

# VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION GUIDE



**CROSSROADS**  
PRISON MINISTRIES

[cpministries.org](http://cpministries.org)

[800.668.2450](tel:800.668.2450)

[facebook.com/CrossroadsPrisonMin/](https://facebook.com/CrossroadsPrisonMin/)

## Dear Crossroads Team Member,

On behalf of everyone at Crossroads, I am happy to welcome you to our team! I know you will be blessed as God works through you to bring love and encouragement to men and women in correctional facilities across the country.

Hebrews 13 urges us to “remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison.” As you serve people who are incarcerated, you are effectively there with them. Regardless of how you serve with Crossroads, you will help men and women in prison grow in their faith and relationship with Jesus. We believe you will also grow as a disciple of Jesus as the Spirit opens your eyes to a world you may not have experienced yourself.

Having visited various correctional facilities and listened to the stories of men and women who cherish the Crossroads lessons and friendships with their mentors, I assure you that what you have been called to do has an eternal impact. On behalf of those who will experience Jesus’ unconditional love through Crossroads, thank you. Thank you for choosing Crossroads as a place to donate your time, talent and treasures. Thank you for answering Jesus’ call to join Him in the work He is doing behind bars.

Full of gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas Cupery".

Douglas Cupery  
Church Mobilization Director  
Crossroads Prison Ministries



**“Thank you, Crossroads, for your prayers and spiritual encouragement. . . . As a prison inmate missionary who is far away from home, friends and family and is weighed down by regret and disappointment, your prison ministry was Jesus to me in my life and difficult situation.”**

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**– Mario, Crossroads student in Michigan**

# THE MASS INCARCERATION PROBLEM



## The Scope

- 10 million people are incarcerated worldwide.
- 2.2 million people are incarcerated in the United States.
- The US accounts for 5 percent of the world's total population but houses 22 percent of the world's incarcerated population.



## Loneliness

- 70 percent of people in prison do not receive a single visitor in a typical month.



## Impact on Children & Families

- More than 2.7 million children in the US have an incarcerated parent—that's 1 in 28 children.
- Approximately 10 million children have experienced parental incarceration at some point in their lives.



## Women in Prison

- The female prison population is nearly eight times greater today than it was in 1980.
- More than 60 percent of women in state prisons have a child under the age of 18.
- More than half of the women in state prisons have been abused—47 percent physically and 39 percent sexually (many of whom are survivors of both types of abuse).



## Education Level of People in Prison

- Of all incarcerated people in the United States, about 65 percent have not received a high school diploma. Just over 41 percent of those dropped out of high school; 23 percent obtained a GED.
- Almost 23 percent have received a high school diploma only.
- Almost 13 percent have also obtained a postsecondary education.



# MISSION

Crossroads connects people in prisons with mentors from churches to develop Christ-centered relationships as they study God's Word together.

## HISTORY

In 1984, Tom de Vries, a real estate agent turned car salesman with a passion for prison ministry, began visiting and sharing the Gospel with men in the Kent County Jail. As Tom ministered to the men, he could see they were learning about God, but he wanted more for them. He was committed to helping them become disciples of Christ and learn how to follow and serve Him in their present circumstances.

However, Tom found that just as the men began to connect deeply with God's Word, they were suddenly transferred to a different location, and he lost contact with them. After a great deal of prayer, Tom, his brother and some volunteers gathered to create a correspondence Bible study program, and Crossroads was born. Because everything was done through the mail, the Crossroads program could follow each student no matter when or where they were transferred.

Under the leadership of David Schuringa, who took over as president in 2000, Crossroads gradually expanded its footprint across the globe, grew its volunteer base and added numerous Bible study courses for students.

Lisa Blystra assumed leadership in 2015 and currently serves as the president and CEO. She has led the ministry back to its roots, renewing its focus on Christ-centered mentoring relationships. Under her leadership, the organization has worked tirelessly to expand its programming to meet the spiritual needs of an ever-changing population of men and women behind bars.

Today, Crossroads Prison Ministries is bringing the Gospel message of love, redemption and hope through Jesus Christ to men and women in more than 2,200 correctional facilities in the United States and facilities throughout twenty-three countries around the world. In the 2020 fiscal year, Crossroads sent 158,088 Bible study lessons, with encouraging letters, to students throughout the United States. The students received spiritual guidance, encouragement and friendship from more than 3,000 mentors from churches across the country. Between the mentors who serve across the US and the mission support volunteers who serve in West Michigan, volunteers donated about 194,996 hours of work to move the ministry forward—equivalent to the work of 99 full-time staff members.



Tom de Vries

Lisa Blystra

# VOLUNTEERING WITH CROSSROADS

The work of Crossroads Prison Ministries is empowered by a community of volunteers who serve in our office, across the country and around the world.

Volunteers are valued members of our ministry team and are capable partners in achieving our mission.

## **What volunteers can expect from us:**

We will partner with volunteers to help them find the roles that best utilize their experience, talents and personal qualities to create the greatest ministry effectiveness and impact.

We believe in the value of volunteers and are committed to investing time in developing them for their chosen roles. We will provide the necessary training, coaching, support and materials for volunteers to function effectively in their ministry.

We continually work toward our goal of building strong relationships between staff members and volunteers as we serve together.

We strive to create an organizational culture that provides spiritual encouragement and an environment that is positive, supportive, transparent and empowering.

We are committed to identifying and developing volunteer leaders, celebrating volunteer growth in both skill and scope of involvement.

## **What we expect from our volunteers:**

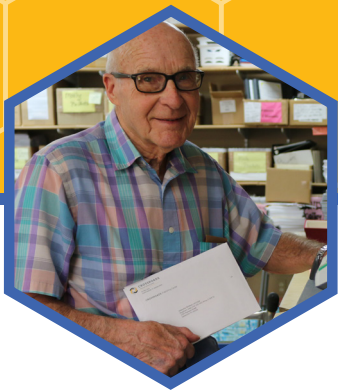
We invite volunteers to approach their ministry with a servant's heart, recognizing that even seemingly simple tasks are vital to the goals of the ministry.

We ask volunteers to participate fully in the training and coaching process by thoroughly reading training handbooks, reviewing physical and digital resources and attending educational events.

We request that volunteers partner with us in our endeavor to maintain a spiritually encouraging, positive, supportive and empowering culture.

We ask volunteers to remain open and transparent, actively participating in receiving and providing feedback and suggestions in a respectful way that contributes to a healthy ministry environment.

We encourage volunteers to be ministry advocates, sharing the mission and story of Crossroads with their faith community and inviting others to join the ministry.



## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

No matter what passions or skills a person may have,  
there's a place for them at Crossroads!

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### Mentors

Crossroads mentors across the country serve without leaving their homes. They form friendships with people in jail or prison through the mail. Using resources that Crossroads provides, they review their students' completed Bible study lessons, offer encouraging comments, answer their questions and help them see how God is speaking to them through His Word. They also write uplifting, hope-filled letters to their students, many of whom do not receive mail from anyone else. Most importantly, mentors pray for their students. Through this journey, both mentors and students experience spiritual transformation as they grow closer to God together.

### Ambassadors

Crossroads ambassadors are mentors who present volunteer opportunities to their friends, families, neighbors, church congregations and others in their communities on behalf of Crossroads. They advocate for the vision and

mission of Crossroads and share the amazing stories of spiritual transformation they see happen through the mentorship program. They recruit, support and encourage mentors as they develop friendships with people in prison or jail through Bible studies and encouraging letters.

### Mission Support Volunteers

Every Bible study lesson and encouraging letter is touched by volunteers who serve remotely from their homes or at the Crossroads home office in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Mission support volunteers do the vital administrative and production work that enables Crossroads to reach thousands of people in correctional facilities each week.

All departments at the home office need people with skills in database management, detailed data entry, proofreading and general administrative support. We also have an ongoing need for people who are bilingual in English and Spanish to assist with phone calls, lesson reviewing and translation efforts.

Various departments have specific needs for:

- People with skills in customer service to assist with mentor recruitment and support, event planning and implementation, hospitality tasks like shopping, setting up for events and serving at events and advocating for Crossroads at their churches
- People with skills in graphic design, writing and editing, art and poetry curation, social media content creation and photography
- People who are detail-oriented and thrive on tracking projects from inception to completion, with skills in proofreading, editing and collecting and compiling data for reports
- People who enjoy general support tasks like mail sorting, administrative support, facility maintenance and custodial care

## Interns

Internships are supervised learning experiences for institutional credit that include learning goals and objectives. They are an integral part of our organization, offering high school and college students opportunities to serve in critical roles alongside Crossroads staff. Interns gain knowledge and skills to lead and serve in all aspects of nonprofit ministries that serve marginalized populations, especially the prison population. Crossroads offers many internship opportunities.

- **Communications interns** help share the story of Crossroads by creating content for the website and social media, writing and editing stories for publications and promo-

tional materials and using graphic design skills to create publications and promotional materials.

- **Art curation interns** assist with collecting, organizing, evaluating and cataloging student artwork. They participate in conceptualizing exhibitions in the home office building and exhibitions that travel to other host sites.
- **International interns** assist with processing international extension center reports. They receive and assure the processing and shipping of extension center material orders. They are involved in proactive, cross-cultural communication with extension center directors to assure that they are receiving appropriate support from the home office.
- **Curriculum interns** assist the curriculum development director with pilot programs, receive and assure processing of student and mentor spiritual assessments, review student questionnaires, compile data for various projects and place print requests. They mail materials to chaplains, test group leaders and curriculum writers/editors and assist with answering student questions and responding to their requests.
- **Bilingual English/Spanish interns** assist various teams by proofreading translated documents, supporting Spanish mentor recruitment, providing customer service to Spanish-speaking mentors and helping staff respond to Spanish-speaking students' requests for more information or support.

*To learn more about mentoring, email [mentor@cpministries.org](mailto:mentor@cpministries.org) or call 800-668-2450, ext. 4010.*

*To learn more about other volunteer opportunities, email [missionsupport@cpministries.org](mailto:missionsupport@cpministries.org) or call 616-256-8222.*

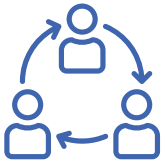




# MORE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Here are even more ways to partner with Crossroads!

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## Share your story

Tell your friends, family, church and coworkers about your experience of volunteering with Crossroads and invite them to join you in walking alongside men and women in prison and jail.



## Invite us to your church

Would you like your entire church to hear the story of Crossroads? We have a team of speakers who can share the mission of Crossroads during your church service or event. Your church could also host one of the Crossroads Prison Art Project's traveling art galleries, which feature student artwork.



## Give

Crossroads is mainly funded by the generosity of individual donors and churches. If God is leading you to support Crossroads financially, you can give a gift at [cpministries.org/donate](http://cpministries.org/donate).



## Pray

At Crossroads, we believe in the power of prayer. Will you commit to pray for the ministry as well as the 10 million men and women incarcerated around the world?

VOG

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