

Crossroad NEWS

20TH ANNIVERSARY 1984-2004

August 2004

By Dr. David Schuringa, President



This year, Crossroad Bible Institute is 20 years old. The anniversary marks a special opportunity to look back and trace how CBI began and developed over these years by God's grace. There will be much for which to give thanks when we gather at the celebration events next month.

Twenty Year IMPACT

CBI was conceived in the womb of the church when a few members of a couple of churches in Grand Rapids, Michigan came to believe they were called to disciple prison inmates. Names like Arnoudse, de Vries and Vermeulen made up this group of founders. By "making disciples" they didn't mean simply leading people to Christ and moving on, but "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you," as Jesus explained in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:20). Real discipleship is a process that takes time.

So they began to meet with inmates on Sunday afternoons in the Kent County Jail with the plan to meet weekly with the *same* inmates so that they could truly *disciple* them by answering their spiritual questions, encouraging them and praying for them.

Soon a cloud descended upon the group's dream. They became frustrated and discouraged. Why? Because they discovered that

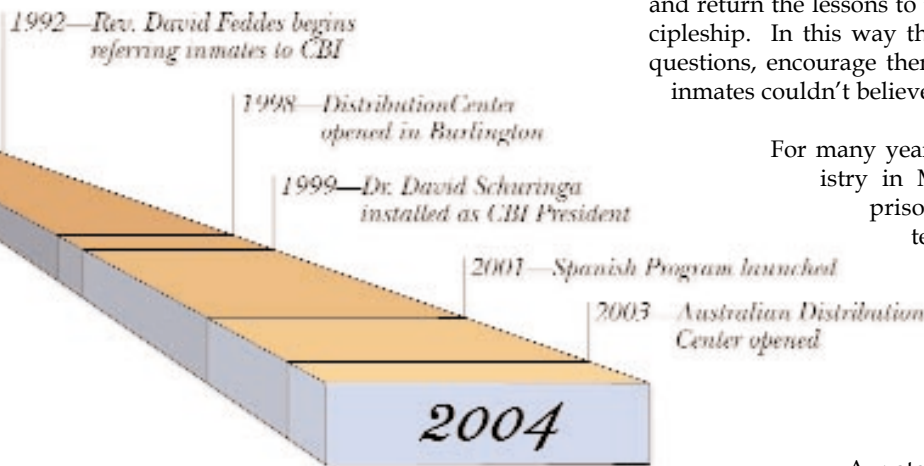
inmates in the jails and prisons are surprisingly mobile as they are frequently transferred. They learned that prisoners are moved around for various reasons: sentencing, security level changes, gang dilution, overcrowding, etc. When they are transferred, families or lawyers are not informed. Virtually without notice, they are gone. This creates havoc, of course, for a program that has the goal of in-depth, long-term discipleship.

Their problem gave way to a solution. There was one way they could develop and maintain a long-term discipleship relationship with inmates: through an intensive and personalized correspondence program. That way, the prisoners' studies could continue no matter how many times they would be transferred, and even upon release.

CBI's founders experimented by purchasing some Bible study lessons. They promised the inmates that if they would mail the completed lessons back to them, the "Instructors" would correct them and return the lessons to the inmates with personal letters of discipleship. In this way they could answer the inmates' spiritual questions, encourage them in the faith and pray for them. The inmates couldn't believe it! And CBI was born.

For many years, CBI was a small, but growing, ministry in Michigan as it spread from prison, in large measure by the inmates telling other inmates. Crossroad began to develop its own high-quality, prisoner-specific curriculum under the guidance of Dr. Ed Roels. More churches were soon needed for recruiting additional Instructors and generating financial support.

A watershed in CBI's history occurred in 1992 when the Rev. David Feddes, radio broadcaster for the Back to God Hour, heard about Crossroad Bible Institute at a Chicago summit meeting of prison ministries. He inquired about the possibility of referring his inmate respondents to CBI for discipleship. CBI agreed and, with Rev. Feddes' suggestion to seek out additional sources for students, the idea of referral affiliates was hatched that would not only catapult CBI to



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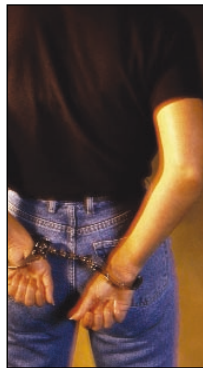
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AMBER ALERT, AGAIN By Dr. David Schuringa

In June, the body of a 12-year-old Ludington, Michigan girl, Sabrina Dalzell, was found after she had been kidnapped two days earlier. When I saw the Amber Alert on television, I felt sick.

It turns out that David Mears was charged with the crimes. Once again, an ex-offender returned to a life of crime upon release. Once again, an ex-offender graduated to a more severe crime. Mears had spent 10 years in prison for armed robbery. Now he had committed murder.



When I was in Iowa in April, an all too similar story was in the news. Having been missing since November, the body of 21-year-old, Dru Sjodin, was finally found. Alfonso Rodriguez had abducted her in a J.C. Penney parking lot while she was talking to her boyfriend on her cell phone. Rodriguez spent over 20 years behind bars. When he got out, it took him only six months to commit a crime. He was first incarcerated for rape, now he too is a murderer.

In February, I was on an extended preaching/speaking tour in Florida. In April 2004 *Crossroad News* I wrote about Joseph Smith's abduction of 11-year-old Carlie Brucia as she was crossing the parking lot of a car wash on her way home from a sleep-over. In spite of catching the abduction on a surveillance camera and the sending out of an Amber Alert, it did not prevent Carlie's body from turning up in the bushes of a church parking lot. Smith had previously spent two years in a Florida penitentiary for drug possession.

The nightmare is relentless. Lawmakers and citizens think they have the solution:

lock up criminals for longer periods of time. That may be what people want to hear, but it is not the answer. As these three horrible instances demonstrate, ex-offenders will likely return to a life of crime whether they've been incarcerated for 2, 10 or over 20 years. And they are likely to graduate to a more severe crime. That fact is that sitting in a prison cell, no matter for how long, does not somehow magically make someone better.

In each of these cases, I had wondered whether things could have turned out differently had the church gotten to them while they were still incarcerated. Would those three young ladies still be alive? We'll never know for sure but, statistically speaking, they most likely would be since most ex-offenders who were disciplined during incarceration never commit another crime again...ever.

Reagan-appointed Supreme Court Justice Anthony M. Kennedy challenged the American Bar Association to study the effectiveness of our incarceration practices. The Kennedy Commission reported that "offenders are unprepared for their release," and, as a result, "chances increase that they will commit future criminal acts." Justice Kennedy himself had "expressed a concern that prison conditions are degrading and likely to lead inmates to continue criminal activity when released." It is time, the commission maintains, "that we take a real interest in the many thousands of men and women we imprison every year."

Society is paying a price trying to forget the forgotten ones. They won't be forgotten, as every Amber Alert reminds us. Punishment that is just must be accompanied by rehabilitation that is effective. The only way to end this misery that sin brings is by getting inmates in touch with God and providing them with the reentry education they need to succeed on the outside.

CBI COLLEGE STUDENTS GRADUATE

CBI has four college students on staff who have recently graduated and who have made important contributions to the ministry. Three left this summer and will be missed. **Rachael Vander Werf** has been serving as a curriculum editor and as an assistant to the president. Having graduated from Reformed Bible College, she is moving to Escondido, California with her husband, Mark, where he (also an RBC graduate) has accepted a teaching position with Calvin Christian High School. Rachael will be serving as an Administrative Assistant at the Crossroads Christian Reformed Church in San Marcos. Calvin College graduate, **Tim Schuringa**, has been serving at CBI as an IT Technician and newsletter editor. He has accepted a position with *Teach for America* and, following orientation in Houston, Texas this summer, will begin teaching high school English this fall among the rural poor in the Mississippi Delta region. **Shane Lems**, an RBC graduate who has been editing curriculum, has moved his family to Escondido in order to study for the ministry at Westminster Seminary in California. Happily, one of our graduates is staying in the area. In fact, **Rachelle Scholma**, who graduated from Calvin College, has accepted a full-time position at CBI as the Special Events and Public Relations Coordinator. We pray for God's blessing as each begins a new chapter in his or her life.

Knowing God

A popular sermon by Dr. David Schuringa, "Knowing God," is now available in printed form for a donation of any size. Contact CBI today to order your copy.



GIVE-A-CAR Make A Difference

Touch the hearts of inmates across the nation by donating your running vehicle to CBI. You receive a large tax deduction! Simply deliver the vehicle to the CBI offices in Grandville, MI. Contact CBI today for more information!

DENTIST DRILLS FOR DISCIPLES *By Rachael Vander Werf*

When you think of prison ministry you probably think of large evangelistic events like those of Operation Starting Line or one-on-one mentoring with CBI Bible study lessons. Chances are you rarely think of pulling teeth. Dr. James Strikwerda of Holland, Michigan does. For almost nine years this dentist has been volunteering a few hours of his time each month at the Ottawa County Jail, ministering to inmates in a unique and practical way.

I recently had the opportunity to go to jail with Dr. Strikwerda and observe his dental expertise in action. A 36-foot motor home, owned by *Miles of Smiles*, serves as his dental office. Though completely different from his office at *Strikwerda Family Dentistry*, the motor home is outfitted with two dental chairs and the essential tools and equipment.

While at the jail, Dr. Strikwerda sees an average of ten inmates and is assisted with each patient by two dental hygienists. Each inmate, handcuffed and accompanied by a corrections officer, takes a seat in the dentist chair and is asked, "What seems to be the problem?" And the doctor begins his work—for the most part he deals with emergency dental work like tooth extractions. And since you all have been to the dentist, the details need not be explained.

But after the work is finished, Dr. Strikwerda won't let his patients walk out the door of the

"office" without sharing some Good News. He does so by spreading the word about CBI's discipleship courses. That day I heard him say to each inmate, "Here you go," and I watched him hand out a CBI enrollment form. "It's a really neat opportunity, take it back to your cell and read about it."

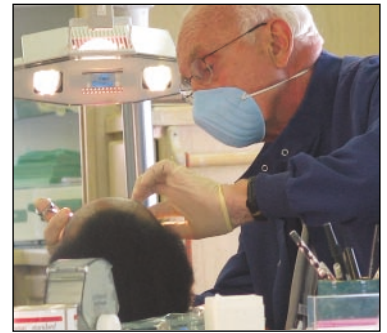
"IT'S A REALLY NEAT OPPORTUNITY..."

wheels." We wouldn't want to say that recruiting CBI students is like pulling teeth, but you get the idea.

With over 50 years of experience as a practicing dentist, Dr. Strikwerda has served hundreds of patients in prison. His dental ministry for the down-and-out is expanding as he shared with me his plans to travel to Nicaragua this summer. "Is that not what it means to know me?" declares the Lord" (Jer. 22:16).



Rachael Vander Werf has been serving as a Curriculum Editor, and as an Assistant to the President



CELEBRATE!

CBI's 20th Anniversary Events!



Featuring: Host Pastors: *Revs. Tom Groelsema & Carl Klompfen*, Worship Leader: *Dr. Greg Schuringa*, CBI Graduate: *Christy Bobo*, Operation Starting Line Platform Guests: *Don Grier & Leslie Kent*, Speakers: *The Back to God Hour's Rev. David Feddes* and CBI President, *Dr. David Schuringa*

Great Lakes Celebration
September 10, 2004 at 7:00 pm
First Christian Reformed Church,
Byron Center, Michigan

Great Plains Celebration
September 17, 2004 at 7:00 pm
New Life Reformed Church,
Sioux Center, Iowa

Mark your calendars now, and plan to attend—discount lodging available!

Go to www.crossroadbibleinstitute.org/celebration.htm for the most current Anniversary Celebration information

IN REMEMBRANCE

Gifts "In Memory Of" and "In Honor Of" are appropriate and meaningful ways to remember a special person in your life and to support the ministry of Crossroad Bible Institute.

IN MEMORY OF:

MARVIN ALTENA
Marian Altena

FRED ANEMA
Jean De Jong

NELVIN VAN ESSEN
Martin & Lorrene Breems

MARINUS VAN HOFWEGAN
Dick & Cora Prins

WILBUR ROOSE
Ruth Huyser
Mrs. Cornelius Roose
Dick & Anna De Weerd
Roose Quartet
Lawrence & Helen Roose
Scott & Cindy Van Tasell
Paul & Marge Vos
Bernie & Cobie Spoelstra
John & Bertha Brouwer
Herman & Anna Mae
Van Mersbergen
Earl & Marcia Van Gorp

JENNIE KALVER
Eleanor Dykema

HAROLD (CHET) DYKEMA
Eleanor Dykema

WILLEM POLS
Eleanor Dykema

STUART KRIKKE
Eleanor Dykema

MR. & MRS. CLARENCE DE VRIES
Joe & Mary Bosma

LEONARD R. DAHLEM
Catherine Dahlem

JOHANNA GEERS
George & Margaret Edema, Sr.

BEN BANGEN
Gerry Bangen

HELEN VAN DYKE
Gilbert Van Dyke

IN HONOR OF:

DOUG VANDER WALL
& **HELEN VER MEULEN**
Marriage
Anonymous

JOHN LANGELAND
In lieu of gift
Theresa Sobczak

BERT & DENA JOLING
65th Wedding Anniversary
Dave & Karen Van Vuren

DOROTHY BAKKER
90th Birthday
Kevin & Alicia Sluis & children

LOUIS BOMMELJE
Father's Day
Daniel & Jennifer Bommelje

CBI GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES A
GENEROUS GIFT FROM THE ESTATE OF
THERESA JANSMA

Continued from page 1

a national and international ministry, but also set Crossroad apart as a premier example of networking in the body of Christ.

For the next few years, Rev. Feddes helped recruit Instructors in Michigan for the growing ministry. The first Instructors outside Michigan were recruited in 1993 in California by Robert Den Dulk and Rev. Tim Spykstra who were also in attendance at the Chicago summit meeting. In 1997, Rev. Feddes spearheaded efforts for the first training seminars in Chicagoland, Iowa and Montana. The radio pastor was also instrumental in assisting CBI in the opening of a Distribution Center in Burlington, Ontario in 1998.

By 1998, national referral affiliates like RBC Ministries, Key-Life Network, Prison Fellowship, Baker Book House and Words of Hope had come on board. With 2,800 students, it appeared that God was about to unleash a movement of some significance. The Board of Directors, chaired by Henry Bouma, began the search for a full-time president to lead the ministry. I sensed God's call, accepted the offer and was installed into office in July of 1999.

Indeed, the last five years have seen more growth and expansion than anyone could have predicted or imagined. In 2000, the student body surpassed 10,000. The Spanish program was launched in 2001. The number of students exploded to over 20,000 in 2002. A Distribution Center was opened in Australia in 2003.

Partnering with additional referral affiliates like Focus on the Family, Zondervan Corporation, Truth for Life, Hawthorne Prison Ministry, Operation Starting Line, Project Angel Tree and many more, CBI has

also grown significantly by the referrals of hundreds of prison chaplains and the inmates themselves who recruit a third of the student body. This year, the number of students at Crossroad is on a pace to

**...EVERY
INMATE
RECEIVES
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CARE...**

exceed 30,000 in some 55 countries as 4,000 Instructors faithfully correct the lessons and compose the letters of discipleship. Notably, every inmate still receives the same first class care as when Crossroad began in 1984.

As we review the last 20 years we see so clearly God's hand. As a grassroots movement, CBI has witnessed the Holy Spirit moving like a prairie fire igniting the hearts of both inmates and church members alike. When we reflect on how it all began, where God has led, the impact on thousands upon thousands of lives, we can only conclude that God's light has shone brightly upon Crossroad Bible Institute as it has equipped the church to reach prisoners everywhere with God's truth and God's love.



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