

Newsletter: May 2019



Spirituality is about being ready. All the spiritual disciplines of your life – prayer, study, meditation or ritual religious vows – are there so you can break through to the eternal. Spirituality is about awakening the eyes, the ears, the heart so you can see what's always happening right in front of you.

Richard Rohr
The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation

Dear Friends of Concilio,

I hope joy, happiness, and renewal are core to your continuing Easter season.

During Lent, I was stirred by a reading from Luke 18. In it, Jesus is telling his disciples about his looming betrayal and suffering. Not one of his disciples really believed what he announced. It was apparent that they were blind to what was happening around them. I too imagined myself unable to see the truth in this situation. And lo and behold, the next reading was about a blind man. He heard Jesus was passing by and called out to him by stating, "Jesus, Son of David have mercy on me!" The crowd tells him to be quiet and his response is to shout even louder. Jesus stops, pauses, and then asks, "What do you want?" His response is, "I want to see."

I want to see! To truly see what truths are before me and within me. *We want to see!* I believe inmates and volunteers desire to see beyond their brokenness and find wholeness.

On November 2, 2019, Concilio will host a celebration of 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 of us to deepen our faith and to interact with understanding our humanity in light of God's love for all. **SAVE THE DATE** and watch for more details on Concilio's Facebook Page and website.

We give thanks for Dr. Harry Gardner, President of ADC. Dr. Gardner has been an encourager and supporter of re-building a collaborative relationship between Acadia Divinity College and Concilio Prison Ministry. We wish him God's blessing for the next phase of his and Gail's life as he retires in June 2019.

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 genuine gratitude and love for each one of you and for your gifts.

Blessings and peace be with you in this continuing Season of Easter,

Clarence DeSchiffart

President, Concilio Prison Ministry

Facilitator, Kairos Marathons

Reflections on Kairos Marathon Circles - a first-time volunteer

April 2019 was my first time attending a Kairos Marathon. I went in with an open mind. The one thing I loved most about the Kairos circle was how it is designed to create a safe zone for forging deep and meaningful relationships with others. I was able to connect on a deeper level with several people. As time passed by, superficial conversations gave way to deep, powerful, authentic exchanges as trust was built brick by brick and I got a sense of what human thriving really looks like. It was beautiful. I was blessed being part of this marathon. I went seeking to give and I ended up receiving much more in return.



Ajay Immanuel has been pursuing a Master of Divinity at Acadia Divinity College since January 2018. He is originally from India, and he currently lives in Wolfville with his parents and a younger brother.

The Board of Concilio Prison Ministry welcomes newest member



Sandra Weldon

Approximately three years ago I was invited to join Concilio's Advent Program at four federal institutions. Attending them, moved my heart. From there it was a short step to start attending Kairos Marathons Circles in Springhill. Being both a retired school teacher and a retired nurse I am drawn to helping others. The work done at these Marathons has touched me like no other. I consider it a blessing from God to share in this work. This is where healing begins.

50 Years of Kairos Marathons: Let's Celebrate!

We're planning a party on November 2 and you're invited! **Fifty years** of continuous volunteer ministry in prison is a great achievement to celebrate!

Since 1969, Kairos Marathons have been held in the Springhill prison chapel for two days approximately every seven weeks. A spiritual therapeutic circle grounded in the Christian faith, "the Kairos Marathons" have been changing the lives of incarcerated men and women and community volunteers. Fifty years ago, the Rev. Dr. "Charlie" Taylor began a partnership with Correctional Service Canada (CSC) that has continued, without interruption. For **five decades**, there has been a ministry to broken and wounded hearts in prison! Through the faithful partnerships of church congregations, prayer warriors, funders, CSC, Acadia Divinity College, and others, hundreds - perhaps thousands - of lives have been changed as the transformation ripples out from Marathon participants' families, friends, and communities.

Join us on **Saturday, November 2 in Wolfville, Nova Scotia:**

To Honour	The history and partnerships of the Kairos Marathons
To Rejoice	In the impact that the Marathons have had on individuals, ministries, and chaplaincy across Canada
To Celebrate	The Kairos Marathons and the continued vision of Concilio Prison Ministry

Together, we will reunite with friends and share stories, laughter, and singing. There will be a program with worship and presentations, followed by a social time with music and munchies.

Spread the word!	Inform your friends of this event. Share the names of people (<i>with contact information if available</i>) that you recall from your experiences with the marathons.
Share a memory.	Send us an anecdote or a photo to create a <i>Wall of Memories</i> for the event.
Get involved.	Email to ask how you can help with planning this important event.

Email: kairosmarathons50@gmail.com

Webpage: <http://concilioprisonministry.org/50-years/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/concilioprisonministry>

Please "Like" and "Share" with your Facebook friends

We look forward to seeing you on November 2nd!

Celebration Planning Team: *Sheila MacCrimmon, Lorraine Street & Sandra Weldon*

Reflections on Kairos Marathon Circles - a former resident



The Kairos marathons that take place in the Springhill federal institution and in the community have impacted my life in a way that I never would have imagined.

In 2011, I was sentenced to 12 years and 7 months after turning myself into police and confessing to all my crimes. These crimes occurred during a period in my life when I abused alcohol and drugs to numb the pain of sexual and physical abuse that I suffered as a young teen. I had been diagnosed with PTSD and had a desire to address the past; however, I did not meet Correctional Service Canada's criteria for psychological intervention, so I was left to cope with my past on my own.

I had been attending chapel services in prison and heard about a Kairos marathon that was going to be held at the institution, so I decided to attend. This turned out to be an important decision: the marathon gave me the opportunity to share what I was going through and to get feedback that helped me move forward in a positive way.

The volunteers were amazing people who provided unwavering and non-judgmental support. Having the opportunity to attend several marathons helped me come through the toughest things I have ever experienced. These people went above and beyond by showing up for weekend sessions every seven weeks. They visited with me during my time in prison for nearly 5 years. And after being released for 4 years, they are still by my side.

I do not know where I would be in my life without the support of this organization. I plan to graduate with a Business Administration diploma in two months, am clean and sober for almost 9 years, and have positive relationships with my four children.

To this day I receive emails from members of Kairos. If they are driving past my town, they meet me for coffee. And when I can, I attend the Kairos street marathons in Wolfville.

Without this organization I would have been left to find my own way. It isn't only me who they have helped; I've witnessed some amazing breakthroughs for guys because of the safe and supportive space offered through the marathons.

I am forever grateful to Clarence and all the volunteers who give their time for such a great cause.

*Former resident of Correctional Service Canada
& Kairos Marathon participant*

Faith-based Learning Exchange: From Incarceration to Community

Sixty-seven individuals from diverse Christian faith groups met on March 30, 2019, in Dartmouth for a day of learning through listening, conversation, idea-sharing, and action-planning. Correctional Service Canada volunteer liaison, Jude Clyke, initiated the idea of this Faith-based learning exchange, and two **Concilio Prison Ministry** volunteers, Clarence DeSchiffart and Sheila McCrimmon, were part of the five-person planning committee.

Faith-based volunteers provide critical support to inmates during incarceration and as they transition back into community. With a criminal record and limited resources, newly released inmates face many challenges: securing housing; finding a job; attending mandated daytime programs; re-establishing relationships with family and community; and, learning how to handle the tasks of daily life (e.g., banking, shopping, and bus schedules).

Goals:

- Realize the importance of creating and maintaining welcoming places to support individuals returning to community
- Develop ideas and identify resources for creating a welcoming faith community - becoming an empathic church
- Become part of a network of Faith-based communities and individuals, to share, digitally and in other formats, the resources and lessons learned.

- Create and endorse an ongoing working group to focus on reintegration of formerly incarcerated

The format for the day was simple: hear from a speaker about their unique experience, break up into groups to discuss a related theme, share it with the room, repeat!

Two people told their personal stories of being incarcerated, the challenges of reintegration, and the role of faith. We heard from Rev. AJ Thomas, a pastor who has been effective in creating a safe and thriving community of believers in Deep Water Church in Halifax. This church is passionate about issues of re-integration. Finally, the group listened to Rev. Rob Elford, the former Executive Director at Halifax Community Chaplaincy, who shared from his years of working with the formerly incarcerated.

The committee is following-up on next steps for this group. Significant interest was expressed in continuing to gather and build capacity to become more welcoming Faith-based organizations.

Thank you to **Acadia Divinity College** and the **Taylor Centre, Canadian Friends Service Committee** (Quakers), two individual donors, as well as participants for your financial support. And thank you to the people behind the scenes who helped with logistics, including the **Nova Scotia Community College** (Akerley campus) for the use of their facilities.

Prison Ministry – Why should you care? – Presentation for churches

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

St. Luke's Renewal Centre Update

Reverend John Tonks continues to provide a loving presence to the inmates at St. Luke's Renewal Centre. For a time, this spring and then for the full summer, John will work on his "bucket list" of travels. During his absence, Rev. Lorraine Street will be the Facilitator at St Luke's Renewal Centre.



Hold the Date: Concilio Prison Ministry AGM

The Concilio Prison Ministry **AGM** is scheduled for **Tuesday June 25**, from **6:45 – 8:15 p.m.** The AGM will take place in the vestry of Wolfville Baptist Church, 487 Main Street Wolfville, NS in the vestry. Come and hear about this past year and hopes for future engagements.

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 **Law Foundation of Nova Scotia** who continues to contribute to the financial sustainability of St. Luke's Renewal Centre. We are also grateful for the growing collaboration with the **Charles J. Taylor Centre for Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care** at Acadia Divinity College.



Support 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 Marathons, and Advent programs

2. *Please share Concilio Newsletters with others.*

3. *Give generously.*

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

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

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