

Andrew F Dutney

Backyard Theologian

JUNE 26, 2016

THIRTEEN2012

Australian Churches Remembering Palestinian Churches

This afternoon the 2016 Forum of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) resolved:

That the Forum:

1. *Receive the request from the Uniting Church to respond to its resolutions of July 2015 on Palestine, and respond as follows.*
2. *Note the resolutions of the NCCA Forum of July 2010 (minute 10.07.23) and of the NCCA Executive of November 2010 (minute 10.11.06) and that these resolutions remain in force.*
3. *Plan for a visit of Australian Church Leaders to Palestine-Israel in 2017, with the program to be co-ordinated by the Jerusalem Inter-Church Center and at least one day's program to be arranged by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.*
4. *Following the Australian Church Leaders Visit in 2017:*
 - a) *invite a Palestinian church leader to visit Australia in 2018 to undertake a speaking tour of 2-3 weeks throughout Australia;*
 - b) *arrange for ecumenical Lenten studies on Palestine, with input from Palestinian church leaders, for use throughout churches in Australia in 2019 or 2020.*
5. *Note the decision of the Uniting Church to “establish an awareness-raising campaign throughout the Church on the plight of Palestinian Christians and the Palestinian people” and invite the Uniting Church to send information to all member churches.*

I blogged about the UCA's 2015 [Resolution on Palestine](https://andrewfdutney.wordpress.com/2015/07/17/proposal-on-palestine/) (<https://andrewfdutney.wordpress.com/2015/07/17/proposal-on-palestine/>) at the time. Here's what I said in presenting the proposal to the NCCA this afternoon:



In July last year the 14th Assembly of the UCA made a series of resolutions on Palestine. In essence they were a restatement of the existing policy of the UCA – and, indeed, of the the NCCA.

The decision to reaffirm and refresh this policy was in response to the direct request from our Palestinian Christian sisters and brothers for this expression of solidarity. It was a request that has been conveyed through official inter-church and ecumenical channels (and the NCCA and its members will have received those requests too). But it was also a request conveyed personally – Christian to Christian – when I led a group of Uniting Church ministers to Jerusalem for a conference in September 2014 and continued on in a solidarity visit with the Christian community in Palestine. In a limited way we felt some of the daily humiliation, intimidation and danger experienced by our brothers and sisters there. It was out of love for them that the Assembly resolved as it did. And the personal messages I received from Palestine afterwards confirmed the encouragement that they gained from knowing that their sisters and brothers on the other side of the world had not forgotten them.

There are two theological principles which compelled us to respond to their request:

- We are part of the one body of Christ; “if one member suffers, we all suffer together with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26)
- We are disciples of Jesus, whose life and ministry fulfills the prophetic tradition of bringing good news to the poor and seeking freedom for the oppressed (Luke 4:18-21, Isaiah 61:1)

That's all that the UCA Assembly's decision was about.

In no way did it represent a compromise to the UCA's "commitment to the existence, in peace and security, of the state of Israel" or our "conviction that anti-Semitism in all its expressions is an affront to the gospel of Jesus Christ" (Assembly Statement, Jews and Judaism, 2009). It was not a resolution in support of the BDS movement. It did not include a boycott of goods produced in Israel. That was reiterated in conversations with the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) around the time of last year's Assembly and after the media reported on the resolution. There was further discussion of the resolution in the national UCA-ECAJ dialogue in November last year and in a meeting between our President, the UCA convenor of the dialogue, and the ECAJ Executive Director in April this year.

Those conversations focused on the UCA Assembly resolution, which included the decision to "convey these resolutions to the National Council of Churches in Australia with an invitation to respond". We did not share with the ECAJ the text of the proposal that is now before this Forum. However, while the ECAJ is not be familiar with the precise details of the proposal they were certainly aware that a proposal would be brought by the Uniting Church reflecting the Assembly's decision.

In addition I am able to table a letter from the Australian Jewish Democratic Society fully supporting the proposal that is now before the Forum.

So I move that...

(The motion was seconded by The Religious society of Friends)

📁 **UNCATEGORIZED**

📌 **NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN AUSTRALIA** 📌 **PALESTINE**
 📌 **UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA**



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One comment

1. **Living Stones: The Uniting Church and Palestine** | Andrew F Dutney says:

OCTOBER 13, 2016 AT 5:30 AM

[...] Assembly on the Proposal on Palestine, and also from the NCCA Forum in June this year on Australian churches remembering Palestine. I made some more personal connections with reflections on what it means to live on stolen land [...]

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