

The Voice

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God's voice amidst many voices

This special issue of 'The Voice' reports on a workshop from the recent national UnitingCare Conference on the theme, 'God's voice amidst many voices'. Facilitated by CMN Director, John Bottomley, the workshop featured contributions from three UnitingCare CEOs speaking on their leadership of a 'faith-based agency'. In this issue, the CEOs reflect on God's call alongside the voices of clients, staff, Church and government in a sector that privileges professional knowledge and relegates faith to the private sphere. John Bottomley then presented research findings that point to the challenges of strengthening faith for agency leadership.

THE VOICE

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God's voice in our heritage - shaping values, service and advocacy in a Wesleyan spirit

By *Judy Leitch* -
CEO Wesley Mission Melbourne

Introducing WMM

Wesley Mission Melbourne is one of the former central city Methodist Missions, with a heritage that we believe is still relevant and inspiring for our staff, our volunteers and the people we work with. This heritage is the Wesleyan tradition, which we actively promote within the organisation. As far as I understand it, the Wesleyan tradition was not about clergy in long robes preaching from pulpits high up in grand cathedrals about how people should live their lives, but rather a form of street evangelism. It was about going to where the need was. It was about people of faith standing alongside and supporting others in their suffering.

Our purpose today is not very different from what it was back in the 1800s. It is to support people who are disadvantaged to live meaningful lives. We do this by delivering services to the community and working to create social systems that value and liberate. We don't pretend to be professionals with superior knowledge regarding what is best for them, but simply stand alongside them, supporting them to live their lives to the fullest as valued members of their communities, and using our gifts as 'people caring for people' (which is the tagline in our logo).

Our vision is for a community where all are valued and included. We believe in the possibility of personal and social transformation, and we work to empower those who are disadvantaged to participate fully in community life. Our values are hope, compassion and justice.

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Today our activities are spread across 100 service delivery sites, and we employ over 3,000 staff and volunteers to deliver 57 different services to disadvantaged people of all ages and abilities. Just over 70% of our revenue is government funding, the rest we raise ourselves. We are incorporated as a company limited by guarantee and accountable to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission as well as to the Uniting Church, so we are actually a faith based corporation, which I personally don't think is an oxymoron, but I'm happy to debate this issue with anyone who disagrees!

Introducing bits of myself that may have led to me working at Wesley Mission Melbourne

My earliest experiences of being filled with wonder were as a small child growing up in Papua New Guinea, where my Dad worked as a patrol officer or 'Kiap'. He had been an accountant who had left his profession to go to war and was sent to the Middle East and then PNG, and he ended up going back to work in PNG after the war. My family lived in some remote areas of PNG, where the tribal populations used over 700 languages and had very different customs and rituals. In some places we were the first white people the tribal people had ever seen and in a sense we were intruders on their land.

Although I had no sense of this as a child, I became acutely aware that, wherever we moved, the tribal children or 'pikinies' would simply reach out and include my sister and I, even though we didn't understand their language or culture. That was my earliest experience of what it was like to have someone stand alongside and welcome me as an outsider, a stranger, with total acceptance and love, and without judgment.

To jump ahead now to my adult life. I've spent most of my professional career working in the human services sector, in hospital and community settings, initially as a clinical psychologist and later as an administrator. Although others would describe the environments I have worked in as 'caring', my personal experience was that only occasionally did I witness the total acceptance and love that is so often shut down by professional education and training. It was mostly professionals practicing their professions, without really connecting in a real and meaningful way to the people they practiced on.



My experience of joining Wesley Mission Melbourne

When I was interviewed for a job at Wesley Mission Melbourne (not the CEO role that I'm now in), I knew that I was looking for a better fit between my own personal values and those of my employing organisation than I had previously experienced. However I was not really sure what to expect. I was given the

As a clinical psychologist brought up in a "white coat" environment, to "love" your clients was not acceptable..

latest annual report and newsletter to take home and read. The lead article in the newsletter was written by the then Superintendent and addressed the question "what is it that is different about a church community service organisation?"

He went on to talk about all the things that Wesley Mission Melbourne did but ended up talking about the essence of transformation and love.

As a clinical psychologist brought up in a "white coat" environment, to "love" your clients was not acceptable, so to be invited to take off the white coat was at the same time a huge relief and very confronting. I had a sense of having found the right place, and in a strange way I knew I had been called to it. I joined the organisation.

Not long after I started, the organisation went through a major crisis that involved extremely negative publicity in The Age newspaper for months. In the midst of this turmoil, I needed to recruit a new manager for Lifeline. I remember being surprised that the preferred applicant wanted to work with an organisation



that was being portrayed as such a “basket case” in the media. Soon after he started I organised a lunch meeting of our Leadership Team so that he could meet his colleagues. The Team at the time was very stressed, with everyone doing what they could to help us pull out of the crisis, and I was concerned that they would give only negative impressions to the new manager. However, as they went around the room introducing themselves to him, what I heard bowled me over. Each one, in their own way, talked about the values and traditions of the organisation being far more important than the crisis.

In listening to them describe their work and the services they managed, it seemed to me that the heritage of the place was in their blood and that it was infused throughout all of the Mission’s activities. It was as if in welcoming the new manager into the Wesleyan tradition they were also making a pledge to each other to stay true to their calling. Not long after this I was asked to act as CEO and to undertake major restructuring, including the incorporation of the organisation as a company. With such a great Team behind me, I was inspired to try to do this in a way that built on the heritage and ethos of the Mission. I accepted the offer.

I’ve been at Wesley Mission Melbourne almost ten years now, the longest I’ve been in any job. Most of the time at work I am close to God and feel that I am directly expressing my faith. But I have also been sorely tested by church politics. I’ve worked in state government and local government and learned how to play the political games, but politics in the church are in a league of their own, and can be very destructive. But I’m not here to talk about church politics!

Our heritage and how it shapes our values, service and advocacy

We previously had a set of eight values: integrity, compassion, respectfulness, courage, vitality, professionalism, perseverance and stewardship. No-one remembered them and not many used them in their daily work. They could have been the values of any organisation. So when we were developing our last strategic plan, we made a decision to go back to a small number of faith-based values to reflect our Christian heritage: hope, compassion and justice.

Of course these values are not unique to the Christian faith, but they are foundational for us and they reflect our heritage. Most people in the organisation know them, are proud of them, and relate to them personally. At our monthly staff induction days, Barbara Gayler, our Minister to the Mission (or M2M as we call her), spends time talking to our new staff about what it means to work for a Christian organisation. Barbara manages beautifully to translate some key Christian messages into language that is meaningful for everyone, whatever their background. It’s our way of talking about our heritage and ethos, saying how proud we are to be part of a Christian organisation, while also genuinely inviting everyone, of all faiths or none, to join us in our work and to uphold our values. We have a very diverse staff and, despite many new staff being surprised by Barbara’s way of welcoming them, most find it inspiring and most respect and respond positively to her invitation to work with us to be part of our ongoing tradition.



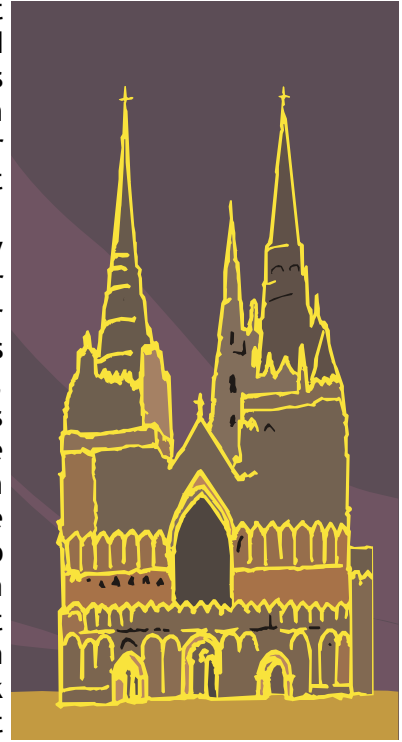
After Barbara's welcome, I talk to new staff about our service delivery. I talk about our 57 different services and I use government jargon, such a "bed days", "occasions of service", "duration of episodes of support" etc to make the point that while we do provide such things, they are not what is actually important. I then go on to talk about the possibility for transformation, which has nothing to do with the things that governments measure, but arises from the quality of the relationship that develops between people who are caring for people. I say that we are all here to facilitate such transformation, although we all do it in different ways. When we have new staff from our commercial printing business attend, they become wide eyed at this concept, and go away wondering what it means for them that the profits they generate for our non-funded services can make such a difference.

Our heritage also influences the way in which we design and evaluate our service delivery. We are currently developing a comprehensive service delivery framework, which will underpin all of our service delivery work. This framework incorporates our ethos statement, strategic planning imperatives, social inclusion policy, service design principles, evaluation, research and advocacy. However its most important element is the evaluation of service outcomes in terms of whether or not we have actually achieved the sort of transformation our vision points to, both for our clients and for the community generally. The framework is thus designed to go way beyond what governments require, or what quality systems require, or what our Board requires in terms of governance. It actually attempts to asses the outcomes of our work against our Christian intent.

Our advocacy is also informed by our heritage. The Mission has had a long history of being an outspoken advocate and has often engaged in bold and provocative initiatives. Many people still remember the Pleasant Sunday Afternoons at Wesley Mission Melbourne, which became a forum for public debate about social policy matters.

The Mission has also had a history of identifying the barriers faced by marginalised people and identifying service gaps, using its own resources to develop new service models to address these barriers and gaps, evaluating these new models and then advocating to governments to fund them. The Mission's active involvement in the

debate about supervised injecting rooms during the heroin crisis in the year 2000 is consistent with this history. Although many criticised us for advocating for better services for drug users, our position was that they are God's children and should not be left to die, as so many of them were at that time. But I'm not here to talk about that either!



In closing, I'd like to say that for me God's voice is in our heritage, and guides my work on a daily basis. And although not everyone who works at Wesley believes in God or hears God's voice, there's something in our heritage that calls them and that they respond to. For together we are all doing the work of the church.

God's Voice in Service Delivery – a case study on values, justice and professional responsibility

*By John Lawrence –
CEO Kilmany UnitingCare*

Kilmany UnitingCare is based in Gippsland. We provide a broad range of child care, foster care, family services, counselling and community development services. We have over 300 staff and work to challenge disadvantage and inequity. All our child care services are accredited by the National Child Care Accreditation Council and the agency is accredited by QICSA.

The guiding principle

Our Guiding Principle is to work for the safety and well being of children and young people – we "live" that because at times we may upset others if we act on alleged child abuse or neglect

by reporting to Child Protection. Before we developed that Guiding Principle, we were not covered by mandatory reporting laws, and sometimes we would unnecessarily grapple with an abuse or neglect issue because we were more concerned about the feelings of a parent or a carer. The Guiding Principle makes sure we put kids first, and now we always report suspected abuse or neglect.

We do police checks and working with children's checks on Board, staff, volunteers, people over 17 years who live in houses where we have carers doing Family Day Care or Foster Care. We recognise that these don't guarantee complete risk avoidance, and we have a range of policies about safety. For example, I just can't transport kids between offices on my own in my car.

We have seven Principles or Values. I say to staff if they make a difficult decision if no managers are around, and the decision is based on those values – even if I disagree with the decision I will support them to the end of the earth. We could have one principle, or we could add a few more, but we decided on seven. They are Accountability, Transparency, Quality, Consultation, Participation, Sustainability and Caring. We embed those in the culture through training, induction and re-induction. We have spoken to Gippsland Presbytery about our Principles and they have developed similar ones to guide their decision making.

The case

I was asked to speak about God's voice in service delivery, and I needed to give you that background for the case I am going to talk about, because our decisions have been informed by our Values and the Guiding Principle. This case started in December and has been ongoing.

We had the partner of a Family Day Carer investigated by the police for a sexual assault on a 13 year old girl. It was alleged he "felt her up". Family Day Care is child care provided in a person's house – the parents can get child care benefits so child care is cheaper, and we recruit the carers and ensure they work within national standards.

When we found out we applied our Guiding Principle, and threw away all thoughts of what Australian's call natural justice. We erred on the side of children. We said to the carer that she



could only look after kids in her house if the spouse wasn't there. He moved out and they denied any wrong doing.

What would have you done? What would inform your actions? What is God doing in this situation? Do you have Principles or Values to guide you in such a case?

Now here come the steak knives – there's more! We are now advised by the Police that the girl has retracted her complaint and the investigation has been dropped and the Police are not proceeding. The Police did say informally they think the bloke did assault the girl but they can't do anything. I'm sure they would never say this in Court. The bloke was never formally charged. Our staff also have other suspicions about inappropriate actions by this chap but we can't prove them. I should say that I think the statistic about sexual assaults is that only 2% of cases come to Court because the person assaulted doesn't want to participate in what can be a degrading and confronting Court appearance.

When we recruit new carers I say to staff that *subjective* thoughts are now *objective* – if they think a person is a creep we will not take them on, even if we don't have good rational reason – but we don't give specific reasons and just say they were unsuccessful in their application! If staff have this subjective negativity I generally

ask them whether they would put their kids in the person's care.

We have now confirmed the carer cannot look after children if this bloke is in the house. We are saying our principle of the safety and well being of children is more important than perhaps discrimination of this bloke. We want to be safe not sorry. We remember the past abuse of kids by Churches, by Schools and by Institutions such as ours, and want to draw a line in the sand.

We have got flack from the carer and some parents who think we are "over the top", but we are prepared to wear that to ensure the safety of kids, but we cannot afford to be liable for significant compensation. In my discussions with the Carer I have said she needs to seek legal advice.

We have received advice from Jobs Australia that the carer and her partner are not employees. (Family Day Carers are subcontractors to us) and any action against us would be taken under Equal Opportunity legislation. They said if action is taken against us by the bloke for discrimination we would either win or lose – and if we lost we would have to pay compensation – but didn't say what that would be.

Our funder (Commonwealth Dept of Family Services) said if we write to them they would either say we have taken the correct action or that they didn't agree with our action, which is not helpful, so we did not seek their written advice. We have a relationship with Minter Ellison, one of the largest law firms in the world, and they have provided pro bono legal advice.

I won't go into all the details, but there are legal complexities about our relationship with the partner of the Carer which are different to issues with the Carer herself. We are told our position is extremely defensible and our risk exposure is minimal. They think any action would relate to a



breach of contract. They did say there is a clause in the Equal Opportunity Act that provides coverage if we have a strong rational belief that there is potential danger to children. They have said we have a duty of care to the Carer, and also to children, and it is perfectly reasonable to err on the side of children.

What is God's voice saying here?

I have still not come to grips with how we are treating the partner of the Carer. I think we have made the right decision, and I'm comfortable about it, but I have concerns about his personal dignity. Under our legal system he is innocent. I have had discussions with him, and he has disclosed his past abuse when he was a child, and other problems he has had. I don't know whether to shed a tear or to recognise he is trying to manipulate me.

What is God's voice in this? I'm comfortable because I can't cut the baby in half, and I am reducing the risk of potential abuse of children. I'm comfortable that the Principles we developed ten years ago are guiding our actions. I'm comfortable that our staff agree we need to take a stand, and that management is supporting them. But what would you do? What would inform your decisions making? What do you think God's voice is in this situation? Or where do you think God's voice is?

So to finish up. I like to make a decision based on good information, and then I like to reflect on that and look at other options. In this case I realized that we were saying to protect children, the carer's partner couldn't live in the house. In fact what we meant was we don't want him around when children are in care. So we have put that option to the carer – who is so pissed off with me that she has initially refused.

We also have some carers that rent houses just for Family Day Care, and we have put that as an option. Either way we would get the carer to sign a contract about her partner not being around, and we would do lots of random and unannounced visits.

**God's voice in Leadership –
integrating calling and gifts
for management practice
or
My journey in a UnitingCare
organisation – realising a vision**

By Ronda Held –
CEO UnitingCare Community Options

Vision meets reality

I commenced as CEO of UnitingCare Community Options in February 2001. This was not long after the formation of UnitingCare nationally. There are a few memorable things about the process of applying for and starting in this position:

Asking the interview panel what they thought it meant for a community service agency to be a Christian agency, as I was disappointed that they had not ask me that question. I think the answer was something like "that is an issue we are grappling with at present" (from the then UCV&T Director)

Finding that the agency considered the Uniting Church as little more than an "auspice body", with the sense that they could swap auspice bodies at their whim.

As far as I could ascertain there were no staff working in the agency that identified as practicing Christians. I did not have a Chaplain and no money or capacity to get one.

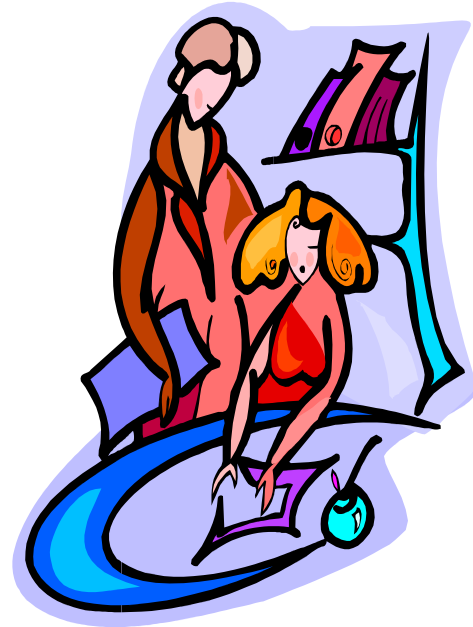
My first UnitingCare Victoria CEO's conference was devoid of much theological input, and totally free of any daily worship or reflection

I had no induction to the structures of the Uniting Church.

I did have a wonderful commissioning service from my Presbytery and great encouragement from Presbytery leaders and community services committees.

So the challenge of transforming this agency into my vision of what I thought a Christian community service agency might look like seemed quite overwhelming. I may have been caught thinking "where is God in the Uniting Church?"

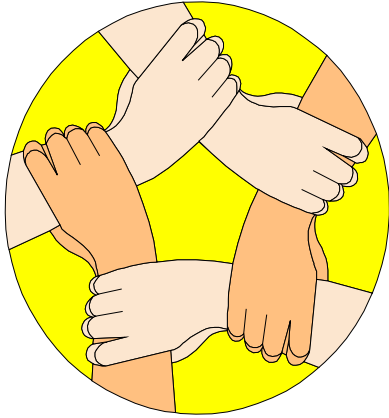
For me work has never been a job, although for most of my life I have been the breadwinner and have not had a choice about whether to work or not. For me, my role is a calling, a vocation that has the added benefit of paying the bills!



I came to this role from one in a national community services organization that had its roots in the evangelical mission tradition but was striving to become a strong national corporate body. Christianity in that organization was extremely overt, which had its own drawbacks.

I think the major challenge for that organization was that of congruence – strongly professing to be a Christian organisation but behaving in ways that sometimes seemed to be incongruent with Christian principles. This may have been in corporate decisions, in too strong an alignment with government to obtain funding therefore an unwillingness to advocate, or in the personal behaviour of managers, of which I was one. This organization was one in which I felt I could clearly express my faith and be supported in it. Challenging those incongruities proved a little more difficult!

My first job in this sector was with Lutheran Community Care, the community services arm of my own church community. After moving on from this role, I decided that my future involvements with my own Church would be on a voluntary basis. My father was a minister of the church so my life had always been closely intertwined with Church structures. However, I felt that working for the Church ran the risk of me being overwhelmed by the structure and politics, and not having the Church primarily as my faith community.



I have also felt a strong calling working outside of faith-based organizations. Employed by the Commonwealth Government through the 1980s I worked with a committed group of colleagues who were engaged in very positive, values-based transformation of the service system for vulnerable groups. The establishment of community care and the reform of disability services were just a few of these initiatives.

Values in leadership

So what does all of this mean for me in being a leader in a UnitingCare service today? My goal has always been to lead with a strong values base to provide high quality community services, and also run an efficient and well managed organization. After all stewardship is also a key Christian value.

Many times I have seen organizations do one or the other well – be highly ideological or very business like, with these being out of balance. A key value for me in this is integrity. If I am to identify as a Christian leader then I understand my behavior will always be under scrutiny. I don't always succeed in this, as I am a sinful human being after all. It can also lead people to accuse me of being too soft in staff disciplinary matters as I always want to ensure that people are fairly treated.

One of my favourite authors is Henri Nouwen who wrote The Wounded Healer amongst many other things. He addresses this to ministers but I think it applies equally to leaders of Christian organizations. Leaders are called to identify the suffering in their own hearts and make that the starting point of their service. For Nouwen, leaders must be willing to go beyond their professional, somewhat aloof role and leave themselves open as fellow human beings with the same wounds and suffering as those they serve. In other words, we heal from our wounds.

Leaders are called to identify the suffering in their own hearts and make that the starting point of their service.

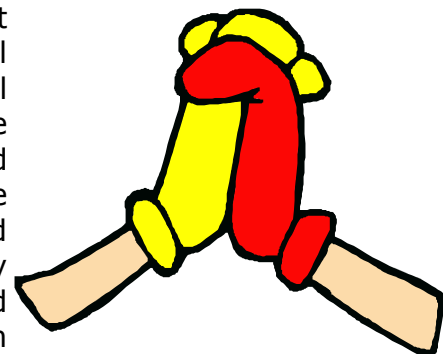
Interestingly, Jim Collins, author of Good to Great, identified characteristics of what he called "level 5 leaders" who led organizations who had sustained success over time. He says that these leaders had a paradoxical mix of personal humility and professional will. They recognized their own "woundedness" yet had a "calling" or determination to succeed in achieving the mission of the organization.

This leads to another principle, that of ensuring that the people we work with are treated with the greatest dignity and respect, and seen as partners in our service delivery. We call the people we work with "participants" to reflect this, and they are involved in all key aspects of the organization, from Board membership through to the partnerships with the individual staff who co-ordinate their support. We work with people, not "do to" them, and try to empower them to take as much control as possible of their own support arrangements.

All of the key stakeholders in our organization (staff, board and participants) were involved in developing our new vision, which is "A Good Life for All". This reflects the essence of John 10:10 "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

This vision is widely known and understood among staff (as measured in our recent employee opinion survey). It also applies across the organization – in the way we work with participants, for staff, board members and our partners in service delivery. We aim to be flexible and supportive so that everyone can live their lives to the full, regardless of disability or frailty, and in balancing their work-life commitments.

The employment of a Pastoral Care Outreach worker has also helped to achieve this – to ensure both participants and staff can speak to someone about their spiritual and emotional needs. The vision and values are covered comprehensively in induction and reinforced when



we come together as an agency.

We also have a set of "Guiding Principles" which have been developed in consultation with staff and guide how we act and behave towards one another in the organization. These are also well known by staff and displayed prominently across our offices.

Where are we going?

I think our pathway is now clear, but I am aware that we need to continually remind staff, the board and other stakeholders of our direction.

What route do we take?

This is constantly being re-evaluated as we gather evidence about how well we are meeting our aims, how satisfied our participants are, and whether there are new and better ways of doing our business.

Are we there yet?

We are some way down the track but definitely not there yet. We are a pilgrim people on a journey relying on God to lead us there. We also want to ensure that everyone is on the journey with us to achieve that life in its abundance.

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Strengthening CEOs faith and vocation

by John Bottomley

The research I carried out for UCVT sought to identify issues around which to strengthen the faith and vocation of UnitingCare CEOs, Boards and agencies. What is at stake in this enquiry is the understanding that faith is not about belief in certain dogma or theology, faith is about trust that there is in human experience more than meets the eye. That is, strengthening faith is about strengthening trust in the power that moves in human affairs to reveal the mystery of life in compassionate love, and is known for Christians as the God revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Each of the panelists and the ten CEOs I interviewed lived and worked with a sense that there was more to their agency leadership than balancing budgets, meeting KPIs, and delivering services to levels of government or professional accreditation standards. Even the CEO who described himself as 'probably agnostic on my good days' spoke with a restless yearning that saw beyond the shallow surface of the present with a passionate voice for justice.

What this research is saying is that the Church's response to this CEO is not to judge him for his lack of faith - because what he doesn't believe in I no longer believe in either! What this research is saying is that our trust is that his restless yearning for justice gives voice to the voice of God made known in Christ. And so for the sake of the world we are called to serve, the Church needs to find ways to strengthen this CEO's faith/trust and our trust that this awareness is gospel truth - it is good news that God is calling people to see beneath the surface of life to the heart of those yearning for God's justice and love.

The research points to a number of issues where CEOs identify what may strengthen their faith and their calling, and I will summarise some of these under the themes of nurturing memory and imagination.

Memory

Memory is the means by which we hear God's voice in story and lived experience. It is also

the means by which we hear God's voice in others stories, from other places and other times. Memory lifts us beyond the immediate, and expands our world.

Most CEOs said their childhood was formative for their faith, both for the role models of faith they were given, but also for several the foundational experience of their first awareness of God's character. What is being remembered here is not belief, but a life-forming relationship with the mystery of God's justice and love.

Most CEOs have a story to tell about one or more critical transition moments in their life journey - of personal struggle, critical illness, an encounter with violence, or divorce, or the painful impact of Church politics or the theological thought police on their faith. The power in these stories is their memory of renewed faith, of God's healing of their wounds, and their liberation to new possibilities.

These very personal and often rarely told stories are foundational for the way these CEOs go about doing what they do - they sit at the core of their professional practice. They are profoundly important memories, and in need of nurturing because they recall the light which penetrated the darkness and hold the yearning of their desire for others to know that light in times of darkness.

Most CEOs knew something of their agency's history, but few had an active remembering of their agency's heritage, or its founding charism or spirit. This is a product of a society that collapses history into the present, and lives for the moment - a trend given force by the rational spirit of agency amalgamations, and the increased importance of market competition for government funding.

CEOs believed it important to remain connected to the agency's founding vision and spirit. Some thought to do this by their organisational links with a congregation or Presbytery, or by focusing on the same client group, maintaining the spirit of the founding culture, or employing people of faith. None of these strategies incorporates remembering the

agency's history and recalling the story of its life, and so they run the risk of the agency losing its moorings in its tradition and becoming subject to the changing moods and trends of the present.

Remembering is at the heart of the Christian tradition, from the deep memory of the Hebrew slaves' liberation from Egypt that is retold across the Scriptures with ever new meaning, to Jesus' command to his disciples at his last meal with them to 'do this in remembrance of me'. Yet opportunities for remembering God's voice

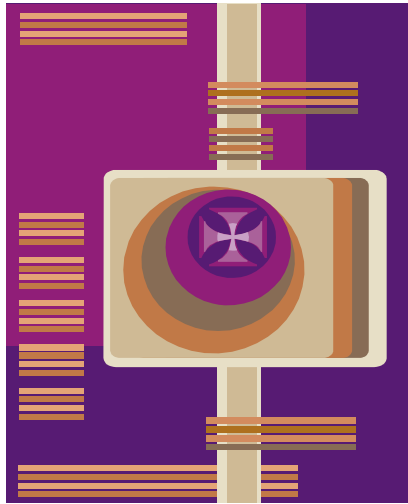
in Scripture and in their personal relationship with Christ were rare for the CEOs I interviewed. Only four said they had opportunities to discuss their faith in relation to work, at work, yet nine of the ten said they had a personal relationship with Christ or a relationship with God. When I listened to how important this relationship was for each of these CEOs, I felt a deep sense of grief about how little the Church has done to support and nurture the core of these dedicated people's calling to serve God's intention

for their lives and our world. This institutional forgetting of the faith and vocation of our lay leaders is a betrayal of Christ and Christ's command.

Imagination

Through imagination we may begin to see beneath the surface of life events, to see what is invisible to the eye - but not invisible to a heart formed by trust in God's justice and mercy - and then to respond in faith to what has been discerned. Imagination also expands our world and invites us to see wholeness and fullness coming to birth in the midst of chaos, suffering and injustice.

The majority of CEOs thought their Boards believed the main indicator that their agency was faith-based were organisational factors - they had links to other Church structures or complied with UCVT requirements. About half the CEOs were struggling with how to imagine their agencies as Church rather than as organisations with religious connections or 'trappings'. These leaders saw the central challenge for them was in the discernment, nurturing and understanding of faith itself in the life of the Board. This is similar to the need they identified for their own faith development.



CEOs also identified two contextual issues critical to the nurture of faith of Boards. One is a need for an imaginative voice to name the decline and dying of the traditional congregation and its associated structures. Nurturing faith that fails to speak into that context with its implications for agencies will remain captive to the institutional denial that leaves so much church life as a shallow existence in a fast vanishing present.

The second is a prophetic imagination that speaks to the narrow assumptions of the free market about human life, which challenges the co-optation of faith views to political ideologies, and which critiques the professionalisation and corporatisation of work relations. CEOs identified the biggest challenge to maintaining the faith-base of agencies came from the current political, social and economic environment.

Half the CEOs said their staff were the factor giving most direction to the agency today. CEOs then identified four key areas for staff that reflected the faith-base of the agency - being inclusive of staff irrespective of their beliefs, the service offered by volunteers, serving disadvantaged people and advocating for social

justice. Each of these areas reflects an awareness of a depth of commitment beyond the surface of an employment relationship between staff and agency that may be the imaginative ground for developing faith reflection and development programs for agency staff. The research report explores this ground for future possibilities.

Four CEOs said their clients were the factor giving most direction to the agency today, but I only included two client indicators in the survey for CEOs to identify how relations with clients reflected the agency's faith-basis. Listening to John and Ronda challenged me to realise my own lack of imagination, because both indicators focused on what the agency does for the client. 'What is God doing in that person's life?' and 'How is God speaking to me/our agency through this client(s)?' may be more imaginative questions to ask.

The awareness of God's intentions for creation is a gift of God's presence that is disclosed through relationships of trust and openness. Our prayer is that you have shared a glimpse of that in this workshop.

Creative Ministries Arts Fund

CMN does not ask for subscriptions from readers of 'The Voice'. Instead, we ask you to consider an annual contribution to the Creative Ministries Arts Fund.

The Arts Fund is a tax deductible fund that supports the ministry of healing, justice and reconciliation of the Creative Ministries Network.

Donations to the Arts Fund empower projects that can build a worshipping and serving community strengthened for ministry by integrating the arts with:

- Social development, including Work-related Grief Support, Veterans Faith and Wellbeing Support, and creative opportunities for Aboriginal women.
- Education, training and faith development, including publication of 'The Voice'.
- Contemporary worship, and prayer.

The arts play a vital role at CMN in integrating the life of faith with life in all its dimensions.

Wholeness of body, mind and spirit is a most pressing issue facing the future of each person, the church and our nation. At CMN, we believe healing, justice and reconciliation are the foundations for the wholeness the Creator desires for us all.

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible. Gifts of support may be sent to 'Creative Ministries Arts Fund' P.O. Box 362, St. Kilda 3182.

Venue change for Contemplative Worship

Contemplative Worship has moved to 15 Cromwell Road, South Yarra, and continues, as before, on the second and fourth Sundays of each month at 7.00 p.m.

The Service explores God's deep longing for communion with humankind, and is patterned on a journey to 'rest in the heart of life'. In this Service:

Rest in the silence that whispers of divine grace.

Contemplate God's deep desire for healing, justice and reconciliation in our world.

Meditate on a gospel text in the manner of Ignatian spirituality to learn of Christ's intention for your life.

Be supported by prayerful companions in your faith journey.

The CMN Board expresses its gratitude to St. George's East St. Kilda Uniting Church Council for its hospitality and support for Contemplative Worship over the past three and a half years. St. George's has commenced a new service of Multicultural Worship on a regular basis on Sunday afternoons.

For further details, please contact St. George's minister, Revd. Angela Tampiyappa on 9731 0604.
