

*Bringing God's love and hope to lives affected by poverty, addiction & mental illness*

## Matt's Story

*By: Hope Versluis, Director*



December 20, 2013, while the Ottawa CTV News reported a story of a string of thefts starting with a car and ending with an assault on a store employee, Matt sat in a jail cell, resting his head in his hands. It had finally caught up with him – the drugs, the crimes, the insanity. Would anyone care? People had always found Matt “useful.” As a kid, he had been the youngest Karate black belt in Canada. He was wanted on the sports teams, he was wanted at the parties, and with a growing drug and alcohol addiction, his karate and physical skills were wanted by the drug dealers. Matt had become part of the business of organized crime. It was a life of danger, risk, shame and fear - a life of increasing drug use and hopelessness.

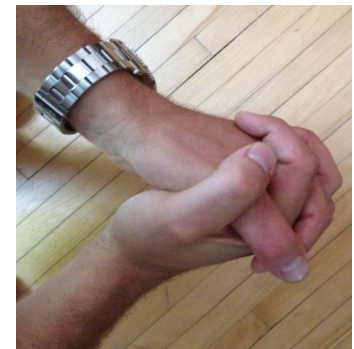
Coming to Ottawa was Matt's attempt to run away from it all, but within days his life caught up to him and he was now serving a 6 month sentence at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre. Did anyone care? While at OCDC, Matt connected with some volunteers who regularly bring the Alpha program to the

inmates. Interested, Matt asked the Chaplain, Carl Wake, for a Bible to read. Carl suggested he start with the Gospel of John. After three days of reading the gospels, Matt found himself praying, “Jesus, I'm done. Help me do it your way.” He woke the next day with a sense of peace and a smile on his face. God knew Matt would need time – time to heal, to unlearn the old ways of thinking and to learn a new way of life. Matt got a hold of a pamphlet about Jericho Road's Addiction Recovery program and called the phone number. When his sentence was served, Matt moved from jail to Jericho Road.

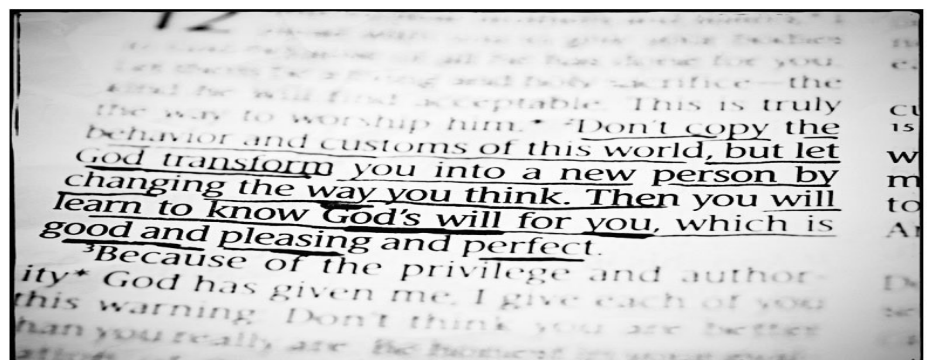
Once at Jericho, Matt found addiction recovery takes time and it takes surrender. That was hard. Old patterns of thought had to be replaced by new patterns. Early in the program, Matt had a relapse and was sent to Detox before returning to Jericho Road. There were issues with stealing. He often had to live under “house arrest” and on the “buddy system.” But through it all, Matt learned a lot about grace, forgiveness and second chances as well as learning humility, surrender and making amends. When Matt graduated from the addiction program and moved into the Jericho second stage home, he was a very different man from that day of his arrest in December 2013. He had learned

to think about other people and not just himself.

Today Matt is living in a Jericho Road second stage home. He maintains his recovery by staying connected to his recovery community, attending AA meetings and by doing service work.



Matt has now trained as a Jericho Road relief worker and works some shifts at Jericho's support homes and even at the Addiction Program. He loves to quote this Biblical wisdom from Romans 12:2 **“Don't copy the behavior of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.”**



Romans 12:2  
NLT