

Minutes
Monthly Envoy Conference Calls
Tuesday, December 15, 2020 3pm & 6pm Eastern

- I. Welcome and introductions
 - a. 3pm ET
 - i. Allison Hess (UU@UN, Rochester, NY)
 - ii. Peggy Montgomery (All Souls, NYC)
 - iii. Jeannie Lewis (San Marcos UU Fellowship, TX)
 - iv. Terry Van Brunt (North Shore UU Society in Lacombe, LA)
 - v. Nasreen Sarah Gagner (UU Church of Long Beach, CA)
 - vi. Barry Lee (North Shore UU Society in Lacombe, LA)
 - vii. Joanne Spivey (UU Congregation of Frederick, MD)
 - viii. Ron Glossop (First Unitarian Church of Alton, IL)
 - ix. Tom Zeller (Towson UU Church, MD)
 - b. 6pm ET
 - i. Allison Hess (UU@UN, Rochester, NY)
 - ii. Bill McPherson (University Unitarian Church in Seattle, WA)
 - iii. Jim Hemstock (First Unitarian Church of Victoria, BC)
 - iv. PJ Deak (Unitarian Society of New Haven, CT)
 - v. Carole Alexander (UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, NY)
 - vi. Phyllis Baxter (North Hatley UU Church, QC)
 - vii. Markly Wilson (UU Fellowship at Rock Tavern, NY)
 - viii. Irvin Waller (First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa, ON)
- II. UN updates and news
 - a. The UN is working hard to address the COVID-19 pandemic through the ACT Accelerator – group of countries and organizations led by WHO working to develop, produce, and equitably distribute covid-19 vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics. Especially focused efforts at low and middle income countries.
 - b. Because of the pandemic, resources from wealthy countries for humanitarian aid are diminished and logistics are complicated
 - c. The Secretary-General is leading a series of discussions for UN staff about addressing racism within the organization.
 - i. PJ: Will there be reports?
 1. Allison: Likely, yes since he’s been transparent and issued reports about progress toward gender parity in UN leadership. [I just looked and it looks like *not*. This “campaign on Awareness and Action” seems to be just a series of discussions. The goals are more “providing an open space, making people feel their concerns are heard” rather than quantitative.] <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1078152>
- III. UU@UN goings on:
 - a. For Human Rights Day last week we held an event called “The Right to Joy: Women of African Descent Ascending” – you can find information about it, including the recording, online: <https://www.uua.org/international-justice/events/right-joy>

- i. Terry: Attended the event. The most moving event he's attended for a long time. The four speakers were moved by the whole idea and each had something to contribute. Was thinking afterwards: maybe break up each speaker's section to use as a sermon in worship?
- ii. Nasreen: Also attended and learned a lot!
- iii. Peggy: Couldn't make it but looking forward to watching the recording
- iv. PJ: has been trying to promote UU@UN events in the congregation both before and after they happen (share recordings). Have others succeeded in this?
 - 1. Irvin: Ottawa congregation has a series of Sunday Breakfast Forums to focus on issues like climate change, etc. When the UN Sunday happened, included the video from UU@UN and people were very interested. Looking for other videos to do more of those. Get 40-50 people at each of those. Weekly newsletter, Board and Minister are very supportive of UU@UN.
 - 2. Markly: Invited congregants to the Right to Joy event, not sure how many actually attended
- b. As mentioned last month, the UU@UN is hosting a sustainable fashion event in February. Will bring together contributors from the fashion industry and human rights and environmental experts who consider this issue. More event details to come in January! For more info about the issue, see blog: <https://www.uua.org/international/blog/systemic-poverty-fast-fashion>
- c. Coming up: Intergenerational Spring Seminar April 9-11, 2021! Registration is open now! The theme is "All In for Climate Justice: Food Equity and Sustainability." The Planning Committee aims to offer a balance of interactive/hands-on, spiritual, fun, challenging, and educational activities. Registration fees are different this year: it's a tiered model (inspired by the Canadian Unitarian Council) based on one's larger economic and financial position and ability to pay ([details here about registration!](#)).
 - i. Joanne: Should I contact the RE leader and minister to let them know this is coming up? Yes please! Spread the word amongst leaders that this is open to all ages 14+!
 - ii. Peggy: How will we sneak in a visit to the United Nations?
 - 1. Allison: Thanks for the reminder...
 - iii. Terry: UN Sunday service was a great way to inform people – maybe some worship resources ahead of Spring Seminar will help encourage people to register.
 - 1. Allison: Tie into the UU Ministry for Earth's "Spring for Change" season of sacred activism to get ready for Spring Seminar. (Spring for Change goes from World Water Day March 22 to Earth Day April 22 to Biodiversity Day May 22.)
 - iv. Irvin: Would like to do something in Feb/March for young people who want to go so they can start talking about it to build up to it, and then hopefully continue involvement afterwards. Have 3 Board members who have been in various times before plus three others.

1. Allison: will keep in mind as Planning Committee develops the pre-seminar assignment that resources for groups to reflect together ahead of time would be helpful
2. PJ: Getting environmental groups to look bigger than micro-local focus is a challenge
3. Irvin: Very active environmental action working group, Canadians tend to be very involved in enviro issues – looking at (bad) things happening south of the border adds to the energy around activities.
 - a. Sharing videos and articles (esp. that appeal to 14-18 year-olds) is great!
 - b. Recently done work around enviro-conscious financial portfolios for older folks
- v. Bill: Will there be an opportunity again to lead Collab Groups?
 1. Sure thing! Collaboration Group Leader applications link here: <https://www.uua.org/international-justice/un/spring-seminar/volunteer/collaboration-group-leader-application>
- vi. Terry: The fact that cost is significantly reduced w/ no travel and registration cost is according to your ability to pay will make it more likely people can attend.

IV. Other topics to discuss?

- a. Terry: Just heard a dispatch from UN Food Programme: amplified the fact that starvation will be increased enormously. Need \$5 billion to save people from famine.
- b. Irvin: Human Development Report was just issued from UNDP. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1080042>
- c. PJ: Did the UU@UN or any partners participate in the Climate Ambition Summit? No, unfortunately.
- d. Phyllis: Congregation just did Write for Rights activity. Amnesty International sent sample letters and addresses and info about cases. Everybody feels a bit of empowerment when we do this because we see how we can do a little bit and it makes an impact. Many of these people are unjustly incarcerated in different countries around the world.
- e. Phyllis: 5th Anniversary of the Paris Accord this past week. Prime Minister has put forth plans for carbon tax and other measures to take action for climate.
 - i. Phyllis is looking forward to seeing what new U.S. President has to say about pipelines & oil industry...
- f. Jim: Just had our UN Sunday and it went pretty well. Jim and a young person from the congregation (videographer!) attended the Seminar. She prepared a 10-minute video on the Seminar. She made 2 critiques about the Seminar – 1) no science. 2) many climate activists seemed opposed to many forms of energy production (enviro activists who say no to wind farms, hydro, solar, etc. for all sorts of reasons)
 - i. Bill: She was in Bill's Collaboration Group last year!
 - ii. Allison: Can we see the video? (Jim will look into this)
- g. Jim: Elsewhere in the congregation doing really well – pledges and attendance are both up! Zoom services are really wonderful.

- i. Phyllis: Are your services available for others to watch?
 - ii. Jim: I know they're recorded, will look into it and tell Allison.
- h. Jim: Invited people to think about attending Spring Seminar. Don't have a youth cohort in the 16-20 range, more like 12-13 or under so might skip this year, but out fishing!
- i. Markly: Congregation's funding is primarily from the use of our building as a school, so in significant financial trouble and have had to reduce a lot of what we do. Budget reduction, and discussing shifting minister to half-time work. Much discussion in the congregation about what we are, where we want to go in the next year and into the future. Like figuring out what we want to do when we grow up. Benefited significantly from Zoom – much more interaction and have gotten to know one another much better.
- j. Bill: UU State Action Group in Washington state is developing priorities for what to do with the state legislature in the coming year. Getting quite active on the political level especially re: homelessness <https://juustwa.org/program-areas/legislative-advocacy/legislative-priorities/state-tax-and-funding-reform/> and climate change <https://juustwa.org/program-areas/legislative-advocacy/legislative-priorities/carbon-pollution-accountability/>
- k. Anna: Congregation is putting on a panel in January to celebrate the UN's 75th anniversary. Brainstorming with the UN Envoy Team at All Souls & considering who to invite to present.
- l. Irvin: Working on SDGs – especially those focused on violence against women 5.2, street violence 16.1, and violence against children 16.3. Looking for ways to promote interest in the SDGs more generally. Interested to hear that Bill's group is doing things with the state legislature. Ottawa has relatively easy access to politicians. Working on guaranteed basic income which the Canadian gov't is looking at seriously. Congregation is also interested in Palestine (angry about what Canadian gov't is doing on that). Violence is a very important local issue – Canada initiative to be free of Gender-based Violence by 2030.
 - i. Videos are always welcome, any additional resources around the SDGs are appreciated!
 - ii. Personally quite involved with WHO re: violence against children and with Habitat re: city violence.
- m. Nasreen: Is on a task force for adopting the 8th Principle in the congregation and would like to get some ideas that have worked for others to use in the congregation.
 - i. The text of the 8th Principle is: "We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions."
 - ii. Here's some background information about the 8th Principle: <https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/background>
 - iii. Nasreen: All 7 principles are what we believe. The 8th principle is encouraging people to think about what we put in action.
 - 1. Also: check out the UUA Commission on Institutional Change's report: Widening the Circle of Concern. Points out trends in the UUA overall

and recommendations on how to be more inclusive and equitable as an association and as congregations.

2. Buy the report in book form here:
<https://www.uabookstore.org/Widening-the-Circle-of-Concern-P18686.aspx>
 3. or read it online:
<https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/cic/widening>
 4. or as a pdf: https://www.uua.org/files/pdf/w/widening_the_circle-text_with_covers.pdf
 5. And here's where you can sign up for the Study Guide to connect Widening the Circle to your congregation:
<https://www.uua.org/widening/guide>
- iv. Allison: Markly asked about this last month and Janet shared resources from Shelter Rock's work on the 8th Principle. Allison will pass those resources along to Nasreen!
 - n. Jeannie: Is coordinator for the Women's group in the church. Last year had a concern with members who thought there should *not* be a women's group (a male board member called it binary gender segregation). Women in the congregation had to defend why there's a women's group. Is there pushback against having Women's Groups in other congregations?
 - i. Terry: No pushback in our area. The Women's Center is very active in the parish.
 - ii. Jeannie: Some people who object are young women. Mostly older women make up the group, who fought in the 70s for women's rights. They recognize what's going on in today's world with women not being paid the same as men etc. Women are certainly not the dominant gender in our society.
 - iii. Joanne: congregation has Retired UU Ladies Eating Out & Retired UU Men Eating Out – say that anyone is allowed to come if they want (a few women have come to the men's group, but no men have come to women's group) More of a social event, not as serious.
 - iv. Jeannie: This group is much more serious with topics to discuss each month. "Women's UU Friendship Society" (WUUFFS) it's existed for a long time and for a while was the heart and soul of the church.
 - v. Barry: Barry's wife has been very involved with the local Women's Center and Barry was jealous of all their amazing programs. He was excited to attend an open session they had and is no longer so curious. Maybe open up one session to assuage the curiosity?
 - vi. Peggy: Women's Alliance is one of the longest-standing groups in All Souls church, but the organization is mostly composed of retired women.
 - vii. Jeannie: Fortunately the minister is a woman and is supportive of the women's group.
 - viii. Ron: Enjoy this discussion but not a lot to do with the United Nations.
 1. Allison: Well, depending on how you look at it, women's groups can be an important way to work towards the UN Sustainable Development

Goal number 5 (Achieving Gender Equality & Empowering Women and Girls) :)

- o. Joanne: With all the widespread hunger, can we have a special service where we encourage people to donate to support organizations that are working on addressing that? (Nice idea!)
 - p. Carole: Congregation in Shelter Rock has the Veatch Foundation. Very proud of grantees' involvement in getting out the vote around the election. Because Veatch has a lot of financial resources and there's so much need during pandemic, they're trying to support as much as possible. Especially now supporting initiatives for hunger, rent, and mental health alleviation.
 - i. PJ: Veatch-supported Postcard writing was incredible both during the election season and also for the Georgia runoffs. Did fundraising in the congregation but the grant they got from Veatch helped them get started which made a huge difference!
- V. BJ: This Sunday, for our RE, we will share plant-based, vegan recipes and tips that we like for the holidays or any day. That will be Dec 20, at 9:30 am CST
- a. Also, our most recent RE was a guest speaker from Indian, founder of the Sadhana Forest, Avirum Rozin and his wife Yorit. <https://sadhanaforest.org/>
 - b. We also had a blessing of the animals, which included farm animals and a link to an address given by Jane Goodall for the UU Animal Ministry. <https://youtu.be/925-wqMdlIdI> . Please also show the UUAM link <https://uuam.org/wp/get-connected/virtual-animal-blessing/>
- VI. Adjourn.