Dear Uniting Church in Australia Members, Congregations and Ministry Agents,

RE: UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS RELATING TO ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ.

The pursuit of peace features prominently in the history of the Uniting Church in Australia. In July 2003, the Assembly passed resolutions to reflect this history, and to renew commitments to be a peacemaking body. Further, at that time, the Assembly responded to the World Council of Churches’ declaration of the Decade to Overcome Violence by committing “to work together for peace, justice, and reconciliation at all levels – local, regional, and global”.

When looking at our Church’s responsibilities globally, peace in the Holy Land is an issue of concern to us as Christians. This concern is born out of our Christian hope for a reconciled world generally, and more specifically through the knowledge that these lands were those in which Jesus exercised his ministry. However, for the people of Israel and the Palestinian Territories, this peace seems far off.

Conflict and violence have marred the lives of the people of Israel and the Palestinian Territories for decades. We despair at the lack of resolution to this long-standing conflict, in particular the harm to the peace process done by the continued building of illegal Israeli settlements within the West Bank. This long, drawn-out conflict results in a distortion of peace for both the Palestinian people and Israelis.

In 2010, the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) passed resolutions which included calling for “an early end to the occupation of Palestine through a freely and peacefully negotiated solution in accordance with international law and United Nations resolutions”. Further, the NCCA, in response to a request made by Palestinian Christians, called on member churches (of which the UCA is one) to “consider a boycott of goods produced by Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories”.

In 2009, the UCA Assembly had resolved “to pray and work for a just and lasting peace for both Israelis and Palestinians”. We believe that prayer and nonviolent action at this time is an appropriate way to add our voice to those who would wish for peace in the Holy Land. To that end, in July 2011 the Assembly Standing Committee resolved to extend an invitation to members and congregations to consider taking peaceful action toward a resolution to the conflict. A number of suggested actions can be found listed on the flyers enclosed.

A suite of resources, entitled ‘A Prayer for Peace’, have been developed to assist as your congregation prayerfully considers a response to this invitation. These can be found on the enclosed CD-ROM or by visiting www.assembly.uca.org.au/prayerforpeace.

We commend these resources to you, and welcome information on any action you choose to take via our response form.

Grace and Peace,

Rev. Alistair Macrae          Rev. Terence Corkin
President, UCA Assembly                General Secretary, UCA Assembly