

Friends of Concilio Prison Ministry

Newsletter June 2023

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Matthew 22:36-40

Dear Friends of Concilio,

I often ponder the question, "What does it mean to love one another?" As a follower of Jesus, I am called to love, but how do I show love when I am with people who are 'at the margins' and people who are 'poor in spirit'?

Author David Benner¹ offers a succinct view on the power of love,

"Love really is the strongest, most creative, generative, and regenerative force in the universe. Given the potency of love for healing, growth, and transformation, what could possibly be more important for the world than humans learning to give and receive love? But the love we need to learn to give and receive is not the soft sentimental kind associated with Valentine's Day, but the hard kind associated with loving those who will not or cannot return our love."

Dr. Charles Taylor always stated, 'Only love heals'. Sometimes I struggle to truly give and receive love the way Christ asks of me – especially when I feel shame, fear, or that I'm unlovable. How do I learn to love myself as a beloved child of God? How do I learn to love others?

There is often a turning to God for me – maybe in the moment, or maybe after some time has passed. I use the Daily Examen², an Ignatian Spirituality approach, to help me grow in gratitude and love, and ask for mercy and forgiveness in my everyday and ordinary experiences. As I grow in trust and assurance of love, I have discovered *wherever there is love, there is God*. And the measure of love I can receive through the Daily Examen reminds me that Jesus is telling me I am a beloved child of God. Scripture tells us this also means living for others. Our primary concern is the need of our neighbour.

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13

This is my desire for all I encounter in this prison ministry work – that we grow in awareness of love (God) being in and around us. I am grateful for the love given, and love received, that is so rich and profoundly real within the Kairos Marathon Circles. Thanks be to God!

Clarence DeSchiffart

President, Concilio Prison Ministry
Facilitator, Kairos Marathons



¹ Visit <https://www.cascadialivingwisdom.com/blog/2021/04/05/itsallaboutlovepart2>

² For more information on the Daily Examen, visit <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/>

Special Acknowledgements: Correctional Service of Canada and Concilio Prison Ministry



On March 20, 2023, Clarence DeSchiffart, President of Concilio Prison Ministry and Facilitator of the Kairos Marathon Circles, presented a gift to Jennifer Fillmore, Warden, and Ian Carr, Assistant Warden Interventions both of Correctional Service of Canada, Springhill Institution. This commissioned artwork acknowledges the **50 Years of Kairos Circles** (1969-2019) within Springhill Institution. Concilio is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the growth and well-being of the residents through the Kairos Marathon Circle and the St. Luke's Renewal Centre.



On the same occasion, Jennifer Fillmore and Ian Carr presented Concilio Prison Ministry with an acknowledgement of 50 years of service from the Commission of Correctional Service of Canada. This was received with gratitude by Sheila MacCrimmon, a long-time volunteer with Concilio, and Clarence DeSchiffart, President, Concilio Prison Ministry.

Teaching 'Introduction to Prison Ministry' at ADC



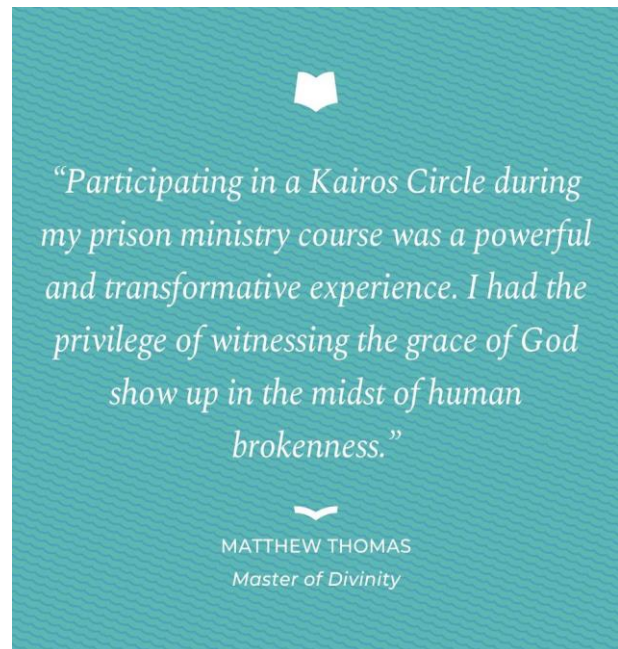
During the winter term, Rev. Wilma Janzen, Manager of Spiritual Services at Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Facility, and Clarence DeSchiffart, President of Concilio Prison Ministry, and Facilitator of Kairos Marathon Circles, taught the course, *Introduction to Prison Ministry* at Acadia Divinity College. It was a blessing to both instructors as they helped five graduate

students gain greater awareness and additional competencies to work with prisoners, former inmates, and people who are marginalized because of their association with crime.

Matthew Thomas was a student in this course - his last course to complete his Acadia Master of Divinity program. As Matthew approached graduation in early May, he offered the following quote summarizing his time at Acadia Divinity College:



Thank you, Matthew, for sharing your testimony and witness of the Kairos Circle with the Friends of Concilio and beyond!



An Experience of Kairos Marathons at Springhill

I attended Acadia Divinity College to complete my Master of Divinity, and after I graduated, I became familiar with the Kairos Marathons. As a visitor, I attended a chapel service at Acadia and heard Clarence DeSchiffart speak about prison ministry and the Kairos Marathons. I have always had a heart for people experiencing oppression. I took part in two Kairos Prison Marathons and my experience was Holy Spirit transforming.

I was a person who had experienced childhood trauma and abuse, so I was often anxious, nervous, and fearful of everything. I have witnessed the hurt that comes from addiction. Although I was nervous and scared before I took part in prison ministry, it became life changing. Entering the chapel (at Springhill), I felt a sense of peace and calm and, as time went on, it wasn't 'us' and 'them'. We were all the same. There was music, prayer, conversations, and relationship building.

A significant time was participating in Active Imagination, a mind exercise that allowed me to be open to my own heart, desires, and brokenness. I knew in these moments that if there would be any healing or positivity, I needed to submit my spirit to God's will, with the Holy Spirit leading. One Active Imagination started in a field; some participants saw flowers and sunshine; I saw snakes. Then we walked along the water and saw a boat. For me, the boat was in the middle of a storm, and it was travelling over big white-capped waves. Then we were invited to envision something in the boat. For me, it was a wooden box with a snake-like dragon inside.

Years prior, a major part of my calling was reflecting on the story of Peter walking on the water in the Gospel of Matthew. I was always told that I should be getting ready to walk out of the boat. This time I was walking confidently on the water, already out of the boat. I was given a sword which I slayed the snake-like dragon in half. We were then invited to envision a lighthouse in the distance and asked, "What do you see?" At the top of the lighthouse, I saw Jesus. As we made our way along the beach, Jesus walked beside me, and that water was calm. As I walked up from the beach, there were no more snakes. The field was beautiful green grass, and I was barefoot in the flowers.

Thanks to the Kairos Circle Ministry, that day God sent His Spirit to reveal hurts I didn't even know existed. Hurts that are now conquered. Through the experience of this great transformation, I have been able to help others.

Rev. Sarah Trenholm
Current Student of the Doctor of Ministry Program
Acadia Divinity College
Truro, Nova Scotia



Updates on St. Luke's Renewal Centre: Winter and Spring 2023



Since December 2022, we are grateful that programs at St. Luke's have continued with few disruptions. More than 400 Christmas boxes were prepared with the help of men from the four housing units who baked and packed cookies. Each box also contained a few wrapped candies and a small note with seasonal greetings. They were delivered to the residents inside Springhill Institution on the day before Christmas Eve.

As 2023 began, the Institution was still divided into two cohorts due to COVID-19 pandemic protocols, so every program had to be delivered twice. The cohort approach ended early February, so St. Luke's began a new set of Roots programming (preparatory sessions for the Houses of Healing and fathering program). It was the first time since 2020 that men from all four Housing Units have been at St. Luke's at the same time! Unfortunately, as programming returned to normal, there was a 12-day strike by Canadian public servants including staff at all Correctional Service of Canada Institutions. This strike resulted in suspending programming at St. Luke's. Thankfully, the strike did not last that long! We are happy to share that all participants of the Roots program have become participants of the Houses of Healing program.

Tremendous headway has been made in preparing for the Fathering from the Inside(s) Out program. Several men on the waiting list met to talk about their hopes and expectations for this program which focuses on deepening their skills as fathers.

The end of the cohorts also allows time for individuals and small groups. This can include cooking a meal or academic studies within the quiet space of St. Luke's Renewal Centre. A few men at Springhill are completing university courses and programs by distance education. We also started the Beading Program with a waiting list from residents in each housing unit. A new art program has begun and will go throughout the spring and summer. (See article on the following page.) As the weather improves, participants will begin to work in the garden to grow vegetables, herbs, as well as flowers.

The ministry of St. Luke's is supported by the work of the clerk/cleaner/cook (who does just what that name suggests) and the program mentor. Both positions are held by residents of Springhill Institution, and we are very grateful to the men who step into these positions. They entail a great deal of work. David, who served in both positions for nearly two years, moved on from Springhill at the end of 2022. We were both happy and sad to see him leave. In January, Clarke, another resident, became our clerk/cleaner/cook. He too has moved on from Springhill. A new program mentor, Will, has joined us, assisting in the Roots and Houses of Healing programs, and we hope to have clerk/cleaner/cook position filled very soon.

Rev. Lorraine Street

Facilitator, St. Luke's Renewal Centre



More Art Sessions at St. Luke's Renewal Centre

The “Art Sou(l)cial” is a bi-weekly day-long gathering for groups of up to twelve inmates. Long-time Concilio volunteer Danielle Cuvilier, a certified Art Therapist, is leading ten “Sou(l)cial” sessions that began on May 10. Each session begins with coffee and muffins followed by introductions and a group meditation. Different rooms at St. Luke’s are set up with different art materials to offer the men choices about what they would like to work on through the morning. Danielle moves from room-to-room to teach/help participants as needed. After a shared lunch, participants choose the same or a different art form to work on in the afternoon, and all gather at the end of the day to share and reflect.

Each Art Sou(l)cial Day is designed to offer the men an opportunity for fun, relaxation, exposure to new possibilities, and exploration of personal expression in which they can develop and expand their creativity. This program is held in a safe, non-intrusive, and supportive atmosphere, where men may be listened to, witnessed, and understood. Through engaging in group activities, participants also improve their interpersonal communication skills and build connection and empathy with other individuals.

We encourage participants to share their stories in new ways and to offer support for their emotional and personal development through art and sharing.



Danielle Cuvilier
Art therapist & mom

A Recent Experience of Volunteering at St. Luke’s Renewal Centre

After more than three years I was given the opportunity to spend a day in the Springhill Institution. This time it was as a visitor at St. Luke's Renewal Centre. Like the first day I walked into Springhill in 2014 for a Kairos Prison Marathon, I was nervous but soon the nerves fell away.

Fridays at St. Luke's is for lifers (men who are serving a life sentence). The men who come in the morning either busy themselves with preparing lunch, chatting together, reading a book, or relaxing. My role for this visit was to be present, converse, and share in fellowship. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit. The guys were open and relaxed.

At first, I wondered what I should do. The guys in the kitchen didn’t need my help. They looked like they could run a restaurant! I knew all I’d do was get in their way, so I respectfully kept my distance. Luckily some other guys were doing the same, and we struck up an easy conversation that covered entertainment, pets, and travel. These are all my favorite topics! I won points for loving Marvel and DC but lost some for not following Anime. I was ok with that. It didn't take long for the morning to fly by and soon we were enjoying an amazing curry on dumplings for lunch. The afternoon was much quieter. Some men left while others arrived. The afternoon was

just as easy and relaxed as the morning. While I helped bake cookies, the conversation was easy and light.

I left that day feeling blessed to have had the opportunity to spend time with these men. Hopefully I was able to provide a little bit of a reprieve from their daily lives in prison.

Terri Chisholm
Treasurer & Volunteer, Concilio Prison Ministry



Concilio Prison Ministry AGM & Visioning Session

You are invited to be part of our first in-person post-COVID AGM.

When: Saturday June 24, 2023

Where: Wolfville Baptist Church Vestry, 487 Main Street, Wolfville, Nova Scotia

Please join us at 1 p.m. as we provide profoundly moving stories and updates on our prison ministry over this past year at our AGM.

On the same day, from 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., you are invited to engage in a facilitated visioning session. The session will address the question: *What would Concilio Prison Ministry look like re-imagined*?. Prior to fellowship over lunch, there will be a time of discussions over this topic. Over the summer, there will be a review of the material gathered and next steps will be determined for a follow-up session.

Please **RSVP**, Concilio's Board Secretary, Wendy Ward - ward.wendyc@gmail.com by June 10th to let us know which one or all you wish to attend:

- √ The visioning session – 9:30 a.m.
- √ A light lunch & fellowship 12 p.m.
- √ AGM 1 p.m.

Coffee, tea, cold drinks, and light snacks will be provided during throughout the day.

Update on Kairos Street and Prison Marathons

Kairos Street Marathons

On April 22, 2023, another adventure for the Kairos Circle began. We were welcomed into **St. Anthony's Catholic Church** in Dartmouth. This is the first time the Kairos Street Marathon was held outside of Wolfville in more than 35 years. It was a blessed time of sharing and finding peace. We welcomed old and new friends. A huge shout-out to all who helped make this new adventure possible so residents of halfway houses in Halifax could easily access a Kairos Street Marathon. In the past, former residents of correctional institutions would travel to Wolfville, but this has been happening less and less. So, we'd like to continue hosting a Kairos Circle in the city and then in the Annapolis Valley on a short-term rotational basis.

In Community Kairos Marathon Circles in the Fall and Winter season, we were blessed with the presence of graduate students enrolled in the Acadia University's Master of Education (Counselling) program, as well Acadia Divinity College's Master of Divinity program. Those students were warmly welcomed and accepted. This acceptance gave students more freedom and happiness to be true to their authentic selves.

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

If you are interested in attending a Kairos Street Marathon, please contact Clarence DeSchiffart clarence.deschiffart@acadiau.ca. Dates are **June 10** at Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville and **August 12**, at St. Anthony's Catholic Church in Dartmouth. Future dates to be announced soon!

Kairos Prison Marathons in Springhill, Nova Scotia

After 3 years, it is with joy we announce the full Kairos Marathon Circle is welcomed back to Springhill Institution. The Kairos Circles will be hosted on Saturdays and Sundays due to a programming conflict in the chapel on Fridays. Our first Kairos Prison Marathon will be held on June 17 and 18.

There are many logistics including security forms, transportation, food, overnight accommodations, and the list goes on. Chaplain Peter Hoar and Clarence will coordinate the security process for volunteers including security clearance forms. Each volunteer will undergo the additional security process of fingerprinting.

Please continue to pray for the inmates and volunteers who long to participate once again in these Kairos Circles. These Kairos Circles create renewed hope for many inmates and volunteers. There is a deep experience of love within the Circle, a sign of the Holy Spirit doing its will in and through each person there.

Concilio Prison Ministry is Grateful for...

Cindy Walker, a member of the Board of Concilio Prison Ministry for several years, recently announced her resignation. We thank Cindy & the Trinity for her service to this ministry.

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 of \$20 or more will receive a Canadian tax receipt.

How to Give

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

Thank you to the many interested **volunteers!** We are grateful for your continued support through the disruptions of the past three years.

Thank you to those who participated in Kairos Street Marathon Circles, those who wrote for and edited this newsletter and other documents, those who serve on the Board, and those who offer advice to 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 which is assisting with the implementing of 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 **Acadia Divinity College**.



Diocese of Nova Scotia and
Prince Edward Island



Ways to 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.
- The Board of Directors of Concilio Prison Ministry as they discuss, reflect, and pray about the future direction of this ministry.
- 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 Kairos Marathons in the community and now back in Springhill as places for healing and experiencing the love of the Trinity.

2. Please share this newsletter with others and invite them to join 'Friends of Concilio' by emailing 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.

4. Learn More



concilioprisonministry.org



Concilio Prison Ministry



For more information on Concilio Prison Ministry or to become a **Friend of Concilio**, email concilio.ed@gmail.com

If your organization would like someone to speak about this ministry, please contact Clarence DeSchiffart and he'd be glad to meet people one-to-one or do a formal presentation to groups.

A Closing Prayer

Take, Lord, receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, my whole will, all that I have and all that I possess. You gave it all to me, Lord; I give it all back to you. Do with it as you will, according to your good pleasure. Give me your love and your grace; for with this I have all that I need.

Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556)