

BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

ANNUAL REPORT

2011 - 2012

CREATIVE MINISTRIES NETWORK incorporating

CREATIVE MINISTRIES NETWORK ARTS FUND
TRUSTEES' AND CONGREGATION ANNUAL REPORTS

Presented to the
Annual Reporting Meeting
Creative Ministries Network
15 October 2012



We acknowledge the Wurrundjeri people
of the Kulin nation, the first inhabitants
of this place. We honour them for their
custodianship of the land on which we
gather for this meeting.

CREATIVE MINISTRIES NETWORK

'BEING THE CHURCH FOR TRANSFORMING THE WORLD'

ANNUAL REPORT

The Creative Ministries Network's ministry is called forth by God's creative vision of a faithful community of people liberated from the gods of the worlds of work and contemporary culture that cause injustice, suffering and division to live in relationships restored by healing, justice and reconciliation.

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BOARD MEMBERS 2011 – 2012

Chairperson: Michelle Ehlers

Members:

Mary Tehan

*John Adamsons
(retired April 2012)*

Brian Cooper

Sue Earl

Barry Mitchell

Dana van de Weil

Hazel Williams

Ex officio: John Bottomley

Chairperson's Report

Perhaps the Board's attention to a number of small and personal matters underpins the Board's responsiveness to a range of significant challenges and opportunities for the future of Creative Ministries Network.

The Board was saddened to hear when former Board member Barry Pearce's cancer entered a terminal phase, and introduced a time of prayer for Barry at the conclusion of our meetings up until his death. Our sadness at Barry's suffering and the injustice of war-related illness experienced by too many Vietnam Veterans was felt keenly by Board members.

The importance of turning to God in faith became an even more important commitment of Board members, who roster themselves to lead our meetings' opening reflection and lay out the reconciliation mosaic tiles created at a recent Board retreat as a centre-piece for our meetings. The Board also has taken time at meetings for members to offer a reflection on their experience of 'Spirit at work'. These reflections and members' responses have enriched our meetings and our mission.

The Board has also invited three people to join the Board who took advantage of our policy to 'come and see' for two meetings. This opportunity helped each of these three people to decide they could not make the commitment to regular Board meetings. We wish each of them well, with a sense of gratitude for their integrity and honesty. In each of these personal matters, the Board is strengthened by the experience of honest and trusting relationships, including our relationship with God in prayer, in shared suffering and the pain of injustice, and the gift of gracious love.

The board reviewed the benefits of our meetings, stating the Board provides:

1. Participation in a culture of creativity that contributes to healing, justice and reconciliation in society.
2. Congruence of issues CMN deals with to the critical issues in today's society.
3. Opportunities for personal reflection on members own values and the spirit that motivates their own work.
4. An opportunity to engage in theological reflection that pushes members boundaries of understanding issues.
5. An informal atmosphere at meetings.
6. An enriching and energising experience.

I believe the many ways we are strengthened for our work as a Board came to the fore as the Board discerned the future following our sale of the Hotham Street East St. Kilda property. We contributed funds to the new owners, St. Nicholas Russian Catholic Church for the restoration and consolidation of memorial plaques within the church building. The Board also commissioned an Honour Board for a number of smaller pew memorials and plaques to be retained by CMN.

The Board was grateful for financial advice from the UC Synod on investing the property sale proceeds, and held a special meeting with staff to consider future possibilities. The Board invested a portion of the Hotham St. sale proceeds in the Synod's Growth Fund, while committing to spend a portion of the proceeds on new initiatives over a five years period. The new initiatives included establishing the position of Manager for our proposed Restorative Justice Service, employing a consultant researcher for a study on the impact of workers' compensation on injured workers suicidal thinking, and contributing to the establishment of the Veterans' Chaplaincy Service.

An unanticipated consequence of the Synod's advice on investment was the Board was able to register CMN with the Australian Tax Office for income tax exempt charity (ITEC) status.

This was followed with registration as a Public Benevolent Institution, providing Deductible Gift Recipient Status for CMN, and finally approval for FBT exemption. These registrations have assisted the Board to achieve a higher rate of interest on our Synod funds, to attract donations and philanthropic grants, as well as offer salary packaging to staff.

A further significant milestone was our signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Port Phillip East Presbytery regarding CMN establishing a congregation of the Uniting Church. Presbytery next recognised the names of our foundation members for a CMN congregation, and inaugurated the new congregation at the Board's anniversary service.

The regular work of the Board also proceeded.

- The Annual Meeting received reports from the Board, the Director and the Arts Fund trustees, with audited annual financial reports for the CMN and the Arts Fund. A forum led by Derek Brookes on the use of restorative justice to respond to work-related injustice was well received.
- The Director and I met with the WorkSafe CEO and senior managers.
- The stages of our Directions Vision were revised on a continuous basis over the course of the year, and the three years review of our Directions Vision was completed. The Board agreed to continue our current theme for the Directions Vision of 'Being the Church for transforming the world', to continue to focus on Paul's letters in the New Testament as a focus for Board reflections, and to continue to structure the Directions Vision on stages based on the Ignatian spiritual exercises used in the Contemplative Worship series, with a prayer/ritual and set of plans for each stage.
- Brian Cooper and I conducted the Director's annual appraisal and reported to the Board on John Bottomley's desire to retire from the position of Director at a mutually agreed time after his 65th birthday. The Board developed the first stages of a succession plan. This includes establishing a framework for how the Board sees the agency's future, and the creation of a new part-time position of Manager, Workplace Ministry and Research to offer to John Bottomley to ensure a smooth transition and for CMN to benefit from John's experience in consolidating this core area of our vocation.
- The Board accepted John Adamsons' decision not to re-nominate for the Board and thanked him for his thoughtful and generous work as a member.
- The Board developed a conflict of interest policy and a policy for fraud detection.
- We reviewed our policy priorities for 2011, and established a new set of five priority areas for 2012.

When the Director and Office Manager were on long service leave, the Board appreciated Rev Steve Crump work as A/Director/Office Manager.

A personal highlight was the opportunity to chair the first Remembrance Eve dinner, with the Board's US guest and Vietnam veteran, Rev. Jackson Day as speaker. Jack's address to the dinner guests and the attendance of a group of Vietnamese veterans of the Vietnam War was in many ways a fulfilment of Barry Pearce's vision of the role of the church in promoting peace, healing and reconciliation.

On behalf of all Board members, I thank John Bottomley for his continued leadership and guidance of our Board; we wish him strengthened prudence and good health as he continues to prepare for his retirement. So too do we pass on our appreciation to Marg Neith and Bette Phillips for their diligent work and support of our Board.

Michelle Ehlers
CHAIRPERSON

Director's Report

This report of CMN's programs for 2011-2012 is presented within the Board's Directions Vision three years framework (2012-2015) with a renewed focus on 'being the church for transforming the world'.

Acknowledging our foundations

CMN acknowledges the Wurrundjeri people of the Kulin nation, the first inhabitants of the place where CMN is located. We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we work and pray.

Responding to the gift of our inheritance

Understanding and transforming our colonial inheritance

A four part Lenten series on 'Colonisation and Conversion: Life, Death and Resurrection in Aboriginal Australia' unfortunately needed to be postponed. It is hoped this series will proceed at a later date, as the issues arising for anglo-Australian inheritors of the colonial invasion remain largely ignored in both church and nation.

Aboriginal Women's Access Art Studio

We are grateful to Prahran Mission for facilitating the relocation of the Aboriginal Women's Art Studio to a dedicated art space at 211 Chapel Street Prahran. The Art Studio received a grant from the Share Community Appeal, which funded the program and equipment that allows students to photograph their work for an archiving and book project. Jessica Kritzer has encouraged students to develop their art, including students keeping the work they do in the Studio. Jess has continued to develop our relationship with Winja Ulupna residence for Aboriginal women in drug and alcohol recovery, a relationship of more than 11 years.

Stage one

Facing our personal and social disorder

Restorative Justice (RJ) after a traumatic death

The Board demonstrated its commitment to establishing a RJ Service by funding a Manager's position to lead its development. We are delighted that Michael Mitchell has accepted this appointment.

Training for healing, justice and reconciliation

Training provided by the Director included:

- Professional supervision on a regular basis for seven church workers in the past year.
- Development of a pilot workshop on the ethical formation of ministers in cooperation with two colleagues.
- Facilitating a workshop for the Bereavement Support Groups Network on 'staff wellbeing'.

The WGS Coordinator facilitated two workshops on grief support with Jane Woollard using CMN's documentary 'Prophet and Loss'. One workshop was for volunteer staff at a UnitingCare agency and the other for teachers at UC schools. This was part of a Share-funded project.

'Prophet and Loss' was distributed by the Synod's Commission for Mission to congregations in Victoria and Tasmania. Rev. Peter Burnham developed an engaging study guide to support use of the DVD with congregations.

Called to serve all people

We have endeavoured to ensure CMN services are open to all people.

Artists and arts-based creative activity programs support

The sale of the Hotham Street facility concluded CMN's support for creative activity programs. Margaret Neith managed the program's closure effectively, and all the tenants of 72 Hotham St were relocated to new premises, without incident.

Work-related Grief Support

An annual grant from WorkSafe continues to provide vital support for this program. We are also grateful for the financial support of law firm Ryan Carlisle Thomas and several individual donors. The program continues to provide support for people in rural and regional Victoria bereaved by work-related death from any cause. This is the only work-related grief support program supporting those bereaved by work-related suicide, and sadly, this is a growing number.

Veterans Faith and Wellbeing Support (VFWS)

Rev Jackson Day, a US Vietnam Veteran and United Methodist minister was brought to Melbourne by CMN to fulfil a commitment we made to our friends at the US-based International Conference of War Veteran Ministers. Jack was guest speaker at the first CMN Remembrance Eve dinner, a well attended and inspiring event. He preached at Wesley UC and St. Paul's Cathedral for Remembrance Sunday, led a one-day workshop on 'Spiritual wounds and mental health' at the Centre for Theology and Ministry, met with two Indigenous people to inform his United Methodist conversations with native Americans, shared in a hospitality dinner with Sri Lankan Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah, and attended Contemplative Worship at Geelong followed by a Vietnam Veterans Geelong branch barbeque. Jack's visit was warmly received at every point, and was a fruitful development in how CMN understands the international and inter-related dimensions of Christian ministry.

Stage two

Openness to Christ's kingdom of love and justice

Research, policy and planning

The Board's commitment to strengthening relationships across the Uniting Church is reflected in the diverse range of research, policy and planning projects undertaken with UC partners. A book on social justice in Australia in prophetic perspective by John Bottomley and Professor Howard Wallace is with the publisher. A research report for the mental health services/ministries for Yarra Yarra Presbytery was published to warm acclaim. Planning with ministers engaged with new approaches to ministry in Presbytery of Port Phillip West has helped each minister be affirmed in their distinctive calling and giftedness for ministry.

CMN research into justice at work reflects our distinctive commitment to engage with work situations causing injustice and suffering. Margaret Neith and John Bottomley published their report *Cutting Corners* for 'United Voice' on the working conditions of cleaners in large shopping malls. The project also enjoyed strong support from the Moderator of the Victoria and Tasmania Synod, Isabel Thomas-Dobson, and the Justice and International Mission Unit of the Synod.

Peace Fund

The Fund has provided ongoing support for monthly Contemplative Worship services for Veterans in Geelong and the Jaffna Diocese, Church of South India in its ministry with victims of Sri Lanka's civil war. The Fund also underwrote the visit of Rev. Jackson Day from the United States.

Web page

Marg Neith and Sue Earl have continued to update material on the web page, while beginning to develop a new format with the invaluable assistance of Rev. Geoff Hurst.

Mission and ministry at work

Sarah Pollock is consultant researcher for a research project on the impact the Victorian workers compensation system has on injured workers' mental health. The Australian Education Union and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union have agreed to be involved in the project.

A Discussion Paper on mission and ministry at work for the Synod's Commission for Mission has led to three pilot projects at congregation, agency and Synod levels respectively.

The Director did interviews on work factors in suicide for ABC TVs '7.30', and for ABC Radio National 'Encounter'.

Staff

Staff meet monthly for mutual support, program planning and to review and update staff policies, including policies for occupational health and safety, injury reporting, first aid, personal/carers leave, staff induction and salary packaging.

Stage three

Walking with those who suffer

Work-related Grief Support (WGS)

The number of new WGS clients for the 12 months was 28 people, compared with 14 for the previous period 2010-2011. This increase is testimony to the increasing respect WGS enjoys, with many referrals coming from new sources in the past year. The increase is also due to the breadth of work-related deaths this program is competent to respond to, especially the increase due to work-related suicide.

The Coordinator, Bette Phillips, supported a client/volunteer to instigate a Suicide Prevention Awareness Network walk in Bendigo, resulting in four new clients, and has followed up a news report with the Ambulance Employees Association on recent suicides amongst paramedics. The union is now working with Bette to consider how to provide grief support to families bereaved from work-related suicide.

In the past year the Coordinator made home visits in the Melbourne suburbs of Ferntree Gully, Balwyn, Rowville, Lilydale, Port Melbourne, Newport, Hoppers Crossing, and Frankston and across Victoria, including clients living in, Warburton, Warburton East, Warrigal, Morwell, Ballarat, Geelong, Bendigo, Maryborough, Lara, Leopold, Herne Hill, Grovedale, Moriac, Bell Post Hill, Strathdale, Spring Gully and Yarrawonga. The commitment to rural and regional families is increasingly important with the growing number of work-related deaths in these areas.

Amongst regular activities of the WGS program, the following may be highlighted:

- The WGS Annual Remembrance Service was well attended.
- A second Timber Workers Memorial Service was conducted and approximately 200 attended.
- The quarterly WGS Newsletter receives regular feedback affirming the mix of clients' personal stories, reports on CMN research and activities, and up-to-date advice on living with grief and trauma.

- There is regular and appreciative attendance at monthly social dinners and lunches, which testifies to the value of informal support activities where clients can safely gather to connect and share experiences.

WGS is committed to support clients with a range of personal and advocacy responses to issues arising from their grief and trauma. These responses include:

- Support for an individual to organise a special service of remembrance after she had been excluded from earlier family rituals.
- A week-end retreat, 'Life's Journey', experiencing the richness of integrating art, meditation, socializing time, good food and music in a supportive environment.
- Organising 'time out' to provide respite from the burden of grief.
- Being attentive to the mental health difficulties created by multiple traumatic deaths, as experienced by a client whose father died in a work-related incident and then suffered her partner's suicide a few years later.
- Drawing upon suicide awareness training to support clients, especially those burdened by multiple bereavements, and working as part of a support team with other specialists.

The Coordinator is active in the Victorian Bereavement Support Groups Network, while the Director meets regularly with WorkSafe to represent the concerns entrusted to us.

Veterans Faith and Wellbeing Support (VFWS)

CMN is delighted the St. George's East St. Kilda Uniting Church Council provides a grant to help establish a Veterans Chaplaincy Service. We are especially grateful for how the relationship with St. George's has guided our understanding of the needs of the veterans' community. The recent appointment of Rev. John Phillips as Veterans' Community Chaplain is testimony to the significance of our partnership.

Sri Lanka Partnership Project

CMN continued its support for Jaffna Diocese, Church of South India's ministry with war-affected communities through an annual grant, and actively supports the Sri Lanka Partnership Program with JDCSI and St. George's East St. Kilda Church Council. Anto Samuel concluded her faithful organisation of a network of people who sponsored JDCSI's Samuel Boys Home.

CMN hosted a service of lament on the third anniversary of the end of the civil war for the Partnership Project.

CMN's Director and the Commission for Mission Exec Director met with two Sri Lankan-born ministers to begin a process for strengthening relations within the Sri Lankan diaspora in the Synod.

Restorative Justice Service

The Service has begun discussion with the Road Trauma Support Service to discern the feasibility of RJ in relation to those affected by road traffic deaths.

Stage four

Receiving the gifts of friendship and delight

Worship

CMN conducts Contemplative Worship once a month for Veterans in Geelong, and witnesses to the agency's faith at the annual Anniversary Service and a Service of Remembrance for those bereaved by work-related deaths.

The Director also conducted a wedding, and a house blessing for a gay couple.

Partnerships

The partnership with St. George's East St. Kilda Uniting Church Council sustains the Sri Lanka Partnership Project, and a mutually supportive collegial relationship between the Director and St. George's minister, Rev. Angela Tampiyappa. CMN appreciates the financial and prayerful support of the Council. The Director preached at several services at St. George's, as well as providing support for the annual Memorial Service.

CMN is also well served by its relations with the UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania Unit and the Presbytery of Port Phillip East.

Expressing gratitude for life and God's presence

Faith story

The faith story of CMN is told through a growing network of relationships. 'The Voice', CMN's quarterly for prophetic and artistic imagination continues to give fresh expression to our faith journey and is now printed in colour.

The Presbytery of Port Phillip East recognised ten people as founding members of a CMN congregation, and inaugurated the new congregation at the Anniversary Service. Subsequently the Board transferred responsibility for Contemplative Worship and fifth Monday faithful conversations to the new congregational Council (see the Church Council report below).

Heritage

The sale of CMN's property at 72 Hotham Street resulted in \$1,131,182.35 being received by CMN, and \$484,792 shared with the wider church.

The Board is grateful to John Campbell for furnishing CMN with an Honour Board that maintains the integrity of the plaques and memorials associated with the former East St. Kilda UC congregation. We appreciate the gesture of the Russian Church of St. Nicholas in restoring and rehangng memorials from the East St. Kilda Congregational Church in the entrance foyer of the Church.

Thanks

Staff members wish to express their gratitude to the Board for their commitment to CMN's vision and the steps in faith they have taken during the year to strengthen and expand our ministry and mission.

I am personally grateful to both Board members and our staff. I especially thank Bette Phillips, Margaret Neith, Jessica Kritzer, Michael Mitchell and Robin Dennis for their generous spirits, good humour, creativity and competence. In the face of ongoing injustice, suffering and violence, these are for me signs of God's presence that calls and equips us to restore relationships through healing, justice and reconciliation.

John Bottomley
DIRECTOR

The CMN Uniting Church congregation

At a special service on Sunday 26th February 2012, members of the Port Phillip East Presbytery inaugurated a new Uniting Church congregation within the life and ministry of the Creative Ministries Network.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the CMN Board and Presbytery paved the way for this new venture which was established on the anniversary of the formation of the Urban Ministry Network (forerunner to CMN) 28 years ago.

The MOU provides for the congregation to meet under the “Alternative Regulations for Church Councils in Small Congregations”, which means that the congregational meeting carries out the responsibilities of a Church Council in a more traditional setting.

The CMN Board will take responsibility for property and financial matters, so the congregation is free to be a worshipping community with whatever other activities the members decide.

The inspiration for moving to establish a CMN congregation came from the 2006 Assembly paper *Being Church Differently*. This paper spoke of congregations coming together on the basis of shared work-places and shared interests, rather than on the basis of where they live. It also invited Presbyteries, congregations, and community service agencies to seek a fuller expression of the gospel of Christ by bringing words (confessing the faith) and deeds (providing community services) closer together.

After calling for expressions of interest from the network of people associated with the Creative Ministries Network, 10 people came forward indicating their willingness to commit to the establishment of the new congregation, and declaring their desire to express their faith through worship, witness, and service.

The CMN congregation is making plans for a retreat weekend in November 2012 to give time to sharing their faith journeys, their community involvements, and plans for their ministry in the future.

Barry Mitchell
CHAIRPERSON

Sue Earl
SECRETARY

Creative Ministries Arts Fund: Trustees' Report

The Creative Ministries Arts Fund provides tax deductibility for donations to the Network's art-based programs.

The Fund received a grant from the Share Community Appeal to continue and strengthen the Aboriginal Women's Art Studio, and donations from a couple of individuals.

Regular six-monthly reports on the operation of the Fund in 2011-12 have been submitted to the Register of Cultural Organisations.

The Trustees authorised the Creative Ministries Network Board to determine priority projects for the Fund's expenditure in 2011-12.

Projects supported by donations to the fund in 2011-2012 were:

- The provision of training modules using the documentary, 'Prophet and Loss' as a resource.
- The Aboriginal Women's Art Studio.

Barry Mitchell
Paul Mayfield
John Bottomley
TRUSTEES