

BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

ANNUAL REPORT

2008 - 2009

CREATIVE MINISTRIES NETWORK

incorporating

**CREATIVE MINISTRIES NETWORK ARTS FUND
TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT**

Presented to the
Annual Reporting Meeting
Creative Ministries Network
9 September 2009



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 DIRECTIONS' VISION ANNUAL REPORT

The Creative Ministries Network's ministry is called forth by God's prophetic and 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 2008 – 09

Chairperson: Michelle Ehlers

Members:

Mary Tehan (Deputy Chairperson)

John Adamsons

Brian Cooper

Sue Earl

Barry Mitchell

Barry Pearce

Hazel Williams

Ex officio: John Bottomley

Chairperson's Report 2008-2009

During 2008-09, the CMN Board adopted the framework of Ignatian spiritual exercises as our framework to discern CMN's vocation for God's mission of healing, justice and reconciliation. The Board recognised the need to live within the tension of our faith and vocation on one hand, and benchmarks from corporate sector and organisational identity on the other hand.

The Board chose to turn away from the rational and objectivist planning assumptions of strategic planning and move to a Directions Vision that discerns the agency's vocation. Our Directions Vision incorporates two affirmations:

1. The Board sees our Vision as a ministry plan because we seek to do God's will.
2. The Board has come to know more collectively the character of God, so we act the way we do because God calls us to act in relationship to God's character, or in keeping with God's character.

The framework acknowledges the foundation for our vocation is God's goodness in creation, beyond our dreaming. This mythical/theological time also locates the Indigenous people as First Nations of this land, Australia. This annual report is set within the framework of the Board's Directions Vision, so that it tells the story of our journey in service and praise as a Board, staff and community of faith.

The Board also revised the governance documents it had developed since 2004 in the light of its Directions Vision, and reformulated them as 'Governance Faith Foundation and Policies'.

The first part of the year focused on planning for the Network's 25th anniversary. We approached people associated with the history of CMN to contribute a reflection on their connection with Urban Ministry Network/Centre for Creative Ministries/Creative Ministries Network. Their stories were compiled into a lively collection, "Like Streams in a Dry Place". The Board and staff met for dinner to mark our mile-stone, then hosted a celebratory service of worship on the theme of 'forgiveness' that was attended by many from past and present who had shared the journey. Vince Ross, Director of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (Victoria) was guest speaker, and with his wife Enid graciously engaged those present in deepening our awareness of the importance of forgiveness in journeying through healing to justice and reconciliation.

As part of our commitment to be at the heart of the Network's faith community, the Board agreed our meeting's opening prayer would incorporate reflection on the texts from Isaiah that mark the stages of our vision. In September, Board members attended the first annual worship service with St. George's East St. Kilda Uniting Church. Our annual retreat day was led by Rev. Joan Wright-Howie on the theme of 'forgiveness'. In April the Board initiated '5th Wednesday faith conversations' with a shared meal for those interested in faith conversations.

The Board held the Network's Annual Meeting in August, where consultant Dr. Derek Brookes engaged us in an inspiring conversation about the place of restorative justice in responding to work-related deaths.

The Board responded to a request from the Jaffna Diocese, Church of South India to join a partnership with St. George's to support the Diocese in responding to the crisis in Sri Lanka caused by the long-running civil war.

The Board was especially appreciative of the Director's report on the project on Indigenous leadership in the Church, agreeing to enter a time of waiting and reflection on the report. In particular, we wanted to prayerfully examine our assumptions as western Christians. The Board agreed to also test our reflection in relation to our Veterans Faith and Wellbeing Support program and the Sri Lanka Partnership Program. The Board has expressed its appreciation to the Revd. Garry Deverell for the integrity of his struggle with the project, and for the opportunity he has given to the CMN to reflect more deeply on what it means for non-Indigenous Australians to seek after justice and reconciliation with Indigenous people.

The Board cancelled the June meeting to attend the preview night of 'Prophet and loss'.

The Board took steps to ensure our long service leave fund was adequate to meet future staff needs.

The Board has been well served this year by the commitment and gifts of all members. The Board expressed its gratitude to Barry Mitchell for his ten year's service to the Urban Ministry Network Council and Creative Ministries Network Board. I am also grateful to Deputy Chairperson Mary Tehan for her willingness to chair Board meetings on occasions when I have been unable to attend.

This has been a particularly fruitful year for CMN with our 25th anniversary, the highly successful staging of 'Prophet and Loss', and the profound work undertaken into restorative justice for parties affected by a work-related death. All this has been accomplished by our committed staff in addition to enhancing our established and newly developing programs. On behalf of the Board, I thank them for the passion, dedication and quality with which they carry out their responsibilities and enrich our vision.

Michelle Ehlers
September 2009

Director's Report 2008-2009

This report is presented within the framework of the Board's Directions' Vision for Creative Ministries Network.

Foundation

We acknowledge 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.

Prayer of thanks for God's created order

L: The Caller is the one who is the depth of Creation.

P: The Caller is recognisable and knowable through the most profound human activity.

L: The Caller is present whenever we allow Love to enter our lives.

P: Our relationship with the Caller is not conditional, cannot be earned; it is a relationship of grace. (Board member, Barry Mitchell)

The foundation for the journey: the well-spring of God's created order.

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. ... They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11: 6,9)

Plans embodying our response to the gift of our inheritance

Indigenous leadership

A report and discussion paper entitled "Cannot be told before it time" has been completed as a report on a research project into Aboriginal leadership in the Uniting Church, including a reflection on the need for repentance by research agencies captive to mainstream beliefs about science and truth. This project was generously funded by the Share Community Appeal.

Aboriginal Access Art Studio

Jessica Kritzer has been employed to assist Studio Coordinator Ann Holt in teaching this program, and this has ensured greater continuity with benefits to both staff and participants. A very successful exhibition of Winja Ulupna women's art was held in January at the Australian Catholic University Gallery, and then repeated at Ivanhoe Uniting Church from Easter to Pentecost.

Indigenous artist in residence

Lorraine Austin completed the first Indigenous artist in residence appointment at CMN. Phillip Ahwang, a Torres Strait Islander, has is the current Indigenous artist in residence. Uncle Phil will work on a project to celebrate a traditional Torres Strait Islands Kup-Murri. The proposed Kup-Murri ceremony will be held on November 11, 2009 at the Meredith Cemetery to honour the headstone provided by the U.S. government for the grave of former US citizen and Vietnam Veteran Ed (Elmer Robert) Bunting. This ceremony will be the culmination of a five part journey that has already commemorated Mabo Day.

CMN has taken the first step towards participating in a program to conserve water as part of Melbourne Water's conservation program.

Stage one

Prayer for facing our disorder

Through love I have been shown that compassion, empathy not sympathy and honesty can confront the demons that kept me in a victim state. Most importantly the Caller loves me and forgives me for my humanness and understands my failings. This is most important. *(Board member, Barry Pearce)*

Our journey begins: Through Jesus healing love we face our disorder and accept our limitations.

And I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!' (Isaiah 6:5)

Plans for facing our disorder

Acknowledging the 'powers' affect us – Board, staff, community of faith, clients.

Arising from the Board's reflection on the report from the Indigenous leadership in the Church project, the following fragmenting spirits in the worldview of western scientific knowledge have been acknowledged as embedded in CMN's assumptions about our work. In acknowledging them, we seek to turn away from them to wisdom that is more holistic and respectful of creation and the created worlds of all peoples.

- Captivity to the science myth and its transcendent claims to 'truth'.
- Participation in the construction and distortion of reality as public objective facts and private, subjective emotions and values.
- Retreat from encountering the personal pain of injustice by turning it into the suffering of others that becomes a problem to be solved

Restorative Justice for parties affected by a work-related death

The Reference Group of Tom Bradley, Mike Hammond, Steve Kolytolo, Margaret Neith, Christine Parker, and Bette Phillips provided invaluable assistance in guiding this project through the conflicts and tensions evoked by traumatic deaths and an adversarial legal process. The spirit of restorative justice was embodied at our meetings, and lived out in the project through the meticulous, sensitive and skillful leadership of our consultant, Dr. Derek Brookes. A comprehensive literature review was launched by Brian Tee, MLC, Parliamentary Secretary for Justice.

The WGS Coordinator has been appointed to the Committee of the Victorian Association for Restorative Justice.

Training for healing, justice and reconciliation

Training provided by the Director included:

- Being a panel member for the UCA annual School of Ministry on the theme of forgiveness in work-related deaths.
- Professional supervision for eleven people in the past year.
- A workshop with the Board and CEO of Kilmany UnitingCare to assist their work on 'governance and faith'.
- A full day seminar on 'Grief @ work' for the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement.

Training provided by the WGS Coordinator included:

- Speaking to an occupational health and safety class at Holmesglen TAFE.
- Three workshops for WGS clients.

Prayer for our call to serve all people

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(to be developed)

Our journey begins: Through Jesus call, we know we are called to all people.

For thus says the Lord: to the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. (Isaiah 56:4,5)

Plans for our call to serve all people

We endeavour to ensure the following services are open to all people.

Artists and arts-based creative activity programs support

The Hotham Street facility has been used by two choirs, an art program for adults with an intellectual disability, a movement and dance program, two support groups, a childrens' music group, a martial arts group, and CMN's Aboriginal Women's Art Studio. The CMN is conscious of its role in helping to support small creative businesses by making the hall available to them.

Work-related Grief Support

A grant from WorkSafe provides vital support for this program. Others such as Energy Safe, Carlisle Ryan Thomas, Synod's 'Sammy Stamp Fund' and individual donors have sponsored specific components of this program. The program supports people bereaved by work-related death from any cause, and has participants from across Victoria from children to older aged people.

Veterans Faith and Wellbeing Support

The second meeting of VFWS broadened our focus with veterans attending from Vietnam, National Service and Iraq war backgrounds.

Stage two

Prayer of longing for Christ's kingdom

A prayer for reconciliation is based on work completed and adopted by the Board in 2006.

Companionship: Our longing is to work for the shape of Christ's kingdom now.

The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he awakens – awakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. (Isaiah 50:4)

Plans embodying longing for Christ's kingdom

Research, policy and planning

A consultation report on the response of UCA School Boards to a proposed 'Charter' was endorsed by the Commission for Mission and its recommendations were adopted by the Annual Synod.

A review of the UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania Terms of Reference was completed for the Commission for Mission.

The WGS Coordinator is carrying out a narrative research study of men and grief.

The Director wrote a chapter for an Australian perspective on work and wellbeing for a book being published in the U.K on promoting workplace wellbeing.

Vocation: work as calling and gift, and the reality of resistance

The development of 'The Shark in the Fishbowl' and training material for responding to workplace bullying has been restricted due to funding difficulties. A revised strategy has now been agreed, and further work will proceed in 2009-2010.

A draft report on suicide of people on worker's compensation has been delayed due to the impact of the Victorian bushfires on Coronial Services ability to access a piece of data.

A project supporting UCA minister Peter Sanders to publish his poetry was completed with the launch of 'I brought my lunch'.

Peace Fund

The Fund has supported monthly Contemplative Worship services for Veterans in Geelong, the visit of Sri Lanka's Bishop Thiagarajah, and made a contribution to the Sri Lanka Partnership Program to support victims of civil war.

Arts Fund

This year has seen a significant increase in both the number and size of donations to the Fund. In particular, the Fund was very grateful for two donations of \$30,000 and \$10,000 from two UCA members who wanted to support the production of 'Prophet and Loss' and the documentary video respectively.

Web page

Sue Earl has taken over the development of our web page. The pioneering work done by David Bottomley in establishing our site is gratefully acknowledged.

Stage three

Prayer for grace and faith to walk with all who suffer

The Board seeks to develop a contemporary form of 'the way of the cross' with stations expressing agency concerns. At present, CMN holds an annual Service of Remembrance for people bereaved by work-related deaths.

Surrender: Through Jesus the Crucified, we seek to walk with all who suffer today

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed (Isaiah 53:4-5)

Plans for grace and faith to walk with all who suffer

Work-related Grief Support (WGS)

There have been 18 new clients in the past year, while the program has maintained contact with close to 90 people through home visits, telephone, email and texting contact, social dinners and workshops. Over 300 people receive the WGS Newsletter. In a full year, the following represent the variety of ways our program walks alongside bereaved people.

OHS prevention Two clients whose husbands died in similar situations have worked with Energy Safe Victoria to develop a DVD to be distributed throughout Victoria to educate farmers and others around the issue of overhead power-lines.

CMN Restorative Justice Reference Group The Coordinator has played an active role in this project's Reference Group ensuring the needs of WGS clients are incorporated into the project, which is near completion. The needs of clients have been an important driver of this project, funded by the Legal Services Board.

Asbestos Information Support Service Bette Phillips works with the AISS Committee and their worker to coordinate grief support to those bereaved by an asbestos related death.

'Prophet and Loss' This play was commissioned by CMN with a grant from the Uniting Church and private philanthropy, and scripted and directed by Jane Woollard. The Coordinator facilitated Jane's interviews with a number of WGS clients to hear their stories and provided support to the clients throughout the project.

The production employed a talented cast and enjoyed a successful season over a two-week period with the final three sessions sold out.

WGS clients gained important validation of their experiences, and a significant section of the community gained a deeper understanding of the trauma, grief and dislocation suffered by families after a work-related death.

Timber workers WGS is working with a funeral company that is developing a "museum" dedicated to timber workers. Discussion is in progress to offer an annual remembrance service for the timber industry held at the specially developed chapel.

Men's grief Over the course of this past 12 months Bette Phillips has interviewed 9 men who have shared their journey grieving the work-related death of a loved one. The project is exploring the different experiences and cultural expectations that may exist in the grief process for men and women.

Grief support friendships The program is seeing the fruits of work that begins with building trust through the home visit, and then as appropriate, invites people to connect with others in small groups. Art therapy workshops and regionally-based social dinners underpin the opportunities for grieving people to meet and form supportive friendships and new communities of support. While the initial experience is one of grief we see that the groups move beyond this aspect into one of shared friendships that provide a foundation for new thinking and new directions.

Networking The Coordinator was elected to the Committee of Victorian Association for Restorative Justice, and attends bi-monthly meetings with the Victorian Bereavement Support Groups Network. WGS volunteer Alannah McGregor has met with Bendigo Shire Council to discuss the idea of a Healthy Minds Network in that region. Healthy Minds focus's on awareness of suicide and education for all community groups to deal with the many issues.

Veterans Faith and Wellbeing Support (VFWS)

Indigenous artist in residence, Lorraine Austin's work with Vietnam Veterans culminated in a successful exhibition of her work at the Centre for Theology and Ministry. The evaluation of this project revealed a deep experience of healing for all participants.

Mary Tehan began as a Project Worker to record the narratives of veterans' stories of faith and war service, and to assist in the stories being transformed into music and song.

Sri Lanka Mission Partnership

The Board agreed to become a Mission Partner with St. George's East St. Kilda Uniting Church and the Diocese of Jaffna, Church of South India to support victims of the civil war. Prior to this, CMN co-sponsored a visit from Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah of Jaffna

Diocese to preach at the St. George's Festival of Lights, and hosted a bible study led by Bishop Daniel on forgiveness for those hurt by war, trauma and violence.

Stage four

Prayer for friendship and delight

The CMN holds an Anniversary service on the last Sunday of February. We celebrate Holy Communion at Contemplative Worship at the end of each stage of the Ignatian journey.

Joy and love: Friendship with the risen Christ evokes friendship with those we serve, and delight in the present moment.

Thus says the Lord, ... 'Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.' (Isaiah 43: 18-19)

Plans for friendship and delight

Affirmation of gifts

Representatives of Presbytery's Pastoral Relations Committee attended a meeting of the CMN Faith Community and later reported to Presbytery on a diverse and committed group engaged in deep theological reflection, prayer and worship.

Partnerships

The Director preached at several services at St. George's including a Peace Sunday service, the launch of the Sri Lanka Partnership Program, and International Nurses Day, as well as providing support for the annual Memorial Service and Festival of Lights. Mary Tehan represented the Board in signing the Sri Lanka partnership agreement.

Prayer of gratitude for life and God's presence

CMN conducts Contemplative Worship twice each month in Melbourne, once a month for Veterans in Geelong, and commenced 'Fifth Wednesday Faithful conversations' to nurture the inspiration and encouragement of our faith community.

Joy and love: We are grateful for all that life brings to us, finding God in all things and discovering our incorporation into a movement to wholeness.

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn. (Isaiah 61:1-2)

Plans for embodying gratitude for life and God's presence

Faith community

'The Voice: a quarterly for prophetic and artistic imagination' disseminates stories from CMN's faith community each quarter.

Heritage

An earlier feasibility study for the Hotham Street property provided a base for a submission to the government's Jobs Fund for funding the proposed redevelopment of

this property. Williams Boag architects assisted with updating the report and documenting our submission.

Thanks

Staff members wish to express their gratitude to the Board for enriching CMN's vision and direction during the year. I am personally grateful to both Board members and our staff. I especially thank Bette Phillips and Margaret Neith for their friendship, good humour and creativity in addressing various causes of injustice, suffering and division so that we and those we serve may better live in relationships restored by healing, justice and reconciliation.

Blessing

The Caller who calls us into the world is gentle and strong, with tender strength; is vulnerable and has a deep understanding of sorrow and joy.

The One who calls you is sacred too.....no name.....no words.....a drawing on.....a drawing into.....a drawing up and out.....a pull.....scary, so scary, so very unknowing stay in the light.....be open to receive the gift.....be open to receive..... (*Board member, Mary Tehan*)

Creative Ministries Arts Fund: Trustees' Report

The past year has been the most successful year for the Fund since its inception, with both an increased number of donors and increased total donations for the period.

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

The 2007-08 audited report of the Creative Ministries Arts Fund was forwarded to the Property Trust, and six-monthly reports of the operation of the Fund in 2008-09 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 2008-09.

Based on existing medium-term program and funding policies, projects to be supported by donations to the fund were:

- The Aboriginal Women's Art Studio program.
- Support for Work-related Grief Support arts-based workshop program.
- Support for the performance of 'Prophet and Loss'.

In addition, the Fund received two grants from the Share Community Appeal for development of 'The Shark in the Fishbowl' and support for professional care workers working in bushfire affected communities.

Barry Mitchell
Paul Mayfield
John Bottomley