

CREATIVE MINISTRIES NETWORK CONGREGATION COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021

**10th anniversary of the formation of CMN Congregation
18th anniversary of the establishment of Creative Ministries Network
38th Anniversary of the founding of our Network**

Introduction

This annual report presents an account of the Creative Ministries Network Congregation's activities during 2021 and marks the tenth anniversary of the Congregation's formation.

In memorium

During 2021 we remembered loved-ones of Network members who had died and prayed that our loved-ones are at peace in God's eternal care. Our members remembered all those who have gone before us in the November annual service of remembrance.

Office-bearers

At the Congregation Council's annual meeting in March, the following office-bearers were appointed for 2021: Chairperson – Linda Hoskins, Deputy Chair - Susan Earl, Secretary - Miranda Walker, Treasurer - John Bottomley, and Minute Secretary – Philip Moran.

The following were appointed to lead the Congregation's program activities.

Margaret Neith - coordinator Sri Lanka Support program;

Steve Crump (convenor) and Gary Bowman (coordinator) Justice@Work

Gary Bowman - Safe Church coordinator.

John Bottomley - Program (Gatherings) coordinator.

During the year, the Council adopted position descriptions for the Coordinator positions for the Sri Lanka Support program and Justice@Work.

Gatherings

Zoom was the predominant mode for gathering twice per month on Sundays and twice per month on Tuesday evenings. Three quarterly meetings this year were held on Tuesday evening and the fourth during the annual retreat. Steve Crump led three Lenten studies drawing upon John White's book, *Uncommon Sense*.

Marg Neith and John Bottomley led a three-part series on 'the problem of men's violence', which the congregation agreed to publish. Rev Dr. Monica Melanchthon, associate professor at the University of Divinity's Pilgrim Theological College wrote an introduction to the study, which was launched by Julie McDonald, Coordinator of the Uniting Church's Bethel Centre at the Presbytery of Port Philip East Zoom Café. We were delighted to welcome Helen Hill on the zoom launch from Timor Leste.

John also coordinated with Steve, Marg, and Gary to present a series of four sessions on 'my pandemic moment', which reflected on the mental health challenges the pandemic was raising for members and our networks. The Congregation is grateful to members who shared their experiences of the pandemic through these two series, and with members' commitment to reflect on scriptures, the encouragement of our faith sharing has been a source of comfort for all at different times in a difficult year.

Other gatherings focused on a single theme, including:

- Our first annual report from Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah via Zoom on the Sri Lanka Support program
- Taking steps in our lives to move towards the light.
- A reflection on Sue Earl's film 'Agender'
- Violence, war, and healing intergenerational trauma
- Telling our story
- Reflection on feedback from friends in Canada and the USA on our pandemic study *In Lockdown with Galatians*.
- The final gathering for the year featured a personal review of the year by members present, chaired by Linda Hoskins.

Our quarterly meal with communion was only held twice due to COVID-19 limitations on gathering, which also impacted our collection for Indigenous art projects via our Arts Fund.

Material for Contemplative Worship in the Ignatian tradition continued to be provided by email for the 2nd and 4th Sunday each month. In addition, two small groups using this material met in homes in Ormond and Reservoir.

The annual retreat was able to be held during a break in lockdowns. Philip Moran secured a suitable weekend rental at Anglesea, which housed the nine members who attended the Friday and Saturday sessions. Our theme of 'Transformation: living into God's justice and mercy' prompted rich reflection and discussion, with relaxed fellowship over shared meals that excited appetites and pleasure. Evening prayer and concluding eucharist were fitting brackets to a fruitful weekend.

Congregation Council Meetings

Our four Congregation Council meetings were well attended, as was our ninth annual meeting, which adopted the Congregation's program report and financial reports for 2020. Office-bearers and leaders for the year ahead were elected, and the budget for 2020 adopted. The auditor we reappointed moved interstate during the year, and we were delighted when Tony Sgro agreed to carry out our audit.

Council meetings decided upon the program for congregation gatherings for each coming quarter, received reports on justice projects being carried out by the Sri Lanka Support program and Justice@Work, and provided oversight of our finances. Members also:

- Adopted the written report of our meeting with Bishop Thiagarajah in compliance with our adherence to our Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission policy.
- Adopted a COVID-19 safe church policy.
- Approved the proposal for a Justice@Work peer support program as a pilot project, to be implemented by the Justice@Work group.
- Carried out the Annual review of our external control standards required by the ACNC.
- Completed the annual review of the members' roll, noting there were no changes to the roll.

Finances

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

- The audit of 2020 financial reports was completed and forwarded to the Presbytery.
- The Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission 2020 report was completed.
- The Congregation made its annual contribution to the Synod Mission and Service Fund.

The Council agreed to close the Congregation's U Ethical account due to policy changes at U Ethical and transfer the funds to our CBA Account, 'CMN Congregation Council'. The administration of the Creative Ministries Arts Fund under the governance of the Synod Property Trust has proceeded smoothly.

The Council was delighted to receive a grant of \$1,000.00 from the Cato Trust in response to our submission for funds to tell our story.

Healing, justice, and reconciliation activities

Solidarity with post-war Sri Lanka

Marg reported on sending 12 boxes of fabrics, toys, and books for Centre for Holistic Healing during December 2020 to February 2021. The CHH Director asked if the congregation could raise funds to renovate a day care centre kitchen and the required \$750 was raised from our networks and sent. A further \$2,000 donation from Warrnambool UC was gratefully received, and an additional \$750 donation for CHH was also forwarded. The regular direct debit program further sustains our financial support for Jaffna Diocese and CHH. We were pleased to receive Bishop Thiagarajah's signed and returned letter of agreement regarding our arrangements for accountability of donations.

Marg informed members of developments in the US with the case for Jaffna College.

Justice@Work program

Gary and Steve presented a proposal for a Justice@Work peer support pilot program, and following the Council's endorsement of the proposal, began to implement it. They reported that one congregation has already joined the pilot, and a further three UCA congregations have been approached.

Men and Violence

The Council decided to conduct a workshop on 'Men and Violence' for male clergy of the Presbytery of Port Philip East. Led by John Bottomley, the workshop was attended by four male ministers in placement in the Presbytery. There was a unanimous request for further sessions on this theme.

Gratitude

We are grateful for the many ways God's Spirit was with us in 2021, especially responding to the challenges members faced due to the impact of the global pandemic. We sense there is a growth in faith amongst us and between us as our relationships of solidarity and mutual regard continue. In a world that has the capacity to bring us undone through its violence, suffering and injustice, these moments of grace and comfort are precious.

We pray that God's justice and mercy will continue to guide and lead us as we seek to faithfully engage in honest conversations that help us to face the challenges of our

lives, focus on what God calls each of us to be, and how we may serve the common good.

Chairperson: Linda Hoskins

Deputy Chair: Sue Earl

Treasurer: John Bottomley

Secretary: Miranda Walker

Minute Secretary: Philip Moran