

CREATIVE MINISTRIES NETWORK CONGREGATION COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2019

**8th anniversary of the formation of CMN Congregation
16th anniversary of the establishment of Creative Ministries Network
36th Anniversary of the founding of our Network**

Introduction

This annual report presents an account of the Creative Ministries Network Congregation's activities during 2019.

In memorium

We remembered two people who died in 2019 who were founders of the Network. Jan Corben was the third Chairperson of the Urban Ministry Network Inc. Committee of Management, and Hazel Williams was a member of the UMN/CMN Board for sixteen years to 2012. Both women made valuable contributions to the governance and life of the Network.

Office-bearers

At the Congregation Council's annual meeting in February, the following office-bearers were appointed for 2019: Chairperson – Linda Hoskins, Deputy Chair - Susan Earl, Secretary - Miranda Walker, Treasurer - John Bottomley and Minute Secretary - Margaret Neith.

The following were appointed to lead the Congregation's program activities. Margaret Neith is coordinator of our Sri Lanka Support program, Mission to Work convenor is Steve Crump and coordinator is John Bottomley and Gary Bowman is Safe Church coordinator. John Bottomley is the Congregation's Program (Gatherings) coordinator:

Gatherings

Garry Worete Deverell's *Gondwana Theology* provided the focus for our Lenten study and two of our Sunday gatherings. The study was valued highly by members. We shared faith reflections on our experiences of mental health and illness, our ongoing desire for progress towards reconciliation, and a series on prayer and images of God in the Eucharist, work, and death. Marg Neith compiled several interviews with congregation members' about their experiences, which contributed to a moving 'honest conversation' on mental health.

Eight of our members explored the theme of 'voices' at our annual day retreat at 'Forest Retreat' in Boronia. We each chose one of the focus areas to share a 3-5 minute reflection:

1. The voices in my head which weigh me down the most are (complete the sentence)
2. I find it difficult to find quiet time in our noisy world to reflect and be open to the Spirit.
3. There are many voices which crowd my life and shape my actions, but I have trouble hearing or knowing which is God's voice to guide me.

Members spoke in turn in groups of three and then listened to responses from the others as we sought to listen to the voices in our lives that build up or pull down our humanity. 'Forest Retreat Director Rev Susanne Chambers led the afternoon lectio divina, an evening Eucharist, and examen, as well as providing enjoyable food for our meals and a beautiful contemplative space for our gathering.

For our final two shared meals of the year, we introduced a framework that began with our main course, Scripture readings from the lectionary followed, with an offering for the poor, the Eucharist, and concluded with dessert/sweets. After coffee and table conversation, we launched into our evening reflection on an aspect of our common life and faith

Congregation Council Meetings

We averaged six members attending across our four Congregation Council meetings for the year. The seventh annual meeting began our year, with the adoption of the Congregation's program report and financial reports for 2018. Office-bearers and leaders for the year ahead were elected, the auditor reappointed, and the budget for 2019 adopted. We rejoiced that April Jacobson was received as a confirmed member of the Uniting Church in our congregation.

Another highlight was the Congregation Council's strong support for the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart. We agreed to post our decision on the congregation's web page and to encourage other congregations to take similar action. Barry Mitchell prepared a valuable report for our consideration, and agreed to take up our wish to urge the Australian Government to work constructively with First Nations People to develop a process and a time-line for achieving the stated aims of the Uluru Statement. Barry will send copies of our decision on our behalf to the Uniting Church General Assembly, to the Justice Unit of Vic/Tas Synod, to the Presbytery of Port Phillip East, to the Prime Minister, and to the Minister for Indigenous Australians.

Mission activities

Solidarity with post-war Sri Lanka

Margaret Neith continued as Coordinator of the Congregation's liaison with the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India (JDCSI) and reported regularly at our Council meetings. Features of her reports included:

- Three boxes of books were sent via the Bishop to a pastor's daughter who is a primary teacher in an isolated school for use in her school.
- Updates on the state of the Jaffna College Board's legal case against the US-based Trustees.
- Assistance with preparation of a Capital Expenditure Plan for Jaffna College.
- The addition of a new donor for direct debits to the Sri Lanka Peace Fund account.
- The adoption of a policy document 'Policy and procedures for CMN Congregation Council's compliance with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC) external control standards for overseas activities. The standards now reinforce the Congregation's compliance with the ACNC external control standards for our grant funding and volunteer programs in Sri Lanka with Jaffna Diocese, Church of South India, Centre for Holistic Healing, Jaffna College and Uduvil Girls College.
- A July visit to Sri Lanka for Margaret and John included attending the Bishop's daughter's wedding, developments on the Jaffna College legal case, developing alumni relationships, computer donations, an orphanage visit, a visit to the Jaffna National Teacher Training Institute and new friendships, providing responses to JC primary school needs (English book project, ceiling fans for the Primary School), and policy and practice support for English learning and a proposed English lab.

- A visit to Scoresby Uniting Church for a presentation on Sri Lanka to the Sunday congregation.
- Development of a project for another Australian volunteer to visit Uduvil Girls' College and Jaffna College. The volunteer is a theatre director and will contribute as a drama teacher at both schools. Funding for the trip has been provided through the Synod as an overseas mission project.
- A donation of \$2,000 was received from Warnambool Uniting Church to support the Centre for Holistic Healing.

Mission to Work

Three meetings were held and undertook preliminary work on a proposal to support whistle-blowers.

Webpage

The Congregation's webpage address is: <http://creative.unitingchurch.org.au>. The site is in its third year. An acknowledgement of country has been added to the website. A new section for interested congregation members to feature their work under the theme 'Members@work' began development

Finances

The Council is pleased to report that all of our compliance responsibilities for the year have been met, including:

- The audit of 2018 financial reports was completed and forwarded to the Presbytery.
- The annual Synod finance and property online report for 2018 was completed.
- The Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission 2018 report was completed.
- The Congregation made its annual contribution to the Synod Mission and Service Fund.

The Council was pleased that funds taken up into Uniting from the Creative Ministries Arts Fund were returned along with administration of the Arts Fund by the Council and governance now with the Synod Property Trust. The Council agreed that the existing funds have been set aside for a project that contributed to reconciliation with Indigenous people and planning has begun.

Gratitude

We are grateful for the many ways God's Spirit was with us in 2019. Our members contribute their faith, wisdom and hospitality to our gatherings, and we rejoice at the relationships of solidarity which continue to grow through our shared journey in a world that has the capacity to bring us undone through its violence, suffering and injustice.

We pray that God's justice and mercy will continue to be present to us as we seek to live out our vocation as a Congregation of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Chairperson: Linda Hoskins

Deputy Chair: Sue Earl

Treasurer: John Bottomley

Secretary: Miranda Walker

Minute Secretary: Margaret Neith

