

Crossroads Connection Prison Ministries  
2014 Annual Report



By the grace of God and the support of many individuals and church partners, in 2014 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 are indebted to all of those who *volunteered over 6500 hours of service* in support of our ministry in 2014. We hope you find this report encouraging and that you will support us in 2015.

Partnership Churches

Crossroads was blessed in 2014 by our 25 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, transportation sponsors and ongoing prayers for our ministry.

Beemer Mennonite Church  
Benson Presbyterian Church  
Center Ridge Presbyterian Church  
Covenant Presbyterian Church  
Discovery Presbyterian Church  
Dundee Presbyterian Church  
Faith Presbyterian Church  
Faithful Shepherd Presbyterian Church  
First Presbyterian Church-Bellevue  
First Presbyterian Church-Omaha  
Followers of Christ Prison Ministry, NE Synod,  
ELCA  
Fort Calhoun Presbyterian Church

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

You can find out more about Crossroads at our 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. "Like" us on Facebook.

### **Mission Statement**

Crossroads Connection is a Christian community of faith in support of prisoners, those released, and their families, because God's grace is extended to all.

### **Vision Statement**

In keeping with our call from God, we will be:

- A Worshiping People
- A Learning People
- A Missionary People
- A Giving People
- A Restorative People

### ***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)  
Bill Breyfogle (Presbyterian Church of the Master)  
The Rev. Bob Bryan (NE Synod ELCA)  
Carol Chereck (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***

Matt Anselmo, 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 2014, Board Vice-President Mike Halvorson and James Almond stepped down from the Board and Carol Chereck, Bill Breyfogle and The Rev. Bob Bryant were appointed to the Board.

## Worship Ministry

The Sunday evening worship service was the center of the Crossroads Connection ministry in 2014. 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 2014 was 70 we welcomed 159 new worshippers from Community Corrections Center-Omaha (CCC-O). Our 34 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 through August. Crossroads received a grant this summer and in August purchased a newer bus to transport on Sundays. Crossroads thanks PCM for the generous use of their bus for many years and ongoing support of our new bus. 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 worshipers 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 are 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 2014 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.

Matt Anselmo was hired as our full time LIFE Manager in March, 2014. Matt managed our housing, provided transportation, and assisted in daily decision making and mentoring during participants' transition to day to day life in the community. We are excited to have Matt in this position and blessed to have his insight and dedication.

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 can 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. Housewares, sheets, pillows, and blankets are also needed by people moving to independent living.

Crossroads Connection in conjunction with Followers-of-Christ Prison Ministries located in Lincoln continued to offer the Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University (FPU) Course. At least 10 volunteers from a variety of churches and organizations participated in the program. Bill Breyfogle 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.

During 2014, Crossroads coordinated 6 Financial Peace University Classes: 3 at CCC-L with a total of 16 graduates, 1 at CCC-O with 7 graduates, and 2 at OCC with a total of 19 graduates. We also did some one-on-one work with participants in the LIFE program.

### **Service**

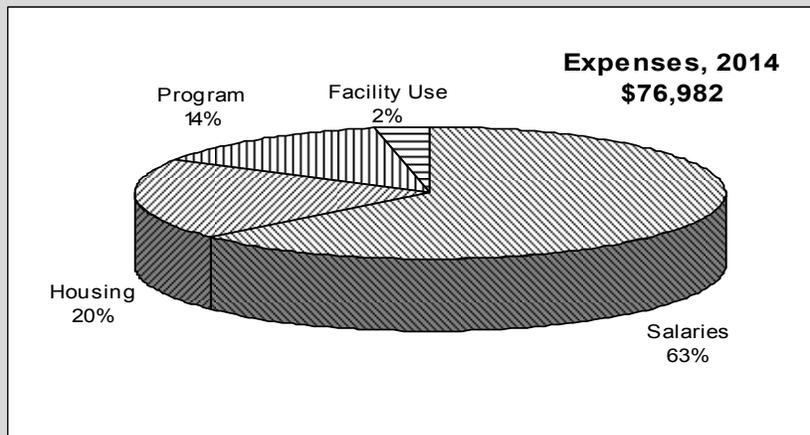
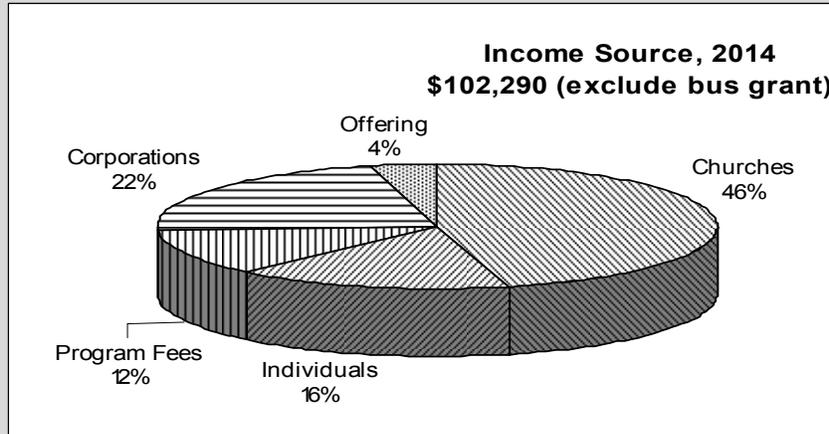
In 2014, former inmates found that serving humanity helped build individual character, provided a sense of self worth, and provided inmates and former inmates with an opportunity to look beyond them selves. Our Project LIFE Manager and other sponsors encouraged inmates and former inmates to participate 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. Anne Carroll took inmates to work at Habitat for Humanity build sites. Small groups of participants also helped with various moving and clean up projects. Matt Anselmo 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 2014. Crossroads Connection will continue to provide worship services during 2015.

**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 2014 income and expenses is included below.



<u>Project LIFE Success Rate</u>	<u>From Inception</u>	<u>2014</u>
In Program at Beginning of Year	29	2
Admitted to Program This Year	95	13
Living Independently	57	8
In Half-Way House or Shelter	8	0
Returned to Prison	21	2
Status Unknown	2	0
Deceased	1	1
In Program at End of Year	35	4
<b><u>PERCENT OF PROJECT LIFE PARTICIPANTS WHO STAYED OUT OF PRISON</u></b>	<b><u>76%</u></b>	<b><u>80%</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. \*\*If you have or are willing to obtain your Class C CDL, become one of our bus drivers to transport inmates on Sunday nights
4. \*\*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!*
5. \*\*Talk to your church's mission committee and your employer about supporting us financially.
6. \*\*Become a mentor to a former inmate.
7. \*\*Help to facilitate a Financial Peace University class.
8. Make a contribution to help support our bus and van.
9. Talk to your church's pastor about leading worship with a sermon, scripture reading, or musical offering.
10. Make a contribution towards supplying Bibles for each Crossroads attendee.
11. Get a group from your church or employer to provide a meal for the fellowship after worship.
12. Help a former inmate find a job.
13. Help a former inmate connect with his or her family.
14. Donate clothes for the clothes closet, food for the pantry, and paper products for meals.

### Goals for 2014

1. Increase number of partnership churches to 30. *(Ended year with 25)*
2. Increase number transportation sponsors to 30. *(Ended the year with 34)*
3. Increase Financial Peace University volunteers to 15. *(Ended the year with 10)*
4. Conduct 5 Financial Peace University classes at OCC, CCC-O, and for Project LIFE participants. *(Six classes conducted)*
5. Continue to have one-on-one mentors for each Project LIFE participant. *(Done)*
6. Involve Project LIFE participants in community outreach and external service projects. *(Ongoing through the year)*
7. Continue Crossroads Board presence at parole hearings for inmates accepted into the Project LIFE program. *(Done)*
8. Obtain at least one external grant for operating funds. *(Applied for and received grant to purchase the bus; applied for 3 grants for operational funds but none were funded.)*
9. Continue to pursue the process to become a recognized worshipping community. *(Application was denied)*
10. Explore with CCC-O how we might better partner to provide educational opportunities for inmates. *(Continuing to offer Financial Peace University classes)*

### Goals for 2015

1. Increase number of partnership churches.
2. Continue to conduct Financial Peace University classes in CCC-O, CCC-L, and OCC.
3. Improve financial stability and corporate relationships.

### Thanks!!

If you supported Crossroads Connection Prison Ministry in 2014 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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*Please route to  
others in your  
organization*