



20 September 2005

PRAYING FOR PEACE IS ABOUT TRUST NOT FEAR

Uniting Church President, the Reverend Dr. Dean Drayton, has urged Australians to join with people from across the globe to pray for peace during the UN **International Day of Peace**.

“As violence continues to damage the lives of millions of people around the world, it is important that Christians in Australia remember that their faith calls them to be actively involved in peacemaking. I encourage members of the Uniting Church to take time on 21 September to join the Christians around the world praying for peace as part of the International Day of Prayer which coincides with the UN International Day of Peace.”

Rev. Drayton said prayer and reflection were vital aspects of the peace building process because they channel people’s energies and increase their desire to take positive steps to build peace.

“Prayer keeps us focussed on peace, so for people of faith it’s an important first step in a process to work toward global peace. Through prayer we are strengthened to go out into our communities ready to make a difference working together for justice and equity.

“We are deeply worried by the path the Australian Government is taking in legislating increasingly harsh anti-terrorism laws. They threaten the security of the Australian people by failing to comply with community expectations of accountability and transparency and are a threat to freedom of association and speech. We are especially concerned that these laws will result in suppression of peaceful activism, religious freedom and expression and may be used to discriminate against members of the Islamic community.

“The Uniting Church is also very concerned by the failure of the member states of the United Nations to respect the validity of UN structures and processes in the struggle for nuclear non-proliferation. While we welcome the news that North Korea has agreed to disarm, we are very disappointed with the recent failure of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. It is imperative that the aims of the NPT be respected and upheld and that all nations move toward disarmament. The road to peace is not lined with weapons. It can only be found by building relationships of trust and cooperation,” Rev. Drayton said.

“We cannot legislate for lasting peace by giving into fear. We must work together to discover the hope that comes from relationships based on our common humanity.”

As well as praying for peace, Rev. Drayton also asked Uniting Church members to pray for the success and safety of those who are actively working to build peace in some of the world’s most troubled areas.

“Since 2001, the Uniting Church’s Young Ambassadors for Peace (YAP) program has been working to build peace in some of the most troubled parts of the Asia-pacific region. YAP works with young people who live in conflict situations, helping them to build relationships across the gulfs that divide opposing groups and growing their skills in conflict resolution and peacemaking.

“On the International Day for Peace, I ask Uniting Church members to remember our staff and friends, and all those who work for peace in the middle of serious violent conflicts. Their commitment to peace demonstrates that the way to break the cycle of violence is to transform communities through relationships of trust built on the hope of a better world. May our prayers add voice to their lives.”

More information on the International Day of Prayer for Peace is available on the World Council of Churches website at <http://www2.wcc-coe.org/pressreleasesen.nsf/index/pr-05-45.html>.

For more information on the Young Ambassadors for Peace program visit <http://www.uim.uca.org.au/ihr/yap>.

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