



TO BE A MOVEMENT OF THE
PEOPLE OF GOD GATHERING
IN AND AROUND THE
CENTRAL FIGURE OF
J E S U S C H R I S T
EMPOWERED BY THE
HOLY SPIRIT, LIVING OUT
HIS WAY IN OUR LOCAL
CONTEXT AND INVITING
OTHERS TO DO THE SAME.

Minutes of the 2014 Annual General Meeting Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc

Held on Saturday May 3, at Clayton Church of Christ

81 Delegates from 33 (or 27% of) churches registered; 69 valid votes received in Council election.

Welcome

Milton Oliver, Roxburgh Park, Council Chair welcomed all AGM Delegates and participants.

Dwelling in the Word

Claire Egan invited all present to spend time in Romans 12:1-11

The Chair introduced the AGM process, including a reminder to Delegates to participate in the Council election.

Motion 1: CrossCulture Church of Christ Point Cook

Resolved: That Cross Culture Point Cook Church of Christ be affirmed and welcomed as an Affiliated Church of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc.

Motion 2: Abundant Grace Church

Resolved: That Abundant Grace church be affirmed and welcomed as an Affiliated Church of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc.

Moved: Kaye Reid, Seconded: Paul Cameron

2013 AGM Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the 2013 Annual General Meeting of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc. held on May 2, 2013 at Discovery church Mt Evelyn, be approved.

Moved: Paul Cameron, **Seconded:** Geoff Meehan (Montrose)

Renewal Challenge Update

The Executive Officer presented an update on the Renewal Challenge process (see attached).

Partner Department Reports

The PD reports were introduced by the Chair, noting there would be an opportunity for questions, and that all reports would be received formally later in the AGM.

Community Care

The ED Paul Arnott and Chair Robyn Millership spoke to the report, highlighting the Research Project: 100 churches and agencies participated, many are active in community engagement of various types, including mentoring young people, food programs, caring for older people. The research showed that mentoring youth and low cost rental housing were major priorities listed. After presenting a full report to the board, a summary will be sent to all churches.

Robyn indicated that Community Care is in good hands, and introduced the new Chair Tim Brewster (Discovery).

Thanks were expressed to Robyn for the leadership, professionalism, grace and wisdom she brought to Community Care in the transition period.

There were no Questions.

Mission and Ministry

Transitional Leader Kaye Reid spoke to the report, indicating that what M&M is about is empowering and equipping churches. Kaye told a story about Northern Community church that illustrated what M&M does in partnership with churches. Prayer for M&M was requested.

In response to a question Kaye indicated that the 5 step process for transitional ministries used at Northern was available through M&M team member Michael Vanderree.

Stirling

Principal Andrew Menzies and Chair John Sharpe spoke to the report.

Andrew noted: the wonderful 2013 valedictory with a record number of graduates; that there are good student numbers for 2014; a successful '25 years at Mulgrave' celebration; that the tenures of Merryll Blair and Stephen Curkpatrick have been extended for 5 years; that MCD has become the University of Divinity (UD); that Stirling was audited and renewed by UD for 7yrs, and affirmed as the most stable, least risk averse, biggest growth college; a fundraising campaign has been launched for Hindmarsh Centre for Ministry and Mission, and Stirling already has 70-75% funding required; and that works in progress include the EAST Alliance, the launch of a new Learning Management System, with online teaching unit development underway.

John noted: 'provisionality' is a good word for the EAST conversation, we weren't quite ready for it, but it's a great concept and we learned from it.

There were no Questions.

The CCVT EO indicated that, as Kaye Reid is now a member of CCVT/M&M staff, constitutionally she can't be on another board, however Council have noted that as the M&M appointment is transitional it has been considered appropriate.

Prop Corp

Deputy Chair David Warren and Joel Plotnek spoke to the report.

David: Expressed thanks to John Bailey, noted the apology from Terry McCredden, welcomed new trustees, and introduced CCFS.

Joel wished PropCorp CFO Frank Morabito "happy birthday" as a way of acknowledging that Prop Corp is 74 today, as the 1940 Conference birthed The Properties Corporation of the Churches of Christ, which was then asked to look after assets and raise funds. Joel noted that the time had come to change 'our game plan' and to bring it into the current century.

In responding to questions Joel indicated that:

He was not going to give an investment interest percentage or number publicly, but affirmed that PropCorp will be competitive and that it is important to remember that money with Prop Corp is for the Cause we share...

We'd like to offer banking for businesses and individuals as well as churches however there are regulatory bodies that decide what we can and can't do, and there are some limitations.

Further to the thanks expressed to John Bailey it was noted that Council had recently shaped an Affirmation of John's significant contribution to CCVT:

That Conference Council recognizes and affirms the generous, humble, imaginative and courageous leadership and service offered by John Bailey through his 40 years as an active Trustee of the Properties Corporation of Churches of Christ in Victoria, and his years of membership of the Board of the College of the Bible/Churches of Christ Theological College (now Stirling), including a period as Board Chair from 1990-97; and Council further acknowledges with deep appreciation John's participation in, and contribution to, many other conversations and dialogues, task groups and committees that are helping shape who Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania is becoming in 2014.

Finance

Frank Morabito spoke to the Conference Finance Report remembering and noting the death of Lindsay Cutler in late 2013; Conference stayed within its budget with a small surplus; managed funds performed very well last year, returning over 17%; Conference provided M&M with \$110 000 and gave \$59 000 to CCVT and ecumenical mission agencies.

There were no Questions.

Urban Neighbours of Hope (UNOH) Update

The EO introduced Jon Owen as the new Australian Director of UNOH. John spoke briefly, but inspiringly that the UNOH work continues in Bidwell; that there has been changes in UNOH lately, as 20 years ago God spoke to Ash Barker and began UNOH, God is speaking to Ash and UNOH again. Those present were encouraged to continue to support Ash in his future plans; and also UNOH as it looks into the future and is happy to discover God's future for it. After all UNOH's challenge is *OUR* challenge, so we need to discover ways to continue to work/walk together. Jon affirmed that it is a privilege to be part of UNOH and to be a part of Churches of Christ.

Prayer was then offered for Jon in his role, and through him to other leaders, and the Advisory Group.

Motion 3 – Asylum Seekers & Refugees

Resolved: That CCVT at its Annual General Meeting on May 3, 2014, affirms the following statement: Refugees and Asylum Seekers are people made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and that their sorrow is close to the heart of God (Psalm 34:18). We acknowledge that throughout Scripture God commands that refuge, provision, protection and justice be extended to those who seek asylum.

Historically the Church has not always stood on the side of the poor and alien, and we seek to remedy that today. We repent for our greed, our ignorance and our lack of compassion as a nation, and as individuals, which has led to the current plight of refugees in being refused welcome in our abundant country.

We seek to participate in bringing the Kingdom of God to earth through practices of inclusion, justice, fairness and hospitality. This is stated clearly in the Shared Value of Justice in the CCVT Statement of Purpose: We value the dignity, equality and inherent worth of all persons regardless of gender, race, economic standing or belief system. Therefore, in announcing the Kingdom and expectant of its arrival, we will work for social justice, equal opportunity for all persons.

We call on our country's government to lead the way in responding generously to international crises which cause many people to flee their home countries through:

- humanising the plight of refugees and asylum seekers,
- the implementation of just domestic policies, and
- holding nations to account who inflict violence and human rights abuses against their own people.

We condemn government policies that seek to dehumanize and criminalize refugees and asylum seekers, and that are in breach of our international obligations under the Refugee Convention and our moral obligations under God's law.

Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania therefore commits to:

- Speak truth where there is misinformation
- Critique culture when it is in opposition to human rights
- Extend welcome and hospitality to those fleeing persecution
- Humanise Refugees and Asylum Seekers through hearing and sharing their voices and stories
- Advocate to the Australian Government for just, fair and transparent treatment of those fleeing persecution

And invites all churches and agencies affiliated with CCVT to make the same commitment.

Moved Paul Arnott, **Seconded** Bethany Koch (Fitzroy North)

The Motion was introduced by the Mover and Seconder. Bethany included the following practical suggestions for churches to implement the Statement:

Change the Conversation

There is a lot of misinformation and unhelpful & negative conversation around asylum seekers. As leaders we need to be reshaping the conversation to be more redemptive. Ways that we can demystify and de-mythologize the issues around asylum seekers include:

- *Introduce the statement and allow some time and space to work it through and hear concerns.*
- *Host a screening of "Between the Devil & the Deep Blue Sea" or "Mary Meets Mohamed"*
- *Host a Q & A*
- *Get in a speaker from the CCVT Community Care Asylum Seeker Network (ASN)*

Practise Hospitality

In scripture we see much of Jesus' ministry centred around the sharing of a meal, as this begins to break down barriers, seeks equality and allows space for conversation.

The ASN have connection with Tamil refugees in MITA detention centre who can be granted day release (with security guards) to come and cook a meal with your church. This program is being trialled but is having very positive results from the detention centre, with the security guards saying that following one of these events the detainees were so happy they were able to sleep that night unmedicated. These small opportunities can be extremely significant for those who are locked up, and also for our congregations.

Advocate

Regardless of who is in power, we need to advocate for just and transparent policy and processes. Ways you can advocate include:

- *Meet with or write a letter to your Minister of Parliament*
- *Sign petitions*
- *Publicise your support of the Statement to your wider community*
- *Find creative ways to advocate for just policies*

Meet Practical Needs

With winter coming up there are many asylum seekers and new arrivals with desperate need of warm clothes, heaters and blankets. There are agencies close to you who can help facilitate these donations, and we encourage churches to get in touch with them.

Comments and questions included:

Anne Oliver (Wallan and Roxburgh Park): As a teacher of new migrants etc, not speaking against the motion but want to add something, not all asylum seekers come by boat, not all refugees are asylum seekers, some have been languishing in camps for years and can't get out, some who come by boat are not in fear for their lives while others wait in camps while they are in fear for their lives, applaud practical suggestions, we help refugees when they do arrive but people on bridging visas and in community detention are particularly unresourced.

Ian Roberts (One Community) affirmed how individual people can provide assistance (like helping people learn conversational English etc).

John (Monash City) felt that perhaps it is a motion that is a work in progress, and he would like to see the motion continue to be developed.

The Chair reminded those present that the statement indicates we are being invited to commit to a variety of things and that Paul Arnott and Network will continue to explore, resource and update us
The Motion was carried overwhelmingly.

Other Business

Kaye Reid on behalf of M&M acknowledged: that Martin Boutros concluded in 2013; the conclusion of board members David Brooker and Tom Blaze and of Russell Kilgour as Chair; the appointment of a new Chair, Marshall Muller (Hobart), and Deputy Chair, Bekkii Scott (Boronia); and that Board and staff are open and happy to engage with Renewal Challenge process.

Reports

Resolved: That all Reports be received and adopted as published.

Moved Milton Oliver, **Seconded** Russell Kilgour

Closing

The Chair indicated that a member of the Clayton church had received a prophetic word that it has been agreed should be shared at the AGM:

I heard God say.....

"Now is the time. Now is the time to dream big, build and expand. Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back, lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.

Dream big, think big, conform your vision to my vision says God, because I am a big God, I am the God of the more than you can think or ask. Do not think of limitations, because in me there are no limitations.

See I am going to pour out my Spirit afresh over the movement. I will come like the spring rain. See the rain clouds are gathering for a refreshing rain and outpouring to come. I am releasing a fresh rain of my Spirit on the churches of Christ. For I am building my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it".

And I also see that God wants to restore the centrality of the gospel and also of the resurrected Christ and the implications of the resurrected Christ to each church. Christ is to be the centre of it all. "And as I am exalted", says the Lord, "I will draw all men to myself".

I also see God is going to increase connections within the churches of Christ. Connections between people, connections between people and God, and connections between churches. But the most important thing that God is doing is increasing the connection between people and Him. There is going to be an increase ability to hear from God, as people connect to God in a greater way. We are going to be more Spirit-led. All life flows from Jesus, and I see life flowing in a new way from Jesus the vine, to people, to churches and in between churches. I see each person being set in their place in their church and each church being set into the larger plan and design of Jesus for the churches of Christ.

I also see that God is preparing the movement and shaping the movement into a net of interconnecting communities of life in preparation for a great harvest. The move of His Spirit, God is releasing, is for a great harvest, and He is building His church of interconnecting people and communities, in turn connected to Jesus, as a net to hold the harvest. But the thing is that the net is not static. It is moved by the Lord and swung by the Lord to also go after the harvest. As a movement we are to be intentional to listen to God and receive His strategy to reach out to the unsaved and not just wait for the unsaved to come to us.

In Jesus Name, Amen



2014 CCVT AGM Appendix 1

Renewal Challenge Update/State of CCVT | May 2014

Connect

In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit; in the name of the One who is, who was, and who is to come, I greet you: Good afternoon saints! Good afternoon sinners!

Challenge

Since last May we in CCVT have been engaging a Renewal Challenge: *We could do better at building Communities of Hope and Compassion (that sometimes might look like church as we've known it) and developing leaders to lead them (that sometimes might look like Ministers as we've known them).* **And,** *The contours of our systems and structures, locally and across the CCVT network, could be an impediment to releasing the resources God has given us to meet this primary Challenge.*

For the last year we have been listening to God and each other. For Council this has included actively practicing the Prayer of Indifference, which Ruth Haley Barton describes as “being indifferent to everything but the will of God...indifferent to matters of ego, prestige, organizational politics, personal advantage, comfort or favour”; and I would add being indifferent to everything but God’s dream for the world—his Kingdom.

The Renewal Challenge is real. Since 2000 in CCVT 39 churches have closed. This includes 10 that entered various church mergers, 17 that are churches more than 50 years old, and 10 that were rural or regional churches. And, maybe a third of existing churches are vulnerable, with questionable short or medium term viability or sustainability; maybe a third of our ministry demographic will no longer be in active service in the next 5-7 years.

Of course, on the other side of the ledger, since 2000 we have also affiliated 22 new churches (and 9 mission agencies). 15 of these new affiliates were multi-cultural. Of the 22, 13 can be described as healthy and flourishing; 2 were intentional church plants by CCVT, 2 by affiliates; 8 have received some form of financial assistance from CCVT; and 6 are on the growing margins of Melbourne.

It is somewhat comforting to note that since 2000 our reported membership numbers have stayed pretty much the same, bouncing around 13/14/15 000; comforting when compared to others, but challenging when compared to the rapidly increasing population, particularly in metropolitan Melbourne, and more importantly when compared with God’s dream for us.

We could do better...

Resources (Opportunities)

For the last year we have been listening to God and each other as we have engaged the Renewal Challenge, and as we have sought to discern what future shape God is calling us to have, locally and across CCVT.

We have celebrated the amazing resources we have in CCVT. As I said last year, we have
Spiritual resources; the gifts, talents and capacity to dream and imagine the future
Emotional resources; memories of other stories, the great big narrative we find ourselves in
Intellectual resources; the capacity to think, reason, plan and strategise
Physical resources; the time, the buildings and other resources and the people

God has given us everything we need to respond to the call to mission he has placed on our Movement.

And of course, we have unlimited opportunities too: in neighbourhoods and communities where we are, or where we could be.

What we have been learning this year is that we could do better at releasing the resources where they are, where they are needed and in ways that they are needed; we could do better at having the prayerful conversations and open-handed collaboration that will lead to this release of resources. Some of us may need to relinquish (or be indifferent to...) long held anxieties, prejudices, judgements or control, or painful memories and histories, in order to have those conversations.

It could be that it is only when these are relinquished that wise and prayerful discernment resulting in bold stewardship and Kingdom deployment can occur; only then that the activities, processes and functions of people and churches and CCVT as a whole can be Kingdom- and mission-oriented gate-openers.

Living into the Future

*It seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us*¹ (that is, Council and the Partner Departments, having heard the voices in the Regional Conversations) that CCVT is entering a period of transition, a time for a provisional response to the Renewal Challenge. You can read more about it in the *Living into the Future* paper that is available today, but let me briefly summarize it for you.

We are clear about our purpose, being a sign and foretaste of the Kingdom in Mission. We have the resources. We have the opportunities. We know we could do better at Multiplying Disciples, Leaders and Churches, at building Communities of Hope and Compassion and developing Leaders to lead them. Our system and structure can sometimes be an impediment to achieving this; and we have been reminded of that as we have heard how different people see CCVT...see *Living into the Future* p4.

We believe that Form follows Function. Unlike other times of transition we have engaged, rather than immediately changing the structure, *It seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us* to move into a provisional way of operating, and to begin living into the future as an adaptive, flexible, responsive organization.

This living into the future will be based on activities, processes and functions and strategic intent, rather than Partner Departments and/or governance groups (see *Living into the Future* p6). This will involve engaging the questions:

“Are there activities, processes and functions that we could: Start? Stop? Sustain?”

“What activities, processes and functions could best be done (by CCVT) together, despite their origin, history or current location?”

This provisional phase will involve functional and not architectural changes; in other words, the current CCVT governance shape will remain, and its functions, focussed on and propelled by mission, will become a catalyst to discern any future form and shape CCVT should take. Council will still fulfill its constitutional responsibilities, PDs will report to Council, and current governance groups will continue to exist where and while necessary, with a view to consider a clarification of legal structures as early as 2015.

After all, how many separate PDs, boards and executives does CCVT really need? For a small movement (or organisation), we have too many governing entities, and too many people involved in them; the desired outcome is that CCVT has a leaner governance, but a stronger functionality, and therefore will be more accessible, adaptive, flexible and responsive to and for our stakeholders and affiliates; that is for your local church or mission agency—the Community of Hope and Compassion you are part of, living out the Kingdom in your neighbourhood.

LOCAL

This is the reason we are having this Renewal Challenge conversation: It's all about 'Local'. It is only about CCVT to the degree that CCVT does or doesn't act as a gate-opener, cheer-leader, and an apostolic incubator for Local mission and ministry.

To repeat, the Renewal Challenge is all about Local. It's about living in our neighbourhoods, building Communities of Hope and Compassion, and developing Leaders to lead them; it's about whether we are releasing the resources God has given us for Mission in our neighbourhoods. It's all about 'Local'. CCVT's role is important, but it is not the 'main game'. That's why we will be inviting churches to participate in Renewal Challenge:LOCAL Regional Conversations this year; to contemplate questions like “Are there activities, processes and functions that we could: Start? Stop? Sustain?”, and to imagine practical ways to missionally engage your neighbourhood.

Called as we are as the people of God to be “like those who dream”², I will conclude with a few comments, repeated for some, based on a balcony view some of us have, and share a dream that emerges from that view; for we too have a dream, Council and the Partner Departments.

In the spirit of God's dream for the world, I invite you to consider this: When, in 2020, 2053 and other signpost years ahead, people in those inevitable 'once upon a time' moments reflect on this season, what will they say about these times, this year, our churches, this Movement? For those who have ears to hear, the Dream CCVT's leaders share is that these are some of the words that will be said of the pioneers and visionaries of 2014:

Once upon a time, in 2014, churches chose to be transformed into Communities of Hope and Compassion, joining in with the mission of God, the *missio dei*, reconciling people with God and each other through Jesus Christ; living out God's dream for the world—his Kingdom, the space where Christ and his Way reigns, where righteousness and justice, peace, joy and shalom are increasingly manifest.

¹ Words from an earlier Council of the Church, Acts 15:28a

² Psalm 126.1b NRSV

Once upon a time, in 2014, churches becoming Communities of Hope and Compassion let go of 'sacred cows', learnt it was more about collaboration than competition; more about people than buildings; more about relationships than positions; more about Kingdom than church; more about the reign of God than the reign of tradition, or of this or that family, or of this or that worship style; more about humbly serving than power and control; more about mission than maintenance, and that it was more about Monday to Saturday than Sunday.

Once upon a time, in 2014, churches chose to stop being an inward looking country club and began to build Communities of Hope and Compassion, moving into neighbourhoods; like Jesus, meeting around the tables of neighbours and new and old friends, rather than expecting them to come to our Table.

Once upon a time in 2014, Communities of Hope and Compassion began releasing every woman and man, younger and older, to join in with the mission of God, according to their spiritual gifting and passion rather than any position or appointment; at the same time forging a grassroots community volunteer network of mission, mutual ministry, pastoral care and support that included everybody in its orbit of hope and compassion.

Once upon a time in 2014, Communities of Hope and Compassion began developing Leaders to lead them in the Way of Jesus, the Way of the Kingdom; Leaders, who sometimes might be (or have been) called Ministers, whose primary gifting is Apostle, Prophet and Evangelist and not only Pastor/Teacher³, for it was agreed that there were more than enough therapists and co-dependent relationships between those wanting and providing therapy.

Once upon a time in 2014, Communities of Hope and Compassion began releasing the people formerly known as Ministers to be Leaders who were actually allowed to lead; Leaders who were freely encouraged to join in with the mission of God and to coach and to mentor others to do the same...

Once upon a time, in 2014...

³ See Ephesians 4:11-13; commonly known as APEPT or APEST, the 'Five Fold Leadership Pattern', where PT or ST could be more the gifting of an 'Elder' than a 'Minister-Leader'

Council Election Outcomes

Two nominations were received, in accordance with the CCVT constitution clauses 11 and 13, for the two Council positions available. To be successfully appointed to Council, nominees must each be approved by at least two-thirds of voting Delegates at the AGM.

The results of the 2014 Council Election voting is as follows:

Milton Oliver *Yes 67 No 2 Blank 0*

Michael Grechko *Yes 66 No 3 Blank 0*

Total Formal/Valid Votes: 69 Majority of "Yes" required equals 35.

Total Informal Votes: 0

All candidates received a majority of valid votes cast and are therefore elected.