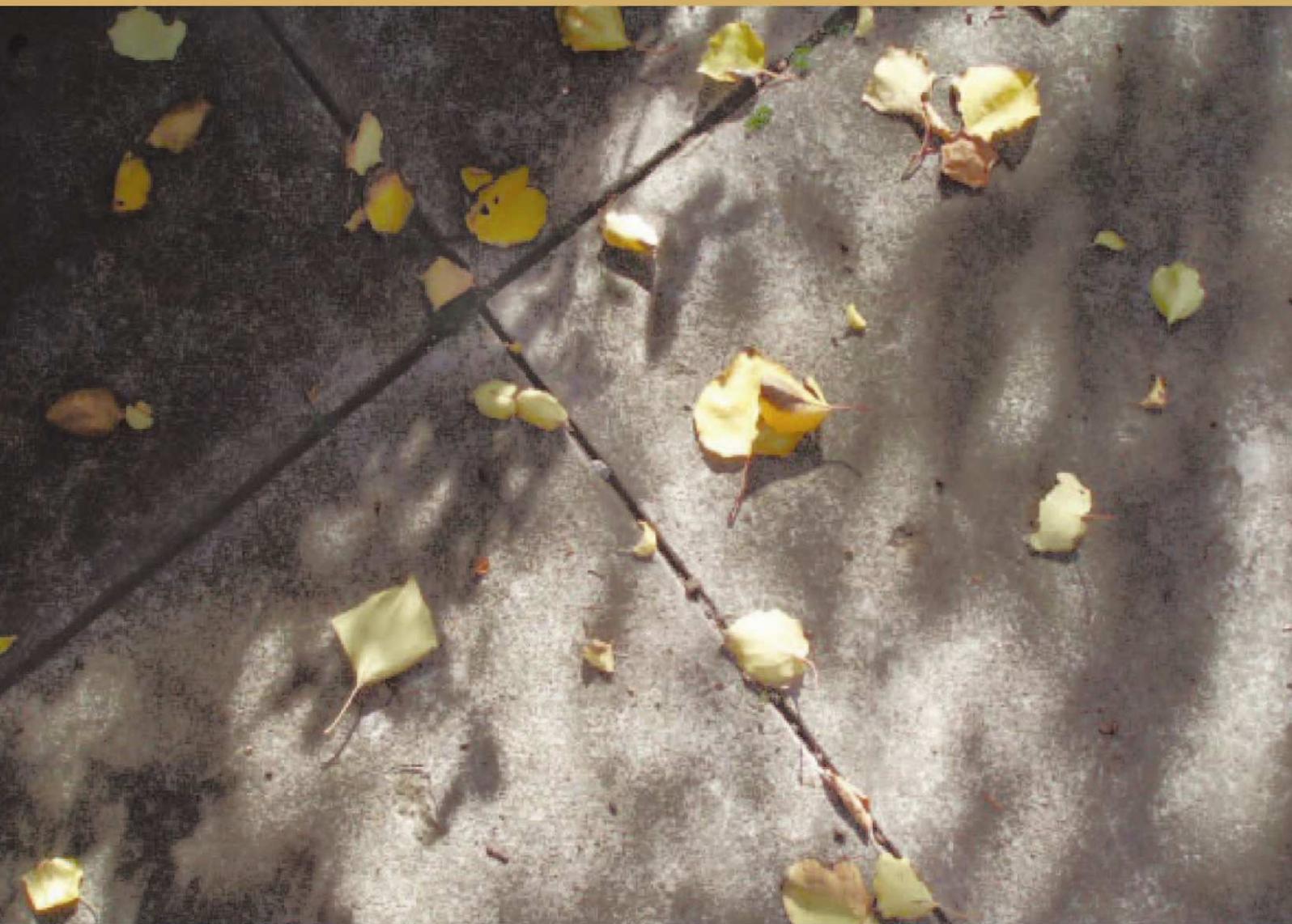


IN, BUT NOT OF THE WORLD:

**A REPORT ON ISSUES TO STRENGTHEN THE FAITH
AND VOCATION OF UNITINGCARE CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICERS, BOARDS AND AGENCIES**



**FOR UNITINGCARE VICTORIA AND TASMANIA
COMMISSION FOR MISSION
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA**

2008

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John Bottomley asserts his moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

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The project has also been warmly supported by Revd. Raoul Spackman-Williams, Director of UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania in the Commission for Mission.

The project would not have been possible without the honesty and courage of the ten Chief Executive Officers who volunteered to be interviewed. Their generous commitment of time and openness made each interview rewarding and inspiring, and confirmed the importance of this study.

I trust that the report will encourage greater confidence in UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania that the faith and vocation of UnitingCare Chief Executive Officers, Boards and agencies can be significantly strengthened, especially if UCVT and the wider Church are able to build upon the integrity, openness and professionalism evidenced in this study.

John Bottomley
Director, Creative Ministries Network
November 2007.

FOREWORD

Our Uniting Church community service organisations, some of which began more than a century ago, are grounded in the faithful response of ordinary and extraordinary people to others who were suffering around them.

Over time these immediate responses became more organised and planned and developed their own organisational structures standing alongside the church out of which they evolved. This gave rise to increasingly larger institutions and significant government funding for such work. Along with government funding, regulation and control has also been increasing rapidly over recent years while at the same time government has progressively expected more from service agencies for every dollar contributed by government.

Clearly this has brought about a considerably different context to the one in which many of our agencies began.

In response to this changed context the UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania network in 2003 began asking again “Who are we? What are our defining stories?” It certainly was not the first time this area of the church’s work has been reviewed but now there was a new sense of urgency. The response was to ground our work once again in the faith of the church in Jesus Christ and establish a framework to guide that work. Now late in 2007 the second version of that framework is about to be finalized.

The church and its community service agencies have changed enormously over the years. These days most of the people working with our agencies do not attend church regularly but have a past connection of some significance or an affinity for what they understand the church stands for. In looking at emerging directions for the next few years one key area for training or support identified by agency chief executive officers related to leadership in faith-based organisations. The request represented a most significant development in the journey of the network.

This ground-breaking piece of work undertaken by John Bottomley is the first step in this regard. It allows the voices of people interviewed to be heard as they should. Here is evidenced the claim and searching of faith to varying degrees but faith or trust present in openness and integrity. There are the evident tensions of being *in but not of the world*. This sharing of stories represents a wonderful gift to us. And it is only the beginning!

Raoul Spackman-Williams
Director
UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This vocational and faith exploration survey of ten Victorian UnitingCare Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) was carried out for the Commission for Mission (CFM) to better understand how CEOs provide leadership to their faith-based agencies within the context of Australia's industrial society. Five CEOs were based in Melbourne agencies and five in regional and rural Victoria. The report locates the issues facing CEOs in the ongoing conflict between God's call to the Church to be partners with Christ in building God's desired kingdom, and the desires of worldly powers to build their own empires. To reflect more fully on this tension, the report seeks to study questions of vocation and faith from both sociological and theological perspectives.

The report explores how the culture of modernity has shaped the professional and business acumen of UC CEOs at the same time as this culture's hostility to Christian faith has become problematic for the vocation ('calling') of UC agencies and the faith formation of UC CEOs.

The CEOs' share a common experience of faith formation in the sphere of family, home and Church, while often later experiences of struggle deepened these CEOs' faith. The faith formulations they received during adolescence into adulthood often seemed flawed and not grounded enough for sustaining their engagement in the public world of economics and politics, injustice and poverty.

A series of pen portraits portrays CEOs' leadership vision and practice solidly rooted in their professional training and previous work experience, while the social networks necessary to sustain faith development are often informal, disconnected from their work, and for several CEOs, almost non-existent. The social structure of their faith reflects the historical shape of faith formation for the modern world. While professional knowledge has a privileged status in modernity, faith was relegated to the sphere of personal belief.

If privatised faith meant the Church's historic response to disadvantage was often blind to the entrenched structural causes of injustice and oppression, the engagement with suffering people by Church programs and missions and their attention to God's call to justice and mercy ensured there was always debate within the Church around its role in reinforcing or transforming social structures and prevailing ideologies. This is an important heritage for several agencies, according to their CEOs.

All CEOs noted the growth in agency service provision over time, reportedly due to increased government funding. Both government and Church saw the growth of services as a sign of progress. The priority of material/business concerns over 'spiritual' matters in the emerging welfare industry may contribute to the fact that half the CEOs said staff members were the key factor in shaping their agency's direction. Faith related factors were also important for future agency direction for six CEOs. These faith factors were organisational, client-related, and staff-related.

CEOs thought their Boards would identify similar faith factors in their understanding of their governance of a faith-based agency. CEOs identified the biggest challenges to maintaining the faith-base of agencies in three areas - in the current political and economic environment, in the structures of the Church, and in nurturing and maintaining faithful leadership of agencies. The report suggests that addressing the

issues of Church and faith leadership is critical to how Boards and their agencies address the political and economic environment.

Six CEOs said their main reason for applying to be CEO reflected their commitment to the agency's mission and its core values, or being connected to UCA networks. The other main reason reflected the person's belief in their professional competency to do the job. The report then discusses issues in integrating CEOs' professional competency with a commitment to the Church's core values and mission.

The report contains seventeen proposals for supporting CEOs, Boards and UCVT to develop and provide responses of prayer, worship, faith education, and integrative reflection so that UC agencies are better equipped with an informed faith. These CEOs lay claim to a faith that lives with integrity in the brokenness and joy of the world, and which knows its strength to resist forces of oppression and evil rests in God's eternal call and promise of mercy and justice.

INTRODUCTION

The Commission for Mission (CFM) commissioned this vocational and faith exploration survey of ten Victorian UnitingCare Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) because it wanted to better understand how they provide leadership to their faith-based agencies in facing today's challenges. This report locates the issues facing agencies and their leaders in the ongoing conflict between God's call to the Church to be partners with Christ in building God's desired kingdom, and the desires of worldly powers to build their own empires.

The powers that shape our modern industrial society deeply have become deeply entrenched in Australia since colonization by the British. At the same time, the Church's faithfulness to God through its welfare/community services represents something of a counter-voice and an alternative vision for society to that voiced by the forces of modernity.

The report's vocational and faith reflections are an attempt to place CEOs' beliefs, values and attitudes in the broader narrative of the Church's struggle to be faithful to its calling under God within the context of Australia's industrial society. The report's reflections then give rise to proposals for a range of faith development and training programs that may be provided by UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania (UCVT) and the Synod to support CEOs' leadership.

The conflict between the desires of worldly powers and God's desire for humankind also shapes the perspectives that inform this study. The description of Church agencies as 'faith-based' in the literature reviewed for this survey derives chiefly from the social sciences and sociology rather than theology.¹ Talking about the Church as 'faith-based' appears to provide a way of talking about the material reality of the Church as organisation, without talking about God! This 'secularised' view of the phenomenon of faith "constitutes a basic part of what it means to be modern" (Schultz, 2006, p.171). As a constituent part of modernity secularisation is the belief that as knowledge expands through rational scientific enquiry, belief in the supernatural to provide explanation or meaning of even 'religious' behaviour becomes less relevant.

So this project also seeks to study questions of vocation and faith in theological perspective, because theology attempts to talk about the interiority of people's faith and doubt as well as their observable behaviour. Theology can have a language for the truths that people of faith can witness to, yet not prove empirically.

¹ See articles in the bibliography such as Ebaugh, Helen Rose. Chafetz, Janet S. Pipes, Paula F. 2006. 'Where's the faith in faith-based organizations? Measures and correlates of religiosity in faith-base social service coalitions'. *Social Forces* 84 (4) (June), Ebaugh, Helen Rose. Chafetz, Janet Saltzman. Pipes, Paula F. 2005. 'Faith-based social service organizations and government funding: data from a national survey'. *Social Science Quarterly* 86 (2) (June), Hiemstra John L. 2002. 'Government relations with faith-based social agencies in Alberta'. *Journal of Church and State* 44 (1) (Winter), and Melville, Rose. McDonald, Catherine. 2006. 'Faith-based organisations and contemporary welfare'. *Australian journal of Social Issues* 41 (1) (Autumn).

This report reveals the integrity the ten UnitingCare (UC) CEOs bring to their work. At the same time, their personal faith and doubts and the faith story of their agencies and Boards are often tested by the challenges that inevitably confront them in a society where injustice and disadvantage are entrenched.

THE SURVEY

The questionnaire was designed by the Creative Ministries Network, in consultation with the Executive Director of the Commission for Mission and the UCVT Director. Two CEOs were asked to pilot the survey, and the questionnaire was adopted without further modification. Then the remaining 34 Victorian UC CEOs received an on-line letter from the UCVT Director asking for volunteers for the research. Seven CEOs volunteered and one was asked to participate to achieve a nominal target of ten interviews. Nine interviews were completed in face-to-face meetings, and one was conducted by telephone.

Five CEOs' agencies were based in Melbourne (Community Options, *Connections*, UnitingCare Harrison Community Services, Prahran Mission, and Wesley Mission) and five in regional and rural Victoria (Concern, Cutting Edge, Kilmany UnitingCare, Remote Family Services, and Wimmera UC). Six of those interviewed were women, and four men, aged between 35 and 66 years with an average age of 52.6 years. Those interviewed averaged 6.2 years as CEO in their current position, with a range from one year to 16 year's service.

Seven CEOs said they belonged to the UCA, two belonged to the Lutheran Church, and one CEO had no denominational membership.

CEOs' FAITH FORMATION IN THE CULTURE OF MODERNITY

Christian faith in the Australian context is shaped by the culture of modernity, the culture which is the seed bed for modern industrial societies of the western world. The culture of modernity was highly critical of religion and increasingly secular in its assumption that by the power of scientific reason humans could conquer nature and enjoy happiness and health as if heaven was on earth. The human self was thought of as autonomous from the limits of particular times and places, and free of divine providence (Harvey, 1999, pp. vii-7).

This report shows how the culture of modernity has shaped the professional and business acumen of UC CEOs at the same time as this culture's hostility to Christian faith has become problematic for the vocation ('calling') of UC agencies and the faith formation of UC CEOs.

Faith formation in the home and Church

The formative influences on CEOs' Christian faith came in the first instance from home and Church. These influences were conveyed through significant relationships – by parents, through growing up in the Church, and by specific individuals.

Six CEOs mentioned the influence of parents and home as formative influences on their faith.

I am a pastor's daughter. My mother was a role model of a female leader.²

My grandfather and his father were both ministers and Presidents of Conference.

Six CEOs also said that growing up in the Church was formative for their faith. Three attended a Church school, one emphasised the importance of Church youth groups and camps, another studied in a seminary, and one recalled the influence of a University chaplain.

Attending an Anglican girls' school had an enormous impact, especially as we explored the role of women in the church.

As a child, I just felt I had to go to Church. I lived in poor circumstances, and I never understood what the tug of Church was, but I always went! Then as an adult, I was an elder for many years.

The CEOs' common experience of faith formation in the sphere of family, home and Church is not accidental. Rather, it reflects the place to which faith was assigned by the forces of 19th century Australian industrial development, particularly the separation of work and residence. This separation is rooted in the 1880s resurgence of the sentimental cult of 'Home' - especially for the middle-class - which historian Graeme Davison described as the soul's defence against the competitive industrial environment and imagined moral pollution of the inner city. (Davison, 1978, p.137) The separation of the worlds of work and home, which so well served the needs of industrial expansion in western society, was not only accepted as given by the developing form of the suburban Church, it also accepted industrial society's belief

² All quotes in italics are direct quotes from the CEOs' interviews.

that the home and family should be the Church's primary focus of concern. The experience of the ten CEOs 100 years later shows how enduring this narrow focus of Church life has been.

Faith formation through struggle

Other influences on CEOs' relationship to the Christian faith came from particular experiences of struggle. Some of their accounts of significant developments in their faith often occurred while they were CEOs.

One CEO was disappointed the Synod did not seem to have specific activities to support staff in their faith journey, so its operations then seemed like any other business or community organisation. Two CEOs struggled against the narrow understanding of faith in the Church revealed by the debates about sexuality over recent years, and the failure of the Synod to understand that its agencies are a mission of the Church. One CEO learned about her leadership ability through some struggles and opportunities she experienced while a boarder at Methodist Ladies College. Another CEO discovered his agency budget was in serious deficit after commencing as CEO.

Underlying these five CEOs' struggles is something of the Church's ambivalent relationship to modernity, especially modernity's separation of the 'material' from the 'spiritual' realities. While the first CEO's struggle points to the Church's captivity to a modern organisational form from the business world, the other comments reveal the Church's rejection of the 'material'. The Church happily separated itself from the perceived evil of the material world's sensuality and sexuality, and often kept a distance from the perceived corrupting influence of politics and money. This attitude is highlighted further by the following CEOs' experience:

Soon after I became involved with this agency, I told the elders and ministers where I worship about some of my experiences here and the needs to be met. Their eyes glazed over, they withdrew from me and didn't provide any support. I became disillusioned with them, and stopped attending worship. At the same time, things began falling into place for the agency, and me, and this experience became the core of my faith.

This comment also highlights how these experiences of struggle deepened these CEOs' faith. What they appear to have discovered is that the faith formulations they received during adolescence into adulthood were often flawed and not grounded enough for sustaining their engagement in the public world of economics and politics, injustice and poverty. For one CEO who left Church after her youth, working for her agency has been very important in renewing her faith.

Since I worked here, I have reconnected with the local congregation, and this has been a big influence on my life.

The split between 'material' and 'spiritual' realities may also underpin the experiences of two more CEOs - one whose faith was tested by a marriage breakdown and divorce after he decided to commit his energy to the issues of fighting economic injustice and poverty, the other whose faith connections were lost in the social and political ferment of early 70s excitement. The latter CEO says,

I am perhaps agnostic on my good days.

This CEO's insight into his journey away from the Church and faith is congruent with the journey of most, if not all those interviewed, in that all have at some point become disillusioned with the shallow cultural foundation of faith in the modern world.

Two CEOs also reflected on the impetus to refashion and renew their faith from their personal experiences of life's struggles and illness.

Faith has been deepened by the struggles of my own life, through loss and celebration, and grappling with how to give expression to what is important.

I had been critically ill, and found a personal link to spirituality in these times. Then I was involved as a godparent to a child in a UCA baptism. The minister at that time was very humanitarian, and this was very important to me.

The cultural foundation of western society's relegation of faith to a 'spiritual' world is brought out by the experiences of two CEOs whose worldviews have been shaped by living in traditional cultures.

It helped me work out where I was in the world – especially the linkages between traditional Aboriginal ceremony and Christian ceremony. The Dreaming stories link with the Bible. The birth of our 6-year-old led me closer to the Church also. She attends a Catholic school.

I grew up in remote New Guinea with my siblings and I the only white children in the region.

There is a paradox in these accounts of CEOs' relationship to Christian faith. Almost all testify to being nurtured in the bosom of the Church and through the love of Christian parents, yet in their interviews most CEOs also said their faith had been tested, or had at some point been diminished because of experiences with the Church. In different ways, the experiences of 'loss and celebration' that emerge from each CEO's life struggles hold a seed of faith that has disengaged them from the prevailing beliefs in contemporary society. This may also be true for the doubting faith of the one CEO who is 'probably agnostic'.

The result of the paradox of personal faith being both nurtured and wounded in the Church may be that the profound questions of doubt and faith are firmly embedded in these CEOs hearts and souls and animate their leadership, while at the same time their insights into faith and doubt are considerably hidden from view in the life of the Church. As a result, the cultural meaning of faith in modern society remains largely uncontested. It severely inhibits the development of a community of faith across the UC community services sector because CEOs' relative silence about their faith perpetuates the historic separation of the worlds of work and faith.

These struggles of CEOs to form faith adequate to the challenges of contemporary living reveal another dimension of the constraints on faith imposed by modernity's worldview. Many CEOs suggested the faith of their childhood was transformed by later struggles in life. Perhaps this transformation meant their faith was more integrated with their experience, so that the spheres of 'spirit' and 'material' reality which 19th century industrial development had separated became more congruent. The separation of spheres was also accompanied by the sex-role allocation of symbolic roles. The traditional opposition between the worlds of home/spirit and

material/work rested on the allocation of symbolic roles within the family and the work enterprise. “The wife and mother, as Ruler of the Home, conventionally represented those natural, non-pecuniary values which were the natural antidote to her husband’s soul-destroying commercialism.” (Davison, 1978, p.139)

But for all the six women interviewed for this study, faith is not confined to the home. In fact, one said her work renewed her faith. However, several of these women said that powers within the Church had silenced (or attempted to silence) their faith voice, thus perpetuating modernity’s belief that work and faith, the material and spiritual worlds, must be kept separate. Conversely, the three male CEOs whose faith was part of their work all had moved to the margins of the Church. It is as if faith that is integrated with work has no place in the so-called ‘spiritual’ reality of Church life.

Proposal one

Faith and vocational development programs may best address this paradox as they recognise the experience of CEOs as ‘wounded healers’ with deep insight into God’s healing and renewing grace, who at times of anxious silence in the Church are also the ‘walking wounded’. Such programs need to unfold gently, create space to acknowledge pain and anger towards the Church, and give value and acceptance to the insights of faith and doubt that CEOs articulate from their experience.

Professional and faith perspectives: pen portraits of competing worldviews in the formation of CEOs’ leadership vision and faith support

We will next consider two other historical forces that can be seen at work in the experiences forming CEOs’ leadership vision and practice for their faith-based agency, and their reflection on the social networks that support their faith.

CEO one

I want to be an inspirational leader because people have inspired me through my work in the Synod Youth unit, and then working in Korea and Sri Lanka I met some amazing people. I practice a servant-leadership style, which comes from valuing people and desiring to unlock their potential. My supervision of staff ends with the question, ‘How can I serve you better?’ My faith equips me to know the Church, and understand their pain and their language. It helps my work with congregations, especially connecting them to our ministry. Faith holds the call to justice that is vital to my work as CEO, but seems to have little to say about life-work balance! I talk most with my Chairperson and my partner about faith issues affecting my work as CEO. The UCA as a whole can be patronizing to CEO’s as they don’t really know what to do with us at times.

CEO two

My leadership vision is shaped by my sense of stewardship of the faith, sweat, and tears of others who built the agency. Stewarding is a respectful thing to do and is shaped by an Aboriginal vision of custodianship. The tone of my leadership is that we are transitory people, so those who came before and after us are important. I have a humanistic view of people as a resource, and a view of organisational life that is at heart relational. How I carry out my role is also shaped by the heritage of the Mission. My faith has created an awareness of the ethos or culture of the agency, and openness to what is the spirit of the place. Faith encourages me to pause and be able to put things in a broader context. Being meditative about organisational life

helps me listen and not rush. I talk most about faith issues affecting my work as CEO with friends with whom I have a history of being self-revealing.

CEO three

Values and faith have influenced my leadership and social role valorization has been an important influence. The focus on the broad inclusion of people with disabilities and the servant-leadership writing has been helpful. The Williamson Community Leadership Program was helpful in exposing me to a range of community leaders and their approaches. My faith informs everything I do, although I struggle with disciplining staff. As CEO I am conscious that I am modeling behaviour. It is an ongoing struggle to find people with whom I can talk about faith issues affecting my work as CEO. I had faith-based consultants to help me on some recent issues for our organisation, a staff member from the Christian faith with whom I talk, and our Pastoral Care Worker to some extent. My partner cops quite a lot! I find some of the rituals of Sunday worship are not well connected with my work as CEO.

CEO four

My goal was to give all I could to ensure that the organization ran efficiently and was able to keep up with rapid growth. This drive to provide the highest level of support to the organisation is a personal thing in all I do and stems from my youth. It was also important to me that staff were valued at a professional level. Ensuring the provision of best practice also fits with an expression of a shared commitment with staff to meet the needs of families in isolated areas in the most effective way. Working in a flexible delivery environment, innovation was a key component of my work. My faith is very important to me and supported me through the more difficult challenges when I felt I needed to provide leadership and stability within the organization. I spoke about faith issues affecting my work as CEO with my Board Chairperson, my clergy ministry team, Presbytery Minister and some CEO's at UCVT network meetings. Working at a national level to advocate for disadvantaged families and children has been a wonderful learning opportunity in this position.

CEO five

Being on the Ethics Committee at the Women's Hospital and joining the Board at MLC was valuable leadership experience. My predecessor also influenced me. He was very inspirational and challenging and was a role model for me by enacting his faith in his work. When we disagreed, he would challenge me in ways that drew on my faith to engage with him. My faith was vital to me through a time of crisis at work, along with pastoral support from a supportive minister that was life-giving. Faith informs my work on a daily basis, from trying always to enact our values of hope, compassion and justice with staff, to writing to the paper to raise issues. Faith is infused in me. I had senior management roles in other places, but this position has brought my whole self to the job. Previously my professional and spiritual selves were split off from each other. This integration is what makes the stress of the job OK in working long hours. My spiritual self is not diminished, and in that sense my work is a calling. I'm a Church member but I can't worship in my home congregation since the crisis at my work. I can talk most about faith issues with our agency minister, the minister who provided pastoral care for me in my time of crisis, and one of my staff who asks questions, and knows a lot about faith.

CEO six

My leadership is shaped by my concern for inequity facing the poor, oral health, Aboriginal health, and mental health. I've had some hard times, but I am now doing well and I see how hard it is for some people. My vision is also shaped by the

awareness our clients now are the adult kids of the clients we had 20 years ago, and that is wrong. My leadership practice is influenced by my involvement with Aboriginal people, and the committed core staff we have. I am very collaborative with other managers. I encourage their innovation and the development of leading practices out of their creativity. Faith drives my intention as CEO to start with the dignity of people, and so I am not a traditional manager. My faith conversation is mostly with my self. I don't talk about my faith so much, although the previous Presbytery minister was very supportive. I use the Internet to research issues.

CEO seven

The volunteers shaped my leadership vision. I wanted to make sure they were looked after because they had been through the trauma of my predecessor's illness. The clients also form my leadership because I find I am drawn to them and care for them. I can see some of my family's hardships in clients as they reflect part of my own journey. It is important to have empathy for people in crisis. I can't be a totally professional administrator. I need to have a human side, a hands-on approach. I get a hug every morning. Where else could you go to work and have this? I thank God every day for the work I can do here. My faith now helps me to remain calmer at work. I find calmness sitting in the church and then it comes with me during the day. Our minister is very good to talk with and a good support. I also talk with the pastoral care worker and Assistant Director about faith issues affecting my work. Our voluntary coordinators will also come and pray with me when I am feeling down. They sense it and are open and honest. We have morning prayer with the volunteers, and people can ask for prayer if feeling in need. Some volunteers will lead the prayer, or the pastoral care worker, or the coordinators.

CEO eight

I developed my leadership vision by watching other leaders, good and bad, and working out what they did that provided the results they achieved. I am not sure what the foundations are for my philosophy of life, but the framework for my work comes out of my action. While I am happy to think about deep metaphysical issues, I prefer to be drawn to act. I feel a dilemma as the face of the organisation because I am unsure at times about whether I connect close enough to UCA. I am equally uncertain about how to connect. It is important to project certainty and confidence in my public persona, and to retain the confidence of my Board, but this is in conflict with my need to explore doubt. My strong connections to the region are a valuable guide for my thinking about the response to local issues like the drought and economic development. I am passionate about these issues. I am also a logical person, and faith and logic don't always sit well together. So while I am a part of the local Uniting Church, I don't always feel comfortable.

CEO nine

At first I didn't have a vision for the agency because I was in a daze about how its affairs were in a mess, the negative attitudes of most of the staff, and the poverty and difficulties facing the clients. When I felt God had a vision for me to follow, things began to fall into place, and they continue to do so. It gives me a sense of confidence in taking on challenges when I sense that a course of action is what the Christ I follow wants to happen. I have a few good friends I talk about these things with, but generally I don't talk much about this. It is a lonely job at times, and I find it very hard to share this talk about faith and my work.

CEO ten

Several experiences have formed my vision of the place of faith in life and leadership. When my father died, the minister visited as a fellow Christian friend and this was very important. Then when our baby was born dead, a group of people through the congregation and the UCA School gave fantastic support. This faith informs my work as CEO. It affirms the importance of acting with integrity and understanding what it is and what it means, such as being fair and tough. Faith also is relevant to my deep commitment to other people, and to social justice. I talk about faith and my work as CEO with our agency minister, occasionally to a neighbouring minister, and a woman of my congregation who has good understanding.

Professional and faith perspectives: the blessing and curse of modernity's faith in science and technology and belief in individual autonomy

The ten CEOs bring a leadership vision and practice shaped by observation and adoption of good management practice, informed views of the human condition and organisational life, professional education and training, learning from other professional peers, business or government sector experience, and professional and faith insight into justice, ethics, empathy, and social inequality.

What also emerges in these pen portraits is that while their leadership vision and practice is solidly rooted in their professional training and previous work experience, the social networks necessary to sustain faith development are often informal, disconnected from their work, and for several CEOs, almost non-existent. Only a couple found their faith informed by the rituals of Sunday worship. The social structure of their faith appears quite vulnerable, a pattern that again reflects the historical shape of faith formation for the modern world.

The history of the relative power and influence of these two worldviews reflects the comparative privilege of the professional worldview in relation to faith in modern industrial society. The privileged status of professional knowledge in modernity has grown out of the belief in the power of science and technology to master nature, and so fuel society's material progress. The pursuit of material progress is based on the ideology that it would automatically lead to increased happiness for all. As support for these beliefs increased, the old order disappeared. "God had vanished: factories and steamships seemed to work just as well without Him." (Cannon, 1978, p.10)

This historical development may explain why these CEOs are so solidly grounded professionally with their leadership vision and practice and yet comparatively vulnerable and isolated with their faith support as the source of an alternative vision for human life.

The relegation of faith to the sphere of personal belief also served the maintenance of the social order. Faith located in the private sphere reinforced the prevailing belief in the autonomous individual. Faith was the personal refuge of individuals who were not strong enough to fashion their own lives and their own world. (Harvey, 1999, p.106) From the 19th century, the prevailing view of faith was to trust "in the individual's capacity to seek and secure his own well-being." (Davison, 1978, p.178) This individualism also contained a bitter judgement for those who could not attain the ideal. Poverty was regarded as a moral defect, the first step in modernity's long ideological history of 'blaming the victim'.

This social ideology was embedded in the Church's theology and ministry to the poor, with much 19th century Church welfare founded on the belief that helping the

poor escape from the bonds of poverty entailed conversion to Christ along with material aid. It was a belief that sustained the status quo by burying and forgetting the injustices done to the indigenous population, and which hid other systemic aspects of violence and injustice in the newly emerging society, such as the colony's brutal convict beginnings.

Because the development of Melbourne's churches was so closely associated with the ideology of growth, individualism, and the separation of the spiritual from the material world, the predominant Church response to the economic depression of 1889 was to declare the crisis was the result of one or another of various individual sins, such as greed, gambling, immorality, selfishness and forgetfulness of God. This theological worldview shaped much of the earliest Church's responses to poverty. It was a theology that fitted in with the prevailing cultural beliefs, even as it paradoxically declared its allegiance to God's heavenly kingdom and prayed for the world to be 'as it is in heaven'.

Today's society is founded on the historic forces that built the modern world. The Church today has inherited its place in the world significantly shaped by the same powers and beliefs. This report will now turn to the challenge facing CEOs as leaders of UC agencies that have a cultural inheritance as organisations formed by the forces that shaped Australian industrial society and also a faith inheritance as the Body of Christ.

Proposal two

The challenge for any UCVT leadership formation and development program is to better integrate the professional competencies evidenced in the CEO pen portraits with the faith-basis of the whole UCVT sector, not just individual CEOs and agencies. Such formation programs will be concerned with leaders 'hearts and minds' so that current and future leaders are enabled to know and confidently act on behalf of the mission of *UnitingCare*. The core values of leadership faith formation need to be embedded in a vision of Church as counter-community that integrates at the personal, agency and sector level the development of the core competencies of professional leadership.

AGENCIES: REINFORCING OR TRANSFORMING THE STATUS QUO?

An historic tension

The history of Church community services has grown out of the voluntary work predominantly carried out by Church women who took up the 'spiritual' task of caring for poor families in the community. This work was centered on home visiting to assist families in poverty, but the offer of material aid was secondary to their higher duty to bring God's Word to the poor.

The older Church welfare services represented in this survey could be seen as typical of Church responses to poverty at the end of the 19th century. They began with emergency relief and other practical support to individuals in physical poverty whose plight was often regarded as caused by individual sin. Some of the agencies that are now represented in *Connections* began by supporting women and saving babies on to good and righteous paths through pure philanthropy. In the 1890s, Wesley Mission began to provide support to people in need. They also advocated for better social systems and social justice through their clergy and leading public figures speaking publicly on social issues at their Pleasant Sunday Afternoons. Kilmany UnitingCare began as a Boys' Home helping disadvantaged boys receive 'a good up-bringing' and improved life chances through a working dairy farm. Agencies that began later such as Prahran Mission, UnitingCare Harrison Community Services and Concern had similar models of welfare service based on volunteers from local congregations helping those who were disadvantaged.

Agencies begun since 1980, such as Remote Family Services, Community Options, Cutting Edge, and Wimmera were more likely to commence with small professionally staffed services, and to have commenced with a Presbytery or Synod initiative. The increased reliance on professional staff rather than congregational volunteers began a developmental process of Church service delivery that relied more and more on knowledge shaped by the social sciences and professional techniques.

Typically, the first programs of agencies were new responses in a particular local context by people of faith to situations of disadvantage they saw around them. For some, there was also a public commitment to social justice and social and political reform. For others, reform was expressed more in moral terms. While the Church's historic response to disadvantage was often blind to the entrenched structural causes of injustice and oppression, these various local responses raised fragmented voices that questioned or challenged the status quo. The engagement with suffering people by Church programs and missions and their attention to God's call to justice and mercy has ensured there has always been debate within the Church around its role in reinforcing or transforming social structures and prevailing ideologies.

The founding legacy

Most CEOs identified a core spirit or vocation in their agency's beginning that has endured from the founding response of faith. Most thought their agency's present identity and purpose was still connected to its founding story or vision, though they saw the connection taking different forms over time.

Several CEOs saw this connection was maintained through their agency's organisational links to a congregation(s) or Presbytery.

Some said the connection was maintained through their focus on the same client group, such as children and families, youth, rural and regional needs, disadvantaged people, or people in poverty.

Two CEOs said the connection was maintained by building on the original culture of the agency – for one it was a culture of innovation, and for another, a commitment to social justice.

Two CEOs thought the connection was maintained by employing people of faith, such as a chaplain, or staff who see a link between their work and faith, or by “bringing the calling of senior staff into the recruitment process”.

The CEOs of the largest and the smallest agencies have perhaps the most distinctive sense of connection with their agency’s founding vision. Once a month Wesley Mission conducts an induction for new staff where the CEO and minister talk about Wesleyan traditions, especially their commitment to advocate for as well as provide service to clients, and about working for a church organisation. In welcoming staff of all faiths, the Mission requests them to respect the agency’s Christian tradition. The CEO observed the Wesleyan tradition of advocacy and service in the way staff work with clients, as well as in training opportunities the Mission provides for medical students. In contrast, Concern maintains a living connection with its founders, with 99% of their large and increasingly elderly volunteer workforce drawn from their founding UCA members.

There is currently no consensus among CEOs about the best way for agencies to draw strength and purpose from their heritage. This fragmentation of ideas may reflect modernity’s rhetorical ploy to “set the clarity of ‘reason’ over against the obfuscation of ‘tradition’.” (Harvey, 1999, p.116)

Proposal three

There has been little attention within the UCA as to how agencies may honour their founding charism or spirit, or why this may be considered important. It is in fact prophetic to engage in remembrance that resists the fiction that society is the product of autonomous and reasonable individuals. The task of remembrance has firm roots in Christ’s command at his Last Supper, and calls agencies to both individually and collectively strive to understand what they were created to be from God’s goodness. The work of leadership faith formation needs to engage this truth.

Agency growth as temptation, congregational decline as judgement: two challenges for faith from the myth of progress.

All CEOs said there has been growth in the services provided since each agency’s beginning, irrespective of when the agency was founded. Only Concern’s CEO thought this growth had not changed her agency from its beginning as a volunteer-staffed emergency relief service.

Most of the growth in service capacity came from increased government funding, beginning with the social welfare reforms of the 1970s, then the later outsourcing of government services. In assessing the impact of increased government funding, CEOs identified a number of positive benefits for their agencies, such as:

- Provided new opportunities for developing innovative programs.
- Broadened their agency’s profiles for service delivery.

- Increased professionalism of their work with the move to more paid staff.
- Increased professionalisation of management and agencies organisational life.

Less positive or negative factors from increased government funding identified by CEOs for their agencies were:

- A business environment has been created for agencies. Agencies have to compete for tendered projects, then ensure they break even on each government funded program.
- The regulatory environment for compliance with performance targets, data collection, service standards and guidelines has increased. The DHS-funded programs provided by Wesley Mission require the agency to comply with 390 different standards and guidelines.
- A perceived over-emphasis on risk management, with less opportunity to be creative.

Church agency growth was at first welcomed in the Church, with its impact on the faith-base of agencies largely unquestioned. The absence of reflection on how changes in government policy have affected the faith-base of agencies was keenly felt by one CEO, who said,

I have not seen any leadership and development of faith in CEOs, or for Boards. The broader church has not nurtured faith for leadership and governance roles.

This may be due in part to the decisions made at Church union to develop a decentralised system of community service agencies. The resulting central bureaucracy was too lean to develop any such function, even if the bureaucracy had thought it desirable.

But from the early 1970s, there was no such thought. The Church saw no fundamental reason to shift its historic relationship to the State or to the prevailing economic and social structures and ideologies. Prior to union, church planners had aligned the new Synod's Presbytery boundaries with the new regions established by Federal Labor in 1973. Funding flowing from the Federal Department of Urban and Regional Development and the Australian Assistance Plan fuelled a vision of a new direction in Australian politics based on strong national and regional governance. The early planning for the Church's community service structures was strongly committed to the community development ethos behind this political vision, so the regionalisation of the Church's community services governance saw the Church again adjusting its life to fit in with the prevailing political and social science ideologies.

The period from 1973 into the early years of the Victorian Cain government marked the first era of government-funded growth of Church and community-based services. The UCA's community services had grown considerably in Victoria with its decentralised model of governance complicit with the prevailing political commitment to a community development philosophy. Indeed the decentralised model was itself the outcome of the community development approach used by the consultants advising the Synod on how to restructure the pre-union denominational services in the new UCA Synod of Victoria. So it is not surprising that one CEO felt UnitingCare had lost any sense of being a spiritual body. Nor is it surprising that one CEO does not belong to a faith tradition, or that another was unsure about matters of faith and

his connection to the Church. Such comments witness to the impact on CEOs' leadership due to the marginalisation of faith in the community service sector by both Church and society over a period of decades.

During this period, the marginalisation of faith from modernist beliefs was also having significant impact on the traditional model of congregational ministry. By the end of the 1980s it was clear that the pre-union trend of ageing membership and declining attendances at congregational worship was firmly entrenched. Two CEOs in regional areas described different impacts on the faith-based nature of their agencies. One thought the general decline of the Church was eroding the agency's support base to the point where its future as a faith-based organisation was under threat. The second CEO was concerned about losing their large pool of Church volunteers through age and retirement.

If we replace them with paid staff, we will lose our faith base.

As agencies moved further into the public world of work, social policy and politics, their traditional congregational base grounded in the private world of home and personal morality, drifted further away from them, while simultaneously continuing its decline.

The impact of congregational decline on agencies has produced other tensions. One CEO noted there was a growing distance from the traditional congregation as it became less able to play a significant role in the agency. This sense of distance was heightened by the congregation's 'air of disregard' as the agency grew and expanded its services. Another CEO noted the development of strained relationships with different parts of the UCA.

Our staff has been vilified by UCA members in discussions about some program changes. They have lost faith and trust in the UCA.

As the nineties unfolded, the model of devolved community service governance came under review, caused in part by the election of first a State then a Federal government espousing a free-market political philosophy that measured every aspect of society in economic terms. One CEO noted how this political philosophy uses a 'prosperity gospel' with an individualistic faith discourse to justify its priority on economic growth and conservative social policy views.

The faith view of the world has been hijacked by this conservative reductionist view of the world, and the challenge for faith-based agencies is not to be hijacked into complicity with their agenda also.

A second CEO described how economic rationalist government has sought to constrain the Church's community services.

There is time pressure to perform more tasks for less money. The Federal Government also made us remove advocacy from our work or they won't fund us.

Another CEO echoed the concern that the intrusion of political correctness and the high level of bureaucratic scrutiny make her cautious about advocacy. This second era of government-funded growth of Church and community-based services increasingly adopted a business model for funding community services.

Perhaps more than any other factor, the government's imposition of business values and processes onto Church community services has influenced the Synod to strengthen its central community services bureaucracy and increase its resourcing of agencies capacity to satisfy the increased government machinery for contract compliance. According to one CEO, the economics of running the agency and operating on tight margins create pressure to conform to commercial standards.

So how do you remain true to your values? Justice costs money.

To summarise, the growth in agency service provision perpetuates the influence of many of the factors identified in the early days of the colony. Both government and Church saw the growth of services as a sign of progress. The increased reliance on social science theories and professional skills to shape service provision, along with the further privatisation of faith in agency life, remained largely unquestioned by Church theologians and leaders. The priority of material/business concerns over 'spiritual' matters in the emerging welfare industry was most often accepted as a fact of life.

Proposal four

However, there is also a commitment amongst most of these CEOs to keep the language and vision of faith alive. This is expressed variously by their lament, their questioning, and their yearning to counter the prevailing social and economic ethos. Perhaps the first step is for the CEOs to hear each other's voices and to recognise in them a common calling to a more collaborative commitment to community service in ways that distinctively transcend the fragmentation and division of the past.

What gives agencies direction today?

When asked what key factors give direction to your agency today, CEOs identified seven factors. Most identified at least two factors shaping their agency's direction (see table 1). Half of those interviewed said staff members were a key factor in shaping their agency's direction. Next most often mentioned were clients, then the UCVT mission statement /UCA values, and the faith/heritage basis of the agency. Only one CEO identified her agency Board as key to giving direction to her agency today.

No CEO acknowledged that God's call or mission gave the agency direction. However, six CEOs said one of the key factors giving direction to their agency was faith-related, either through the UCVT mission/UCA values, or the agency's faith heritage. One of these said the framework of 'the overall UCVT vision and mission, plus their role as a stakeholder group' provided direction. Others said:

Its umbrella gives direction. Their key documents guide my senior staff.

The influence of belonging to the Church.

Table 1: key factors giving direction to agencies today³.

CEO	Clients	UCVT mission/ UCA values	Govt	Board	Staff	Faith or heritage	Service philosophy
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
Total	4	3	2	1	5	3	1

Three CEOs said the direction provided by other faith related factors was experienced more relationally, saying:

Key senior staff have a Christian commitment, share the agency's vision, and have the integrity to work from a theological/philosophical point of view.

We are continuing to enact our heritage and ethos, strongly driven by values of hope, compassion, and justice.

For some staff it is having the opportunity to express the values of the UCA in their work.

Five CEOs said staff gave direction to the agency through their professionalism, their ability to listen to clients, understand their needs and determine how to respond, or their creative ideas. The primary staff contribution to agency direction was their professional knowledge and experience. In addition, one CEO said key senior staff with a Christian commitment and the integrity to work from a theological or philosophical point of view gave direction to the agency. Another said staff provide agency direction when they have the opportunity to express the values of the UCA in their work.

³ The numbers assigned to CEOs in the following tables do not correspond to the numbers assigned to CEOs in the pen portraits. Each table has randomly redistributed the number assigned to CEO responses to protect their anonymity.

Proposal five

CEOs' identification of the key factors giving direction to their agency appears to contradict the UCVT policy manual's advice that the agency Board through its Strategic Plan is to direct the organisation. The manual is also at pains to emphasise that directing the agency is not the responsibility of staff (see pp. 14-15). This contradiction highlights some critical challenges to be addressed. A CEO and Board faith development program on governance will need to reflect on the place of God's vocation for the agency, how faith is developed at Board and staff levels, and to discern whether professional knowledge and creativity are always congruent with the agency's vocation and faith.

What makes an agency faith-based?

CEOs identified three dimensions of faith when responding to an open-ended question about indicators that show their agency is faith-based. Several CEOs described indicators for their agency on more than one dimension.

Organisational faith indicators

Two CEOs said the main indicators of their agency's faith base were formal links with other Church organisations or Church officials. One described their links to a Presbytery, the local clergy, UCVT, and support from UCAF groups. The second noted their agency provides office space for the Presbytery and Presbytery minister, while it also links with congregations and has some partnerships with them.

A third CEO saw the agency name as a key indicator of the agency's faith base, along with the links to Churches by Board members and staff, while another suggested being interviewed for this project indicated how the agency was anchored in a theological vision with a particular view of human dignity. Another CEO said their written mission and vision statement indicated their faith base.

CEOs of two agencies employing a minister and a third employing a pastoral care worker saw that position as a visible indicator of the faith base of the agency,

Staff and faith indicators

One CEO where the agency employs a minister and another with a pastoral care worker said these positions reflected a commitment to develop the expression of staff members' faith through values in action. The pastoral care worker also inducts staff into UCVT and orients them to wider Uniting Church networks, and the minister focuses on inducting staff into the agency's heritage and faith ethos.

A small staff team at another agency met for regular devotional times. The agency emphasises holistic support to both staff and participants. Another CEO spoke of setting up sacred space for staff meetings so staff could look at their own spirituality and the importance of social justice.

Several CEOs said the way their staff worked with clients showed the agency's faith base – such as their commitment to addressing inequity, respect for the dignity of people, and working to help clients often for not much money compared with their market value. One CEO said the main indicator of the faith base of their agency is the belief and care of the volunteers for their clients.

Clients and faith indicators

Only one CEO said an indicator of their faith-base was a direct religious activity for clients. This agency has held worship services when a staff member or client died.

CEOs were then asked whether a range of activities gave expression to the faith-base of their agency on each of these three dimensions. Five activities were classified as organisational indicators of faith (see table 2).

Table 2: Organisational faith indicators x CEO

Organisational indicators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Mission statement expresses Christian values	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	10
Draw on BoU			■				■			■	3
Draw on UCVT foundations	■	■	■	■		■		■	■	■	8
Employ a minister, pastoral leader	■	■	■			■			■		5
Board shares faith at meetings				■		■	■	■	■	■	6

While each CEO said their agency has Christian values in their mission statement, the meaning attributed to this differed. For some it was ‘a key indicator’, ‘expressing core values’ that ‘hold everyone together’ and is ‘very important’. Two CEOs said the mission statement showed the agency’s relationship to the UCA. But one said there were difficulties because there was too much ‘God’ language, and another wondered who really owns the values, especially when they are not much different from many other organisations.

Eight CEOs said their agency draws on UCVT’s theological foundations as an expression of the faith base of the agency’s life and service. However, there was a sharp difference of degree in its use. One CEO said the document was closely aligned to what they do, but was not used much; another said it is not used in any overt way, and two said they found it hard to use the document because its theology was too abstract and didn’t relate to Boards. Three CEOs found the most value in the John 10:10 text, and one of these used the document as a reference for their Board. One CEO appreciated the document as an anchor point for the inevitable dilemmas of organizational life because it helped him organise his thinking by being anchored in these values. Another found it informed his decisions because in helping develop it, it has become part of him.

There was little evidence of agencies drawing on the Basis of Union⁴ for their life and service. Most CEOs said they had a copy on file, and knew its importance as a background document. Only three CEOs saw it in an overtly positive light, one saying it calls her agency into partnerships, uniting with others even if it is easier to

⁴ The Basis of Union is the document on which the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches established the Uniting Church in Australia in 1977. The document proclaims the UCA’s faith in Jesus Christ, its commitment to the mission and unity of the whole church, its portrayal of church order and of the ministry of every church member, and its conviction that Christ leads the church in the contemporary world.

do it on their own. Another said it underpinned all they do, and perhaps in a similar vein, the third CEO said it has a core idea that expresses what the agency 'is on about'.

The Basis of Union, the UCVT theological foundations, and agency mission statements are all faith statements derived from rational, logical discourse. CEO comments on their value are sharply divergent, with the major theme of criticism being the abstract and/or other-worldly language of these documents. This is a valid critique of a faith that claims to offer people 'life in its fullness', but in form and content is limited by its one-dimensional captivity to rational thought. It is a major challenge for the Church to liberate its theology and organisational planning from the abstract conceptual thinking of the modern world. There may be a need for Synod leaders and officials to acknowledge how exclusive and alienating these forms are for most people, before seeing what may be salvaged and usable.

Six CEOs said there was faith sharing discussion at Board meetings, such as an opening devotion, an opening reflection and prayer that relates to part of their work, a segment called 'faith in action' that is led by Board members on a voluntary basis and which engages the Board in discussion, and reflections at the end of each Board meeting. One CEO said faith discussion went on throughout Board meetings as members considered how God will provide for their clients' needs.

Proposal six

Given the absence of any reflection on the place of faith activities for Boards in the UCVT Governance Manual, it may be fruitful for UCVT to collate some of the faith reflection material developed by Boards as a resource for others, or to fund several agencies to develop this material cooperatively. There is a need to consolidate this material to provide a foundation for a discussion about the impact of such faith reflection on Boards' governance responsibilities.

One CEO with a lay chaplain said the position was critically important, having practical and symbolic value. Another CEO had established a position for a lay pastoral worker who contributed significantly to the agency's understanding of factors to be taken into account in making ethical decisions. Three agencies had ministers with diverse task descriptions developed for their specific contexts. In each of these five agencies, the position was new or had evolved significantly from earlier models. One CEO found employing chaplains didn't work because the chaplain persisted in blurring his role and not respecting their line management accountability.

Proposal seven

These comments reflect similar issues being raised by Principals of UCA Schools, and highlight the challenge for the Church to develop new models for ministers and lay chaplains/pastoral workers working in agencies.

Six activities were classified as staff indicators of faith (see table 3).

Table 3: Staff and faith indicators x CEO

Staff indicators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Service of volunteers	■		■	■	■		■	■	■	■	8
Inclusive of staff, irrespective of beliefs	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	9
Advocate for social justice	■	■	■	■		■	■		■	■	8
Serve disadvantaged people	■		■	■		■	■	■	■	■	8
Staff faith sharing		■	■	■	■	■		■	■		7
Integrating faith with professional practice		■		■		■	■		■	■	6

Eight CEOs saw the service given by volunteers as an expression of the faith embodied in their agency. Again, the meaning given to this varied. One CEO saw their volunteers maintained the agency’s links with church communities. For Concern, volunteering by Church members is the core of this agency, whereas two other agencies, UnitingCare Harrison Community Services and Wesley have a large number of community as well as Church volunteers, and so the motivation is community service as well as faith.

While the CEO of Concern thought their staff need to have a Christian ethos, eight CEOs felt being inclusive of all staff without regard to their beliefs could be an expression of the agency’s faith base. At least half of the CEOs were unequivocal about this, while a couple said they thought this was harder than it sounded, especially regarding staff who are secular or of no belief. These CEOs said this group felt inhibited in their behaviour or uncomfortable in a Church agency.

One CEO said advocating for social justice was good professional practice rather than an expression of faith while the volunteer-based agency Concern saw this as a Presbytery or Synod responsibility. Other CEOs strongly affirmed social justice as an expression of their agency’s faith, although there was quite a divergence about what social justice may mean. Two CEOs’ views of social justice incorporated a spiritual dimension.

We model to the community acceptance of people who are often on the margins. Staff model values of respect and attend to the spiritual needs of participants, particularly around end of life issues such as reconciliation.

We bring a holistic focus to human problems.

The remainder described faith-based social justice activities primarily in terms of current best practice social work or community development models, such as advocating equal access to services for disadvantaged families, improved service provision that is more responsive to identified needs, the use of social research and social policy advocacy, and government lobbying.

Eight CEOs said serving people who are disadvantaged was an expression of their agency's faith. Often this expression of faith was linked with advocacy for social justice, although Concern's CEO said it was their core commitment, and Wesley's CEO emphasised their commitment to 'the hard end' of serving people who are disadvantaged.

Three CEOs said formally organised faith sharing discussion among interested staff was an indicator of their agency's faith base, while four thought staff faith sharing discussion was mainly informal. One CEO noted that the number of partnerships the agency had with secular organisations prompted reflection within the agency on what was their distinctive contribution to the partnership.

Four agencies had made a direct attempt at integrating faith with professional knowledge and practice. One invited staff at induction to connect their professional practice to the agency's prophetic advocacy role; one used its newsletter to offer faith-based articles, and had a holistic perspective on people's needs; one CEO spoke regularly at staff days 'about why we're here', and at the fourth agency the previous Chairperson would visit and talk to staff about faith and what makes the agency different. The other comments from CEOs described a more informal process of faith being integrated into staff practice. Two CEOs said their agency did this implicitly – in one case through unlocking staff potential, and another said this process of integration was done subtly and focused on encouraging staff to integrate their professional expertise and experience with faith-based values. In similar vein, a CEO said the agency had developed a framework of walking with staff that is consistent with professional ethics. At one agency, the integration of faith with professional practice was an individual staff choice.

Proposal eight

The diversity of understanding within each indicator of staff faith may be a fruitful entry point into the provision of staff faith development. The following reflections are offered:

Volunteers UCVT or a funded project of cooperating agencies may gather liturgies that have been developed to recognise volunteers, and document existing faith-based training for volunteers as a first step in a strategy for faith and vocational support for volunteers.

Multi-faith staff The CEOs forum may discuss the employment and induction of staff from multi-faith backgrounds, and support and equal opportunity issues in providing faith and vocational opportunities to staff.

Social justice The diversity of models of social justice being drawn upon provides a fruitful starting point for a wider reflection on UCVT's view of social justice. This reflection may benefit by seeking to integrate models that acknowledge spiritual needs and resources in the pursuit of justice. There may also be much to gain by a more intentional reflection on biblical and theological insights into justice from the prophetic tradition, and the tradition dating from the gospels of non-violent resistance to oppression and militarism. It may be fruitful for UCVT to develop a training module as an outcome of this process of reflection.

Disadvantage Today's strong commitment to serving socially disadvantaged people may well be at the heart of the Church's historic involvement in community services, and for that reason alone may signify a need for critical faith reflection on what that means for the Church's relationship to the social order, to structures of power and belief in society, and Christ's desire that all may have life in its fullness.

Integrating faith with professional practice The six quite different and specific responses to how this activity is carried out may indicate both a sense that CEOs view it as important, and yet there is little shared understanding of what it means. Perhaps this reflects the isolation CEOs face when grappling with the Church's enduring challenge of 'being in the world, but not of the world'.

Two activities were classified as client indicators of faith (see table 4).

Table 4: Client and faith indicators x CEO

Client indicators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Staff share faith with clients											5
Hold services of worship											2

In the two agencies where the CEO acknowledged there might be faith-sharing discussion by staff with clients, it seemed that this is done informally. In other agencies, staff were encouraged to refer faith conversations to a minister/pastoral worker, either a minister on staff or from an associated congregation or appropriate religious community. Three CEOs were adamant staff should not cross the boundary of faith sharing with clients. One said the agency has a specific policy – 'we don't preach to clients!' Another agreed that it's not part of their role, and the third said they do not support a proselytising view of their work as a Church agency.

What is clear is that advice by professional is taken-for-granted knowledge in all agencies, while faith's wisdom is sometimes feared, or referred to 'experts', or kept at the margins of relations with clients. The relative merits of professional and faith discourse in UC agencies seems to reflect their relative merits as perceived by the broader society, paradoxically undermining the claim in the UCVT theological foundation that its' agencies fulfill Christ's desire for people to receive Christ's gift 'of life in its abundance'.

Only two agencies hold services of worship on a regular basis. One CEO said the services were really important, having been most powerful at significant moments of celebration (Easter and Christmas) and at times of staff and client deaths. A minister at the second agency held memorial services for some clients and staff. A number of agencies had other links with UCA congregational worship as visiting worship leaders/speakers or special events. One CEO said that some workplaces in the agency have reflection times, but it depends on management of the different sites, commenting:

Some are uncomfortable with 'God' and feel challenged about how to do it.

As noted previously, the relatively minor place given to worship in UC agencies reflects the historic split in industrial society between public and private life, with the 'spiritual' world confined to home and private morality. The Church's acceptance of this belief has left its agencies often deeply interdependent with society's major dimensions – the forces governing the public 'material' world of work and politics. If worship is the place where the Church is primarily shaped by an encounter with God,

then the absence of worship in the life of agencies must eventually leave agencies at risk of being disconnected to their founding vocation under God. (D. Murphy, 2001, p.3/10)

Proposal nine

It may be helpful for UCVT to document agency's experience of worship in their mission, while providing training for CEOs, senior managers, or staff who may be encouraged to explore the development of agency-based worship.

DEVELOPING FAITH IN GOD'S SOVEREIGN GOVERNANCE TO SHAPE AGENCY BOARDS' GOVERNANCE.

Can the Church rely on technical governance competencies as indicators of faith?

The shift from Councils of Management to Boards in 2002 reflected a concern in the Synod about the lack of governance accountability for UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania agencies. However, these constitutional changes weakened the connection many agencies had with congregations, changing the Church Council's relationship with an agency from that of 'sponsoring body' to 'affiliated council'. The changes also increased the power of the Commission for Mission through UCVT to have governance oversight of agencies. As one CEO observed of this new model,

The governance reporting framework has no faith-based appraisal process from UCVT.

Three CEOs believed their Boards would point to general organisational faith indicators to indicate their governance of a faith-based agency, such as the agency's connection to UCVT, to congregations, other UCA organisations, and the employment of a chaplain. Conversely, one CEO said his Board struggled with what it meant to govern a faith-based agency, in part because they could not understand how the UCA works!

Three CEOs thought their Boards would say their Strategic Plan was a specific organisational faith indicator of their governance of a faith-based agency. The Plan may show the agency's core values, provide a process that 'removes the veil of secrecy on operational decisions', or provides an evaluation framework for assessing outcomes against the agency's social justice philosophy.

One CEO said the Board's leadership of the agency showed its faith-base.

Only one CEO said the Board would talk in meetings about how their agency was being Church at a time the traditional form of Church is declining.

We would talk about joining Word and Deed, and the growing importance of being Word also – not 'just deed'.

Another CEO emphasised his Board's concern 'with pushing a caring ethos. They are not preoccupied with the bottom-line'.

The majority of CEOs believe their Board's main indicators that they govern a faith-based agency are organisational factors, that is, the agency has links to other Church organisations or structures, or the Board has a Strategic Plan. Only two CEOs thought their Boards would point to the agency's culture or 'spirit' as an indicator of its faith-base. The fact that a majority of Boards appear to put technical competencies at the heart of their governance of UC agencies could put the long-term identity of UC agencies at risk. For example, an analysis of the capacity to sustain Catholic health care as a ministry of the US Church concluded this capacity "depends on our realisation that all our activities must flow from the core of who we are, that is, from our spirituality." (Homan, 2004, p.1/7)

Four CEOs would recognise the relevance of Homan's observation for their leadership of their agency's Board. They said the central challenge for them was in

the discernment, nurturing and understanding of faith itself. Their comments included:

The Board is cognizant that the agency is faith-based. My dilemmas are more about how faith is experienced and interpreted. Faith is there, but it is not a strong part of our discourse.

My challenge is how to bring people on to the Board who have a vocation to the Board role.

I don't know what to do with the UCVT material myself. I don't see the direction it can be taken. I can't see how to turn it into action.

Our challenge is to find a balance between being a corporation and being part of the UCA. In some ways it would be easier to not be in the Church. It is also a challenge to ensure our prophetic voice be heard within government. For example, the service delivery models for at risk youth are not adequate. We need to engage them in a different discussion, but they are deaf to it.

Some of the other problems identified by CEOs in giving leadership to their Boards were organisational. These included establishing, training and informing a new Board about their role, 'handling the practical stuff not the philosophy', a Board's inability to make tough decisions, and having the Board grapple with 'the complexities of the social, political, and legislative framework, especially the professional responsibilities, and then to understand the Church's role in these issues'. However, these organisational problems seem relatively straight-forward for UCVT to address with CEOs compared with the uncertainty, searching and sense of isolation voiced by CEOs concerned about nurturing the culture or 'spirit' of faith in their Boards.

Clues about where this process of faith development may begin come from two CEOs who described what they appreciate about the faith witnessed to by their Boards.

I like the way the Board provides prayer and pastoral support for me. I can put all my issues on the table, and feel it is a shared responsibility.

We have a binding link in our agency. It is a special bond and we have another dimension to our work.

It may also be that Boards that see faith in organisational terms are more likely to end up being judged to have 'not much difference from other Boards at present'. One of the CEOs who thought there was not a great difference between his and a not-for-profit Board suggested the Board had a sense of security being part of the Church because it has a peak body, not because it is faith-based. While some CEOs didn't think there was much difference between their Boards and those of secular bodies, at least one thought there should be a difference.

We need to be congruent with our values. This is a broad challenge, and being Christian more so because there is wide cynicism about faith.

Sadly, the main difference CEOs saw between the governance of their agency and governance in other sectors was due to being part of the Church, especially 'its

complex nature as an organisation'. The scale of organisational problems that occurred due to being part of the Church's governance included:

The problem of Church politics, especially when Synod does not appear to have the necessary expertise.

Finding the balance between church-based and other forms of community expertise.

Discovering that Board decisions do not always rest with the Board. You can respond to the needs of the Church, and then get your fingers burned. In a secular agency, you wouldn't take on an outside body's expectations.

Proposal ten

There appears to be a need to offer support to CEOs who wish to develop the faith culture and spirit of their Boards. There is also a need for UCVT to provide faith development workshops to Board members from the wider perspective of the Church's collective calling to respond to injustice, idolatry, and oppression. These two tasks are mutually supportive of each other, and may be best developed in tandem.

It will be critical to involve CEOs and UCVT staff in the development of these programs in a planning process that itself embodies an intention to be faithful to God's sovereign governance.

Why does God call faith-based agencies to Christ's mission today?

CEOs identified the biggest challenges to maintaining the faith-base of agencies in three areas - in the current political and economic environment, in the structures of the Church, and in nurturing and maintaining faithful leadership of agencies. Each of these challenges goes to the heart of the Church's identity and purpose as the people of God.

The political, social and economic environment: in but not of the world

Concerns about the political environment included the rise of conservative reductionist views that use the language of faith to justify narrow political views, the enforcement of political correctness and the pressure of increased scrutiny, the politics of regulatory compliance, and the threat of losing funding (and therefore jobs) to stop agencies from doing advocacy work.

While there are economic aspects to these political pressures, other economic concerns expressed by these CEOs included the pressure of running an agency on tight margins, the time pressure to perform more tasks for less money, the impact of cost pulling faith-based agencies to the same standard as commercial operations, and competition with big agencies

The challenge for UC agencies from these pressures is the assault on agency values, and pressures to conformity. Another challenge comes from Y generation staff as they look for values-based employment, even as the support base of the traditional Church declines. One CEO identified the need to develop a new support base with people having strong social values.

The Church: being members of the Body of Christ

One concern CEOs had with the structures and processes of the Church were the Church's difficulty dealing with conflict, whether it was their agency's struggle with the UCVT unit over a policy or strategic planning matter, or in strained relations with congregations or presbyteries. This failure may feed the concern of the CEO who was concerned her agency had no sense of being part of a spiritual body. The Church loses the core of its identity when it deals with issues of conflict no differently from secular organisations.

Another strongly voiced concern was the impact on agencies caused by the general decline of the church and aging congregations. This situation means the connection with this organisational dimension of an agency's faith base is under threat, the pool of volunteers is shrinking, and there is a tendency for the Church bureaucracy to look at agencies with an air of disregard because they are more business-like than congregations. These changes all create tensions and division that undermine the unity of the Church.

Nurturing leadership: faith formation and spiritual awareness

Three CEOs identified the need for CEOs and Board members to be nurtured in their leadership and faith development as the biggest challenge to the faith-base of agencies. For one CEO, this is the priority issue for maintaining the faith-base of agencies. Another said,

The faith values of the CEO position and the Board are critical for how to move forward.

It is likely all three areas identified by the CEOs need to be addressed if the faith-base of agencies is to be maintained in the current environment. Indeed, resisting the pressures in the external environment may not be possible without nurturing CEOs and Boards in leadership and faith development, and strengthening the lived experience of agencies and the sector as a whole as Church. This means encouraging Boards to accept responsibility individually and collectively for being the Church (as a community of faith, witness and service). Boards may also be best equipped to engage with the structures of the wider Church organisation. "Governance's task is to hold the common good of mission as value in itself and to create a mission 'horizon' toward which policies and procedures move." (Homan, 2004, pp. 2/7)

This perspective of Boards as the sponsors of the agency's identity as Church is much broader than the organisational philosophy promoted by consultants BoardWorks International in their 'Governance Policy and Procedures Manual' for UCVT agencies. Board members are not to be simply risk managers making sure things don't go wrong, but *leaven*, animating the culture of UnitingCare service.

Proposal eleven

Governance formation that will sustain the faith-base of agencies in the face of the multi-dimensional challenges identified by CEOs will require programs of theological education and spiritual awareness specifically designed for this purpose. Such programs need to assist CEOs and Boards connect with the foundation of the organisation's identity and mission, that is, its vocation.

Again, it will be critical to involve CEOs and UCVT staff in the development of these programs in a planning process that itself embodies an intention to be faithful to God's sovereign governance.

The vocational question is critical because it addresses the 'why' of the agency's existence. The question 'why' directs boards to reflect on God's purpose in calling the organisation into being in a particular political, social and economic context and how Christ sustains the agency in 'fullness of life' in the contemporary context. Only then will board members actively appreciate and understand the organisation's fundamental beliefs, values and culture. This is the understanding necessary for Boards to engage with the wider Church on what it means for agencies to be the Church, to discern how to equip themselves for faithful leadership and to strengthen themselves to resist the pressures of contemporary economic, social and political idols.

EQUIPPING AND SUPPORTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

Understanding the faith and professional foundations of UC CEOs

When asked why they applied for the position of CEO at the agency where they worked, six respondents identified their main reason reflected their commitment to the agency's mission and its core values, or being connected to UCA networks. The other main reason reflected the person's belief in their professional competency to do the job. Integrating professional competency with a commitment to the Church's core values and mission is the daunting challenge for UCVT in developing successful leadership of UC agencies.

Committed to UC mission/values or connected to UCA networks

One CEO was drawn to the values, mission and vision of the agency. This was enhanced by the agency's historic connection to the community and its reputation in the mental health sector for delivering quality service and having a research capability. Another had worked in local and state government and other non-profit organisations, and was looking for a deliberate fit with her deeper values. This CEO found aspects of the Kennett government reforms couldn't be reconciled with her deeper social justice and human values. After a contracted position, this person became acting CEO, then applied for the position. One CEO said the fact it was a Uniting Church agency was most important because she was interested in a Christian community service agency.

One CEO had previously worked for the UCA, but left this work after media interest in her being a lesbian left her feeling burned out. She went to work in Asia, then after a job in regional Victoria was approached by people in the UCA to set up a new youth service agency. A second CEO said she was talked into it! She had gone to the UK and done some leadership training and was frustrated with her previous role. She was rung by a staff person in UCVT and asked to apply. She also had a preference to work in Church. A third CEO had worked for the agency as a volunteer, was then asked to carry out a review of the agency's future, and after that was asked to apply for the position.

Professional competency

A CEO had worked in local Council for 20 years and was looking for a change. He was a member of his local UCA congregation and felt he was the best person to do what needed to be done to help the agency through a difficult time. Another CEO described his need to move back to Victoria from Central Australia where he lived after a marriage break up. A friend told him about the job and it had most of the elements he was looking for - a reasonable salary, some flexibility, a community-based service, and a philosophical commitment to industrial democracy and teamwork. A third CEO had moved to a new area, also after a marriage break up, and successfully applied for the position as the deputy Director. When the Director died she was asked to apply for the position. Another CEO originally applied for a teacher's position because of her interest in working with isolated children. After her interview, she was asked to apply for the coordinator's position.

Proposal twelve

Before being appointed CEO, six CEOs either worked for the agency or knew about the position through their membership of the UCA. This fact may be important for UCVT in developing leadership training programs that support succession planning for CEOs across the UCVT network. That is, some attention may be given to ensuring training programs are inclusive of people who may be potential future leaders in the network.

Work and faith factors in becoming a UC CEO

While some CEOs had specific career or personal issues at the forefront of their decision to apply for a position as a UC CEO, others saw a connection between their faith and their decision about their work.

The separation of faith from some work and personal decisions

One CEO described the position as a step up for them, along with their interest in the challenge of leading an organisation. Another said they were attracted to the twin challenges of managing in a bigger organisational environment and bringing innovation to a larger organisation. A CEO observed that as her service grew into an agency, it grew into a career, while the CEO of a small agency just wanted to work. Another CEO took a pay cut, even though it was a move up from her previous position, and two CEOs thought the position was potentially detrimental to their career path.

Four CEOs said the main personal factors in their decision were family-related. For one CEO, the position with his agency enabled him to reduce time away from home traveling while for another having a supportive family means she could tackle a job with especially long hours. Having less time out at night motivated another CEO who was worried about the impact working long hours had on his young son. The fourth CEO applied for the position because the agency was near his wife's family.

The integration of faith with work and personal decisions

Six CEOs said the main personal factors in their decision to become CEO in fact reflected their public commitment to the Church's core values and mission, or their commitment to the agency. Those committed to the Church's mission and its core values thought the position either matched their values, allowed them to help those they felt drawn to support, or enabled them to make a difference to situations of injustice. Two CEOs had specific involvement with their respective agencies in a time of crisis, and they wanted to help the agency through the crisis. One CEO whose career considerations seemed less important than faith issues said it was important that she integrate her spirit and soul with professional skills at work. Against the ideology of secularisation, these six CEOs saw their personal faith integrated with their public decisions about work.

The Catholic Health Association of USA (CHAUSA) identified seven core faith-based values for leadership of their ministries – reverence for each person, community, justice, commitment to the poor, stewardship, courage and integrity. (Giammalvo, p.2/4) Many of the CEOs decisions to work in UC agencies resonate with several dimensions of leadership identified by the CHAUSA research.

There is also a prophetic leadership quality in the integration of faith with work that stands over and against secularisation's assignment of faith to a sphere outside the public world of work. One CEO said her work was a ministry. When a CEO thought the position of his agency was hopeless, he prayed that God would 'help now'. The next day a minister from the Presbytery visited him with an offer to help, and that act focused his life and commitment to the job. Another CEO was moved by the courage and integrity being demonstrated by her managers as they spoke about their passion for the agency and the Christian ethic at work while inducting a new manager.

They were telling him how good the faith basis was. Being brought up Methodist, the importance of their bottom up theology also attracted me.

Three CEOs expressed a strong faith commitment to justice and the poor. Two commented:

I wasn't afraid of issues around the drug-injecting room. The Mission has a long history of advocacy and being outspoken. It felt right for me to step in and be provocative if it's needed.

I valued the public advocacy role being taken by the Board. The agency was doing research about clients and then advocating for them. My desire was to do more than just impact on the individual. This is part of my value basis from my upbringing in the Catholic Church, and my commitment to the poor. I thought I could help the agency make a difference, and this is exciting.

One CEO affirmed the church's relevance to community in the modern world was important to him, particularly because of his critique of current political discourse, which solidifies around either/or positions.

I feel invited into a more ecumenical space in this faith-based agency, and to a deeper engagement with the community as a professional.

While two CEOs said faith was not a factor in their application for the position, faith had become important as their work developed. One said,

After working at the agency, my interest in theology was sparked, and I saw the diversity of expression that is in the Church.

Calling and vocation

Six CEOs said they had a sense of calling to the position. For three, the sense of calling preceded their application for the job, and reflects a view of their life's work as a vocation or calling. One of these had a life calling to overcoming disadvantage, and achieving good outcomes for disadvantaged people, and another had felt since late adolescence a call to stand with oppressed people, and to be an agent of change. For three other CEOs the sense of calling emerged later as they reflected on the events that led them to the position. This reflects a view that God is present in their life, and their openness to see in the pattern of their life how God has been present. One regarded her decision to apply for the position as an event in her life that was 'meant to be'. She said the appointment was miraculous the way it evolved! Two others describe their call as follows:

All the things I had done in the past came together for me in this job – my upbringing in poverty, my work experience, my skills, and my faith.

I didn't understand that language until I got here. I was looking for a change and met the then CEO. He offered me a contract for one year. At a gut level, it felt like a calling. It felt meant to be. Before he left he said, 'One thing I've done is put you here.' I knew this was right.

Another CEO also had difficulty with what she said was this 'Church language', while affirming her decision that she had wanted to work in a faith-based organisation.

Three of those who hadn't felt a sense of calling to the position of CEO simply said 'no'. One CEO added that the agency's success in growing bigger with more layers of management was diminishing her life's calling to be with disadvantaged people at the grass roots.

Working for a faith-based (or UnitingCare) agency

The fact the agency was faith-based was clearly important in the decision to apply for the position of CEO for four respondents. One CEO was attracted to the difference between a faith-based agency and a secular agency.

There is something about the values of the UCA that are good and wholesome, especially the commitment to social justice and equality of people. I don't find this anywhere else.

Another emphasised the privilege to be in ministry and to witness to what she believes. One said he puts the Church first in whatever he does, and another rejoiced in having the freedom of the gospel and the trust of the Church in doing her work.

For others, the faith-based nature of their agencies is more ambiguous. One CEO said this was not in the foreground of his thinking when he applied, but now questions of faith arise that have forced him to think about it. Conversely, another CEO said it was an attraction for her that the agency was faith-based and it was therefore surprising to find that it wasn't! Yet another expressed her surprise to find she was working for a church! It was not something she would have expected in her life.

Two CEOs expressed some personal discomfit with the faith-based nature of their agency. One CEO said it would have been easier for him if the agency wasn't faith-based because he was not comfortable about this at times. The other CEO's concern was that the agency would be (too) conservative.

Perhaps the strongest resonance in these interviews with the previously mentioned CHAUSA leadership competencies is in the courage and integrity of the CEOs responses, not only in giving witness to their faith in a world hostile to God, but especially in speaking about their experiences of doubt and discomfit with faith, their alienation from 'God talk', or their disillusionment with the UCA in general and UCVT in particular. Each of these comments illuminates in some way the challenges experienced by CEOs as they seek to give leadership to a faith-based agency.

Proposal thirteen

If Commission for Mission faith and vocational leadership development programs are to ensure they are inclusive of CEOs or others who share experiences of faith and doubt, they will honour not only the *doing* of leadership, but also the *being*. Such programs recognise that courageous leadership is based on leaders who are real human beings, and that the challenge for the Church is to create space for the formation and nurturing of this awareness. (Buck and McPherson, 2006, p.63)

People of faith, leaders of Church

Table five examines possible areas where leadership training programs may give “more attention to the leader’s interior spiritual experience of ministry and exterior expressions of service, what we have called the practices of ‘reflective integration’.” (Giganti, 2006, p.4) Reflective integration that enhances leadership formation may focus around three dimensions of leadership.

Table 5: CEOs’ faith practices

Faith practices	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Follow Synod policies	■	■	■	■	■	■			■		7
Attend public worship		■	■				■	■	■		5
Faith reading		■		■		■			■	■	5
Professional supervision	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■		8
Personal relationship with Christ		■	■	■		■		■	■	■	7
Discuss faith		■	■	■					■		4
Theology course											
Prayer, meditation	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	9
UCVT CEO forums	■			■	■				■		4
Support of minister		■				■			■		3
Spiritual direction											-

1. Personal exploration of relationships with Christ/God

This exploration is fruitfully shaped by the metaphor of faith as a journey, a life-long learning process that deepens participants’ capacity for self-awareness and their discernment of the divine presence in all of life. It holds at its heart the two most widely reported faith practice contributing to CEOs competence for leadership of their agency - that is, having a personal relationship with Christ, and prayer/meditation.

The heart of almost every interview came with CEOs’ answers to the question about their personal relationship with Christ. Their answers revealed people of integrity and courage – people who had lived with the tough questions of life, faith and doubt, and who knew how to witness or listen to the suffering and injustice experienced by others. Yet the words on paper do not adequately convey the strength of their convictions, or the integrity with which they voiced their doubts.

Six CEOs affirmed a personal relationship with Christ that contributed to their leadership competence. A further three CEOs spoke of their relationship to God, one experiencing it as a universal sense of God as the ground of being, another as a unique relationship for each person with mind and heart shaping what God is for each person, and the other as belief in God and in humanist values that are Christian values. The last of these said,

I have been a CEO for 35 years and at times I sense God is sitting next to me. My sister-in-law was murdered ten years ago and it made me think about where God is. The Minister at that time shared my question. He encouraged me to keep exploring the question. I'm still on the journey.

Each of the six CEOs expressed what their relationship with Christ meant to them. Like the CEO whose experience of God came after a violent crime in his family, other CEOs found a depth in their relationship with Christ through their own pain, grief, hurt experienced in the Church, and the loneliness this had brought to them.

It is pretty important now although it wasn't in the past. My mum's death was important. She said goodbye to me and when I saw the peace that came across her face, I felt she had gone home. Our minister was helpful in explaining things.

The Christ I understand is not the Christ I see in the Church! I can talk with God at night about any problem, and feel an answer in the morning. I feel an external strength bigger than me, and am quite content in that trust.

It is very important. Being the CEO can be incredibly isolating. I hold the weight of so many people's (staff) lives, and also providing services, and there is no back-up in a regional area. My relationship with Christ is very sustaining, and is something of a miracle over the past ten years.

If I was able to state my bottom line, this relationship is what keeps me going. With the ups and downs in an organisation, it is important to know I have someone there guiding me who is dependable and I can trust.

The remaining CEOs also spoke of their relationship with Christ in similarly intimate terms.

Christ is very important in my life. The conversation and listening is a centering relationship for me. It stops me from being overwhelmed and relying on my own devices.

This is very important to me. I find Christ in meditation, and it is a deeply personal thing.

The spiritual discipline of regular prayer or meditation was also identified by nine of the CEOs. Two CEOs connected this discipline with exercise, saying:

It is a regular daily practice. My morning walk is a meditative pause moment. Pausing is counter-cultural. I would like to do that more for myself and set the tone for the organisation.

It is essential to have quiet time at the gym, or walking in nature. Meditation and exercise give me balance.

Proposal fourteen

A leadership program of personal exploration of CEOs relationships with God/Christ will be enriched by exploring themes that emerge from these comments: images of God and images of self and other, the spiritual nature of one's authority as a leader, exploring the sacred, knowing the source of one's identity, trust, being a servant leader, and sharpening one's creative thinking. These themes also provide fruitful entry points into teaching about prayer and meditation.

2. Creation of communities in the UCA ethos

A leadership program that focuses on the creation of communities of justice for disadvantaged people that are congruent with the UCA ethos and traditions will respond to what CEOs have said about Synod policies, their attendance at public worship and the role of the UCVT CEOs' network.

While seven CEOs said following Synod policies contributes to their competence for leadership of a UC agency, four added important qualifications, such as the need to challenge the policies occasionally, to sometimes only give them lip service or to ignore them, and to acknowledge that there are times Synod policies conflict with the CEOs' management responsibilities. As one CEO said,

Our constitution says we have to comply with the UCA Synod policies. I am not sure we know about them all, and some of the policies are hypocritical, such as gambling!

Half the CEOs attend public worship as worshippers, and three CEOs added they attend worship as part of their work. Those who attend as worshippers were unequivocal in stating worship's importance to sustaining their competence to lead their agency, and/or provide a place of balance in their life.

The four CEOs who said the UCVT CEOs forum contributed to their leadership competence all identified organisational rather than faith benefits from their participation. The identified benefits were from information and problem sharing. Paradoxically, the main criticisms of the forum were all related to organisational matters. Four CEOs criticised the forum for its lack of relevance to their agency. One missed the opportunity to talk with people, and one said distance was an issue.

Proposal fifteen

A leadership program directed to creating communities of justice congruent with the UCA ethos will need to address the diverse experiences revealed in these comments. Such a program will build bridges between Synod staff and agency CEOs and managers, strengthen agency and UCVT advocacy within the UCA, explore opportunities for encouraging congregational worship to integrate the concerns of agencies in worship, and refine skills of providing and receiving honest and constructive feedback.

3. Demonstration of distinctive competencies for passionate leadership

A leadership program that reinforces development and demonstration of the distinctive competencies required for passionate leadership of UC agencies may occur through learning that builds knowledge based on the following faith practices:

Reading about faith matters Half the CEOs said they read about faith matters. One CEO reads about how the Church can link with agencies as the existing congregations decline. Another reads widely, and about other faiths. For a third it was important to be informed, and another reads about faith for stimulation, enjoyment and encouragement.

Professional supervision Professional supervision is widely practiced by these CEOs, but only two CEOs said their professional supervision integrated faith and work/practice issues. CEOs valued professional supervision as essential to their leadership competence and professional practice. One CEO said he has a good friend who he meets once a week to swap issues for mutual support and encouragement.

Discussing faith matters Four CEOs said discussing faith matters was important to their leadership competence. One added it was useful to talk about faith with others, and a second that such conversations guide her in dealing with everything. One CEO said she would like to have more faith discussion in a work context, but felt under-equipped to do this. Another CEO who doesn't discuss his faith gave a similar reason, saying

As an Australian bloke it is not easy to discuss these personal things.

Theological study While none of the CEOs found studying theology contributed to their leadership competence, the comments of a couple indicate their attitude is largely about the perceived irrelevance of theology courses. For example:

I would like to do more, but I am wary of courses that put people off faith.

It would be useful, but I need really practically stuff that is contextualized.

A minister's support Only three CEOs seek support from a minister for their leadership role. One said this is important for her work and personally, for pastoral support. The other two find support from the minister working in their agency. Another CEO said it depended upon the minister, and there was none available to them at present.

Spiritual direction None of the CEOs had spiritual direction, although one CEO would like to have one, but hadn't found the right person. Another CEO had spiritual direction from a previous Presbytery Minister.

Proposal sixteen

CEOs responses to these different modes of group and individual learning indicate that only professional practice supervision has widespread support. The responses also indicate the importance of tailoring some programs to specific needs and learning preferences.

CEOs said the most helpful initiatives from UCVT to support CEOs of a faith-based agency would be through either faith or professional development. Those who put their priority on faith development said:

Nurture our leadership of a faith-based program by identifying the normal things that could support a CEO in a faith-based organisation and provide information on where to source material on things such as the trends coming out of the USA.

Convene leadership forums and meetings that address ethical and spiritual issues. These need to be challenging and led by people who have thought about these questions.

It would be good to have structured mentoring and spiritual direction.

UCVT need to develop a proper induction for CEOs into UCVT and Synod. This should include induction into the faith of UCA, the Basis of Union and UCVT's theological foundations. This would really enrich our lives.

UCVT needs to develop the role of Presbytery in inducting CEOs at both the practical and religious levels.

I would love more opportunities for discussion and conversation that has some depth, and flexibility based on relationship.

Those who put their priority on professional development were not seeking skill training, but rather opportunities for conversation and shared experience. One wanted organised CEO professional development based on a model of learning from peers, another wanted to talk about practical things, where people share their good management practices, and the third preferred it when CEOs meetings were more social and participants shared information about the challenges they faced as CEOs. He added,

I am not interested now that it is more technical information, because it is not as helpful to me.

Several CEOs also said the most helpful initiatives from UCVT to support them as CEOs of faith-based agencies were organisational, including developing human resource policies, sorting out structural issues in relation to aged services, maintaining contact with isolated and regional agencies, improving and better managing its own legal, governance and risk responsibilities, and continuing to be available for advice.

Two CEOs reflected on the need for UCVT to think more about succession planning for CEOs. Their concern reinforces other comments in this study about the need to keep developing the sector with appropriate systems that continue to build upon the current experience. Their comments also reinforce the importance of vocational and professional formation and training for leadership development across the sector. They said:

We have created a culture at our agency that needs to continue when I go. If UCVT was to be involved in our agency's next CEO appointment, would they have any contribution to maintaining and enriching our culture? There is a need for UCVT to develop criteria for the CEO role because the appointment influences the agency for a long time. It would be good to get a group together to consider this.

There is a need to train people for the CEO role in UCVT agencies. What does it mean for someone who is not a UCA member to be a CEO? How well are they then inducted into the UCA?

Proposal seventeen

The desire of some CEOs for conversation-based professional and management training may be integrated with the desire for faith development programs. Conceptualising these two spheres as separate is an unhelpful accommodation to the dualism created by modernity for its own self-serving purpose. So UCVT programs take on a prophetic quality when they grow out of the gospel conviction that Christ came to offer fullness of life, that is, life that is not divided and fragmented.

CONCLUSION

The UC CEOs' responses in this report reveal the larger truth about the fragmentation of life today, for it is not a neat picture of their faith or professional journeys that emerges. The report describes this fragmentation in terms reminiscent of the inevitable consequence of the tower of Babel-like (Genesis 11:1-9) devotion of western societies to modernity's beliefs and ideologies for the construction of industrial societies

Because modernity's beliefs and ideologies have also invaded the Church, aspects of the Church's beliefs, organisation, witness and service are accommodated to these forces. At the same time, the fruits of modernity have enriched the Church along with the wider society. As *The Basis of Union* states, "The Uniting Church acknowledges that God has never left the Church without faithful and scholarly interpreters of Scripture, or without those who have reflected deeply upon, and acted trustingly in obedience to, God's living Word. In particular the Uniting Church enters into the inheritance of literary, historical and scientific enquiry which has characterised recent centuries, and gives thanks for the knowledge of God's ways with humanity which are open to an informed faith." (The Basis of Union, 1992, section 11)

Within this vision of the 'Basis' lies the core challenge considered by this report – what it may mean for the Commission for Mission and UCVT to support the development of an informed faith in the life of UC agencies. This report has heard in the yearning and testimony of ten UC CEOs a deep desire to grow in faith that lives with integrity in the brokenness and joy of the world, and which knows its strength to resist forces of oppression and evil rests in God's eternal call and promise of mercy and justice.

The desire of these CEOs to have an informed faith comes from a personal awareness of God's grace in their lives, and their conviction that God's intention for all whose lives are captive to fragmentation, injustice and oppression is that they too may receive this same gift of life's fullness. The report seeks to honour both God's intention and CEOs desires by offering a number of proposals that suggest possibilities for new initiatives, collaborations, and challenges for enhancing the worship and service of agencies and the wider Church.

The starting point for each of the seventeen proposals in this report is a deeper engagement with the faith and vocational foundations of UnitingCare agency Boards and their CEOs.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

A VOCATION AND FAITH EXPLORATION SURVEY FOR CEOs OF UNITINGCARE'S FAITH-BASED AGENCIES

This exploration of UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania CEOs vocational and faith identity aims to:

- Better understand the calling of CEOs to their current leadership of a faith-based agency.
- Provide a basis for UCVT to develop CEOs vocational and faith resources as leaders of faith-based agencies.
- Assist the Commission for Mission to develop a path for engaging similar issues in the community services sector.

Becoming CEO of a faith-based agency

What factors led you to apply for this position (as CEO)?

Were there factors in your career path that were important?

Were there factors in your personal life that were important?

Were there factors in your faith that were important?

Did you have a sense of calling to this position? (If yes, describe how you sensed that.)

How important was it that the organisation was a faith-based agency? (or UnitingCare)

Connecting with the history of a faith-based agency

Do you know how this agency began?

What do you think the founders believed they were called to do?

What types of service were first provided? (Probe: casework, social action, community development)

Has the type of service provided changed from then to now? If so, how?

Is the story of your agency's faith and service development connected to the agency's present identity and purpose? If so, how?

Is the story of your agency's faith and development relevant to what you do today? If so, how?

What do you believe are the key factors that give direction to your agency today? (Probe: is there a connection between the agency's history and factors that shape the direction today?)

The place of faith in your agency today

What are the main indicators that your agency is a faith-based agency?

There are a number of activities that may give expression to the faith embodied in a faith-based agency. How important do you think the following activities are in expressing the faith of your agency's faith-based community service activities? (Please explain why you say that)

- Service given by volunteers
- Being inclusive of all staff without regard to their beliefs
- Faith sharing discussion at Board meetings
- Having Christian values in our agency mission statement
- Advocating for social justice
- Drawing on the Basis of Union for agency life and service.
- Drawing on UCV&T theological foundations for agency life and service
- Faith sharing discussion among interested staff
- Serving people who are disadvantaged
- Integrating faith with professional knowledge and practice.
- Faith sharing discussion by staff with clients
- Use of a chaplain
- Holding services of worship

What are the biggest challenges to maintaining the faith-base of your agency in the current political and economic environment?

Governance of a faith-based agency

Are there things about the governance of a faith-based agency that you prefer to the governance of other government or not-for-profit community service organisations?

Are there things that are more difficult in the governance of a faith-based agency compared to the governance of other government or not-for-profit community service providers?

What are the challenges for you in giving leadership to the Board of a faith-based agency?

What are the main indicators for your Board that they have governance of a faith-based agency?

Of the following factors that may assist a Board exercise its governance of a faith-based agency, how important is each of the following for your Board? Please comment.

- Keeping connected to the traditions, beliefs and stories of the agency.
- Using a mission statement to express values and spirituality
- Reflecting on what service or work for justice God may be calling your agency to
- Keeping a critical mass of Board members with a Christian affiliation
- Respect for the agency's physical inheritance of buildings and spaces
- Using symbols and rituals to declare the agency's mission

CEO formation and leadership

What have been the key influences on your relationship to the Christian faith?
(Probe: experiences of Church, life events, important people, experiences)

What experiences have been important in forming your leadership vision for this faith-based agency? (Probe: formal, informal)

What experiences have been important in forming your leadership practice for this faith-based agency? (Probe: formal, informal)

Who do you talk with most about faith issues affecting your work as CEO? Why do you talk to them?
(Probe: is there anyone you would talk to amongst your staff, Board, UCVT?)

What are some of the key issues where your faith has informed your work as CEO?

What aspects of your faith do you find are most relevant to your work as CEO?

What aspects of your faith do you find are least relevant to your work as CEO?

There are a number of faith practices that may contribute to a person's competence for leadership of a UnitingCare faith-based agency. How important are the following practices to you in being the CEO of this faith-based agency?

- Following UCA Synod policies
- Attending public worship
- Reading about faith matters
- Professional supervision
- A personal relationship with Christ

- Discussing faith matters
- Doing a theology course
- Personal spiritual disciplines (prayer, bible reading, faith sharing)
- UCVT CEOs Forums
- Seeking support from a minister/priest
- Spiritual direction

What experiences have most enhanced your faith since you became CEO of this agency?

What experiences have most tested your faith since you became CEO of this agency?

Agency relations to UCVT

How helpful has the theological framework of UCV&T been to your role as CEO of a faith-based agency? (Probe: most helpful, least helpful)

How helpful has the CEO's network of UCV&T been to your role as CEO of a UC agency? (Probe: most helpful, least helpful)

What would be the most helpful initiatives from UCVT to support you as CEO of a faith-based agency?

Personal details

Do you belong to a faith tradition/denomination?

How long have you been CEO of this agency? _____

Your age? _____

Male/female (circle)

Do you have any other thoughts you wish to offer for this vocational and faith exploration for CEO's of UnitingCare faith-based agencies?

Thank you for your participation.