

Church Army Australia CEO Report to Annual General Meeting – May 2017

I have just returned from the Church Army international leaders gathering at CA headquarters in Sheffield UK. It was a valuable time sharing with the CA leaders from across the globe. Church Army UK is healthy and growing with 20 centres of mission spreading across the UK; they are the 'go to' organisation when church leaders and Anglican bishops are looking for people and resources to do effective evangelism and plant mission shaped churches; especially in new and unreached areas. They have gained a reputation as an organisation that can deliver. We here at Church Army in Australia can only dream and pray that God will allow us to grow and develop into such an organisation. The result of my trip is a growing ability to work much more closely with Church Army UK and make use of the resources and expertise they have to offer for our future work here in Australia.

A new base in Canberra

I was appointed CEO of Church Army Australia in August 2017. My first job was to move the National Office to Canberra and secure, preserve and protect Church Army's valuable evangelism training materials and national office administration. A new national office has been established in Macquarie ACT and we have recruited a dedicated team of part-time staff who work with me. Thomas Rose is our communications manager and Greg Cobcroft our finance manager. We were also fortunate that Justine Slockee, previously employed with CA was able to move to Canberra and continue and extend her role in administration and donor care. I want to thank the national office team for the hard work, enthusiasm and expertise they always display in their work for Church Army. Thanks also to Simeon Goodlet who worked for CA at Lawson for many years and was very helpful during the handover period.

Refocus

With Church Army in a time of change it has been challenging to present a clear message of our purpose, work and vision even though we do have an important purpose and work and a developing vision of what God wants us to do. As CEO I am aware of this lack of focus in our communication and we are working towards clearer communication. This is a current priority but if we are to get the message clear and our focus right we will need to take some time to do so. Our working statement is as follows:

Mission: Church Army is a movement committed to bringing people to a life changing faith by sharing the transforming power and love of Jesus in words and action.

Vision: to train, equip and mobilise evangelists and whole church communities in the mission to make disciples.

Key Objectives:

- Doing, Resourcing and & equipping for evangelism
- Facilitating a national network for evangelists and faith communities
- Providing an resource hub to communicate and celebrate what God is doing in Australia
- Developing strategic partnerships and networks to strengthen the evangelism movement
- Promoting and supporting projects serving those on the margins

Training Developments

Church Army has a wealth of expertise over many years in training and equipping people in Australia to share their faith in Jesus. Based on this previous material and texts, a new course for all Christians in every day evangelism is currently being developed.

The following modules have been defined

1. Get out more -
2. Practice healthy evangelism**
3. Tell your story and God's story
4. Make prayer a priority
5. Help your church build pathways
6. Be clear on the Gospel
7. Understand and develop your calling and gifts

Module 2 in healthy evangelism can be broken down into the following key elements

- Evangelism as part of discipleship
- Integrity of word and action
- Participating in what God is doing in people's lives. - seed sowing, sprouting growing, bearing fruit, reproducing over time
- Real, interesting and engaging communication
- Warm and growing relationships rather than detached kindness
- Exposure to Christian life and community

We are in the planning stages to run pilot versions of this training course in a number of locations during 2017. This will enable us to gain valuable feedback and further develop the course as an effective tool. Another important strategy will be to use Church Army evangelists to deliver the course. The passion and real life experience of our best people will make the training we offer stimulating, inspiring, real and unique.

A Movement for Evangelists – Matt Nine

With a desire to engage a new and wider group of people with gifting and passion for evangelism; A sub brand of CA is in development along the following lines:

Matt Nine is a movement of likeminded people working in God's harvest field who want to see more people in Australia living with Jesus at the centre of life. We plan to offer

- Web Resources and Connection – The CA Website and E News now has new stories and inspiration for evangelism. The Matt Nine website is in development and will be an important hub to network and resource a growing group of evangelists. The website will be a library of CA's historic training materials and also include the most up to date training, resources and tools available.
- Support in Prayer – we are now sending a weekly prayer email and have published and distributed prayer notes. We are praying for a wider group of people who are sharing their faith across Australia. The new Matt Nine website will make it easier for people to connect in, share and pray for each other
- Face to Face Training - initially using our new course that is in development
- A yearly gathering for inspiration, training and networking. This is planned to commence in September 2018.

Communications and Networks

The national office team have worked hard to review and develop an up to date list of practicing evangelists, supporters and interested people and organisations. We have established a pattern of communicating regularly with this community through a weekly prayer email and a monthly E Newsletter with CA news as well as stories, training and resources for effective evangelism. This network of contacts is growing as we meet new people and include them.

It will be valuable in this next season for CA to connect with likeminded organisations and explore strategic partnerships. Already we have developed relationships with Arrow, Christian Community Churches in Victoria and Tasmania (CCCVAT), Billy Graham Association, St Marks NTC, Scripture Union, Power to Change (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ), local churches and a range of individuals with experience and expertise in evangelism.

Finances

We thank God for the faithful donors who have continued supported Church Army through this time of change. We are also grateful for the grants that we have received to continue our work. In 2016 cash reserves were used to continue our operations and as we look to the future we must find new sources of income to sustain and grow our work. Whatever happens it will be vital to remain financially stable while still making plans for what we might do if and when financial resources become available.

Property Management

In the second half of 2016 Rick Beresford became the part-time manager of the Kihilla Conference Centre. With oversight from CA's Chair Ian Freestone and the board, Rick has worked tirelessly to make appropriate upgrades to the facilities and rooms with a view to increasing occupancy and making the most of this asset for Church Army.

Conclusion

The past few years have been challenging. Church Army Australia is at present a much smaller organisation that it has been in the past. I do however believe that God has kept Church Army alive for a reason. We have expertise and experience in evangelism that is vitally needed in the Australian church. There has never been a time when it was more important for every Christian to be equipped to share their faith in word and action and for gifted evangelists to be out there helping people discover Jesus. The work we have done in 2016 has laid a groundwork for future growth and will allow us to make the most of the opportunities that come our way.

All for Jesus!

Judy Douglas

CEO Church Army Australia