the Office of Religious Congregations for Integral Ecology and The Canadian Council of Churches. Together, we are mobilizing communities of faith and conscience to demand:

- **Debt cancellation** for unjust and unsustainable debts.
- **Global financial reform** to prevent future crises.
- **A debt resolution framework within the United Nations** that is transparent, binding and fair.