

Crossroads Connection Prison Ministries
2011 Annual Report



By the grace of God and the support of many individuals and church partners, in 2011 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 2012.

Partnership Churches

Crossroads was blessed in 2011 by our 23 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.

Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church
Beemer Mennonite Church
Benson Presbyterian Church
Center Ridge Presbyterian Church
Central Presbyterian Church
Covenant Presbyterian Church
Dundee Presbyterian Church
Faithful Shepherd Presbyterian Church
First Presbyterian Church-Bellevue
First Presbyterian Church-Omaha
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

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.

Board of Directors and Staff

In September, 2011, long-time Program Coordinator Rev. Becky Balestri stepped down to devote more time to her family and Diane Greenfield took over this role. In December, 2011, Mike Halvorson was appointed to the Crossroads Board of Directors.

Crossroads Board Members

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)
Mike Halvorson (St. Thomas Lutheran Church)

Crossroads Staff

Tim Locatis, Project LIFE Manager (Crossroads Connection)
Diane Greenfield, Program Coordinator (Underwood Hills Presbyterian Church)
Mike Rush, Volunteer Counselor (Underwood Hills Presbyterian Church)

Worship Ministry

The Sunday by Sunday evening worship service was the center of the Crossroads Connection ministry in 2011. 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 invited Crossroads to their Thanksgiving meal with inmates, former inmates, sponsors and families attending.

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 intermittently in one classroom; the clothes closet and food pantry were housed in another. Program Coordinator, Diane Greenfield, 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.

On a few occasions, the Sunday worship and fellowship meal was held at one of our other partner churches. While at times logistically challenging, this gives our participants to experience a variety of worship environments and those congregations an opportunity to become more deeply involved in our ministry.

The average attendance at our worship services for 2011 was 71 for the year as compared to 62 in 2010. In the last half of the year, we had an average attendance of 78, indicative of the continued growth of the ministry. Our 19 dedicated, trained transportation sponsors, coordinated by Mary Ann Fox, did a marvelous job of getting 35 to 45 inmates to worship each week. Presbyterian Church of the Master averaged transporting 20 inmates on their bus most Sundays, logging almost 2100 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, bus passes to get to work, food and general support in returning to the community.

Participants were required to apply to the Project LIFE program. Prior to acceptance in the Project LIFE Program, they were interviewed and approved by Project LIFE Manager Tim Locatis and Board Member Scott Lamb. 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 2011. 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.

At the beginning of 2011 we operated a three bedroom house and two one bedroom apartments. Throughout the year we worked to change this model and at the end of 2011 we operated three apartments each with two bedrooms. These units can accommodate four men each.

During 2011 we began participating in the Residential Furlough Program. This program allows an inmate to reside away from the Community Corrections Center-Omaha. While participating, the inmate is accountable to the Center at all times.

Every Sunday morning former inmates attended a support group led by volunteer counselor Mike Rush. 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 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 week of employment.

Project Life Success Rate

	From Inception	2008- 2009**	2010	2011
In program at Beginning of the year	6	0	4	2
Admitted to Program This Year	55	23	10	22
Living Independently	25	10	7	8
In Half-Way House or Shelter	6	4	1	1
Returned to Prison	11	4	3	4
Status Unknown	2	1	0	1
In program at End of Year	15	4	3	8

Percent of Project LIFE Participants**Who Stayed out of Prison**

70%	78%	73%	60%
From Inception	2008- 2009**	2010	2011

***Accurate record keeping began in April, 2008. Partial year 2008 and 2009 combined.*

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

Service

In 2011, 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 them. 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.

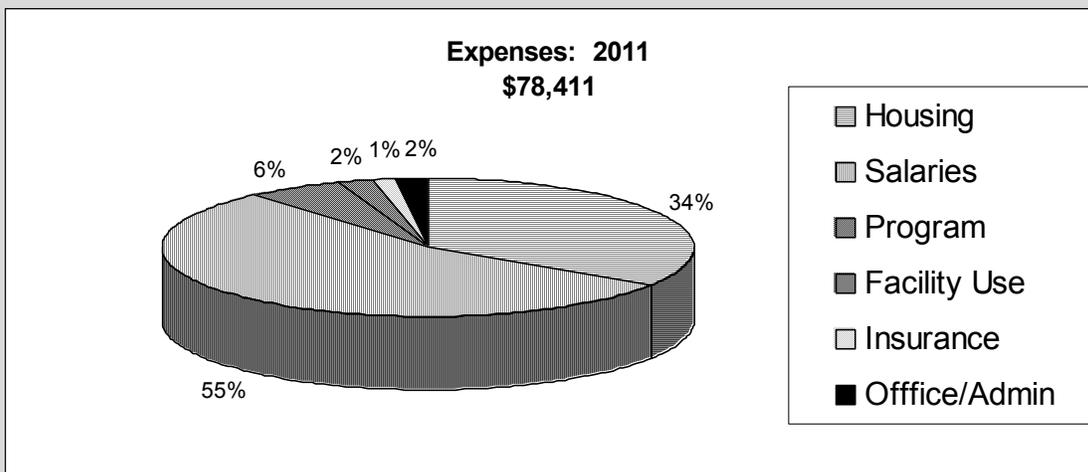
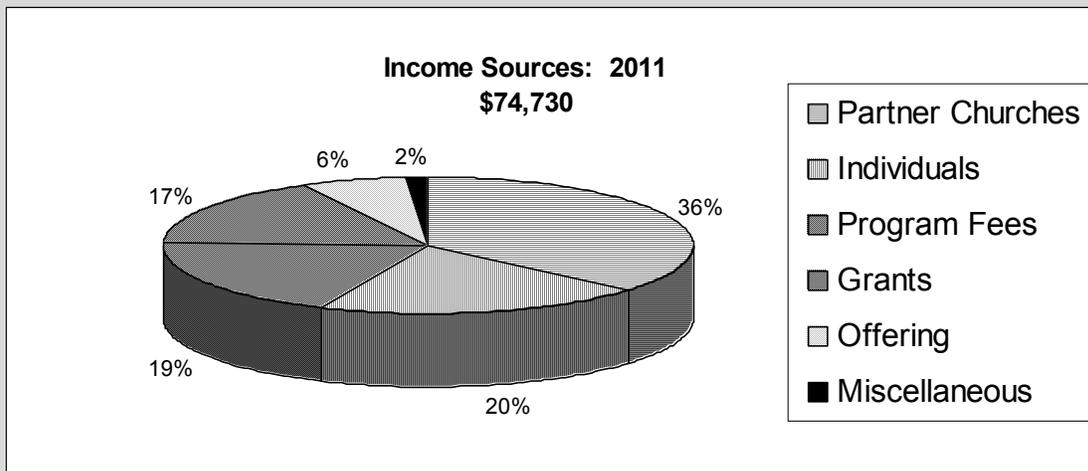
In 2011, our sewing group, organized by Anne Carroll, met periodically through the year. These women sewed blankets, baby clothes and other items for Direct Relief and looked forward to making items for others in need using their sewing skills.

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 2011. The Nebraska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church hired Rev. Robert Bryan as Director of Lutheran Prison Ministries. Crossroads Connection will continue to provide worship services during 2012 and will encourage more Lutheran congregations of the Omaha metro area to join us in ministry.

Financial

Crossroads continued to be blessed with generous contributors to support its ministry. We welcomed two new partnership churches 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 2011 income and expenses is included below.



Freedom Keepers

In 2011, 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. Brad Whitman was the Board member sponsor of this group.

Freedom Keepers projects in 2011 included distributing donated bread in the Park Avenue corridor, filled and distributed 50 Christmas stockings to inmates, provided inmates with Christmas and Fathers' Day cards and postage, assisted with many outreaches at homeless shelters, neighborhoods, and parks, helped provide clothing and household goods, and assisted participants in obtaining identity cards and drivers licenses.

Appreciation Dinner

On November 7, 2011 Crossroads Connection hosted its 3rd 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 Covenant Presbyterian Church. The catered dinner by Hap Abraham was donated by James Almond. Several testimonies were given presenting what involvement in Crossroads has meant to participants.

Goals for 2011

The following goals that were established for 2011 were accomplished:

1. Increase number of active Sunday transportation sponsors by 5. *(not accomplished)*
2. Increase the capacity in the Project LIFE ministry to 10 participants at any one time. *(housing capacity at 12)*
3. Increase the number of partnership churches to 24. *(23 churches)*
4. Improve communication by producing a quarterly newsletter. *(1 Published)*
5. Work with CCC-O to support the Re-Entry Furlough Program. *(3 RFP participants in the program)*
6. Insure that all Crossroads attendees have a Bible. *(Bibles repeatedly offered through the year)*

Goals for 2012

1. Increase number of active Sunday transportation sponsors by 3.
2. Increase the number of partnership churches to 26.
3. Improve communication by producing a quarterly newsletter.
4. Insure that all Crossroads attendees have a Bible.
5. Develop transition programs inside Omaha Correctional Center in co-operation with Followers of Christ.
6. Develop Board bylaws.
7. Increase the annual success rate to at least 70%

Opportunities for You to 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. (We often have a waiting list of 12-15 people waiting to attend Crossroads worship services.)
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.
13. Donate clothes for the clothes closet, food for the pantry, and paper products for meals.

Thanks

If you supported Crossroads Connection Prison Ministry in 2011 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.

Contact any board member, our Program Coordinator, Diane Greenfield, at 402-932-1284, or our website www.CrossroadsConnectionOmaha.org for more information.

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