

Strategic Planning Study
**Report of Findings and
Recommendations**



Prepared for
Crossroads Campus Ministry
Mankato, Minnesota

April 30, 2013

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“Crossroads connects me with God, and with myself, again.”

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1. Study Objectives

Crossroads Campus Ministry (ELCA), located at Minnesota State University – Mankato in Mankato, Minnesota, engaged Richard Wehrs to conduct a Strategic Planning Study during the winter and early spring months of 2013. The objectives of this study included:

- Assessment of ministry “hopes and dreams”
- Assessment of challenges and obstacles
- Ranked recommendations for meeting identified ministry priorities
- Assistance with implementation

2. Study Setting and Process

Input from participants representing various stakeholder groups was a critical component of this study. To begin the study process, a public event was held at the ministry’s facility. That gathering identified a list of general themes from which was distilled a set of interview questions. These were used in each interview and focus group.

Suggestions, observations, criticisms and compliments were offered by participants over the course of several days of focus groups and interviews, with additional input submitted by individuals via email. Through interviews, focus groups and emailed comments, approximately 65 people provided input to the process, representing what was believed to be a reasonable cross-section of the ministry’s stakeholders.

3. Study Kick-Off Event: “Crossroads, Today & Tomorrow: a Community Conversation”

Approximately 24 persons attended at least part of this Sunday, 17 February 2013, event, with 20 participating in small- and large-group discussions. Participants were invited to imagine what successful and effective ministry would look like five years hence, as well as what challenges or obstacles exist which could prevent such a vision from being achieved. Following are unranked responses:

Hopes & Dreams for Crossroads’ Future

- Students enjoying the facility
- Lots of people coming and going
- Welcoming environment
- Safe haven for questions about faith
- Creative small groups outside of traditional worship
- More connections among students, new and returning
- “Week of Work” ministry continues

- Increased membership/participation
- More interdenominational – and welcoming people of other faiths, too
- Larger worshipping body – which would create greater diversity in programs
- Continuity of participants throughout school and beyond
- Better and more parking
- Building open longer
- Strengthened connections with local churches – mutuality
- Students utilizing the building more
- Roadside gas station: familiar, yet differentiated from others; valuable
- Full time ministry leadership
- “Real” entrance – prominent and obvious front door
- Use the building for social and “holy fun” purposes
- Designated time and space for meditation
- Interconnectedness among age groups – wider scope of age groups
- Continuing church visits
- Worship music enhancement – passing the torch through student turnover
- Reaching out to help – campus kitchen and other Christian service opportunities
- Exploration of alternative spiritual experiences
- “Lunch for a buck” continues
- New appliances (kitchen)
- Other faith practices – building connections with other campus ministries
- Increase in laughter
- Smooth leadership transition
- Interaction with other youth groups –shared activities
- Outdoor activities when weather appropriate

Challenges/Obstacles to Achieving These Hopes & Dreams

- Insufficient Money
- Insufficient Time (everybody’s challenge)
- Leadership model that spans student turnover
- Young adult missionary
- Expanding a narrow definition of what, and who, is “Christian”
- Broadening our circle of influence
- Breaking into other social groups – gaining access to other circles
- Focusing on and prioritizing our objectives
- Thinking outside of the box is SCARY
- Culture of invitation
- Getting beyond the familiar – taking risks
- Leaders (staff and others) being able to step it up with the constant turnover
- Communicating across transitions
- Promoting volunteer opportunities for retirees and others
- Maintaining continuity in the face of constant turnover
- Parking

4. External Interview Questions

Crossroads board members were invited, as part of this study, to consider visiting with members of the MSU-Mankato and City of Mankato communities about ways that Crossroads could be more integrated into the challenges and joys of its larger context. The following questions were offered as discussion points:

1. In your opinion, what are the urgent issues or challenges facing the community/university today, and what do you project will be the greatest *increasing* need in the community in the coming years?
2. In what ways do you see Mankato's faith community in general, and Crossroads Campus Ministry in particular, helping in addressing the needs of the community/university?
3. In what ways might the Mankato faith community and Crossroads Campus Ministry work more effectively to address the current and future needs of the community/university? What partnerships would you suggest might be explored?
4. What, if anything, do you know about our ministry? For what is it known in the community, be it good or bad?
5. Our campus ministry's leadership is in the process of examining its mission and purpose, and setting a vision for its work in the years ahead. From your unique perspective, what should we be sure to consider about the community/university in this process?

5. Interview and Focus Group Questions

For comparison and consistency purposes, all interview participants and focus groups were asked the same questions. This set of twelve questions was composed in response to the themes and topics raised in the initial study event.

- 1) What do you consider the “core values” or “core mission” of Crossroads Campus Ministry? In other words, what is Crossroads’ purpose, or reason for being?
- 2) What is your own personal vision or hope for Crossroads’ future? What do you feel God desires for Crossroads’ future?
- 3) What are some examples of things Crossroads is doing well, with regard to its “core mission”?
- 4) Are there aspects of this ministry about which its leaders and/or participants are particularly *passionate*?
- 5) What about Crossroads’ ministry or programming needs improving? Are there new programs or ministries you would like to see?
- 6) What are the greatest challenges Crossroads faces? What concerns do you have about Crossroads’ future?
- 7) What challenges do the university, the surrounding neighborhood and the larger Mankato community face? What ideas do you have for how these challenges can be opportunities for Crossroads, in terms of Christian service?
- 8) What partnerships (with community agencies, area congregations, or others) currently exist? Are there partnerships that you feel should be explored or established?
- 9) Is Crossroads staffed adequately to meet its needs and objectives? Is there a new staff position you’d like to see established, or a current position that should be adjusted?
- 10) How adequate are Crossroads’ current facilities in meeting its current – and future – program needs? Are there particular deficiencies or challenges you’ve experienced?
- 11) In what ways is Crossroads engaged in *evangelism outreach* – that is, inviting others to experience Christ through Crossroads and through participation in its ministries and programs? Are there ways you feel that invitation can be made more effectively?
- 12) Do you feel that there are sufficient opportunities for Crossroads participants to grow in their discipleship or understanding of the Christian faith? In what ways are you participating in those opportunities?

6. Interview and Focus Group Participant Responses

1) What do you consider to be the “core values” or “core mission” of Crossroads Campus Ministry? In other words, what is Crossroads’ purpose, or reason for being?

- Make “church” available to the campus.
- To reach students with the Gospel... to those who choose to open their hearts. A place of fellowship for those with a common interest. Place of welcome and hospitality, with Christ at its center.
- Meeting the faith needs of students in the campus setting. Being responsive to those needs, rather than expecting students to conform to the organization.
- Offer a community, a Christ-centered community, to students; to keep some connection with people in a phase of life where church can be less important. An outreach connection for congregations, too. A place for students to experience a broader “Church” than just their home congregation, especially as they encounter new faiths, and non-faith, as well.
- To allow students, who may or may not have come from a church background, to participate in and connect with the Church, and to continue in their spiritual and faith growth. Welcoming, “reconciling.”
- To share Jesus with young adults – a really vital time for people who are for the most part young and still in need of guidance – it’s a home and a place of refuge and a community. College life is so stressful – lots to do in a limited amount of time. This has been a great place for my own growth in terms of leadership, spirituality, sense of God leading and preparing me.
- To stay true to the historic faith of redemption in Christ -- doing it in a way that directly engages young people who don’t have a “Sunday School faith” anymore. Trinity actively encourages high school graduates to stay true to faith, stick close to your campus pastor – [people at campus ministry] care if you’re alive or dead, in contrast to everyone else there – and [our youth leader] then checks up with them when they come home – are you going to church?
- Connecting with the students and from that connection, sharing ministry with them.
- Main purpose: a place of worship, to build that community, but to be a place of outreach and welcome. No judgment, come as you are, be accepted whoever you are.
- Outreach toward the community of the university, a pillar of ELCA doctrine. A presence, a light to that community.

- It's to provide a home or a safe place for students, a place where they can relax, get away from the distractions of school – a refuge.
- To spread the word of God and among the students, to get them involved; to preserve their earlier participation in the Church. Not sure what their mission is today.
- To continue what Christian training and upbringing students may have had, now in the university setting – giving students the support and love they need.
- To help connect students with God, and with each other, too.

From Students Focus Group:

- Provide a gathering space for students and other college-aged persons to talk about God, Jesus, and share experiences. An emphasis on Christ's love and acceptance – Crossroads has a growing reputation for this!
- Spiritual exploration of emerging adults – a place where hard questions can be asked that maybe couldn't be asked at home. It's okay to explore and question on the spiritual realm

From Parents Focus Group:

- To make the doors open, that my child would find welcome. Like a second home, without feeling like they're going to church, per se. We've worked all these years to cultivate these values and beliefs and we know that our children will need a continuation of that – they're not done yet in terms of faith formation. Good to know that someone is there to care.

From University Faculty/Staff Focus Group:

- A space for everybody – eager to reach out to everyone. Assist in spiritual awakening and developing skills for living.
- Provide a place for those seeking a church home, as well as those who are less involved and those who find themselves in circumstances where they need help.
- Hospitality. That's its core value. Everything else is secondary. In dialogue to the campus and community.

From Area Clergy Focus Group or Clergy Phone Interviews:

- Being a presence of God's grace on campus. Connecting with students who have questions, and/or those who want to maintain a connection with a church while in this place. Making disciples of Jesus, in a way that's their own faith, rather than their parents faith, in a community that's inclusive and welcoming, honoring diversity. Everybody's welcome. A community gathered in the Word and Sacraments.

From Adults in Their 20's and 30's Focus Group:

- I'm hoping that it's finding a connection to the faith for those who so often wander from the church. A place for them to find others their own age who are believers – friends who share your belief... plus, an opportunity for those without a faith to come and discover. Outreach – Christian service – as a means to demonstrate faith, too.
- It's good to offer a safe place for kids to have fun without being drunk. There's tremendous pressure – or just a default expectation – that students have to drink in order to have a good time. It's the weekend (or Thursday)? We must be drinking. I wasn't a drinker when I went to school here, and I have to tell you it was *tough* to find something to do, socially, that didn't include drinking. Crossroads can be that place – and be loud and proud about it.

From Staff/Board Members:

- Giving people of this age group a place to build their faith, share their faith... discover a faith that can be their own, not just the one that's pushed on them or they're born into. These kids are so courageous in their sharing – not rigid in their beliefs. Crossroads is flexible and nimble in accommodating students' schedules – being what the kids need it to be, also in terms of what its programming provides from semester to semester.
- “Crossroads connects me with God, and with myself, again.”

2) What is your own personal vision or hope for Crossroads' future? What do you feel God desires for Crossroads' future?

- Continue to offer the type of service and presence they've been to foster and feed students' spiritual enrichment.
- Growth, more students involvement than in the past. Broader reach to the campus students. It's a tough thing, as there's so many other things that students can be doing... but students need a safe place, a haven from all that “noise”.
- That kids feel comfortable coming here. There's so much crud out in the world; they come here and are accepted.
- Stronger, bigger, continued strengthening... recovering from a time of real slippage in vitality. More opportunities for hanging out, making connections with other students, deepening relationships. A place to discuss and unpack new ideas in a Christian setting. An accepting place where you can go while you're finding yourself.

- That it continues going strong, building on the good foundation it has today. I hope Week of Work, Lunch for a Buck, and other programs continue.
- Continue doing what we do well, and do it right. It's okay to branch out, but we need to be faithful to our core, first and foremost.
- Hope it – and all campus ministries – continues.
- Continue to provide the kind of influence that led me to pursue parish ministry. I just think it's a way for students to be connected with the Gospel. I don't have too many there right now, but that weekly connection is so important.
- Definitely to continue on with the ministry they're involved in now – and increasingly work in cooperatively with other campus ministries.
- I really hope that it will continue to serve as a positive force, a safe place, a community of friends and a haven for exploring faith and the tough questions that we as young people are sometimes afraid to ask. I believe in campus ministry so much as a home away from home, a place where they can find that they're loved, and the love of Christ is apparent.
- I would hope that it would continue to grow in being a place where they can encounter God, come to know God better. Discover God's love – it's more than just a place to relax. To discover a purpose beyond what one otherwise might have.
- I hope they continue to grow. I'm a member of the downtown Kiwanis, and I approached them last year in seeking volunteers with the holiday lights program. Strengthen ties with local congregations.
- Greater cooperation with other ministries in the area. More growth, more youth.
- More work with the LGBT Center – Crossroads has been a place of welcome and acceptance.

From Students Focus Group:

- A really strong social justice thread, from immigrant issues, LGBT, etc. It seems like the heart and direction of this place is going that way, from the Bible studies to service opportunities. Tammy's a leader who's also a learner.
- We're still finding our way on what kinds of things people want to do, trial and error; there's a willingness to risk to discover things.
- That Tammy can stay here a long time. Or, if she can't, that someone else with the same openness and welcoming heart... she's just perfect for this place. Great connector,, great personality for this work. Danger of that: can't let the leader be the

sole attraction – organization needs to survive and thrive regardless of who’s in charge. Institutional memory is a challenge – it’s pretty short-term with student turnover. Student leadership is critical to building a sustainable culture/organization. Delicate balance between students and director providing leadership.

- Mentor relationships for future leaders. Loose position descriptions for student leader roles.

From University Faculty/Staff Focus Group:

- Building and nurturing faith in action. Serve as bridges between church and secular communities. Portraying faithfulness in non-confrontational ways. Making connections locally and globally, too. Never gauged by quantity, but by quality of experiences – first: are you being faithful to your mission? “With God’s help... humble excellence.” Do what we do well, with God’s help. The last bastion of Protestant ecumenism on campus. Teach people to love and care and serve – without the fundamentalism of other ministries on campus. Could be a place of interfaith dialogue and welcome, too.

From Area Clergy Focus Group or Clergy Phone Interviews:

- Strong and vibrant presence on campus. An extension of our ministries. I like the “working together” attitude that Tammy brings. A place where young people can wrestle with questions of faith safely, a place where they can encounter Jesus. A place of familiarity, reflective of the place they grew up. A church presence based on how God is present, gracious and merciful, in Jesus Christ. Develop a desire to have life-long engagement.

From Adults in Their 20’s and 30’s Focus Group:

- That it would grow and continue to find ways to serve in the community – to cultivate empathy and compassion. Make an impact on real needs.

From Staff/Board Members:

- Expand even more – with something to extend to the area churches’ 20’s and 30’s. Establish support to enable continued growth. Lots of challenges ahead for many of the Lutheran campus ministry.

3) What are some examples of things Crossroads is doing well, with regard to its “core mission”?

- Outside of a couple conversations with a student, no real acquaintance with Crossroads. Some facilities improvements, that’s about all. Tammy has visited our church a couple of times and shared some stories – nice to have that personal touch.

- Lunch program is really good. We don't really have a clear picture of all that goes on (even as Bethlehem members). But that relationship is much better than it used to be, thanks to Tammy!
- The kitchen thing (Lunch for a Buck) is new, and it sounds great. Taking the ministry to the congregations through church visits – that's better than it used to be.
- "Cookie" connection – fun way to engage students. Lunch program – a great way to connect with people we might not otherwise see. Grateful for the RIC designation. Campus Kitchen program.
- Lunch for a Buck, WoW, several Bible studies throughout the week – opportunities to learn about the faith practices of the Church.
- There's usually one person at least who is prepared to pounce on someone who comes in – pounce in a good way – to make sure they're welcomed and feel at home. I like our band, and that it's an inclusive thing to those who want to participate. It's been a good tool in our visiting churches, too. It's a good band as well, good quality.
- Meal for a buck – great idea. My wife and I are going to be serving at some time in the next couple weeks – a great way of connecting with students. The pastor is doing a terrific job of welcoming – a gift for hospitality – it's just easy to be with her.
- Dollar dinner is really great. No one gets pushed, no pressure, just welcome and hey, we're glad you're here.
- Wednesday night worship is a huge piece. The dollar lunches offer great opportunities. And the various studies that they put on, like five different studies throughout the week. Pastor Tammy came in when things were really bare bones, and she's built a program that's well rooted and moving forward. I hear really cool things.
- The worship band fest – specifically intended to gather all the campus ministries under a single roof just to worship, setting differences aside. The growth in the sense of community – great relationships being formed, people united. And lots of service – Week of Work, for one thing – a good emphasis to have, serving outside ourselves.
- Not that I'm aware of. I'm not sure many of our members (Christ the King), either, have a clear sense of all that's going on.
- Pr. Tammy's a really good spiritual advisor. And meal for a buck has really grown.
- Lunch for a buck. I'm here every week. Homemade food, and a chance to see friends that otherwise I might not be able to see.

- Bible studies that are student-led – for the most part they are good.

From Students Focus Group:

- Bulletproof Faith study group. It's organic – students grow at their own pace and willingness – nothing's forced.
- Fan of us “putting ourselves out there” on tabling, and the whole cookie tactic.
- Faithful to the Great Commission – without shoving things down people's throats. Relationship-based, not afraid to get our hands dirty, getting into areas that some faith groups wouldn't enter. Undeniable that this is what Jesus would do. There's a level of humility to what we do.
- We're good at adapting to changing conditions, people coming and going, shifting schedules,, etc.

From University Faculty/Staff Focus Group:

- Hospitality. Inclusive and respectful. Always present on campus – love the cookies – buck for lunch, tough questions – everything says “welcome” and nothing says “you're not right for us, stay away.” Facility is available for lots of uses, another sign of welcome.
- Students know that this is a place that's welcoming and affirming (LGBT and others). A place of God that's going to embrace them.

From Area Clergy Focus Group or Clergy Phone Interviews:

- Welcoming. Campus Kitchen program, and other connections to campus life. Offering things that students are interested in. Connecting with the synods' (SE and SW) churches. Good relationships with congregations – that's where we need to be. Good use of the facility – available for use by others in the community. Maintaining a welcome place, where people can hang out – good hospitality. Developing student leadership and a sense of ownership in programming (eg. Week of Work)

From Staff/Board Members:

- The students do it. It's not the board, but the students that make this place succeed. No one forces them to do anything, but they're open and welcoming and they make things happen. The Board pays the bills and keeps the doors open – but the students provide the energy.

4) Are there aspects of this ministry about which its leaders and/or participants are particularly *passionate*?

- Don't know that much about it, other than sharing Christ with students.

- Relationships with the students – showing that they’re cared for. Tammy has a focused, concentrated approach to connecting with students.
- Pr. Tammy is just so passionate about kids – she’s just a warm person, an attraction for the kids. Not intimidating, thoroughly loving the kids, loving her work. Such a welcoming spirit and personality.
- Matt and Josie are doing some pretty meaningful things with Bible study, though I’m not sure about the particulars. Not sure where they are theologically, but they’re striving for relevance and doing it with energy.
- Outreach – Christian service in a variety of forms.
- Community – and service, a personal priority that’s still a work in progress for us. Once it was our goal to do something once a month.
- The whole church needs to be more welcoming – less insistent on fitting into our mold – regardless of their circumstances. Pr. Tammy is so good at that, and I’m sure that gets translated through the office, the others that work there, and so on. She creates that environment, but it comes directly from her.
- Pr. Tammy’s really passionate about developing leaders in this ministry. She cultivates participants into leadership roles really well. There’s a really strong structure now as a result.
- Pastor Tammy has a real heart for ministry. So welcoming; open arms toward everyone.
- People to simply love each other, even if they have different viewpoints, or different *anything*.
- I don’t know.
- The students that come in seem to really get connected – we just need more of them. Christian service opportunities seem to be a draw.

From Area Clergy Focus Group or Clergy Phone Interviews:

- Servant attitude. Embracing opportunities to make a difference, and to shape difference-makers. Empathy for those who have questions.

From Staff/Board Members:

- Welcoming and open to anyone – no matter who you are, you’ll be accepted for who you are.

5) What about Crossroads' ministry or programming needs improving? Are there new programs or ministries you would like to see?

- Don't know enough to be able to judge on that.
- Not sure. Don't have a strong enough acquaintance with things.
- I really don't know. I'm not familiar with all aspects of what goes on.
- They're working on the kitchen idea. Not entirely adequate facilities – reorganization? More facilities availability to community. Need more parking.
- Plan for strong continuity beyond each graduation – cultivating new leaders who are able to “step up” as former leaders move on.
- More casual hang out, friends events. Movie nights, etc. – up to the student board to make that happen.
- Not that I can think of. Appreciate the flexibility of building access, that an event can be thrown together quickly. Quick to give permission, if it's needed at all. And the residents are a great part of the ministry, too, for connecting with students in general.
- Gaining momentum on the path it's on – just keep moving forward with the same powerful stride it has now.
- Greater variety in the worship service, maybe? So that it's more fresh and new, week to week.
- More effective publicity of things. That's not an easy thing. People don't listen or read or pay attention. Does worship happen on Wednesday or Sunday now? I'm not sure. Maybe vary the programming more? Stick with what works and then expand from that? Does Pr. Tammy connect with graduating students in area high schools? Is that information even available?

From Students Focus Group:

- Until Jina was hired, Pr. Tammy must have been overwhelmed. Can't be pastor and still manage the organization and everything else by herself.
- More and better structured service events... we try to do this, but the challenges are many with so many students leaving on the weekend and so on.
- We could build a whole additional level of programming by targeting graduate students. Sometimes as we get older we're more willing to invest in things that

matter to us. Plus, there can be an awkward stage of life when we don't fit in with the kids OR the adults who have kids and houses. This place could offer activities that would make a home for us – a social outlet with a purpose.

- Church as an alternative to the hook-up and bar culture.

From University Faculty/Staff Focus Group:

- Important to resist the tendency to base “success” on numbers. Mentorships between older students (seminary students from the Cities? or non-students? (Community engagement office is there to support that kind of linkage). Make sure the building is open all the time (during the day). Staff with volunteers?
- Is there an opportunity of service and outreach to the university's employees?
- Fred Fritts' name still comes through on my caller id if I get a call – that needs to get changed!

From Adults in Their 20's and 30's Focus Group:

- Better communication to the surrounding churches – let us know what's going on. This may be the fault of the churches – do we hear what's being shared by Crossroads? Hard to say...

From Staff/Board Members:

- Logistics and operations and policies and procedures and management of the day to day “stuff” – filing, correspondence – all of it is improving with Jina on board -- we're working on it. Protecting Tammy from these things so Tammy can do what she's called to do.
- Establish TEAMS as well as the Board. Expand the structure of leaders to address key areas. (8 persons just isn't enough – and we can't look to the students for such things.)

6) What are the greatest challenges Crossroads faces? What concerns do you have about Crossroads' future?

- I'm concerned about it continuing – money is at the bottom of that, of course. And there's so much competition for students' attention and involvement. I'm guessing that CCM is static or growing, not shrinking.
- Finances. Cutbacks all the time, for a long time. Juggling act to keep things funded. Decentralized – less cohesiveness, more isolation, lack of funds from “above.” Undermines leadership development for the Church – long-term costs to be paid!

- Same thing all our churches face: everyone's busy, too many other things to do. Easy to be drawn to things that are more attractive – or more tempting.
- Capacity (especially financial) to keep at least a part-time pastor. Crucial to have a Tammy-type person in an on-going way. How do we ensure that she feels enough satisfaction to want to stay and provide the kind of continuity that the ministry needs? Helping the people in the pews (of area congregations) “get it” in terms of the ministry's importance – need better, stronger connections.
- Continued financial stability – but currently, things seem to be pretty good, barring any unexpected changes to funding. Continuity of leadership.
- Turnover of student leadership. Constantly needing to raise up new leaders, not always easy to do that. I would say money, except that it seems like God always provides... and the adult board is really great in taking care of us. Communications are a challenge, all the details.
- Inroads of technology and social ministry. Secularism. The weird transition for students from parents' church to a diverse world, and what that means for my faith.
- I imagine that economic challenges are the greatest – students aren't in the position to contribute significantly, and the Church is cutting back. I think that's going to continue to be a challenge, and continuing to make connections and build relationships with others. Tammy's recent thank you to the congregation was very well received.
- Every semester you have to start over, it seems like. Between students graduating and changing their schedules, it's hard to keep much consistency. Tammy keeps a mind for that, though, and she picks out future leaders knowing that there will be attrition.
- On-going up-hill battle of being “campus” ministry – countercultural to a university climate that's generally opposed to faith and church.
- Trying to remain up-to-date without losing the focus of ministry – keeping up with trends without losing its Christian and Lutheran identity. Maintain familiarity with home church (for those who have them) – church basement, Sunday night youth group meeting feeling. Church service is “relatively traditional” while also “relatively contemporary” in terms of its liturgical.
- Growing the numbers of students involved? Not sure... always need great leadership in place, and ask people to be involved.
- Timing things, competing interests, too many things for kids to do.

- The number of students that participate. Tests, jobs, other activities, all take time.

From University Faculty/Staff Focus Group:

- Funding. The ministry has great potential so long as there are resources available.
- Time (students’); social media distractions and the interpersonal isolation (and lack of sustained attention) that comes with it;
- No shared campus ministry effort or coordination – or even as neighbors.
- Does it make sense to sell Crossroads’ parking spaces to others when there’s such a shortage? How to accommodate drop-ins?
- Rent the rooms to the university for short-term stays as a source of additional revenue?
- Find common denominators with other groups to unite efforts and peoples

From Area Clergy Focus Group or Clergy Phone Interviews:

- How do you steward the resources you have, decide between the things you can and cannot do. Concern that the pastor will need to spend too much of her programming time on raising money instead. Dysfunctional relationship with LCM-M and its requirements versus a shrinking revenue base. Concern about burning Tammy out. “Adopt a Student”? Adopt a family? Mentorships?

From Adults in Their 20’s and 30’s Focus Group:

- A lot of kids in college just don’t want to go to church. They don’t feel like they have to – or they expect that this will be like the church they didn’t like to go to at home. Lutheran timidity about faith and faith-talk. Helping students understand that Crossroads has something very positive to offer.

From Staff/Board Members:

- I’m feeling less concerned – maybe even *unconcerned* – about visibility and the viability of the ministry right now. Things are much better than they used to be. Continue demonstrating value and credibility to the synod and others.
- Finding the right advocates in the synod, or more/greater congregational partners, is important – people who believe in what we do.

7) What challenges do the university, the surrounding neighborhood and the larger Mankato community face? What ideas do you have for how these challenges can be opportunities for Crossroads, in terms of Christian service?

- I assume there's plenty of opportunity – all kinds of people in spiritual need. The challenge is to create an environment of welcome and hospitality that students may be drawn to.
- Not familiar with any programs connecting community needs and Crossroads. Would be a good idea – wonderful – to reach out in that way. Crossroads-coordinated volunteers, partnering with another local organization would be exciting. (But students are so busy, too... could this be done?) Crossroads musical groups participating as music leaders at congregations would be a good connection, too.
- Not sure, as an out-of-town person.
- Not sure. Crossroads should be directed both ways, toward the university, toward the community. Might be healthy to adopt a cause.
- Bullying – attitudes in society, built on frustration, anxiety, misguided liberty.
- Community garden for fighting hunger; poverty and homelessness in Mankato.
- Guidance or encouragement about personal choices, such as substance abuse? Prevalence of alcohol abuse?
- I assume that Mankato has increasing crime, even violent crime; diversity; all these things are opportunities for demonstrating Christian love. And offering a place for worship – a place for making connections, being accepted – offering an enticing alternative.
- I know that there's a service day coming up. To raise up that awareness and expectation says to churches and other supporters says "we're here and we're servants of the Servant" – we aren't "takers" but "givers" too, and that attitude is well received by congregations.
- Campus Kitchen is a great opportunity to build even greater connection with the community – a pretty great thing, and a good way to connect with the larger community.
- Mankato is definitely a college town, we both know it has a reputation – Crossroads can be used as an example of how MSU can be more than just "party." Lift up the contrast, in positive ways – differentiate Crossroads as a good thing, an outreach force for good.
- So many people in Mankato seem to be perfectly happy to not have God or even a higher power or higher being in their lives. How do we play a role in addressing

that? And so many love their alcohol, love their substances... it's almost a way of life. How do we tackle that challenge?

- Increasing diversity – responding to opportunities represented by new growth in the community. Alternative to “conventional” church. Partner with a church on this?
- Christian service is rightly a priority – lots of opportunities through Crossroads and other agencies, too. (The Reach – homeless shelter for youth – started by LSS, maybe on its own now?)

From Students Focus Group:

- Are there other colleges in the community that we could be doing more to serve? Better outreach would be great – maybe export a Bible study over there.
- MSU is a college of the people – middle class, trying to get ahead, getting trained to earn a living. Good to keep that cultural reality in mind in all things. Hunger and homelessness can be a real issue, and we could be thinking of ways to at least be aware of these issues, learn about them, and maybe find ways to address them.

From Area Clergy Focus Group or Clergy Phone Interviews:

- Recent increase in crime – crisis support center? Elders in neighborhood – outreach or visits? Stephen Ministries? Drop-in daycare? College moms? Neighborhood association membership? A place for respectful dialogue over divisive issues – community issues? Student poverty concerns – food shelf for students?

From Adults in Their 20's and 30's Focus Group:

- Homelessness and poverty? College-poor?

8) What partnerships (with community agencies, area congregations, or others) currently exist? Are there partnerships that you feel should be explored or established?

- Don't know.
- Don't know.
- Don't know.
- None we're aware of.
- Campus Kitchen (formerly in Gage Towers), a non-profit organization that repackages and distributes food from restaurants and businesses.

- Officially a recognized student organization (RSO) of MSU, able to use university vehicles, apply for activity funding; interaction among other ministries (such as Newman Center).
- Not aware of any. Maybe Habitat? That would be a good one.
- There was a university prof or something who organized Habitat involvement.
- Partnering with local – and not so local – churches. Really a good thing. Keep building those relationships – deepen partnerships for mutual benefit.
- Campus Kitchen.
- Not aware.
- Don't know of any other than with the ELCA churches. Are there others?
- The LGBT Center

9) Is Crossroads staffed adequately to meet its needs and objectives? Is there a new staff position you'd like to see established, or a current position that should be adjusted?

- I assume Pastor Tammy is full time... not sure other than that.
- I don't know anything about staffing. I think Pastor Tammy is part-time, don't know the particulars.
- Tammy is very passionate and works a lot, but I'm not familiar with the details.
- They need more "Tammy time." Is she half time? She's terribly stretched; we hope that the new assistant is helping in that. And Tammy seems to be doing a good job of church relations, getting more help from our area congregations in terms of volunteer involvement and other kinds of support.
- I would say it is adequate. Jina's position is a good addition – helped in making Tammy's life more bearable or sane.
- It makes a very big difference to have an office person! And the residents really contribute quite a lot to the program.
- I think so at this point. Down the road maybe it could be expanded – is Tammy at the level of employment she wants to be at this time? Maybe she's 2/3.

- It's important to have someone there every day, throughout the day, just for presence and welcoming people. Staffing makes that difficult. Less than full time currently, I'm sure.
- Right now, yes. I like that there's an ordained pastor running the ship, and I love that there's so much student involvement, in that they're the faces that connect with other students. Down the road there may be a need for more staff, though, if this continues to grow.
- Based on what I know, I think it's staff the best that it can be... but it would be good if there could be someone there more often. People drop in looking for a pastor and have to come back – would be great to have a full time presence. I'm sure there are many times that things get crunched – all kinds of things that need to be done at once.
- Good question – I couldn't guess.
- I heard that there was a new office person... I guess I don't know if they have enough staff. I'd guess so.
- Pastor Tammy and Jina seem to be managing things okay – and students help when there's a need for that.

From Students Focus Group:

- Are our staff getting paid for all the hours they work? Or are they working beyond their pay?

From Staff/Board Members:

- Tammy could certainly fill 40 hours a week if we could afford it. Jina's hours are the first target for expansion, though. Will we need to pay a music person? The new treasurer?

10) How adequate are Crossroads' current facilities in meeting its current – and future – program needs? Are there particular deficiencies or challenges you've experienced?

- I believe they're adequate. No needs that have been conveyed to me, anyway.
- Many have been addressed. It seems to work -- would be nice to have a bigger place, with more room for students to live, but that opens a whole new can of worms. Kitchen improvements are in the works now, I think.
- I think they're adequate. Things have been addressed, and the place is reasonably well cared for.

- So far as we know, it's generally adequate. Need more parking, of course. Some realignment of the current usage is being discussed, we believe. Sanctuary is more than adequate. White stone walls are too cold, somehow.
- Assuming there's no big change in our mission, the facilities are adequate.
- Parking is a constant challenge. Making space for Campus Kitchen has been a challenge – but we're working through it with a plan. Sometimes we need more storage space. Residence area may need some updating.
- The times I've been there, it seemed like the property is pretty good.
- The facilities are adequate, and always open for ministry of all kinds.
- One of the most beautiful campus ministry facilities in Mankato – so much going for it, a wonderful facility.
- Parking is a definite challenge. Renting out limited parking to make budget is a bad trade-off – we need the spaces we have.
- They used to hold AA meetings here... not sure if they still do.
- It's beautiful – great location, nice spaces. I've heard there are improvements needed for the kitchen because it gets a lot of use.
- The parking's not very good.

From Students Focus Group:

- Worship space is fine, even awesome – but the original, former house has its challenges. Carving out public space is difficult – without it feeling like we're infringing on private space. Would be great to have a place to claim as “our own.”

From University Faculty/Staff Focus Group:

- No front door – poor exposure to the students.

From Area Clergy Focus Group or Clergy Phone Interviews:

- Great place, wonderful location – both to be celebrated. 25 years old, in need of a face lift.

From Staff/Board Members:

- Need for repairs, certainly. Kitchen remodeling needs to be done.

11) In what ways is Crossroads engaged in evangelism outreach – that is, inviting others to experience Christ through Crossroads and through participation in its ministries and programs? Are there ways you feel that invitation can be made more effectively?

- Don't know of any. Weekly services, during the week, but that's about all I know.
- They do something to invite students, I'm not sure what it is. Stuffing envelopes with information, or something, and Pastor Tammy speaks at student orientation; "Lunch for a Buck" seems effective. Not sure how many students come to worship, but the time has been adjusted to make it more convenient.
- Not aware.
- Tammy has her heart in that as important... I don't know the details.
- The "tough questions" program; worship band fests; Lunch for a Buck – we're serving, not being pushy, though.
- Regular participation in RSO events; tough questions program; it's nice to see how a variety of opinions, philosophies and beliefs are treated respectfully. I was first attracted by a poster on campus; there's a lot of word-of-mouth. Once people visit, they're very likely to return. Many students feel immediately like they're "at home."
- Tables in the student union; meals, etc.; more than anything, though, it's the person-to-person invitation that's most effective.
- Lots of people just stumble into it – stop by out of curiosity, check out this or that event. Table presence at the university; lunch for a buck is a big draw – gets them in the door. Root beer "kegger" once; there's lots of traffic. *Morning coffee drop-in?
- I remember what they used to do – not sure what's done now but I'm sure it requires multiple strategies, using social media, etc., as well as more conventional methods.
- Programs, being a presence on campus... maybe there's more that can be done before students even arrive on campus – if not directly to the students, perhaps to the parents?
- Tabling every Wednesday in the Student Union; Pastor Tammy participates in student orientation.

From Area Clergy Focus Group or Clergy Phone Interviews:

- One-on-one – student team, building relationships, invitational ministry. Good focus on making themselves known on campus. Students bringing students. Tammy

spends much time on campus, building a presence, especially through orientation events.

12) Do you feel that there are sufficient opportunities for Crossroads participants to grow in their discipleship or understanding of the Christian faith? In what ways are you participating in those opportunities?

- I hope that's what's going on there – growth in discipleship, learning about the faith. I don't know the particulars.
- I don't know that much about the programming here. There's a young couple running a Bible study – I think they still lead it.
- Not aware of any specifics.
- Bible study; one of the residents has a program or discussion of some kind.
- There are several programs: four Bible studies, open-door to Tammy's office for drop-ins, etc.
- I think I've heard that there are such things. I keep coming back to the hospitality thing – I'm sure the other flows out of that attitude to naturally grow. Tammy is gifted and able to connect with others who are gifted to provide such services.
- Student-led Bible studies, focused on different topics and offered at a variety of times to maximize participation.
- There are plenty. Students take the initiative to make things happen, based on their own interests.
- For me, I had a desire for more. More “guy” things, with more guy mentors/leaders? There's room for improvement there.
- Bible study and worship, that's all I know.
- Plenty of opportunities available.

From Area Clergy Focus Group or Clergy Phone Interviews:

- Empowering students to do Bible study on their own, building leadership for that to happen. Good social media use for awareness, inviting, creating opportunities. Cultivating skills in students. “not afraid to think crazy: couch worship”

- Pr. Tammy has an emphasis on thanking churches, not just asking for what's needed or wanted. She offers to preach – for free – as a way to thank congregations for their support.

13. Are there other comments you'd like to add?

- The base is very positive, very responsive to students. Better than it's been for 15 years – better relationships between the director and area congregations, their pastors, and the synod. Tammy helps the congregations feel like Crossroads is their ministry.
- Crossroads team – Tammy and student musicians – came to our church and made a good connection through worship leading and preaching. We get the newsletter, and were invited in for a meal in connection with the SP process.
- Pleased that Crossroads is here and doing well. Glad our son Paul could be a part of it, and glad that others have this available. The challenges of reaching out are significant.
- Need for structure and greater clarity in terms of committee tasks -- position descriptions? Not dead certain just what we're supposed to be doing.
- Make sure there is student involvement in decisions about every aspect of the ministry – to ensure that there's buy-in and participation.
- “If funding is drying up, you might want to put a little more effort into direct development work with congregations – ‘youth’ and ‘passing on faith’ are an easy sell here. Just the word ‘youth’ sells itself. Older people just love to support young people in their faith. There are a lot of people with a lot of money – get out there and make the pitch. Get some people together who have a passion for young people who can make the invitation.”
- I just think that Tammy has brought a new spark, a new interest, a new vitality to the ministry – some great changes from the top down and that things are on the right track, moving forward.
- Might be good to create a body of “congregational advocates” – even pastors who would visit other churches’ councils to speak on Crossroads’ behalf. Approach LCWs and other organizations within the church to solicit direct and on-going support.
- Involved in my own church now as a result of my involvement in Crossroads.

- I've felt a really deep connection with all the pastors I've known at Crossroads – and I have enduring relationships with many of the people I met there. An important part of my life.
- I'm a huge fan, and I'm so pleased at what I've seen done. It's meant so much to me personally and professionally, too.
- The ministry is doing what I think it needs to at this point – finding its way and seeking the right paths for moving ahead.
- I enjoyed participating in Crossroads quite a lot when I was a student – lots of great memories of different things we did as a community. It was meaningful, kept me connected and involved with Church – closeness, didn't feel like a stranger, very welcoming; it would be neat to have regular student connections (in addition to Pastor Tammy) between Crossroads and our congregations. Explain how Crossroads is making an impact, and how the congregations make a difference through support of the ministry.
- Wouldn't it be great to have a Crossroads reunion – an anniversary or some other event?
- I get asked questions at my church about what's going on at Crossroads, to justify our giving. Publications have improved as a way to be able to answer that question.
- What are we up against – competition-wise? As long as we're serving students, it's okay to go it alone if we have to – or cooperatively, too.

From Students Focus Group:

- Partnerships with other ministries would be good – focus on common purposes for a common good. Lots of opportunities for that kind of partnership.
- Get beyond the things that divide/separate us, look at the things we have in common.
- Find common ground with other faiths.
- Open cupboard for students who really need food.
- Pr. Tammy's taking the initiative in proposing "Bulletproof Faith" – reaching out to an oppressed group – an effort that's sent a huge message to the LGBT community. She came to us with an offer to help – that's *huge*.
- Regarding worship: Tammy's sermons are always relatable to college students, unlike some of the others we've heard.

- Non-traditional, experiential ways of expressing one's faith would be great. Meditation, walking, etc., all are creative ways of experiencing God in our lives. Sometimes: calmer, more reflective/contemplative is good.
- Students can be equipped and trained to share the Gospel – someone should come and disciple us on how that can be done without being offensive or in-your-face. Evangelizing in a modern age, in a modern way.
- Summer programming or special event for connecting during the months away. Speakers? Activities? Sponsor participation in continuing faith opportunities?
- We love the website! We have website pride! Grateful for the newsletter to remind us of activities!

From University Faculty/Staff Focus Group:

- Add technology access to increase attraction?
- A lot is expected of Pr. Tammy, but without the resources needed for what's desired. Concern on a personal level for her health and wellbeing. "How far can she be stretched, even apart from the funding question?"
- I'm excited – I think the best is yet to come.
- Leadership and vision are needed to see what this place will be. The potential is unlimited – but some real commitment and dedication are needed.
- Clarification about what's acceptable from the synod and other funders.
- If it's not the ELCA here at Mankato that's offering an open and sophisticated conversation about faith, who is it? After Crossroads, there's no one left.

From Adults in Their 20's and 30's Focus Group:

- How about doing a regular event for people like us? Nobody's doing this. Invite us all, married or single, a place to gather for people who care about church and who need a sense of community.

7. Recommendations

1. Recognize and continually celebrate the many good things being achieved at Crossroads Campus Ministry.

Why is this important?

In the face of anxious times and distressing challenges, it can be difficult to take time to remember that there's a great number of things for which to be grateful at Crossroads Campus Ministry. Among them:

- Growth in student participation
- Enthusiastic and committed board members
- Student leaders growing in their commitment and willingness to invest their gifts
- Partner congregation relationships that are growing deeper in their knowledge of and appreciation for what's being accomplished at Crossroads
- A remarkable campus pastor who has an exceptional instinct for leadership, and what needs to be done for Crossroads – and the students it serves – to succeed
- Generous individual, household and congregational donors
- A wonderful facility in a great location, a gift from the past which will continue to give long into the future
- Broad and deep support for an “all are welcome” ministry
- New opportunities to teach students and others about discipleship, and the rewards that come from serving others in Jesus' name
- A ministry that makes a real difference in the lives of real people, each and every day, by being a genuine presence of grace in the midst of an often uncaring world

This list could go on and on. The bottom line is that Crossroads *matters*. Crossroads *works!*

How do we get it done?

The so-called “attitude of gratitude” can truly change us, our perceptions, our choices. Crossroads is by no means a place of gloom or pervasive sadness – but perpetually naming our blessings and offering continual thanks will only bolster the warmth and grace that Crossroads is called to embody. Grace abounds where hearts are first softened with gratitude.

How these blessings are celebrated will be discussed further in Recommendation 9, below.

2. Achieve financial independence and long-term viability by establishing a sustained, focused and energetic fund development effort, and a permanent team to lead it, with thorough awareness and understanding of the principles of *donor confidence* as its foundation.

Why is this important?

“Important” may be an understatement: this issue is, by far, the most critical matter to be addressed in this report.

Crossroads Campus Ministry has a great deal of “positives” working in its favor today. Stakeholders are grateful for its existence, enthusiastic about its mission, thrilled about its revitalization and eager to see it grow. The ministry is blessed with a remarkably gifted leader, Pr. Tammy Dahlvang, who exhibits an extraordinary, intuitive sense for what needs to be done, and who is particularly suited for the relational nature of this calling.

At the same time, the celebration of the many measures of success that Crossroads enjoys is significantly tempered – particularly among its leaders and insiders – by worry and concern. Cuts in synodical and synod-related funding over the past years, and the grave threat of future cuts, create a Damoclean sword hanging over what would otherwise be a happy existence. “If it weren’t for money fears,” one interviewee said, “we’d be dancing in the streets over the progress we’ve made.”

The precariousness of Crossroads’ situation will remain, one assumes, so long as the ministry looks to other church structures for a significant portion of its financial resources. It would appear that Crossroads will only become all that it can be when it is financially independent – and such financial independence can only truly be achieved through a sustained and direct relationship with a broad base of individual and congregational donors who are confident that their contributions make a difference through Crossroads Campus Ministry.

Understanding the principles of donor confidence is essential to this intended outcome. Supporters are more likely to feel confident (and even enthusiastic!) about their giving, and will be more inclined to give at a higher level – that is, at a level closer to their actual capacity for giving – when these objectives are met:

- A. Donors have a clear understanding of the organization’s mission.
- B. They are inspired by a clear and compelling vision for the organization’s future.
- C. They recognize the vital ways in which the organization’s mission and vision are consistent with their own personal values, beliefs and desires.
- D. They are given abundant and compelling reasons to believe the organization is experiencing success in its mission – they are provided with clear indications of progress, forward momentum, growth and innovation, and they are given opportunities to celebrate such success.
- E. They have access to communications that both describe the various successes of the organization and tell stories about how each makes a difference for the community and individuals alike – connecting the dots between *principles* and *people*.

- F. They believe the organization is competently led, well managed, well staffed, and operated in a cost effective manner.
- G. They understand the costs of operating the organization and its programs in terms that relate to their own lives, budgets, and giving.
- H. They understand and accept without hesitation the connection between their individual giving and a positive impact on the lives of those they care about, or feel a desire to care for and support.
- I. They are appropriately invited to participate in the organization by a variety of means, including (but not limited to) financial giving.
- J. They are confident that the organization is intentional in the work of expanding its donor base by actively reaching out to prospective supporters/participants through creative outreach.
- K. They are regularly presented with “special” opportunities to support particular programs, in addition to annual giving.
- L. Their giving and other efforts are recognized and acknowledged gratefully, sincerely and in a timely fashion.

How do we get it done?

Carrying out the work of sustained fund development requires a focused and dedicated team of people who have a sincere love for Crossroads – or, at least, a shared passion for the ministry it accomplishes and the people it serves. Establishing a new team – or retooling one that already exists – will be the first step. Ideally, one or more of the persons involved will have some experience in institutional fund development work; if this isn’t the case, there are numerous books and other resources available for guidance in laying out objectives, goals, strategies and tactics for this important work. Contracting with a professional fundraising consultant is another option, of course, but there is at least some likelihood that a retired (or working!) development person in the Mankato area may be found who would be interested in participating in this effort.

Many of the recommendations that follow are related, some quite closely, to the concept of donor confidence and the principles listed above.

3. Brand/re-brand with an appropriate ministry emphasis and strong accompanying *mission slogan*.

Why is this important?

Companies and non-profit organizations understand well the importance of creating a concrete association of their brand with what they do – their mission, their purpose. The

goal is instant recognition: “Oh, you’re the people who...” or “Yes, I know exactly who you are: you (do or stand for)...” That’s the function of *branding*.¹

Currently, Crossroads has a slogan that reflects an important part of its identity, as copied here from its website banner tagline:



And truly, the “All Are Welcome!” emphasis is a cornerstone of what Crossroads is, and strives to be. At the same time, “Welcome” is only the beginning of the relationship between Crossroads and those it serves. “Welcome” invites, encourages, holds open the door... to the transformation of faith and love that one presumably encounters upon accepting that welcome.

Acceptance is immensely important, of course. But it’s a springboard into a new reality, a means to a greater end.

Several of those interviewed spoke quite emphatically about their desire to draw a more formal link between Crossroads and difference-making, for Christ’s sake. The biblical notion of faith, active in love, alive and about the business of re-creation seems to capture the idea. Gustavus Adolphus College has had remarkable response to their recent slogan: “MAKE YOUR LIFE **COUNT**” – a powerful and compelling invitation to make a difference through what one does and who one is. The ELCA has made abundant use of their recent and similarly compelling slogan “God’s Work – Our Hands.” The ideal slogan conveys a core message with as few words as possible. Think bumper-sticker, at-a-glance brevity and impact.

How do we get it done?

Students and Crossroads board members alike could participate in a discussion about a ministry emphasis and mission slogan.

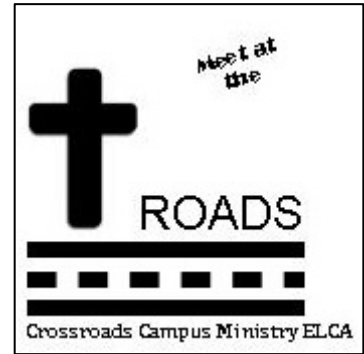
4. As part of the branding effort, develop and consistently apply a distinct “look & feel” communications template package, possibly including a new Crossroads logo.

Why is this important?

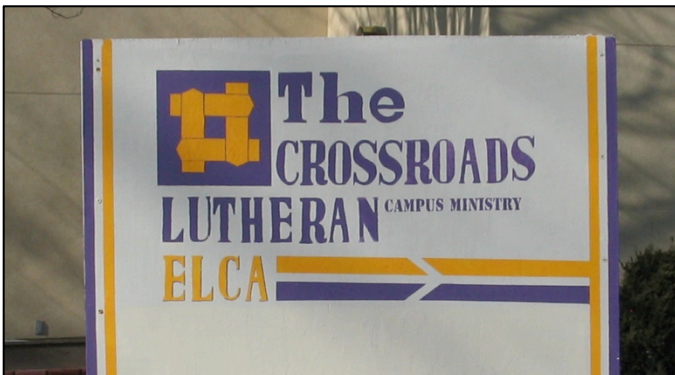
From Target and Apple to Coca Cola and UPS, the power of logos and the instant associations they bring is all around us. Choosing the right logo, and using it consistently, creates the brand recognition that holds so much value in our visually-oriented world.²

¹ For an overview of this topic, see “The Basics of Branding” at <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/77408>

Currently, Crossroads (or is it “the” Crossroads?) uses a variety of visual representations for itself. The website features the Georgia-bold-with-drop-shadow typeface, upper and lower cases (see above); newsletters and other communications from the office often include the more recently integrated rebus (at right). Meanwhile, the more historical logo remains on the “front” of the building, utilizing a green sans-serif typeface. Around the corner – yet another look, this time incorporating MSU’s colors and hand-painted lettering.



Benefits of brand recognition (particularly as a factor in fund development) depend on a disciplined application of carefully and intentionally developed visuals that say exactly what’s intended, each and every time they’re viewed.



How do we get it done?

With the MSU-Mankato visual arts department – including graphic arts – so near, the university seems like a great place to start in exploring possibilities for the development of

² See “25 Posts on Why a Good Logo is Essential” at <http://www.qualitylogoproducts.com/blog/25-posts-on-why-a-good-logo-is-essential/>

a new logo, *after*, that is, a discussion and determination of what message is intended to be conveyed. In addition to a logo, a style template for its use, and Crossroads' publications, could also be developed.

Whether a new logo is developed or Crossroads dedicates itself to consistent use of its existing logo, some explanation of the logo would be helpful for making the association with Crossroads and its mission.

5. Continue, and grow, Crossroads' strong connection with discipleship, Christian service and difference-making, including such service as a prominent component of its mission.

Why is this important?

In the same way that more typical congregations are called, gathered, and sent again into the world as disciples of Christ, eager to make a difference for others, so, too, is there a deep desire among many of those served by Crossroads to do the work of discipleship under the Crossroads banner. Serving side-by-side with others of the Crossroads community has been a point of pride and genuine satisfaction for students and members of area congregations alike. The popularity – and pervasive community memory – of last year's Week of Work, church visits, and the more recent addition of the Campus Kitchen program point to a fervent yearning to convert the experience of Crossroads making a difference for "me" into "my" making a difference for others.

In fact, several interview participants suggested that Christian service could very well become the *primary* function of Crossroads Campus Ministry, addressing the challenges of campus and community alike. Hunger, homelessness and other manifestations of poverty, substance abuse, experiences of the lack of equality and mutual respect, and countless other topics suggest that there is a world of opportunity available. Crossroads already serves as a training ground for lives of discipleship; embracing and proudly proclaiming that mission will only enhance its attraction for people who care about others.

How do we get it done?

Crossroads does reference service in its "In A Nutshell" belief summary, especially in its closing sentence:

1. We believe that every single person is a unique child of God, and is created in God's image.
2. We believe that God has come to us in Jesus Christ, who is both fully human and fully God, and who died so that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Our sins are forgiven, and Jesus is ALIVE!!!
3. We believe that the Holy Spirit has been given to us in baptism, and that the Spirit gives us motivation and energy to love our neighbors-which means standing up for them, helping them out when they need it, speaking well of them and generally treating other

people the way we want to be treated.

We believe that God has work for you to do, that God created you with skills and talents, and we want to help you grow and discover how God can use you in the world.

(This section of beliefs is also featured on the back page of the Spring, 2013 newsletter, with an additional paragraph regarding hopes for participants' growth.)

However, this could easily be distilled into a more concise mission statement and moved to the top of the Crossroads homepage as a more prominent declaration of "who we are and what we stand for." (It should be noted that being "loud and proud" of the Christian service priority, together with the training for lifelong service that goes with it, bolsters the enthusiasm of donors, too!)

6. Continue to cultivate relationships with other service-related organizations and ministries in Mankato.

Why is this important?

Compassion has many partners, and Crossroads is already benefiting from relationships with organizations in the business of caring for those on the margins. Such associations make a strong statement – and "grease the skids" for events, activities and other relationship-deepening opportunities for service. Cultivating such relationships emphasizes Crossroads' focus on service, while heightening its stature in the larger community.

How do we get it done?

Turning to the community with an attitude of "how can we help?" is a great way to start. Crossroads is encouraged to continue with the external interviews suggested for this study as a way to discover connections with benefits for all involved.

7. Seek and take advantage of opportunities to tell stories of success. (And please: Get personal.)

Why is this important?

In the world of difference-making, nothing is more important or compelling than a good story of a life changed in a positive way.

The Gospels are full of such stories: a sick woman cured, a dead man raised, common fisher-folk called to do something more. Powerful sermons often tell modern versions of those same stories: the lonely lifted up by the power of grace, the lowly transformed by forgiveness. People want to be on the team that's winning, and when the wins are won by the love of God at work through God's people, there's nothing more thrilling.

How do we get it done?

The good news in this is that Crossroads is already doing so many things so well. Its' ministry truly does make a difference at a critical time in students' lives, and each and every individual touched by Crossroads' ministry is a unique story worth sharing. Today, stories can be told in so many ways. Imagine a section of videos on Crossroads' website, where individuals tell their first-person accounts of how Crossroads had a positive and significant impact on their lives. Imagine stories being shared in every publication and e-news.

8. Expand to the scope of those served by Crossroads' programming to include ministry to "20s and 30s" in the Mankato community – and find ways to build mentor relationships through such programs.

Why is this important?

Conversations with persons in their 20's and 30's revealed a deep longing to be part of a community of similarly aged people, particularly, it seemed, among those without children. Local congregations do not seem to be adequately addressing this population, and their desire for fellowship and opportunities for spiritual and personal growth make this an excellent target for Crossroads programming. The involvement and availability of people at this stage in life – mostly out of school, but still "young enough" to relate well to college-aged students – could provide opportunities for truly beneficial connections and mentor relationships.

How do we get it done?

This could be as easy as a special monthly worship service or topical discussion group, to which younger adults from area congregations are invited. Linking MSU students with local church members for on-going conversations about life, faith, careers, etc., could enrich the lives of both groups, while attracting the interest and excitement of even more persons in both groups.

9. Work to preserve Crossroad's facility by continuing to address needed improvements and deferred maintenance items.

Why is this important?

Crossroads is blessed with a very fine facility, one that is widely appreciated and which, despite its limited parking, has much to offer for ministry. Proper and timely care for the building will ensure that it will continue to serve Crossroads for decades to come.

How do we get it done?

While generally in good repair and well cared for, there are numerous indications of past (and potentially current) water leaks, affecting interior and exterior finishes alike. Discolored, cracked and deteriorating acoustical ceiling tiles, wall board, stucco, and window frames, as well as numerous anecdotal references to the need for replacing portions of the building's roof, point to significant expenses ahead. Cost estimates for such repairs should be obtained and included in fund development targets for the years ahead.

10. Explore possibilities for drawing more attention to Crossroads' facility.

Why is this important?

While the Crossroads building is immediately adjacent to the MSU-Mankato campus, its entrances, unfortunately, do not face the campus directly. There is no "front door," per se; nor are there windows facing either the campus or the well-trafficked street separating the campus and Crossroads. As a result, any signs of life or activity within the Crossroads building are essentially lost on the campus community. This is, to some at least, an architectural design flaw that's not easily rectified.

How do we get it done?

In lieu of a transparent glass exposure to the campus, there are alternatives. Among the less expensive and more readily implemented of these is the colorful lawn pennant or sail (at right); other options could also be explored.



8. Next Steps

Where does Crossroads go from here? That was the question that motivated this study, and it's the question to which we must return at its conclusion. What should the next steps be?

In the estimation of the consultant, the answer – indicated by the ordering of the recommendations – is clear: *fundraising* in the first, best step. Fundraising, fund development, or just plain development is critical to Crossroads, particularly at this point in time. As its historical funding sources continue to decrease, it's a matter of real urgency that Crossroads asserts its own financial independence, and quickly.

The very good news is that Crossroads is doing SO MANY things well today.

In fundraising language, Crossroads has the benefit of *urgency*. Many supporters in congregations and households understand the importance of its work, and care about its success. Interviewees spoke with genuine concern about Crossroads' continued good work on behalf of young people, and with genuine pride that the Church is doing something vital to meet the spiritual needs of students, casting a grace-filled tether to those who otherwise might be adrift in a sea of new ideas, sudden liberty, and, to some extent at least, even hostility toward faith.

People *yearn* for Crossroads' success, for these students' sake. People want to know what they can do to help. Many non-profits today would love to reach the level of mission recognition and sense of urgency that Crossroads enjoys.

All of this puts Crossroads in a position of advantage, ironically. "You want to know what you can do to help?" Crossroads leaders might very well ask in response. "We're glad you asked, because we have a partnership idea we'd like to share with you."

Fundraising isn't about begging for help. It isn't about twisting arms or guiltting people into participating, either. Real fundraising is about connecting people who want to make a difference in the world with the opportunity to do so, for real, live people Jesus calls them to care about. Fundraising under such circumstances is well worth doing – everybody wins!

And it can be just plain fun, too. As well as abundantly rewarding.

It's time for Crossroads to leverage the excellent ministry that's being done, and the growing reputation it enjoys, into powerful and enduring relationships with those on whose behalf Crossroads exists and works.