



## AUSTRALIA, ASIA , NEW ZEALAND UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM (UPJ)

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One of the key activities of the past year has been a Strategic Planning exercise to review the current structure and operations of the Union for Progressive Judaism (UPJ). The recommendations now include a smaller central UPJ; the creation of regional UPJs with delegated responsibilities; an increased profile for the Moetzah; a more independent JRAAC; an autonomous and strengthened ARZA; and an independent UIA Progressive Trust.

**Australian Reform Zionist Association (ARZA):** The UPJ provides administrative support, enabling ARZA to continue its work of promoting Israel and Progressive values in the World Zionist movement.

**Awards:** Each year, the UPJ presents awards to outstanding and long-serving volunteers in our congregations, as well as to potential future leaders. These awards reflect the wonderful spirit of enthusiasm and dedication that permeates our congregations.

**Centre for Living Judaism:** Our partnership with the King David School (KDS) and Progressive Judaism Victoria (PJV) in maintaining the excellent Centre for Living Judaism (CLJ) has continued during 2014.

**Congregations and affiliates:** The overall range of activities and programs provided by congregations has continued at an amazing rate. We have been pleased to offer publicity and support for them via our regular email distributions and through special notification on our website.

**Community representation:** The UPJ and its affiliates are represented at every level of community leadership and involvement at state, federal, regional and international levels. In addition, we have been involved with numerous interfaith and lobbying groups, where members of our movement hold positions of leadership.

**Conference 2014:** The biennial conference theme *Ani v'Atah* ("You and I can change the world") was a perfect opportunity for people from across the region to meet the leadership of our world movement; to learn and leyn with like-minded people; and to celebrate our achievements and aspirations in the beautiful city of Adelaide.

**Gatherings:** Gatherings of UPJ presidents, executives and rabbis took place at the Leo Baeck Centre for Progressive Judaism in Melbourne in November 2013.

**Leadership development:** The excellent programs of the WUPJ's Anita Saltz Centre were again enjoyed by a number of people from our region, with our financial assistance.

**New Congregations and groups:** At the biennial conference in Adelaide, it was a pleasure to welcome three new congregations to the UPJ family: the Sunshine Coast Jewish Community; Kehillat Shanghai and the Jewish Community of Japan.

**The Millim Institute for Progressive Jewish Learning:** Rabbi Emeritus Fred Morgan AM has led the way in the development of an innovative institute for adult Jewish learning, commencing with two programs to equip lay leaders with the skills and knowledge required to lead Shabbat Services.

**MAZON:** Under the enthusiastic leadership of Rabbi Gary Robuck, MAZON – the Jewish Response to Hunger - has held a number of campaigns, including the annual food drive over the High Holydays. During the year, Mazon made grants to a number of worthy causes in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, as well as to an aged care facility in Mumbai, India.

**Moetzah:** The Council of Progressive Rabbis is a vital and integral part of the UPJ, reviewing religious practice and policy in order to remain relevant to our congregations via involvement in interfaith activities

and social advocacy issues. It has been a pleasure to welcome Rabbi David Kunin from the Jewish Community of Japan (Tokyo) and we look forward to welcoming Rabbi Nathan Alfred as he assumes his position as Rabbi to the Singapore congregation in the near future.

We have also been pleased to assist with the placement of Rabbi Adi Cohen in Temple David, Perth following the completion of his contract in Wellington, New Zealand. Rabbi Kaminsky steps down from the position of Chairperson and we pay tribute to her dedication, patience and the spirit of partnership that she has championed over her two years in this position.

**Mission to Poland & Israel:** Further to the great success of the initial Mission to Poland and Israel in April 2012, the UPJ, ARZA, TBI and Emanuel Synagogue co-hosted a second trip in April 2014. Rabbi Steve Bernstein from the WUPJ's Anita Saltz Centre joined the group as and spiritual leader and helped make the trip the overwhelming success that it was. The next Mission will be in October 2015.

**Music Network:** Network Chairperson, Cantor Michel Laloum led a delegation of 15 people to Israel to participate in the biennial conference of the American Conference of Cantors – Guild of Temple Musicians in June 2014.

**Netzer:** The UPJ's support for Netzer has been maintained, including financial support and involvement in many aspects of the lives of UPJ congregations. We continue to be impressed by the dedication and talent of the Netzer leadership, and they are respected and valued members of the UPJ family. The Netzer outreach programs to smaller communities continue to be very well received and the state and federal camps become more popular each year.

**Professional development:** We remain committed to maintaining and developing a high calibre of professionals to serve our community as rabbis, cantors and educators. We continue to encourage young people to attend the various programs provided by the WUPJ's Anita Saltz Centre, including financial assistance. In addition, we believe that the Milim Institute will greatly assist in the development of Jewish professionals and Jewish literacy.

**Visitors:** In February 2014, Rabbi Benjie Gruber visited Perth, Sydney, Melbourne and Hong Kong as part of his trip as Guest Speaker for the UIA Progressive Trust appeal, with each function being an undeniable success..

**Rabbinic search & mediation:** As our congregations have developed, there have been a number of searches for new rabbis, cantors and educators. We have been delighted to offer assistance and support in each case. At the same time, there have been a number of disputes and differences of opinion within congregations and, wherever possible, we have tried to offer positive and objective mediation and support.

**Shlichut:** We have continued the tradition of having the very highest calibre of community shlichim, and we are deeply appreciative of the support provided by Netzer Olami and the Zionist Federation of Australia to achieve this. NSW Community Shaliach, Yuval Nemirovsky and Victorian Community Shaliach, Nadav Shachmon have both done outstanding work for Netzer and the entire community.

**Social Action & Advocacy:** Our involvement in speaking out on a number of important issues, including climate change, patrilineal descent, marriage equality, religious discrimination, the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, the plight of indigenous Australians and attempted genocide in various parts of the world continues.

**UIA Progressive Trust:** Thanks to the tireless work of volunteers and staff, we continue to send significant amounts each year to the WUPJ in Israel via the UIA Refugee Relief Fund, providing the financial means for absorption programs and freeing up resources to develop Progressive congregations across Israel. The success of the UIA Progressive Trust is a tribute to our donors who understand the special goals of the campaign, as well as to the dedicated volunteers.

**World Union for Progressive Judaism:** Our commitment to the work and mission of the WUPJ is undiminished. Philip Bliss is Vice-Chairman, Phyllis Dorey and Ian Samuel are on the Board. Immediate Past President and Treasurer David Robinson remains the official UPJ representative on the WUPJ Board. Our Honorary Secretary, Sharene Hambur was co-chair of the CONNECTIONS conference held in Jerusalem in May 2013 and former President, Phyllis Dorey is on the Planning Committee for CONNECTIONS 2015.

**Conclusion:** The UPJ's position in the region, within the community and in the world movement remains vital, even as we consider how to re-structure and increase the overall reach of Progressive Judaism across

the Australia-New Zealand-Asia region. We look back with pride on what has been achieved and look ahead towards some significant changes to our organisation that will, hopefully, assist in the promotion and development of pluralistic Judaism in our region.

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