

The Voice

A Quarterly for prophetic and artistic imagination
 Number 35 ISSN 1444-3708 Summer 2012/13



Celebrating new work at CMN

November 30 saw the Presbytery of Port Phillip East commission two CMN staff to their new responsibilities for our mission of healing, justice and reconciliation. Michael Mitchell was commissioned as Manager of the Restorative Justice Service and John Phillips was commissioned as chaplain to the Veterans' community. CMN Director John Bottomley reminded the new staff and friends of CMN of the calling we shared.

Imprisoned by injustice

At our most recent CMN Board meeting, the Board received a deputation from the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union requesting CMN become a partner in the FairWear campaign. The FairWear campaign has worked strenuously to improve the working conditions and pay of perhaps one of the most vulnerable groups in Australia. It is mostly migrant women who work as 'outworkers' or in sweatshops as machinists, sewing clothes for as little as \$5 or \$6 an hour that later sell for \$300 or more in boutiques and department stores.

A Vietnamese-born worker told her story. She escaped Vietnam as a boat refugee and worked for years in her garage sewing clothes for a pittance for leading mens' and women's clothing companies. "My garage was my small prison," she lamented. Her life was captive to an unjust world that was virtually hidden from the rest of the world.

God's liberating and comforting intent

This is the context in which the prophet Isaiah announced the beginning of a new prophetic ministry. The community in Jerusalem was riddled with division, conflict and injustice. The long exile in Babylon had taken its toll. Even though the community had escaped Babylon, there was no freedom in their new environment. Yet when the situation appeared hopeless, God called forth a new ministry, someone whose task it was to "bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners." (Is 61)

THE VOICE
 is published
 by the
**Creative
 Ministries
 Network**
 - an agency of
 UnitingCare
 Victoria and
 Tasmania

Street Address:
 15 Cromwell Rd
 South Yarra Vic

Postal Address:
 P.O. Box 362
 St. Kilda
 Vic 3182

Email Address:
 admin@cmn.
 unitingcare.org.au

Website: www.cmn.
 unitingcare.org.au

Tel /Fax:
 (03) 9827 8322

CONTENTS

Celebrating new work at CMN	1	Not conformed, but transformed	2
Trends in demand for grief support	3	CMN congregation in 2013	3
CMN Director advertisement	4	Veterans' well-being and support	4

For the Vietnamese-born worker, the spirit of God's liberating intent was embodied in the TCF Union and the FairWear campaign. These were the instruments of good news and a new future for her life. This evening, we are commissioning Michael and John to be instruments of this same prophetic ministry to people bereaved by road and work-related traumatic deaths, and veterans of war service and their families. Their work will be both pastoral and political.

Isaiah proclaims that God's good news will bring "comfort to all who mourn ... (it will) give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. (61³). So these ministries are to have a restorative emphasis.

Your ministries will seek to embrace all who mourn, to reach out to re-clothe those burdened by destructive violence, bring healing to wounded souls, and renewed life to those depressed and despairing. Both perpetrator and victim may be the focus of your work, and the window into their humanity may be their grief, their sorrow, their apology, their mourning.

Working within the horizon of God's justice

At the same time, Isaiah calls you to a radical politics, "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God" (61²). The year of the Lord's favour in Israel's life was every 50 years. It was a Jubilee year of economic justice, when the wealthy were mandated to return land to its peasant landowners that the rich had acquired by their power and wealth.

But that was only half of it! The prophet was also commissioned to remind the Jewish people that God would take revenge against those who practiced injustice. This is profoundly important as you work with victims of injustice and perpetrators of violence and war. It is not your job or our agency's task to enforce our views of justice on people. It is not your task to mete out justice, although you will often be angry and distressed at

the injustice you encounter. However you see these matters, Isaiah declares a great promise that falls from the mouth of God – "For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing" (61⁸). This is the large horizon for your politics. Discern how God is moving in human affairs to overturn corrupt and self-centred power, and then act in solidarity with God's power to hold to account those who practice injustice.

Trusting God's unmerited grace

We could not believe the impossibility of this promise except that we know the transformation of our own hearts. John and Michael, you are here today because you know a grace in your life that has rebuilt your heart when it was broken. You know the joy of being released from the prison of grief, and being freed from captivity to despair.

Isaiah reminds you what knowing this promise may mean for your work. Those who know the transforming power of such a loving spirit "will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord" (61³). All of your work may then be joined to something larger than each of you, for your work will point to a spirit of ultimate value and life-giving justice for all humankind. In Isaiah's words, you will be richly blessed. "You shall be named ministers of (our) God" (61⁶), our God, whose character is to love justice.

Not conformed, transformed: celebrating CMNs 29th Anniversary

This year is a significant time of transition at CMN. Long-serving Board member Hazel Williams retired recently after 16 years dedicated service to the CMN Board, and Hazel's contribution will be acknowledged at the 29th Anniversary Service on Sunday 24th February. Barry Mitchell concludes 15 years' service in April, and Michelle Ehlers marks 12 years of Board membership later in the year, including six years as Chairperson. In addition, CMN's founding Director, John Bottomley, retires as Director in April to take up the new part-time position of Manager of Workplace Ministry and Research.

Barry and Michelle will reflect on their experience of Board membership under the theme of 'not conformed, transformed'. Their reflections on their individual transforming experiences of Board membership may challenge and encourage all who come to grasp how our lives are not to conform to this world, but be transformed to serve God's future of justice and wholeness.

The service will again be blessed by Mood Swing choir. All are welcome at 15 Cromwell Road, South Yarra at 7.00 p.m. and after the service, supper will be provided.

CMN Board vacancies

The CMN Board is inviting expressions of interest from people interested in filling one of two vacancies on the Board.

The Board meets monthly on the third Monday of each month (not January) to exercise its governance responsibilities for CMNs mission and well-being as a member of the UnitingCare network of agencies.

For more information, please contact the Director, John Bottomley. Expressions of interest need to be submitted by 28 February 2013.

Work-related Grief Support:

trends in demand for CMN's service

The number of new clients in CMN's Work-related Grief Support service increased significantly in the previous 12 months from 28, compared with 14 for the previous year, and 19 for the period 2009-2010.

The increased number of new clients this year is reflected in the increased demand for client support hours of support. Coordinator Bette Phillips has been very busy providing client support to meet the increased demand. The service is responding to a range of complex traumatic grief issues clients present with from all parts of Victoria, especially as grief support from

professional agencies is extremely limited in most regional areas.

However, the mainstay of WGS is still the Coordinator's home visits across Victoria. A home visit is the foundation for the program for all families, including the increasing number from rural and regional areas. Other activities that stand out in 2012 include:

The Coordinator supported a client/volunteer to instigate a Suicide Prevention Awareness Network walk in Bendigo.

The WGS Annual remembrance service was conducted in November, and was well attended.

The Timber Workers Memorial Service was conducted in October and approximately 200 attended.

The quarterly WGS Newsletter contains a mix of clients' personal stories, reports on CMN research and activities, and up-to-date advice on living with grief and trauma.

Regular monthly social dinners and lunches provide valued informal support activities where clients can safely gather to connect and share experiences.

A week-end retreat, 'Life's Journey', provided a rich time for integrating art, meditation, socialising time, good food and music in a supportive environment.

Anyone who would like to receive the WGS Newsletter is requested to send their mailing details to admin@cmn.unitingcare.org.au

CMN Congregation 2013

After our successful end of year retreat, the congregation has decided to meet five times during 2013. The first gathering is on Sunday 24th February at 4.00 p.m. at 15 Cromwell Road, South Yarra.

We will begin with our faith-sharing conversation, followed by the congregational meeting at 5.30 p.m. and dinner with a take-away meal at 6.00 p.m. The congregation will then join the CMN anniversary service at 7.00 p.m.

Dates for congregational gathering for the remainder of 2013 are:

Sunday 5 May

Sunday 21 July

Sunday 1 September

The format for these gatherings is for everyone to bring something to share for the meal, to start at 6.00 p.m. We plan a faith-sharing time from 7.00 p.m. and have 30 minutes of business from 8.30 p.m.

Put the dates for the next Mount Martha retreat weekend in your diary now. We have planned it for 15-17 November.

For more information about the activities of the CMN congregation, contact Barry Mitchell, 9397 7153 or Sue Earl 0419 565 201

Advertisement for the position of CMN Director (CEO): leading justice at work

You will have:

- A strong social justice commitment
- Entrepreneurial creativity
- Operational management experience
- A holistic theological vision
- A relevant tertiary qualification
- Sound computer skills

You will:

- Lead a small, dedicated team in South Yarra.
- Report to a talented and committed Board who share this church agency's mission.

The Creative Ministries Network is a UnitingCare agency of the Uniting Church. Our passion is to enhance the quality of life in Australian workplaces.

For a Position Description call 9827 8322, email

bette.phillips@cmn.unitingcare.org.au

or download from

www.cmn.unitingcare.org.au

The Creative Ministries Network has been approved by the Australian Tax Office as a Deductible Gift Recipient. This means all donations to CMN can be claimed as a tax deduction by donors.

Creative Ministries Network

VETERANS WELL-BEING AND SUPPORT

This free service is available for former defence force men and women and their families in the hope of enhancing their personal healing, health and spiritual wellbeing. This ministry is open to all who have experienced military life, whether engaged in active service or not. We can provide hospitality, home visiting, counselling, contemplative quiet days, de-stressing techniques, retreats, creative arts and other activities that may emerge from this experience.



Veterans Chaplain, **John Phillips**, has spent many years working in parish communities, schools, and health care. An Anglican priest, pastor, theologian and Master of Counselling, John has spent the past nine years caring for patients, their families and staff in haematology/oncology and palliative care at the Mater Hospital in Brisbane where he journeyed with many veterans.

If you feel you or your family may benefit from this ministry please email: john.phillips@cmn.unitingcare.org.au or phone 9692 9405 or 0438 545 359.

'Soul food for those who have served'

Creative Ministries Network is an agency of UnitingCare, the Uniting Church in Australia, www.cmn.unitingcare.org.au