

Crossroads Connection Prison Ministries
2010 Annual Report



By the grace of God and the support of many individuals and church partners, in 2010 Crossroads Connection continued to develop its approach to prison ministry and to support individuals remaking their lives as they return to society. That we are a strong worship community was only possible with the generous support of all who assist us: the volunteer pastors and lay who led our services; the transportation sponsors and host churches by whose cooperation we met in places filled with the Spirit; the meal providers who gave opportunity for God's acceptance to sink in; the Crossroads and Corrections leaders who worked together to foster successful transition; the individual and congregational contributors who addressed the needs of our attendees; the board members who pulled this together; and the inmates and former inmates who formed the community of mutual encouragement and evangelism. We hope you find this report encouraging and that you will support us in 2011.

Partnership Churches

Crossroads was blessed by our 22 Partnership Churches. They provided direct financial support, gifts in kind (work and winter clothing, food for our pantry, and other supplies), fellowship meals after worship each Sunday, worship leaders and music providers for Sunday worship, and ongoing prayers for our ministry.

Beemer Mennonite Church
Benson Presbyterian Church
Central Presbyterian Church
Covenant Presbyterian Church
Dundee Presbyterian Church
Faithful Shepherd Presbyterian Church
First Presbyterian Church-Bellevue
First Presbyterian Church-Omaha
First Presbyterian Church-Shenandoah
Fort Calhoun Presbyterian Church
Hope Presbyterian Church

Mosher-Pilgrim Presbyterian Church
Northside Family Christian Center
Peace Presbyterian Church
Presbyterian Church of the Master
Presbytery of Missouri River Valley
St. Thomas Lutheran Church
St. Timothy Lutheran Church
Trinity Presbyterian Church, Clarinda
Underwood Hills Presbyterian Church
Westminster Presbyterian Church
Wheeler Memorial Presbyterian Church

Board of Directors

In 2010, Scott Lamb was appointed to the Crossroads Board of Directors and Michael Brennan resigned to take a job opportunity in St. Cloud, MN.

Board Members, December, 2009

James Carroll, President (Underwood Hills Presbyterian Church)
The Rev. Roy Fox, Vice President, (Missouri River Valley Presbytery)
Guy Shelton, Secretary (Presbyterian Church of the Master)
George Thompson, Treasurer (First Presbyterian Church-Bellevue)
Anne Carroll (Underwood Hills Presbyterian Church)
Mary Ann Fox (Underwood Hills Presbyterian Church)
John Rohwer (Covenant Presbyterian Church)
Brad Whitman (Crossroads Connection)
Scott Lamb (Crossroads Connection)

Worship Ministry

The Sunday by Sunday evening worship service was the center of the Crossroads Connection ministry in 2010. All other activities of the ministry flowed out of the worship service. As the inmates prayed and sang together, listened to scripture and were inspired by the preaching, they came to understand that Christ-centered living empowered them in unexpected ways. Seeing their growing trust in God replace self-centeredness was nothing more than the work of the Holy Spirit.

The fellowship of a meal following worship opened participants to spiritual growth and possibilities of successful transition. Inmates had the opportunity to interact with their families, sponsors, and visitors and expanded their support network. Partnership churches and organizations generously provided a meal each week. Presbyterian Church of the Master again sponsored a Thanksgiving meal serving over 60 invited inmates, former inmates, sponsors and families and entertained the group with a performance by their Puppet Ministry.

Most Crossroads Connection activities occurred in the facilities of Underwood Hills Presbyterian Church. In addition to using the sanctuary and fellowship hall Sunday evenings, a support group of former inmates met early Sunday mornings and a mission sewing group met Wednesday afternoons in one classroom; the clothes closet and food pantry were housed in another. Underwood Hills' pastor and Crossroads' Program Coordinator, Rev. Becky Balestri, coordinated ministers, musicians, and meal providers, and prepared worship bulletins when asked. Crossroads appreciates the generosity and hospitality of Underwood Hills in the use of their building.

The average attendance at our worship services for 2010 was 62 for the year but had increased to an average of 67 in the last half of the year, indicative

of the growth of the ministry. Our 26 dedicated, trained transportation sponsors, coordinated by Mary Ann Fox, did a marvelous job of getting between 30 and 40 inmates to worship each week. Presbyterian Church of the Master averaged transporting 20 inmates on their bus most Sundays, logging almost 2200 miles. In addition, transportation sponsors helped get inmates to counseling sessions, job interviews, and other events throughout the year.

Project LIFE

The transition from prison to life on the outside is often overwhelming for former inmates. The current system is a set up for failure. Many inmates exit incarceration with the clothes on their back and \$100 from the prison system. They often have difficulty with housing, employment, and cutting through the red tape to get started back in the community. The transition can be so difficult that they are highly vulnerable to recidivism during the first six to twelve months after release. Project Living in Freedom Eternally (LIFE) addresses this high rate of recidivism by providing transitional support for former inmates.

Participants in our Project LIFE Program were provided safe housing and utilities in a furnished home or apartment without need for an up-front deposit. Approved housing such as ours has been a requirement for parole. Former inmates in our program typically transitioned over a few months to independent living. Participants were also provided a weekly counseling session, assistance regaining identification papers and finding employment, and general support in returning to the community.

Participants were required to apply for the Project LIFE program. They agreed to take care of their living space, attended our weekly counseling sessions and worship services, maintained employment, paid their program fees in a timely manner, remained clean and sober, and met the other conditions of their release.

Tim Locatis continued as our full time Project LIFE Manager in 2010. In this role, Tim managed our housing program, provided transportation and support for former inmates, served as a mentor to inmates and former inmates, assisted in daily decision making during the transition to day to day life in the community, and attended parole hearings in support of inmates.

Tim coordinated transportation for and assisted former inmates with job interviews, meetings with parole officers, community services, medical and counseling appointments, educational services, support groups and service projects. He helped guide former inmates through some of the red tape to facilitate their

life in the community. On behalf of inmates and program participants, he established and maintained contact with the Community Corrections Center-Omaha warden and staff, local adult parole staff, the Charles Drew Health Center, Douglas County Hospital, and Metropolitan Community College.

Every Sunday morning former inmates attended a support group led by volunteers Mike Rush and The Rev. Roy Fox. Project LIFE program participants were required to attend and several other former inmates continued to participate and received ongoing support. Mike also provided former inmates with one-on-one counseling as needed.

Crossroads maintained a clothes closet where warm coats, shoes and other clothing items were distributed to current inmates and newly released inmates. The clothes closet was stocked mostly by clothing contributions from individuals and participating churches. Carol Cherek and Charlein Nila organized and coordinated our clothes closet.

The Crossroads food pantry helped provide essential food items for newly released former inmates and others who were struggling financially to make the transition back into society. In addition, the pantry provided some personal care items to current inmates and newly released inmates. The pantry was stocked by gifts of food items and cash from sponsors, individuals and partnership churches. Mary Ann Fox coordinated our pantry this year.

Crossroads also provided bus passes to help with transportation for education classes and the first two weeks of employment.

Service

In 2010, former inmates found that serving humanity helped build individual character, provided a sense of self worth, and provided inmates and former inmates with an opportunity to look beyond themselves. Our Project LIFE Manager and other sponsors encouraged inmates and former inmates to participate in community service opportunities. Periodic clean up days were held at Underwood Hills Presbyterian Church to help repay them for the opportunity to use their facilities for worship and fellowship. Some sponsors took inmates to work at Habitat for Humanity build sites. Small groups of participants also helped with various moving and clean up projects. Tim Locatis and Anne Carroll coordinated many of these service opportunities.

In 2010, our sewing group, organized by Anne Carroll, met periodically through the year. These women sewed blankets, baby clothes and other items for Direct Relief and looked forward to making items for others in need using their sewing skills.

Project LIFE Success Rate

	From Inception	2008- 2009*	2010
In Program at Beginning of Year	4	0	4
Admitted to Program This Year	33	23	10
Living Independently	17	10	7
In Half-Way House or Shelter	5	4	1
Returned to Prison	7	4	3
Status Unknown	1	1	0
In Program at End of Year	7	4	3

PERCENT OF PROJECT LIFE
PARTICIPANTS WHO STAYED
OUT OF PRISON

<u>76%</u>	<u>78%</u>	<u>73%</u>
From Inception	2008- 2009*	2010

* Accurate record keeping began in April, 2008.

Partial year 2008 and 2009 statistics are combined.

We also provided assistance in finding housing and with other services to 12 other individuals not in Project LIFE.

Freedom Keepers

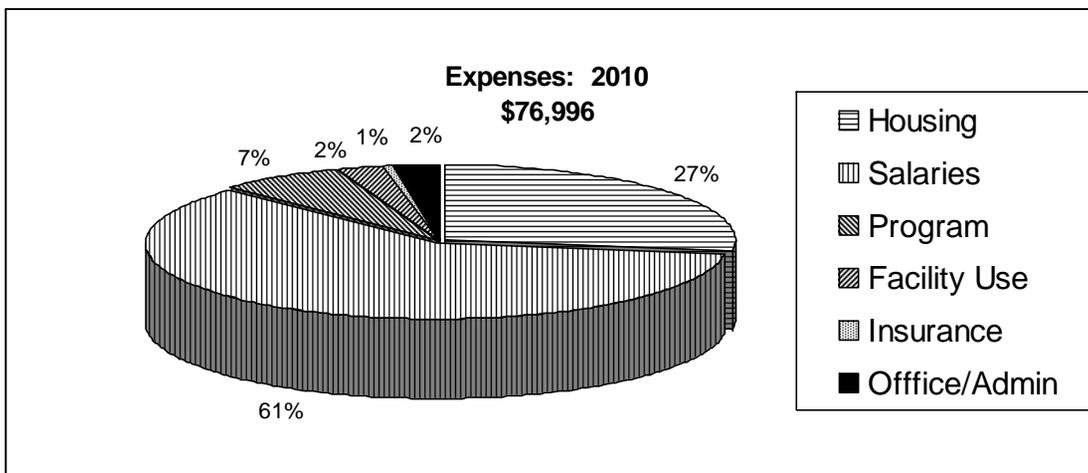
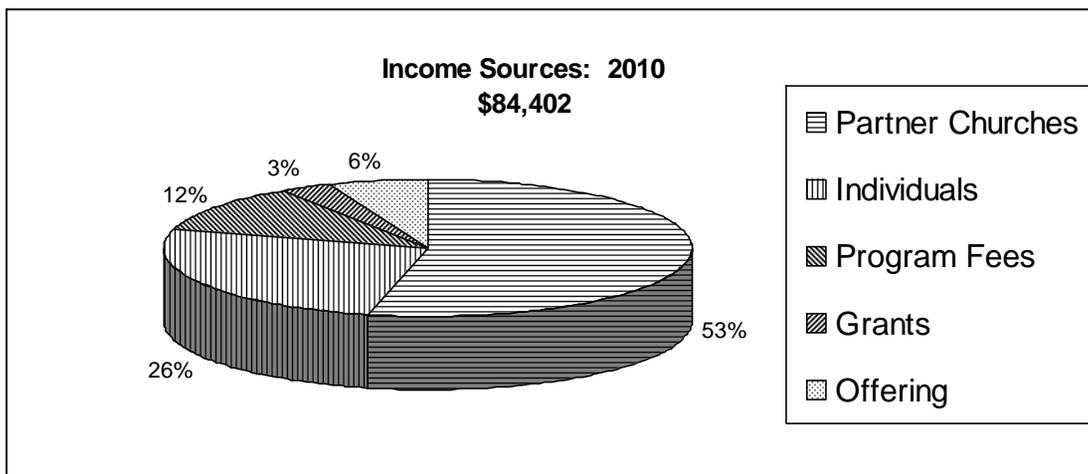
In 2010, Freedom Keepers, a small but energetic group of former inmates, continued to provide service to others. Their stated purpose was to offer assistance to former inmates and their families in their transition into society and to participate in projects that assisted the greater good of the community. The Freedom Keepers mission statement was “Life After Fences and Fellowship for the Freedom of All”. Project LIFE participants were encouraged to participate in Freedom Keepers projects and become members.

Freedom Keepers projects in 2010 included distributing 600 pounds of donated bread in the Park Avenue corridor, provided inmates with Christmas and

Fathers' Day cards and postage, assisted with eight outreaches at homeless shelters and parks, helped provide clothing and household goods, and assisted participants in obtaining identity cards and drivers licenses.

Financial

Crossroads continued to be blessed with generous contributors to support its ministry. We welcomed one new partnership church and a number of individual contributors this year. Crossroads Connection is a Nebraska Nonprofit Organization and is exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. A graphic summary of 2010 income and expenses is included below.



Associated Ministries

Crossroads Connection partnered with the prison ministry of the Nebraska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church to provide worship services every other month in the Omaha Correctional Center during the year 2010. Presently, the Nebraska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church has a vacancy in its position of

Director of Lutheran Prison Ministries. Crossroads Connection will continue to provide worship services during 2011 to the Omaha Correctional Center and will encourage more Lutheran congregations of the Omaha metro area to join us in ministry. We hope to co-operate once again when the new director of Lutheran Prison Ministries is in place.

Appreciation Dinner

On September 2nd, 2010 Crossroads Connection hosted its 2nd annual Appreciation Dinner. This year's theme was directed towards the appreciation of pastors and respective mission chairs of our supporting churches. This informative event was held at Presbyterian Church of the Master. Dinner was prepared by several cooks at PCM. The keynote speaker was Laura Westphal of Nebraska Aftercare in Action. Laura spoke about the concept of mentoring teams. Several testimonies were given presenting what involvement in Crossroads has meant to volunteers, churches involved, and participants. A most compelling testimony was presented by Crossroads participant Eric VanHunnik

Communication

You can find out more about Crossroads at our website. Go to www.CrossroadsConnectionOmaha.org to learn the latest about our ministry, look at the volunteer schedule and find out how you can support Crossroads.

Goals for 2010

The following goals that were established for 2010 were accomplished:

1. Maintain cooperation with Lutheran prison ministries. (Accomplished)
2. Serve a total of 15 former inmates in the Project LIFE ministry. (Served 14)
3. Raise an additional \$10,000 from individuals, partnership churches foundations, service clubs and corporate sponsors. (Raised about \$15,000)
4. Increase the number of partnership churches to 25. (22 churches)
5. Improve communication by regularly updating our website, producing a semi-annual newsletter, updating PowerPoint presentations and brochures, and seeking additional testimonials. (Website updated, 3 newsletters published and mailed, several testimonials presented in worship and at appreciation dinner)
6. Hold an appreciation and awareness luncheon for pastors of our partnership churches and potential partnership churches. (Held an appreciation dinner.)

Goals for 2011

1. Increase number of active Sunday transportation sponsors by 5.

2. Increase the capacity in the Project LIFE ministry to 10 participants at any one time.
3. Increase the number of partnership churches to 24.
4. Improve communication by producing a quarterly newsletter.
5. Work with CCC-O to support the extended furlough program.
6. Insure that all Crossroads attendees have a Bible.

Thanks

If you supported Crossroads Connection Prison Ministry in 2010 in any way, THANK YOU!! We welcome your continued support and ask that you consider increasing your level of support. Above all, please pray for the ministry participants, partnership churches, transportation sponsors, and board members.

Opportunities for You to Get Involved

If you are not a current Crossroads Connection supporter, here is how you can get involved:

1. Pray for the ministry and its participants.
2. Attend worship one Sunday night (6:00 PM) and stay for the meal and fellowship afterwards—see what we are all about! You are always welcome!
3. Consider a financial gift, or even better, an ongoing pledge.
4. Train to be a transportation sponsor and commit to transporting at least once a month.
5. Talk to your church's pastor about leading worship with a sermon, scripture reading, or musical offering.
6. Make a contribution towards supplying Bibles for each Crossroads attendee.
7. Make a donation to provide bus passes for newly-employed inmates.
8. Talk to your church's mission committee and your employer about supporting us financially.
9. Get a group from your church or employer to provide a meal for the fellowship after worship.
10. Help a former inmate find a job.
11. Help a former inmate connect with his or her family.
12. Join a mentoring team to help a former inmate.

Contact any board member, our Program Coordinator, The Rev. Becky Balestri, at 402-397-4318, or our website www.CrossroadsConnectionOmaha.org for more information.

God is good, all the time; and all the time, God is good.