

**Crossroads Connection Prison Ministries**  
**2013 Annual Report**



By the grace of God and the support of many individuals and church partners, in 2013 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 2014.

**Partnership Churches**

Crossroads was blessed in 2013 by our 28 Partnership Churches and Organizations. 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	Fort Calhoun Presbyterian Church
Beemer Mennonite Church	Hope Presbyterian Church
Benson Presbyterian Church	Morning Star Lutheran Church
Center Ridge Presbyterian Church	Northside Family Christian Center
Central Presbyterian Church	Peace Presbyterian Church
Covenant Presbyterian Church	Presbyterian Church of the Master
Discovery Presbyterian Church	Presbytery of Missouri River Valley
Dundee Presbyterian Church	Second Presbyterian Church-Hastings
Faith Presbyterian Church	St. Thomas Lutheran Church
Faithful Shepherd Presbyterian Church	St. Timothy Lutheran Church
First Presbyterian Church-Bellevue	Trinity Lutheran Church-Omaha
First Presbyterian Church-Fullerton	Trinity Presbyterian Church, Clarinda
First Presbyterian Church-Omaha	Underwood Hills Presbyterian Church
Followers of Christ Prison Ministry, NE Synod, ELCA	Westminster Presbyterian Church-Omaha

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

***Crossroads Board Members***

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

***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

During 2013, Founder and Board Vice-President Rev. Roy Fox stepped down from active participation on the Board and was designated Emeritus Board Member by the Board. Mike Halvorson was appointed Vice-President by the Board.

**Worship Ministry**

The Sunday by Sunday evening worship service was the center of the Crossroads Connection ministry in 2013. 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.

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 helped check in worshippers and make name tags each Sunday and 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 2013 was 69, we welcomed 151 new worshippers from Community Corrections Center-Omaha (CCC-O). Our 26 dedicated, trained transportation sponsors, coordinated by Mary Ann Fox and Anne Carroll, did a wonderful 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 2000 miles. In addition, transportation sponsors helped get inmates to counseling sessions, job interviews, and other events throughout the year.

### **LIFE Program**

The transition from prison to life on the outside is an enormous step, even for those at the Community Corrections Center-Omaha who had been Crossroads worshippers and working in town. Because they are required to pay the Department of Corrections, few leave with enough money for a rental apartment, much less other immediate necessities, including payment to parole and the cost of the personal monitors the parole board frequently requires. Few of those on work release long enough to have saved have the self-discipline and financial savvy to use their savings well. It can be lonely because they have to break from former friends, and family members need to rebuild trust. The transition can be so difficult that they are highly vulnerable to recidivism during the first six to twelve months after release. Crossroads' Living In Freedom Eternally (LIFE) program provides former inmates transitional support to foster their success.

LIFE participants are provided safe housing and utilities at a low cost in a shared furnished apartment. Approved housing such as ours is a requirement for parole. After a typical parole period of six months, LIFE men are more prepared for independent living, with better finances and jobs, improved self-confidence and self-awareness, and spiritual grounding from weekly worship and spiritually-based group counseling. Those who stay in Omaha tend to keep in touch, maintaining a community of service and support.

Our capacity varied during 2013 with the rate of requests for admission. Applicants are interviewed to determine their employability, the sincerity of their personal goals, and soundness of their plans for meeting them.

Tim Locatis continued as our full time LIFE Manager throughout 2013, but had two operations after heart attacks and has since left for less stressful work. Tim's support and encouragement were appreciated by LIFE participants and the other Crossroads worshipers he helped. Tim managed our housing, provided transportation, and assisted in daily decision making during the transition to day to day life in the community. His dedication is one of the reasons Crossroads is respected by Adult Parole officers. We wish him health, joy, and peace.

Every Sunday morning volunteer counselor Mike Rush conducts a group counseling meeting required of LIFE participants and often attended by other former inmates. Each session starts with a short Bible passage to set the topic. Mike draws everyone into the conversation, which reinforces positive approaches to address problems of the week.

### **Other Ministries**

Every other week Crossroads opens its clothes closet, from which current and newly released inmates and select warm coats and clothing they need, particularly for work. The closet was stocked mostly by contributions from individuals and participating churches. Carol Cherek organized and coordinated our clothes closet.

Crossroads keeps supplies of food and provisions for use by groups sponsoring social meals after Crossroads worship services. Newly released former inmates entering the LIFE program are provided an initial allocation of essential food items from the same pantry. Others struggling financially because they are between jobs may be provided some food from our food pantry or another local pantry with our assistance. 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.

The Furniture Ministry helped provide used furniture and household items for use by LIFE participants and donation to others associated with our ministry. A garage for storing these items was made available to Crossroads. This enabled us to hold furniture until needed. House wares, sheets, pillows, and blankets are also needed by people move to independent living.

Crossroads Connection continued to offer the Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University (FPU) Course at the Omaha Correctional Center (OCC). The course was co-sponsored with Followers-of-Christ Prison Ministries located in Lincoln, NE. Twelve volunteers from a variety of churches and organizations participated in the program. Representative churches/organizations include First Presbyterian-Omaha, Presbyterian Church of the Master, Rejoice Lutheran, St. Thomas Lutheran, Shepherd of the Hills

Lutheran, Faith-Westwood Methodist, Journey Church (Gretna), Followers-of-Christ (Lincoln) and University of Nebraska-Omaha. Dr. Mike Halvorson (Crossroads Vice President) and Pastor Bob Bryan of Followers of Christ served as class leaders and volunteer coordinators. The volunteers work closely with the Education staff at OCC.

Nine inmates graduated from the FPU class held in April to June of 2013 at OCC and 10 graduated from the July to Sept. class. The students were very appreciative and especially enjoyed learning about the "7 baby steps for financial success" and the lessons related to reducing debt, relating to money, and dealing with credit. There is currently a waiting list for the classes to be held in 2014.

In collaboration with Followers of Christ, the FPU program expanded to the Community Corrections Center in Lincoln in the fall of 2013. Six students graduated from the class.

The FPU program will be expanding to the Community Corrections Center in Omaha and will be offered to the Crossroads' LIFE participants in 2014.

### **Service**

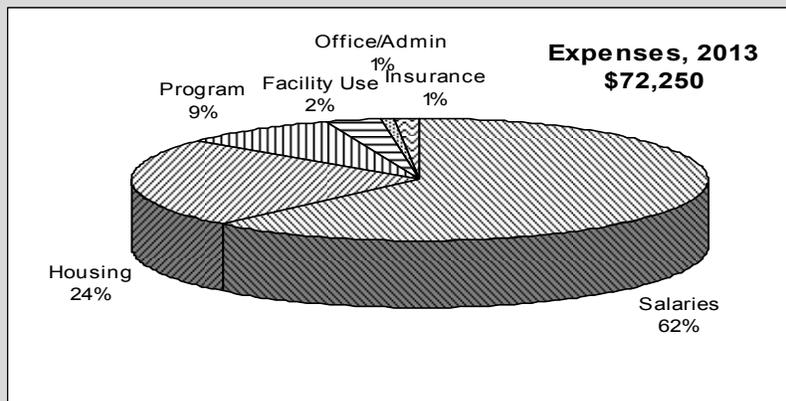
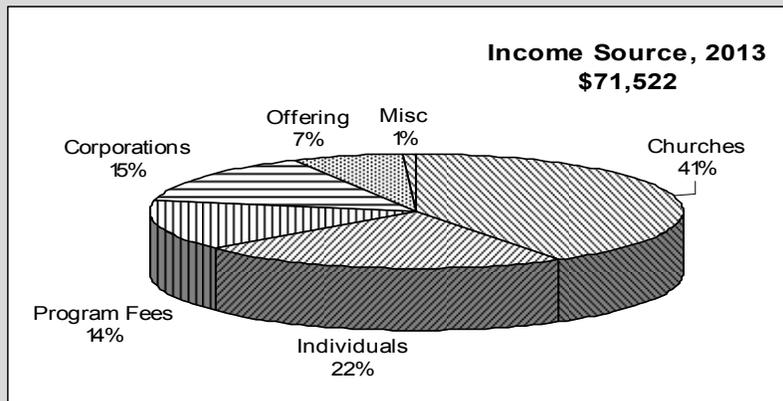
In 2013, former inmates found that serving humanity helped build individual character, provided a sense of self worth, and provided inmates and former inmates with an opportunity to look beyond themselves. Our Project LIFE Manager and other sponsors encouraged inmates and former inmates to participate 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.

### **Associated Ministries**

Crossroads Connection partnered with the Followers of Christ 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 2013. Crossroads Connection will continue to provide worship services during 2014 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 2013 income and expenses is included below.



## Project LIFE Success Rate

	From Inception	2013
In Program at Beginning of Year	25	10
Admitted to Program This Year	83	10
Living Independently	50	11
In Half-Way House or Shelter	8	0
Returned to Prison	19	7
Status Unknown	2	0
In Program at End of Year	29	2
<b><u>PERCENT OF PROJECT LIFE</u></b>		
<b><u>PARTICIPANTS WHO STAYED OUT</u></b>	<b><u>75%</u></b>	<b><u>61%</u></b>
<b><u>OF PRISON</u></b>		

### Opportunities for You to Get Involved

\*\* = Primary Need

1. \*\*Pray for the ministry and its participants.
2. \*\*Consider a financial gift, or even better, an ongoing pledge.
3. \*\*Train to be a transportation sponsor and commit to transporting at least once a month. (We often have a list of 12-15 people waiting to attend Crossroads worship services and must have adequate transportation sponsors for them to attend.) 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!*
4. \*\*Talk to your church's mission committee and your employer about supporting us financially.
5. \*\*Become a mentor to a former inmate.
6. \*\*Help to facilitate a Financial Peace University class.
7. Talk to your church's pastor about leading worship with a sermon, scripture reading, or musical offering.
8. Make a contribution towards supplying Bibles for each Crossroads attendee.
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. Donate clothes for the clothes closet, food for the pantry, and paper products for meals.

### Goals for 2013

1. Increase number of partnership churches to 26. *(we now have 28)*
2. Increase number transportation sponsors by 3. *(increased from 22 to 27)*
3. Increase Financial Peace University volunteers by 10. *(we now have 12)*
4. Conduct two Financial Peace University classes at OCC, one class at CCC-O, and one class for Project LIFE participants. *(2 at OCC, 1 at CCC-L, LIFE class scheduled for 2014)*
5. Increase number of one-on-one mentors to 8. *(one on one mentors provided for all participants in the LIFE Program)*
6. Institute one Project LIFE education class with 4 instructors/facilitators. *(no—agency intending to provide class lost its funding)*
7. Increase Board attendance at parole hearings. *(at least one Board member attended most parole hearings of those accepted into the LIFE program)*
8. Obtain at least one external grant for operating funds. *(none received)*
9. Establish individual counseling program. *(connected those in need of individual counseling with local counseling resources)*

### Goals for 2014

1. Increase number of partnership churches to 30.
2. Increase number transportation sponsors to 30.
3. Increase Financial Peace University volunteers to 15.
4. Conduct 5 Financial Peace University classes at OCC, CCC-O, and for Project LIFE participants.
5. Continue to have one-on-one mentors for each Project LIFE participant.
6. Involve Project LIFE participants in community outreach and external service projects.
7. Continue Crossroads Board presence at parole hearings for inmates accepted into the Project LIFE program.
8. Obtain at least one external grant for operating funds.
9. Continue to pursue the process to become a recognized worshipping community.
10. Explore with CCC-O how we might better partner to provide educational opportunities for inmates.

**Thanks!!**

If you supported Crossroads Connection Prison Ministry in 2013 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.

***Consider this an invitation to join us in our ministry!***

Contact any board member, Program Coordinator Diane Greenfield at 402-516-2403, or see our website [www.CrossroadsConnectionNE.org](http://www.CrossroadsConnectionNE.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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