

**Crossroads Connection Prison Ministries**  
**2012 Annual Report**



By the grace of God and the support of many individuals and church partners, in 2012 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 2013.

**Partnership Churches**

Crossroads was blessed in 2012 by our 25 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 (Discovery) Presbyterian Church

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

You can find out more about Crossroads at our website. Go to  
[www.CrossroadsConnectionOmaha.org](http://www.CrossroadsConnectionOmaha.org) to learn the latest about our ministry, check the  
volunteer schedule and learn how you can help support Crossroads.

***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)  
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)

***Missouri River Valley Presbytery Mission Committee Liaison***  
The Rev. John Besancon

**Worship Ministry**

The Sunday by Sunday evening worship service was the center of the Crossroads Connection ministry in 2012. 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. The clothes closet and food pantry are also located at Underwood Hills. Crossroads appreciates the generosity and hospitality of Underwood Hills in the use of their building.

Program Coordinator Diane Greenfield coordinated ministers, musicians, and meal providers, and prepared worship bulletins when needed for weekly worship. Carol Chereck

and Mary Vaughan helped check in worshippers and make name tags each Sunday and Jeff Lampson prepared the communion elements and closed up the facility each week.

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

While our average worship attendance in 2012 was about the same as last year, we welcomed 155 new worshippers from Community Corrections Center-Omaha (CCC-O). Our 22 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 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, pay their program fees in a timely manner, remain clean and sober, and meet the other conditions of their release.

Tim Locatis continued as our full time Project LIFE Manager in 2012. 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 also assisted some outside of our program to find housing and with other services to help their transition to the community.

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.

In 2012 we operated three apartments each with two bedrooms. These units can accommodate four men each for a total transitional housing capacity of twelve.

During 2012 we participated in the Residential Furlough Program (RFP). This program allows an inmate nearing parole to reside away from the Community Corrections Center-Omaha to help ease the crowding in the system. Crossroads' transitional housing housed 3 RFP participants in 2012 and provided direct assistance in locating safe housing for 2 additional persons. While participating in RFP, the inmate remains 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 Mary Vaughan 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, partnership churches, and The Food Bank of the Heartland. Mary Ann Fox coordinated our pantry this year.

Three ministries were added in 2012. A *Furniture Ministry* developed through donations of used furniture and household items. A garage for storing these items was

made available to Crossroads and enabled us to collect and distribute these items to several former inmates.

Crossroads Connection also expanded its ministry in 2012 by offering Dave Ramsey's *Financial Peace University* course to inmates at the Omaha Correctional Center. The course is co-sponsored with Followers-in-Christ (FIC) ministries located in Lincoln, NE. Volunteers from four churches currently participate in the program - First Presbyterian, Presbyterian Church of the Master, St. Thomas Lutheran and Rejoice Lutheran Church. Dr. Mike Halvorson (Crossroads Board member) and Pastor Bob Bryan of FIC serve as class leaders and volunteer coordinators. The volunteers also work closely with the Education staff at the Omaha Correctional Center.

Ten students graduated from the first class in July, 2012 and 15 students graduated from the second class in October, 2012. The students enjoyed the class, and especially liked learning about the 7 "Baby" steps for financial success. One student exclaimed "This class has truly opened my eyes to the things I need to know to be successful financially in life - so Thank you very much".

The next class is scheduled in April, 2013 and the second class is yet to be scheduled. There is a waiting list for the next two classes. In addition, Crossroads Connections has had requests to teach the class at the Community Corrections Center in Omaha and will also offer the class to Crossroads LIFE participants in the near future. Contact us if you would like to be a part of this exciting ministry.

It was a celebration all around, when Omaha's Trinity Lutheran recognized the thirtieth anniversary of the ordination of Pastor Elizabeth Backus. She is the wife of Pastor John Backus, who serves as one of Trinity Lutheran's Crossroads transportation sponsors. One of the ways Trinity recognized her ministry was to donate ten pairs of *Redwing work boots* to inmates at the Community Corrections Center who earned work release and were starting jobs which required waterproof, safe boots. Haney Shoes in Benson generously offered to fit the shoes to inmates with special foot needs and Crossroads handled applications and distribution. The program was so successful and the boots so appreciated that the program was expanded to seventeen pairs of boots, extending Christian love to those in need.

### **Service**

In 2012, 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 2012, our sewing group, organized by Anne Carroll, met periodically through the year at Westminster Presbyterian Church. These women sewed blankets and baby hats for Direct Relief.

**Project LIFE Success Rate**

	Since Inception	2012
In Program at Beginning of Year	13	7
Admitted to Program This Year	72	19
Living Independently	38	13
In Half-Way House or Shelter	8	2
Returned to Prison	12	1
Status Unknown	2	0
In Program at End of Year	25	10
<b><u>PERCENT OF PROJECT LIFE PARTICIPANTS WHO STAYED OUT OF PRISON</u></b>	<b><u>79%</u></b>	<b><u>94%</u></b>
	Since Inception	2012

**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 2012. Crossroads Connection will continue to provide worship services during 2013 and will encourage more Lutheran congregations of the Omaha metro area to join us in ministry.

**Awards and Honors**

Crossroads Connection was humbled this year to be the recipient of two awards. On September 27, 2012 Governor Dave Heineman and Corrections Department Director Robert Houston presented a Nebraska Department of Correctional Services Partnership Award for 2012 to Crossroads Connection Ministry for its "exceptional commitment in helping inmates assimilate back into society." Several Crossroads Board members were in

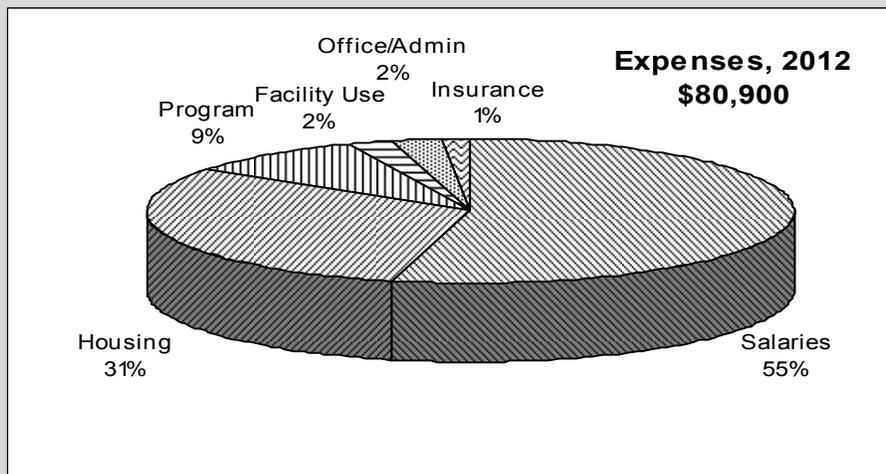
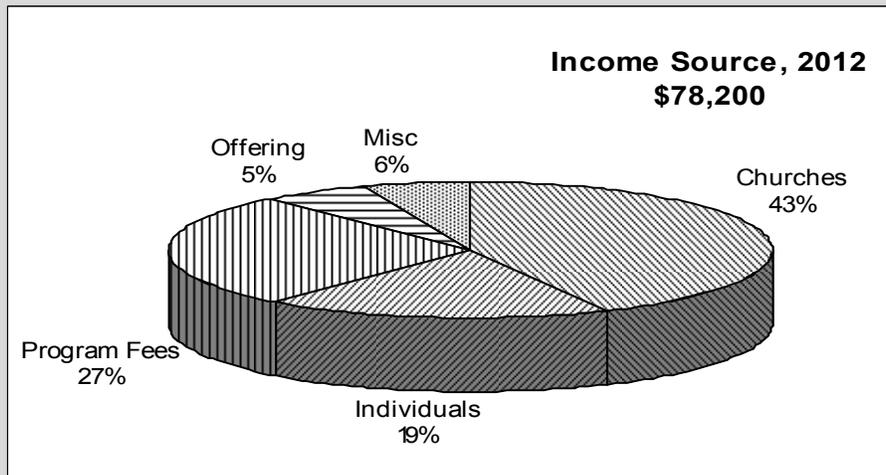
attendance at the State Capitol for the awards ceremony.

In December, 2012, CCC-O residents presented Crossroads sponsors with a beautiful Praying Hands Statue quoting Philipians 4:6-7 and inscribed as follows: "Crossroads Sponsors—Thanks for all your kindness and support—CCC-O Residents, 2012".

The Crossroads Board gratefully accepted both of these awards on behalf of all of the churches, groups, and individuals that support Crossroads.

### 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 2012 income and expenses is included below.



### Opportunities for You to Get Involved

\*\* = Primary Need

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 and must have adequate transportation sponsors for them to attend.)
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. \*\*Talk to your church's mission committee and your employer about supporting us financially.
8. Get a group from your church or employer to provide a meal for the fellowship after worship.
9. Help a former inmate find a job.
10. Help a former inmate connect with his or her family.
11. \*\*Become a mentor to a former inmate.
12. \*\*Help to facilitate a Financial Peace University class.
13. Donate clothes for the clothes closet, food for the pantry, and paper products for meals.

### Goals for 2012

1. Increase number of active Sunday transportation sponsors by 3. *(accomplished)*
2. Increase the number of partnership churches to 26. *(have 25)*
3. Improve communication by producing a quarterly newsletter. *(published 1)*
4. Insure that all Crossroads attendees have a Bible. *(accomplished)*
5. Develop transition programs inside Omaha Correctional Center in co-operation with Followers of Christ. *(accomplished—2 Financial Peace University Classes held)*
6. Develop Board bylaws. *(accomplished)*
7. Increase the annual success rate to at least 70%. *(accomplished)*

### Goals for 2013

1. Increase number of partnership churches to 26.
2. Increase number transportation sponsors by 3.
3. Increase Financial Peace University volunteers by 10.
4. Conduct two Financial Peace University classes at OCC, once class at CCC-O, and one class for Project LIFE participants.
5. Increase number of one-on-one mentors by 8.
6. Institute one Project LIFE education class with 4 instructors/facilitators.
7. Increase Board attendance at parole hearings.
8. Obtain at least one external grant for operating funds.
9. Establish individual counseling program.

### Thanks!!

If you supported Crossroads Connection Prison Ministry in 2012 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 and staff.

Contact any board member, our Program Coordinator, Diane Greenfield, at 402-516-2403, or our website [www.CrossroadsConnectionOmaha.org](http://www.CrossroadsConnectionOmaha.org) for more information or to volunteer.

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

Crossroads Connection  
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