

Newsletter for December 2018



*For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace
Isaiah 9:6*

Dear Friends of Concilio,

Love reconnects us to life. The truth of Christ's life is that life is love and love is life. There is no genuine life without love. Self-interest suffocates life. Life implodes when self-interest is at the core. This is why the kingdom of self is based on death. Ultimately, taking care of Number One takes care of no one. For the only way to truly care for myself is to give myself in love of others. There I will find my truest and deepest fulfillment.

David G. Benner, *Surrender to Love: Discovering the Heart of Christian Spirituality*

This season focuses our attention on hope, peace, joy, and love. As I write this letter, Concilio volunteers are gathering in prison chapels to share these Advent themes with men behind bars. For this gift of time and presence, we give thanks.

The Board is grateful for past gifts and vision. In 2019, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first Kairos marathon circle founded by the late Dr. Charles J. Taylor. Dr. Taylor pioneered clinical pastoral education in Canada and served as a professor of Acadia Divinity College (ADC) between 1953 and 2002. His leadership and inspiration have led many to deepen their faith and interaction with understanding our humanity in light of God's love for all.

We also give thanks for the current gifts and vision of Dr. Harry Gardner, President of ADC, Dr. Dorothy Hunse, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care, and Rev. Joe Green, Director, Charles J. Taylor Centre for Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care, and their commitment to bring Concilio Prison Ministry "home" to ADC. Dr. Hunse and I are working towards a program to involve ADC students in Kairos prison marathons as part of a student's academic experience. On **Wednesday, January 16, 2019, at 11:30 a.m.**, I will have the privilege to speak at the **Acadia Divinity College Chapel** about the ministry to deeply wounded at the Manning Memorial Chapel, Acadia University. This service will be followed by a short presentation during the community lunch in the basement of the Chapel. All are welcome to attend the service and the community lunch.

Thank you for your willingness to visit inmates in prison, to pray for them and Concilio, to donate food and money, and to speak well of these experiences. Please accept my sincere gratitude and love to each one of you for your gifts.

I invite you to read the updates in this newsletter and to learn more about Concilio Prison Ministry. We covet your prayers as we move forward in hope, peace, joy, and love.

Blessings and peace be with you in this Season of Advent,

Clarence DeSchiffart
President, Concilio Prison Ministry
Facilitator of the Kairos Marathons

Benefit Concert by Lucas Porter for St. James, Kentville & Concilio Prison Ministry

Lucas Porter is home for the holidays! He will be performing a benefit piano concert to fundraise for Concilio Prison Ministry and the new audio-visual system at St. James, Kentville. Proceeds will be shared equally.

Date: Sunday, December 30, 2018
Time: 3:00 p.m.
Location: St. James Anglican Church, 18 Prospect Ave, Kentville, Nova Scotia
Admission: Freewill offering

Lucas Porter has been heralded as "a young lion of the keyboard" with "staggering virtuosity and some of the old-school pyrotechnics and unabashed romanticism of early 20th-century legends like Moiseiwitsch or even Sofronitsky" (Natasha Gauthier, Ottawa Citizen). In February of 2017, Lucas gave an "All Schubert" recital at Oberlin College, alongside several vocalists and string players.

Invite your friends and enjoy this concert and support Concilio Prison Ministry and St. James.

Introduction to Chaplaincy, Acadia Divinity College



Spread the news! This one-week intensive course is intended as a survey of the profession of Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care, exploring the diversity that exists in this specialized ministry.

Course: Introduction to Chaplaincy
Dates: February 18-22, 2019
Time: 9:00-4:30 each day
Location: Acadia University in Wolfville
Professor: Dr. Dorothy Hunse, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care

A variety of specialists will contribute to the class, including prison and reintegration (community) chaplains, military chaplains, sports chaplains, business chaplains and chaplains involved in healthcare and senior sectors. Issues such as professional competencies, requirements for employment and certification, and ethical issues of care will be addressed. In addition, students will begin to develop theological understandings of the Chaplain's unique call and role as it relates to the church, as it involves seeking God in the midst of human brokenness and as it is lived out within our pluralistic Canadian culture.

For additional information, contact Dr. Hunse at dorothy.hunse@acadiu.ca or 902-585-2222 or go to <https://acadiadiv.ca/> and click on "Courses".

50 Years of Kairos Marathon Circles!

Concilio is organizing an event in 2019 to celebrate 50 Years of **Kairos Marathon Circles** at Springhill Institution! Contact Clarence DeSchiffart (cell: 902-599-4139) if you are interested in helping plan the celebration for this milestone.

St. Luke's Renewal Centre Update

At this time, there are more than 60 individuals involved in various voluntary programs at St. Luke's Renewal Centre. These are inmates who are serious about changing their way of living. Recruitment is simply by word of mouth; one person finds a program helpful and recommends it to others.



The programs at St. Luke's focus on the spirituality of the inmates. True change happens when transformation occurs, and this only takes place in a person's life at a spiritual level. These programs clarify 'spiritual' with 'religious'. Although only some inmates follow a specific religious path, everyone is spiritual and needs to find a way to heal and nurture their lives. This is the goal of St Luke's.

Rev. John Tonks is the facilitator at St. Luke's, and he has been active in re-introducing its services to the inmate population since August 2017.

Programs offered in the last 6 months include:

1. More than AA or NA, **12 Steps** is an internationally designed program which attempts, through question and written answers and discussion, to help the addict look at the emotional and other factors behind their addiction.
2. **Grief and Loss Program** is designed for those who are struggling with death, divorce, separation and loss of freedom. The goal of the program is to help them understand their grief process.
3. **Houses of Healing** is an international program that has been very successful in numerous prisons in the USA and Canada. The program focuses on emotional development, or lack thereof, encourages growth and understanding of oneself, and seeks to offer alternative ways of handling difficult situations.
4. The Psychology Department offers a course on **attitude and commitment** at St. Luke's, directed by Dr. Margaret Priemer.
5. St. Luke's sets aside time for those who need a **quiet space** to sit and reflect, and to find their centre and inner peace.
6. **Individual counselling** is offered for those uncomfortable in group settings.
7. A new program has begun with a group of individuals, carefully selected, who are serious about dealing with the **abuse they experienced as children**.
8. An **overnight program** is available for those cleared to participate.

A Reflection on the Kairos Marathon Circles



“To wait for Christ to come in his fullness is not just a passive thing, a pious, prayerful, churchly thing. On the contrary, to wait for Christ to come in his fullness is above all else to act in Christ’s stead as fully as we know how. To wait for Christ is as best we can to be Christ to those who need us to be Christ to them most, and to bring them the most we have of Christ’s healing and hope, because unless we bring it, it may never be brought at all”.

Frederick Buechner, *Secrets in the Dark: A Life in Sermons*

I’ve been attending the Kairos Marathons for 30 years and co-leading the day-long Advent programs for nearly 20 years. Both are amazing programs. Both bring hope to a very dark world.

The Kairos Marathon healing circle has a Christian foundation and focuses on both the psychological and the spiritual. It’s a safe place - for me, for us. All of us. Inmates and volunteers alike. It’s where I “woke up”. And, now, it’s where I can bring the most I have of Christ’s healing and hope.

Looking back to when I began attending Marathons, I was not very open to working on my own inner issues. I had wounds, and pent-up anger and shame. I wanted my life to be well-controlled, without surprises, or risks. I couldn’t bear to be seen as incompetent. As the inmates would say, *I was in my own personal prison.*

Slowly over the years, I learned to trust the circle and to open up and talk about my own woundedness. And as I talked, and as I received love and care from the circle, I dismantled my emotional prison, brick by heavy brick. The circle of inmates and volunteers helped me find my freedom.

I can’t imagine my life without the Circle. I plan my year around those dates. I want to be there every six weeks. I want to be with this group that knows what it’s like to struggle, and question, and rail against God and all the tragedy of life.

And, I need to give and support, to guide and be guided. This is “not just a passive thing, a pious, prayerful, churchly thing” for me. This is acting in Christ’s stead, bringing the most of Christ’s healing and hope ...because if I/we don’t bring it, it “may never be brought at all.”

Sheila MacCrimmon

Kairos Marathon volunteer from Halifax area

Prison Ministry – Why should you care?

We have been engaging churches and chaplains on the topic: **Prison Ministry – Why should you care?** If you are interested in having someone speak to your church or organization about the impact of Concilio prison ministry on inmates, volunteers, and the general community, email concilio.ed@gmail.com or call Clarence DeSchiffart (cell: 902-599-4139).

Recent conversation with inmate during a break in the Kairos Marathon in Springhill

Inmate: *“Clarence thank you for being here!”*

Clarence: *“You are most welcome!”*

Inmate pauses and then states more assertively: *“No, I mean it. Thank you for being here. It is absolutely necessary for you and the volunteers to come. It makes such a difference. Without it, I would not have changed. You need to know that you need to continue to come!”*

Please help Concilio Prison Ministry

1. *Please pray for ...*

The Board of Directors and committees of Concilio Prison Ministry

The donation of time and service by gifted and inspired people

The development of a long-term sustainability strategy and fundraising campaign

The financial support to sustain and grow the current ministries of St. Luke's Renewal Centre, Kairos marathon circles, and Advent programs

2. *Please share Concilio news with others.*

Consider using your gifts to help communicate the mission of Concilio ministries by volunteering to help with social media and/or website management. If interested, please contact:

Clarence DeSchiffart

President, Concilio Prison Ministry

concilio.ed@gmail.com

home: 902-542-3917

cell: 902-599-4139

3. *Give generously.*

We gratefully accept your donation. All gifts \$20 or more will receive a tax receipt.

Mailing a cheque to: Concilio Prison Ministry
261 McGee Street, RR#1, Springhill NS B0M 1X0

Give online: Canada Helps: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/5921>

Words of Appreciation

Concilio is thankful for the generous support and encouragement from many individuals helping with various ministries through volunteering, purchasing food, and making donations. We are deeply appreciative for the following organizations who have contributed to the financial sustainability of Concilio Prison Ministry in 2017-2018. They include:

Maritime Conference
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

LAW FOUNDATION
OF NOVA SCOTIA

MCC

Relief, development and peace in the name of Christ