



# CHRISTIAN COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION

NEWSLETTER



FALL 2007

## Planting Mustard Seeds of Hope and Love

A small seed for prison ministry was planted within me as a teenager when as part of a youth group we came to Springhill to offer a worship service. I still remember that first walk down the breeze way, the Sister who led the way, and the space and peace of the Chapel that day.

As the saying goes, one never knows how some seeds will come to fruition. Who would have dreamed that I would ever follow a vocation to ministry? Who would have ever dreamed that one day I would find myself sharing ministry in that place I visited as a teen-ager so long ago?

I say sharing in ministry because that is what I do, I share the task of speaking and making visible God's love with inmates, my Roman Catholic Chaplain colleague, the Facilitator at St. Luke's Renewal Centre, other CSC staff and the Board of the Christian Council for Reconciliation. Together we share the task of planting seeds of hope and love.

The planting happens in the welcome that is offered to men in the chapel in informal conversations, worship, times or fellowship, the sharing of prayers and song. The seed is nurtured and tended in the deeper conversations - conversations that touch on guilt and shame, love and self-worth restoration and renewal and the invitation to participate in a Kairos Marathon.

Filled with remorse and feelings of worthlessness, a young man finds himself in the circle of a Kairos Marathon - a group spiritual process offered by the

Christian Council for Reconciliation at Springhill Institution in Nova Scotia. As part of the circle of other inmates, volunteers, chaplains and a facilitator, he is given an opportunity to share his story. The circle listens with care and together seek to discern truth, share the pain, and assist in the process of reconciliation with himself, others and God.

The journey of healing and hope continues at St. Luke's Renewal Centre - a retreat centre on the grounds of Springhill Institution, built and staffed by the Council. Entering the doors he is welcomed by the Facilitator, the Rev. Carol Smith. It is like coming home. Silence can be heard here. A sense of peace fills the air. Here, for a time he can leave the negativity of the prison behind. Here in the presence of others he can continue his search for wholeness. Here he can name his pain. Here he can weep for the pain he has caused. Here he can seek the image of God within. Here he can find the strength to begin anew.

A five hour drive with three children under seven years of age in the car can be an ordeal, even more so when the one you love is incarcerated and you are trying to make it on your own. There is not a lot of money left for even phone calls let alone visits to the prison. Entering the town of Springhill one quickly sees that there are not a lot of options for accommodation, especially if you are on a limited budget. Just before reaching the prison a house beckons: Springhouse. Sr. Christina opens the door with a warm welcome. Entering the homey kitchen the anxiety of the journey begins to less-

en and warmth fills the heart - I am not judged. I am loved.

**To each one of you who support the work of the Christian Council for Reconciliation, thank you for the part you play in the planting and nurturing of the seeds of love and hope.** We plant the seeds and nurture them, and trust that God the gardener will bring the seeds to fullness in their season. In the words of Natalie Sleeth's beautiful hymn:

*In the bulb there is a flower;  
in the seed, an apple tree;  
in cocoons, a hidden promise:  
butterflies will soon be free!  
In the cold and snow of winter  
there's a spring that waits to be,  
unrevealed until its season,  
something God alone can see*



The Rev. Lloyd A. Bruce BA MDiv  
Protestant Chaplain, Springhill Institution  
Member of the Board of Directors of CCR

**MISSION STATEMENT**

*To promote reconciliation between the prisoner and God, the prisoner and his/her family, the prisoner and self and the prisoner and others.*

**VISION STATEMENT**

*To provide opportunities to experience God's healing love, leading to reconciliation for prisoners, their families and the community.*

**MAIN PROGRAMS**

Kairos Marathons  
Spring House Hospitality  
St. Luke's Renewal Centre

*These programs are made possible by your donations and a grant from the LAW FOUNDATION OF NOVA SCOTIA.*

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**Notes from the Editor**

There were many people who attended our annual meeting this past August. The weather was great, we had a enjoyable barbeque, and time to socialize. What a wonderful time we all had!

The message from our guest speaker, Marie Burge, was very timely in terms of what is happening within corrections, both in Canada and the United States. Marie spoke about the relationship between poverty and incarceration. You will find her article thought provoking and challenging.

The musicians we had this year at our annual meeting were Bruno and Jonathan. Everyone was very much entertained by their music. We can't thank them enough for their contribution to the day. You will note Jonathan's letter to staff at Spring House.

A former inmate, Stephen Osmond from Newfoundland, was able to join us and he spoke of his experience with the Kairos Marathons and St. Luke's Renewal Center. He fondly remembers Sr. Agnes Leger and the warm welcome, together with a treat of cookies, she often provided at St. Luke's. Stephen also noted how important the CCR programs were to his successful return home to his family. Thank you, Stephen, for coming and sharing with us how important CCR has been to you. We wish you success in all you do.

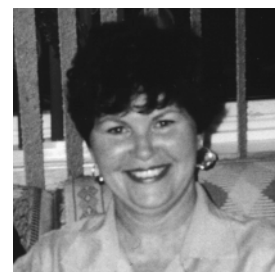
The newsletter includes an article by the Rev. Lloyd Bruce, Protestant Chaplain at the Springhill Institution entitled, "Planting Mustard Seeds of Hope and Love." Lloyd's article sums up the ministries of CCR.

Also included in the newsletter George Lohnes, QC writes of the Nova Scotia Law Foundation and how very important this foundation is to the Christian Council.

The Christian Council for Reconciliation has embarked on a new ministry, a program called "Living Well in the Here and Now." This new venture is for women who have a loved one incarcerated. We hope to have more news on this program in our next newsletter, and inform you on how this program unfolds. The Spring House Board of Management recently held its annual fundraiser, the Spring House Breakfast.

In closing, as we move forward in this ministry for inmates and their families, we thank you for your support and continued sponsorship of this ministry. It is together we make this most important work successful.

Kathy Bourgeois  
Editor



## Christian Council for Reconciliation - Keynote Address

### *Annual General Meeting at Spring House, Springhill NS August 11, 2007*

#### ***With String Attached***

*Presentation by Marie Burge*

It is an honour to share some reflections with you today. My talk is entitled With Strings Attached.

Your work is part of the essential caring for a group of people which society often locks away and forgets, makes invisible and even considers to be worthless. You know that you do sacred work.

To explain my title, With Strings Attached: The "no strings attached" approach is often meant to protect the organization, recipient of charity, from donor/volunteers undue interference. That is essential to carry out services for the people who need those services. Most of you certainly know about remaining attached to the reality of the lives of inmates. You talk a lot about relationships, personal human stories, and fellowship.

However, today I am promoting a deeper and even-more-demanding form of "strings attached". I am proposing a model which includes both a charity and social justice approach, two sides of the same coin, the two feet, to give us spiritual balance, based of course on deep silent prayer. The charity model in our society generally governs/controls the intent and direction of both our volunteering for good causes and our donating to them. We live in cultures and faith communities which give high marks to people who engage in charitable work, but tend to shun those who ask and act on the basis of social justice. Social justice people are referred to as "those people" as though social justice activity were a specialized position for a few people, "political" types.

Functioning from the perspective of the union of social justice and charity is a key position of most of the world religions and movements, directed by their faith and spirituality, regardless of how each one experiences or defines "faith" and "spirituality".

When we make a contribution to help someone, we can easily feel that we have done our bit. For me, the string attached, which requires intentional and deliberate incorporation, is a social justice-based question. The major social justice question is Why. Why does a specific group of people need my volunteer work and financial support in the first place? What are the root causes of the conditions which they suffer? What are some transformative solutions? So what are our social justice questions here at Springhill? I am sure that many of you ask these questions over and over again.

- What is the relationship between economic disparity (poverty, impoverishment) and crime/prison system?
- What is the relationship between cultural (race/ethnic) roots and the crime/prison system?
- Is prison the best default position for dealing with crimes?



Marie Burge, a member of the Cooper Institution in Charlottetown, and an advocate for people living on the margins of society, addresses the members at the annual meeting.

#### **Relationship between economic disparity (poverty, impoverishment) and crime/prison system**

The National Crime Prevention Strategy identifies poverty as a risk factor for criminal activity and also implies that social development for poverty reduction (i.e. community involvement) is an essential aspect of crime reduction. NCPS' view indicates that crime is not only the responsibility of the individual law breaker, but that it is also a social responsibility. Citizens can have various responses to this ranging from "help for the imprisoned" to "lock them up and throw away the key", either position may be avoiding the issue behind the issues.

NCPS says that social and economic exclusion, unemployment and low literacy are risk factors that can result in people living in poverty, and are therefore also risk factors for individuals coming into contact with the law as an offender or as a victim. Research (Gillis, 2000) indicates that 75% of offenders had "employment needs" (no gainful work) when entering the federal correctional system. We need, however, to be careful not to fall into the trap of thinking that it is poor people who commit crimes. Being poor is not the cause of crime nor is it an excuse. Of course, impoverished people in our society, lacking resources necessary for a decent life, are at risk to commit property crimes (break and enter, robberies, etc.). This is often made worse by drug/alcohol addiction, which is illness added to poverty. However, we are reminded often that many of the greatest property criminals in societies all over the world are the rich and the powerful, and people who are rich already have money to feed their addictions. *continued on pg. 4...*

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A society which discriminates against people on the grounds of who they are, or what they own, creates an environment of general reduction of a sense of self worth and an increase in a sense of powerlessness. In Canada, being poor carries with it non-acceptance and isolation. For some people that leads to high levels of frustration and may deprive people of an environment for developing good judgement and/or may even present as lack of conscience.

The justice system is built to protect and/or favour the rich and powerful. If many of the people who are serving time for crimes against property had the riches and power of Conrad Black, they wouldn't be in Springhill Correctional Facility, but would be "confined" to a free choice of the Sheraton Hotel in Halifax and a winter estate in Florida.

### **Relationship between cultural (race/ethnic) roots and the crime/prison system**

Many race and cultural groups in our communities feel the pain of discrimination against them and society's tendency to accuse and convict them. For our purpose today, however, we zero-in on the situation of Aboriginal people. We cannot help but be alarmed about the over-representation of Aboriginal people throughout the federal prison population. The numbers are currently on the rise. These numbers reveal a critical situation:

- *While Aboriginal adults represent 2.7% of the Canadian adult population, they accounted for 11% of admissions to federal penitentiaries in 1991-92 and 18% in 2002-03.*
- *28.5% of all incarcerated women and 18.2% of all incarcerated men in Canada are Aboriginal*
- *The numbers reach critical levels in the Prairie region where Aboriginal people make up more than 60% of the inmate population in some penitentiaries. In 1998 Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan represented 11% of the total population but accounted for 61% of people in federal institutions, 74% of people in provincial jails and 72% of youth in custody.*

The overall Aboriginal population is young and growing, with 35% being less than 15 years old. It is expected that the current Aboriginal baby boom could cause the number of Aboriginal offenders to rise still further over the next decade. People aged 18 to 25 are more likely to become involved in criminal activity than other age groups. Should the current trend continue unchecked, the Aboriginal population in Canada's correctional institutions could reach the 25% mark in less than 10 years. The impact on Aboriginal communities and federal corrections will be extremely serious if left undressed.

### **Is prison the best default position for dealing with crime?**

I have kept the most important question to the last. Over the

past, many courageous people have asked it and proposed solutions. Some have made distinctions among the various motivations involved in the commission of crimes, ranging from a childish lark, to lack of judgement, to extreme frustration and lack of options, to inadequate boundary formation, to an overblown sense of entitlement, to severe psychological disorder and lack of conscience.

The urgency for work on this overarching question about prisons becomes more obvious as we see big business, especially in the USA, positioning itself to take over the prison system as an enterprise which promises huge profits. We know that a main principle of corporate sector profit-making involves mass production, efficient warehousing, low input costs. We don't need to be rocket scientists to figure out how this principle would translate to prison life. Mass production= having as many inmates as possible; efficient warehousing=cramming as many inmates as possible in as small an area as possible, and stepping up security to control and cow the inmates into submission; avoid any boil-up; low input costs=cutback on food, clothing, personal care, and training/rehabilitation programs. We are challenged to be vigilant about the strong urge of governments to give-in to the privatization model, which would be a disaster for the prison system as it would be for the healthcare system. We may be required as citizens to do more than quiet objection. We may have to protest loudly to be heard and find creative ways to effect policy change.

The three questions we ask today requires a response from all of us. We need to:

- \* allow the questions to permeate our consciousness
- \* mourn the pain and destruction which is the life of so many prisoners
- \* mourn the loss to society of the wisdom and creative capacity of many inmates
- \* alleviate the pain wherever and however we can
- \* be engaged together in social justice action aimed eventually at a total transformation of the prison system and based on finding and acting on root causes
- \* embrace and respond practically to the opportunities the Creator places before us, behind us, and around us
- \* love what we do
- \* drop our fear of being "political" (remembering that not taking a social justice position and action is very political).

**May we be blessed in all that we say and do.**

## To: The Christian Council for Reconciliation & All the staff at Spring House

It is with sincere gratitude, humble thanks and appreciation that I write this.

I am an Inmate at Springhill Penitentiary, and since my incarceration, have been attending and providing music at the chapel services, and various other events that go on here through the church.

When I was approached by Chaplain Lloyd Bruce about providing musical entertainment at the Christian Council for Reconciliation's Annual Meeting and barbeque, I accepted the task with much excitement, (and to be completely honest, a little skepticism.)

"What if the people didn't like me?" Or "How would they see me?" Or "What if they were afraid of me because I was an inmate?" The night before, it was time to go, I maybe got about an hour's sleep, I was so nervous.

My skepticism and questions were immediately put to rest upon our arrival at Spring House by the motherly hug I received from Sister Christina, and the hearty handshake that was given to me by Al Wallace, and last but certainly not least, the great lunch that the ladies had prepared for us was indeed an unexpected treat.

As more and more people showed up, introduced themselves to me, gave me a hug, or complimented me on my playing, I almost forgot that I was indeed incarcerated, but felt like I was back home at one of my family reunions that we have every August..

It is amazing how when you are away from something so long, how you learn to look and appreciate the smaller things and to look upon them with a new light and hope.

When I got out of the van on our arrival the first thing I noticed was a pine tree, (in all actually I bumped my face into one of its branches.) I plucked a needle from its branch, smelled it, felt it in my hands, then actually bit into it and tasted it. (Something I always did as a child.)

I personally have not seen or touched a pine tree for almost three years, with the exception of television or seeing one far in the distance in the prisoner's yard of course. But the memories that little pine needle brought to mind was impeccable, I guess you can say that I almost felt humbled by it.

God's grace, gifts, power and love that day was more than certainly visibly and invisibly present. Little things that all of us overlook each day seemed to be revealing themselves everywhere...they all mean so much in the long run when they are taken away or you can't see or touch them.

All in all the day went really well, the weather was fantastic, and the people...words cannot describe the amount of love, friendship, fellowship, and hospitality that was shown to me, and each other that day.

My most heartfelt thanks go out to each and every one of you.



Jonathan Davis and Bruno Haché

Personally I think that, having a day like you did and allowing and accepting a couple of inmates to get out for the day and experience the outside in a positive setting such as Spring House, with positive people from the community, looks really good and says a lot about all of the inmates here in Springhill and that we are not at all the way some people in society depict us as.

I only hope and pray that in the future more inmates can be given a chance to get out into a positive setting like Spring House and experience first hand, as I did, that there are people out there who care about us and are willing to give us a chance and a little hope for our futures.

I have learned over time that sometimes in our lives we are held back in order to be moved forward and that sometimes God steps in to let us know that maybe we are on the wrong path and that we need a time out from our lives we are living, decisions

we are making, or everyday routine, be it in society or behind prison walls.

Sometimes God has something better in store for us and all we have to do is stay alert, focused and watching or we may miss it, it happens so fast.

As it says in Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you, and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future." Amen.

My day out really showed me all that I was missing out on and how many good people are out there, and that we are not forgotten.

As I go on and finish up my sentence, I can hold my head a little higher and face each day with a positive and open outlook. Knowing how many good things and people await will proudly give me the confidence I was lacking in my past to go forward, achieve my goals, and strive a little harder to be once again a productive member of society.

Thank you again from the bottom of my heart to Correctional Services Canada, my case management team, my Parole Officer, Carol Anne Griffiths, for granting me the ETA; to Lloyd Bruce and Peg Noseworthy, for the friendship and escort; Sister Christina and Al Wallace; Ken Murphy for the incredible job on the sound; The Christian Council for Reconciliation. To all those people who gave me hugs, shook my hand and gave me words of encouragement and made me feel again like I was somebody: Linda Weatherbee, Sister Agnès Legér for just being her (and the bowl of raspberries), Bruno Haché for the wonderful job on the guitar and his accompaniment, all the staff at Spring House for the excellent meal and all around down home hospitality, and to anyone else who I failed to mention.

And above all God, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for making the day possible and filling my life with so many great people. You are all and always will be in my thoughts and prayers forever

Thank you.  
God Bless You All!

Jonathan P. Davis  
Springhill Institution  
August 2007

## The Law Foundation of Nova Scotia – Committed to the Administration of Justice

In the early 1900's, Dr. Charles Taylor shared his vision to establish a Renewal Centre within the walls of Springhill Penitentiary with the Christian council for Reconciliation. After several years of discussion with the Correctional Service of Canada and careful planning by Board of the Christian Council, it was determined we would proceed with construction provided funding was in place to meet our financial obligations without incurring long-term debt. This was a formidable challenge. We received encouraging prayer and generous financial support from our many faithful donors.

And yet there was a significant shortfall – with no apparent source to close the gap. A decision was made to approach the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia to present our need to the Foundation for its consideration. While the Law Foundation is a secular body, it has as one of its legislated objects to fund programs that support the administration of justice in the Province of Nova Scotia. The Law Foundation responded with amazing generosity by awarding a grant that would totally cover the shortfall in our construction budget – an amount in excess of \$130,000 – St. Luke's would become a reality as a result!

In 2006 the Law Foundation responded to our request for a Continuing Program Grant which has enabled the Christian Council to focus on ministry in four core areas: St. Luke's Renewal Centre, Spring House, the Kairos Marathons at Springhill and the Street Marathons at Acadia Divinity College.

Since its creation in 1976, the Law Foundation has received approximately \$29 million in revenue from interest on Nova Scotia lawyers' trust accounts, and has paid out approximately \$26 million in grants. An additional \$2,000,000 has been awarded in scholarships during the past 15 years. As the Law Foundation noted in its 2007 Annual Report, these grants and scholarships have promoted improvements in the law, excellence within the profession, and have helped more than 250 organizations make the law more under-

standable and accessible to the public. In the case of the Christian Council, the Continuing Program Grant has provided funding that has assisted the Council in its commitment to provide services leading to the reintegration of the prisoner back into society and support for the prisoner's family while the prisoner is incarcerated.

In its current Annual Report, the Board of Governors of the Law Foundation affirmed its commitment to be accountable in the distribution of funds received by the Foundation from interest accruing on lawyer's pooled trust accounts. The Board endeavours to be transparent and consistent in its evaluation of applications. It takes into consideration where programs will operate and who will benefit from them, as well as whether they fit within the Foundation's mandate. Accountability extends to the careful assessment and consistent monitoring of programs that receive funding.

The Christian Council is grateful to the Law Foundation for its generous support of the work of the Council in its ministry to prisoners and their families.



### ***Breakfast Thank You!***

Thank you to all the volunteers who made the 16th annual Spring House Breakfast a success again this year. We extend a Big thank you to Don Guilderson and his inmate helpers, the Spring House Board of Management, and members of the Community for your generous assistance and support for Spring House.

## CCR Sponsors New Program for Women "Living Well in the Here and Now"



Debbie and Keesha are deeply involved in an art project during the Women's Retreat

Spring House was the setting recently for a weekend wellness retreat for inmates' families. In attendance were family members who made Spring House, "a home away from home" while they visited at the Springhill Institution. Facilitators for the weekend were Sr. Mary Beth McCurdy and Sr. Arleen Brawley from the Sisters of Charity of St. John. CCR board members, Sr. Christina Doyle csm and Kathy Bourgeois assisted with the weekend activities. Through prayerful reflection, counseling and creative activities emphasis was placed on the value of self care, an essential component of a healthy life style. All of the participants recognized that they had gained new learning and new friends, as well as new ways to "live well in the here and now".



Sr. Mary Beth, Sr. Sister Arlene, and participants pose in front of Spring House.



Keesha spends a moment in reflection prior to the morning's activities.

### Happy 40th Springhill Institution!

The Christian Council for Reconciliation offers congratulations to the management and staff of the Springhill Institution on the occasion of its 40th Anniversary. We thank you for your involvement with, and support for, the services we provide at Spring House, St. Luke's and the Kairos Marathons.

# CCR Annual Meeting



- 1 - Al Wallace, President of CCR
- 2 - Women from the Salvation Army
- 3 - Strawberry sundaes are enjoyed by all
- 4 - John Alderson gives Spring House report
- 5 - Millie Munn listens attentively
- 6 - Dolly Davison introduces Nova Marathons
- 7 - Clarence Deschiffart - Marathons
- 8 - Sr. Agnès Legér and Stephen Osmond

