

# Friends of Concilio

Newsletter December 2022

Since then, I always give thanks for you and pray for you.

I pray that the great God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ may give you the wisdom of His Spirit. Then you will be able to understand the secrets about Him as you know Him better. I pray that your hearts will be able to understand.

Ephesians 1:16-18a New Life Version

I cannot transform myself, or anyone else for that matter. What I can do is create the conditions in which spiritual transformation can take place, by developing and maintaining a rhythm of spiritual practices that keep me open and available to God.

Ruth Haley Barton, [Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation](#)

**Dear Friends of Concilio,**

The power of circles has been on my mind this season.

In September 2022, my twin brother Charley invited me to attend a weekend spiritual retreat in Westport, Ontario. Sponsored and organized by Souly Business Canada, this event attracted more than 120 men. When I read the retreat description, the invitation appeared to be for Christian businessmen to step away for two days. However, once in Westport, I quickly discovered that Souly Business was in the business of inviting souls to grow. The retreat speakers invited men to both know and experience Jesus.

During those 48 hours, I witnessed many men longing to express their feelings and emotions but struggling with their vulnerability. One young man in his late 30s sat at our table was gripped with emotion after listening to one of the speakers. When I gently asked him what was going on, he replied, "I don't know." I have heard the same statement during Kairos Marathon circles while listening to inmates, volunteers, and counselling students. However, after being deeply heard, I have also witnessed people's spirits freed.

Love is present when someone chooses to be vulnerable, moving beyond knowing God to experiencing God. When we are cared by others then we can lift ourselves, even momentarily, from our deepest confusions, hurts, anger, and shame. This is where God is found, in the poverty of our wounded heart and in our brokenness. Love is present in our circles, and in our daily quiet reflections, when we acknowledge the presence of God, allowing us to experience Jesus.

**Clarence DeSchiffart**

President, Concilio Prison Ministry  
Facilitator, Kairos Marathons



## Only Love Heals – How to be “there” for those on the fringe!



*Do you know someone who is living on the fringes of society because of an addiction or a life challenge?*

*Are you interested in improving your ability to help those who are struggling or have done prison time?*

If yes, you are invited to enroll in ***Introduction to Prison Ministry*** to gain the knowledge and skills to better serve people who are vulnerable in your church and community.

Taught by Clarence DeSchiffart, President of Concilio Prison Ministry, and Rev. Wilma Janzen, Manager of Spiritual Services at Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Facility, this course considers the specialized form of ministry with persons who are, or have been, incarcerated, as well as other people who are vulnerable in our churches and communities.

Students will have the opportunity to examine the culture of correctional institutions, explore life circumstances that contribute to a wounded spirit and being incarcerated, cultivate an attentiveness to how God’s Spirit works through various ministries offered inside correctional institutions, and identify faith-based interventions which assist in healing and rehabilitation.

WHEN: February 20-24, 2023 (one-week intensive)  
WHERE: On-campus at Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville & Online  
WHO: All welcome! This course can be taken for credit or as an auditor.

If you are interested in registering for Introduction to Prison Ministry, please email Catherine Cole, Acadia Divinity College Manager of Recruitment and Admissions, at [catherine.cole@acadiau.ca](mailto:catherine.cole@acadiau.ca)

### About the instructors:

[Rev. Wilma Janzen](#), an alumna of Acadia Divinity College, grew up in the beautiful Annapolis Valley and is a life-long member of Kentville United Baptist Church. She has served on countless church boards and committees as well as led the youth group.

Wilma has more than 15 years of experience working in prisons, serving as chaplain of Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility in Dartmouth for 5 years, as facilitator of St. Luke’s Renewal Centre, a retreat center for inmates located within the fence of Springhill Institution, for 3 years, and as chaplain of Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Facility in Priestville since 2015.

[Clarence DeSchiffart](#), M.Ed. (Counselling), R.S.W., has 35+ years of career counselling experience and is a part-time lecturer in the Acadia Master of Education Counselling program since 1993. As the Coordinator of Career and Essential Skills for Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), he contributed to more than a dozen national career projects.

Clarence has been involved in prison ministry for nearly 36 years. He is currently serving as the facilitator of the Springhill and Wolfville Kairos Marathon healing circles and President of Concilio Prison Ministry. Clarence’s spiritual life and his service to people who are marginalized were enriched by his mentor, the late Dr. Charles Taylor, a professor at ADC.

## Concilio Prison Ministry Welcomes New Halifax Community Chaplain

I am the Chaplain of the Halifax Community Chaplaincy Services (HCCS), an organization with a long history of supporting the re-integration of individuals who have committed criminal offences. The people we support (or core members) face what can seem like insurmountable challenges of accessing housing, food, and employment, as well as navigating stigma, exclusion, and the challenges of recovery from mental health issues and addictions.

One way that HCCS supports core members is by helping them to find a welcoming faith or spiritual community when they express interest. We also support and equip churches and faith groups to bring core members safely and thoughtfully into community life. Our other role is facilitating Circles of Support & Accountability (CoSA), supporting the re-integration of people who have committed sexual offences with the encouragement of a circle of volunteers. Often ostracised, these core members find it incomprehensible that volunteers want to take the time and energy to get to know them.

Knowing the serious crimes committed by the people we support, you may ask,

*Why should we help these people?*

Jan Van Ruusbroec, a medieval priest and mystic, wrote about the “natural nobility” inherent to each human being. He called this the divine spark, that place where the Imago Dei abides in all human beings. In our chaplaincy work, we see this dignity alive in each person that we support. The light of that holy spark may be dim or the smallest flicker, yet still, it is there. How many of us can truly see ourselves except through the light of those people who faithfully reflect to us our value, our contribution, our unique gifts to the world around us?

Our volunteers are the kindling to this inner light in core members. Their hope and faithfulness allow core members to see themselves afresh, with hope for recovery, reconciliation, and belonging. And this relationship is never one-sided; core members help our volunteers to discover new perspectives on themselves and God. As they both take the risk of being seen and known in an honest encounter; they are changed by the unique presence of God in each other.

We are welcoming new volunteers and invite all those with open minds and strong hearts to support us in our work. Please contact me to find out more about our work. I will leave you with a favourite passage on this mysterious spark, the Imago Dei in each of us, from “Sayings of the Desert Fathers”:

Abba Lot went to Abba Joseph and said to him, “Abba, as far as I can, I say my little office, I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do? Then the old man stood up and stretched his hands toward heaven. His fingers became like ten lamps of fire, and he said to him, “If you will, you can become all flame.”

**Coryn Stehouwer**

Chaplain, HCCS

902-329-2224

[halifaxcommunitychaplain@gmail.com](mailto:halifaxcommunitychaplain@gmail.com)



## St. Luke's Renewal Centre: Summer & Fall 2022



We are grateful that St. Luke's Renewal Centre was permitted to open again this past summer. The Centre closed Christmas Eve 2021 due to the Omicron variant of COVID-19, and then in the spring, the Centre's Facilitator, Rev. Lorraine Street, had emergency surgery, delaying her return to the Centre to the end of May.

**Cohorts:** The four Housing Units of the Institution continues to be divided into two cohorts - a change introduced because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This arrangement requires the Centre to offer each program twice so that people from each cohort can participate. In fact, a third cohort was created to offer programming in French. Time was spent regrouping in the summer. Since December 2021, some program participants were transferred to other institutions or, more happily, some were paroled or reached their statutory release date.

**Programming:** Two days each week, men serving life sentences (or long sentences) come to St. Luke's for quiet time, conversation, and a shared meal. On the other days, we build the schedule around the availability of the men.

The Roots sessions was held over the summer so that by early September 2022, three groups moved into the Houses of Healing + Surviving Trauma program. This program also incorporated some of the men who had expressed interest in December 2021. Two Houses of Healing groups were scheduled on Mondays to be completed in early December. Our plan is to start the Roots sessions in mid-December as there is a long waiting list of men from each cohort.

We have been especially fortunate this fall to also offer a four-day Art Therapy Program facilitated by a volunteer and trained Art Therapist, Danielle Cuvelier. A group of men from one cohort completed this program in early November, and another cohort has begun. The men have enjoyed and benefitted from the Art Therapy Program, and we hope to offer the Program a third time in the spring. We are grateful to Danielle.

**Scheduling Challenges:** Over the fall months, there were several lockdowns, disrupting programming. Some lockdowns were for a morning or an afternoon, and some lockdowns were for a week at a time due to frequent reports of contraband (e.g., drugs, cellphones). In September and October, the Centre was closed for six Mondays - directly impacting the two Houses of Healing programs: Labour Day (September 5), The State Funeral for Her Majesty The Queen (September 19), the aftermath of Hurricane Fiona (September 26), and Thanksgiving (October 10), plus two lockdowns. Fortunately, in November there was only one holiday (November 11) and no hurricanes, and there were less lockdowns!

**Please continue to pray** for St. Luke's Renewal Centre, the program leaders, and the men who enter this place inside the walls of Springhill Institution.

**Rev. Lorraine Street**  
Facilitator  
St. Luke's Renewal Centre



## New Art Therapy Program at St. Luke's Renewal Centre

This fall, I have been facilitating Art Therapy sessions once a week at St. Luke's Renewal Centre with men who are incarcerated at Springhill Institution. This program consisted of meditations, art, reflection, meals together, and meaningful sharing.



Explore • Art • & Mind

Catch me on my knees.  
Reach out without asking please.

USING ART  
FOR HEALING

Join in to explore ways of creating balance in times of stress AND to restore a sacred sense of personal well being.

FALL 2022  
WORKSHOPS

SIGN UP  
AT ST. LUKE'S

More Info: Contact Lorraine Street, Facilitator St. Luke's  
(No previous skill required)

After some art therapy sessions, the men were asked how they experienced the program. Some of the responses were:

*The sessions leave me feeling refreshed.*

*I find it informative and enlightening.*

*It is a break for my mind.*

*It created a safe space and gave me the sense of freedom, something I don't experience otherwise.*

I have witnessed Concilio Prison Ministry and specifically St. Luke's providing the most beautiful long-lasting spaces for calm healing to emerge, in an ocean of rough waters. This going-to-prison territory to run a workshop is not necessarily a walk in the park. Not easy. Not clear cut. While others may want to steer clear of this emotional and stigmatized environment, I want to jump right in.

As for myself, it is clear to me that working with the Concilio team is like working with a friend that is morphing worthlessness into worthy, useless into useful

and, forgotten into forgiven. What beautiful qualities to have in a friend. Right? I am grateful. This is what we all need when navigating rough waters, metaphorically speaking... especially the rough waters of our mental health realm.

Truth is, we can all choose our ripples, we can be the sun that emerges or the wind that just whispers, the intimidating storm or the sky that holds it all...every part adds to the whole. Nonetheless I live in faith that - healing happens. Insight happens. Safe spaces and friends are important. When you support Concilio, rest assured you are helping give these priceless gifts to others.

**Danielle Cuvelier**  
Art therapist & mom





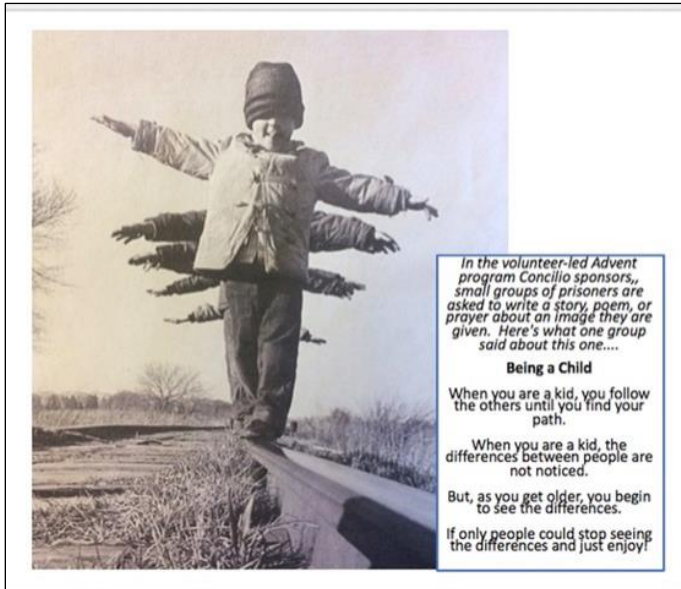
## New Art Therapy Program at St. Luke's Renewal Centre

Below are several pieces created in the art therapy sessions.



## The Advent Program Returns - 2022!

I am just back from Springhill prison chapel, riding on a bit of an emotional high. This was the second of two days in Springhill, facilitating the beloved Advent sessions. Because of prison restrictions, we could visit only one prison this year, and with only two volunteers. It was definitely odd to be without our regular group of volunteers, yet, with the help of the Chaplains and a couple of faith leaders, we created some good fun for the 14 men in the first group and 24 in the second.



It's sort of a "Christmas Day" of laughter and lighthearted fun for the men. The morning is full of lively Christmas tunes, games, and puzzles, and the afternoon moves into quieter activities that encourage some creative writing and reflection.

Near the end of the day, we read a storybook; this year it was "The True Meaning of Crumbfest" (by David Weale, a PEI author).

Who doesn't like story time, right?! The illustrations are shown on a large screen, and the group settles right down, quietly listening. That deep stillness is a wee bit 'magical'.

The final piece of the day is a reflection from Jeff Hosick; this year the focus was on the words of O Holy Night. Then each person gets a "gift" of a scripture passage on a strip of paper, which is a reminder of the day, and of God's unwavering Love.

This is a difficult season for those incarcerated. The isolation and deep loneliness can be crushing. The Advent sessions are a small spark of light in the darkness. The men can step out of their sadness for a few hours, and into a place of community. Burly, tattooed, supposedly "hardened" men become playful, giggling boys for just a few short hours. We hear lots of gratitude as they leave the chapel:

*I won't forget this.  
I needed this kind of day.  
This was a lot of fun.*

Their gratitude is heartwarming. I'll be basking in the glow for months!

**Sheila MacCrimmon**

*Sheila has been co-facilitating the Advent sessions with Jeff Hosick for close to 30 years.*





### Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

Concilio Prison Ministry gratefully received a grant of \$10,000 in November from the Growth for Ministry Fund of the Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. These funds will support the implementation of a new program at the St. Luke's Renewal Centre: Saying "Yes" to Kids by Helping Dads in Prison Become Better Fathers.

This program will support inmates of Springhill Institution to become better fathers through a highly interactive educational program. Supported by a variety of purchased and created resource materials, this program is based on:

- a deep understanding of the prevalence and devastating impact of childhood and adolescent trauma in the lives of people who are in prison;
- a trauma-informed understanding of the most significant elements of healthy human development; and
- the knowledge of the significant difficulties many men in prison experience in their efforts to connect and remain connected with their children in ways that support their healthy development.

The program will include:

- The fundamentals of being a healthy child, adolescent, and adult.
- Current thinking about traumatic events and its impact on children, adolescents, and adults.
- Looking at how participants were parented and its impact on them being fathers.
- Assessment of participants of strengths, weaknesses, and areas of need in relation to being a father.
- Exploration of specific resources and supports for specific child situations (e.g., child with ADHD; moral support through a custody battle).
- Development of individual strategies to obtain parenting information, education, support from inside and outside the Institution.

Through this educational program, the hope is participants will become better fathers to their children, and that, consequently, their children's health—physical, emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual—will be enhanced and supported.



## Street and Prison Kairos Marathons: Update

**Kairos Street Marathons.** Over the summer and fall months, several inspiring marathons have been held at Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. These experiences included rich conversations, attentive listening, and deep compassion addressing deep hurts and brokenness.

In the last two circles, students from the Acadia University Master of Education counselling program participated and witnessed a warm reception and acceptance for who they were and what they brought to the group. After 90 minutes of opening introductions, sharing of what brought each attendee to this Kairos marathon and a little about their guided imagery experiences, one student shared with me,

*There is something special in the room - creating a joyful space for me – I can't describe it.*

I responded to her,

*Classroom 201 at Acadia Divinity College has a history of prayer and love from hosting many Kairos healing circles over the years.*

God's love and presence was evident throughout the day. There was a deep sense of the Holy Spirit working in the hearts and minds of participants. It was a moving experience and a privilege to witness.

**Kairos Prison Marathons.** No circles were held at Springhill Institution in 2022 as marathons were re-booked four different times in 2022 due to Covid-19 restrictions and other circumstances. A modified circle with two volunteers only is scheduled for January 16-17, 2023.

Please continue to pray for the inmates and volunteers who long to participate once again in these circles. These marathons create hope for many participants. If you are interested in attending a Kairos Street Marathon, contact Clarence DeSchiffart [clarence.deschiffart@acadiiau.ca](mailto:clarence.deschiffart@acadiiau.ca). Dates will be announced soon.

## New Board Director – Welcome to Joy Steem

We are delighted to welcome Joy Steem to the Board of Directors of Concilio Prison Ministry.



Joy has been accompanying individuals and families impacted by incarceration since 2017 in her roles as Executive Director, Community Chaplain, and Circles of Support and Accountability coordinator with Halifax Community Chaplaincy Society (HCCS). In the summer of 2022, she decided to deepen her vocational capacity by going back to school for a second graduate degree, this time an MDiv.

Her articles and book chapters have appeared in the likes of *Mythlore*, *Christianity Today Women*, *Fathom Magazine*, *Converge Magazine*, *Clarion Journal of Spirituality and Justice*, *The Inklings and Culture*, and elsewhere. Joy is tremendously grateful for the opportunity to continue her accompaniment of offenders in a journey of grace and mutuality through her part-time work with HCCS while she is in seminary.

## Concilio Prison Ministry is Grateful

### 50 for 50 Campaign Pledges

Concilio Prison Ministry deeply appreciates your financial support. Thank you also for honouring your pledges.

### To Make a Gift

All gifts \$20 or more will receive a tax receipt. If you donated in 2022, your receipt will be sent in January 2023.

### How to Give

Mail a cheque:	Concilio Prison Ministry P.O. Box 2382, Wolfville NS B4P 2N5
Give online:	Canada Helps <a href="https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/5921">https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/5921</a>
E-transfer:	Concilio Prison Ministry <a href="mailto:concilio.ed@gmail.com">concilio.ed@gmail.com</a>

Thank you to the many interested **volunteers!** Although your engagement with ministry services has been limited due to the pandemic, we are grateful for your continued support.

Thank you to those who participated in street marathons, those who wrote and edited this newsletter and other documents, those who serve on the Board, and those who advise the Board President regarding Concilio's way forward.

Thank you to the **Law Foundation of Nova Scotia** for their financial support of **St. Luke's Renewal Centre**. The Foundation has demonstrated understanding and flexibility with their guidelines, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you to the **Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island** for their generous contribution that will implement new programming at St. Luke's Renewal Centre.

We are grateful for collaboration with **Correctional Service of Canada** and their ongoing encouragement and support to operate the Kairos Marathons at the Chapel and programs at St. Luke's Renewal Centre. Finally, we appreciate growing efforts to work closely with the **Charles J. Taylor Centre for Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care**, an academic centre of the **Acadia Divinity College**.



Diocese of Nova Scotia and  
Prince Edward Island



ACADIA  
DIVINITY COLLEGE

## How You Can Support Concilio Prison Ministry

### 1. Please pray for ...

- The men and women inside correctional institutions and those released back into their communities.
- The families, loved ones, and churches who are supporting inmates.
- Correctional Service of Canada staff and the management of federal and provincial correctional institutions for their care in helping residents re-enter civilian life in a healthy way.
- The programs offered at St. Luke's Renewal Centre by Facilitator Rev. Lorraine Street.
- The Board of Directors of Concilio Prison Ministry as they discuss, reflect, and pray about the future direction of this ministry.
- Volunteers who desire to be engaged but cannot serve due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- The Kairos Street Marathons as places for healing and experiencing the love of Jesus.

### 2. Please share this newsletter with others and invite them to join 'Friends of Concilio' by emailing [concilio.ed@gmail.com](mailto:concilio.ed@gmail.com)

### 3. Join the weekly Pray for Prisons Gathering.

Rev. Lorraine Street hosts a Zoom **PrayForPrisons Gathering** each Tuesday at 5 p.m. This is a meditative 30 minutes of prayer for those who are incarcerated. If interested in participating, contact Rev. Lorraine Street by email [prayforprisons@gmail.com](mailto:prayforprisons@gmail.com).

### 4. Learn More



[concilioprisonministry.org](http://concilioprisonministry.org)



Concilio Prison Ministry



For more information on Concilio Prison Ministry or to become a **Friend of Concilio**, email [concilio.ed@gmail.com](mailto:concilio.ed@gmail.com)

A Blessing

*May God give you more and more mercy, peace, and love.* Jude 1:2