

**Minutes**  
**Monthly Envoy Conference Call**  
Tuesday, May 18, 2021 3pm & 6pm Eastern

- I. Welcome and Introductions. In attendance:
  - a. 3pm Eastern
    - i. Allison Hess (UU Office at the UN)
    - ii. Jeannie Lewis (San Marcos UU Fellowship, TX)
    - iii. Janet Bendowitz (UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, NY)
    - iv. Ron Glossop (First Unitarian Church of Alton, IL)
    - v. Elaine Nelson (UU Community Church of Washington County, OR)
    - vi. Mandy Mynhier (All Souls Community Church of Grand Rapids, MI)
    - vii. Dana Burch (Community Church of NY, NY)
    - viii. Peggy Montgomery (All Souls Church, NYC)
    - ix. Barry Lee (North Shore UU Society, Lacombe, LA)
  - b. 6pm Eastern
    - i. Allison Hess (UU Office at the UN)
    - ii. Irvin Waller (First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa in ON)
    - iii. Bill McPherson (University Unitarian Church in Seattle, WA)
    - iv. Phyllis Baxter (UU Church of North Hatley, QC)
    - v. Bruce Knotts (UU Office at the UN)
    - vi. BJ Allen (San Marcos UU Fellowship, TX)
    - vii. Markly Wilson (UU Congregation at Rock Tavern, NY)
    - viii. Anna Mone (All Souls Church, NYC)
    - ix. Nasreen Gagner (UU Congregation of Long Beach, CA)
    - x. Tom Zeller (Towson UU Church, MD)
- II. UN News:
  - a. Israel & Palestine
    - i. Tuesday was a Meeting of the UN Forum on the Question of Palestine
    - ii. UN has been trying to play a mediator role, but there is no appetite for ceasefire or peace talks
    - iii. Calling for more humanitarian access. Just opened a crossing into Gaza for humanitarian supplies which was closed until now. (just one crossing is open – need more)
    - iv. Security Council has met a couple of times about this issue. The United States blocked efforts to call on Israel for a ceasefire. Don't know if the U.S. actually used its veto, but just saying no to the measure means they don't have to. This is pretty typical behavior for members of the Permanent 5 in the UN Security Council: Anything even remotely critical of Israel at the UN the U.S. vetoes, anything critical of Syria gets blocked by Russia, and anything critical of Myanmar gets blocked by China. U.S. President Biden reportedly spoke to Netanyahu urging ceasefire but Biden refused to actually put that into motion at the UN.
      1. Dana: The relationship between U.S. and Israel is so powerful, Biden is leaning into that unilateral relationship rather than multilateralism.

- v. Bruce: With the pandemic we need alignment and collaboration in the security council (and the United Nations generally) but this current situation is causing more divisions
- vi. Historically, the UU@UN doesn't have a lot of grounding based on past UUA GA statements or resolutions that do not give a clear position on this issue. There is a growing recognition of Palestinians as indigenous to the land, with Israel as a settler colonial presence. This is in focus at the UN as Israel's actions are in violation of international law.
  - 1. Janet: Veatch Board of Governors is meeting with the UUA President this evening and Janet might bring this up
  - 2. Irvin: have several congregants who are very passionate about addressing treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli army
- b. Bruce: A focus right now for the UU@UN is on extrajudicial killings – killings by state actors outside of judicial processes. This is repeatedly condemned by the United Nations as being a violation of human right to trial Some high-profile examples of extrajudicial killings include the American killing of Osama Bin Laden and the Saudi killing of Jamal Kashoggi. Another type of extrajudicial killing that is of concern at the UN is killing carried out by drone strike.
  - i. The UU@UN is trying to get the UN to focus on demilitarization of police, including violence against peaceful protesters. Want to apply the UN policy of condemning extrajudicial killing to police killings that have no accountability in many countries.
  - ii. Irvin: would love to partner with you in some way on this. UNODC has a meeting this week and Irvin will be making a statement on a couple of the specific targets of SDG 16. Part of Goal 16 has to do with police. Irvin has experience with India and China which both have issues with extrajudicial killings by police. Recently has learned about Brazil which has extremely high rates of police killings. Question is: what can be done to control this, create a culture of accountability. Irvin is very interested in this professionally and would love to collaborate.
    - 1. Bruce: would love to collaborate on this
- c. Nasreen: Does the UN have a plan for vaccine equity? Like wealthy countries donating surplus vaccines
  - i. Yes. The UN's health agency, WHO (World Health Organization), has a program for sharing vaccines called COVAX. The UN has no way to force anyone to contribute, but the U.S. is beginning to donate doses to COVAX and encouraging others to as well. Vaccines are starting to get to more countries, but many will still not receive large quantities of vaccines until late this year or next year (or later). Vaccine hesitancy is pretty common in the U.S. as well as some other parts of the world.
  - ii. Some African countries do have facilities that would be capable of producing vaccines if info is shared.

- d. The UN launched a new program today to support Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh; joint initiative of the Government of Bangladesh, the IOM (Int'l Organization for Migration), and UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency)
  - e. UN Food systems summit & pre-summit & counter summit: In September, the United Nations is hosting a Food Systems Summit, for which there will be a pre-summit in Rome in July. The framework for the summit was created with no input from grassroots groups, peasant groups, small-scale farmers, or indigenous communities, and their interests are not part of the agenda – rather, corporate interests seem to have taken over the summit. Accordingly, those groups are planning a counter summit.
    - i. The UU@UN is collaborating with UUMFE on how UUs can be in solidarity with the counter summit while present for the Summit. Hope to draw attention to the issues raised by those who were left out of the UN summit process.
    - ii. BJ: Suggested Indigenous leaders for the Food pre-summit in July or for other events. Vincent Schilling, Mohawk, is an author and does podcasts and TikTok. Also Hereditary chief Phil Lane Jr. Recent vegan and knows hundreds(?) of tribes and is working to get people to sign a Treaty to Protect the Earth.
  - f. Bruce: Gearing up for COP26 (supposed to be in Glasgow; likely largely virtual) Looking at what our goals will be for COP26. We want to push for a fully-funded Green Climate Fund and to exceed the goals set in the Paris Agreement.
  - g. Annual UN High-Level Political Forum is coming up in July: urgency on the SDGs now that we're in year two of the Decade of Action on the Sustainable Development Goals
- III. UN Sunday: Theme is "All In for Climate Justice: Food Equity and Sustainability" and the recommended date is United Nations Day which this year falls on a Sunday, October 24, 2021. Very much related to this year's theme: May 16 (Saturday) is World Food Day, so that is also a good weekend for UN Sunday if UN Day doesn't work out. Talk with minister or worship team at your congregation to see about getting UN Sunday on the calendar now! A collection of resources will be made available in June for congregations to start planning UN Sunday. The resources include: Background and history of UUs at the UN, Information about the theme (incl. what's going on at the UN on this topic and what do UUs have to say about this topic from a spiritual standpoint), Sample Order of Service, Religious Education materials, and an Action toolkit. What of the UN Sunday resources is most useful to you and your congregation?
- a. Ron: people just need to be informed: let people know what's happening and what's not happening at the United Nations. (Many people are totally uninformed re: the UN)
  - b. Janet: The resources are a great starting point, need to also incorporate input from other entities in the congregation. Videos are really helpful. Readings also helpful. (Maybe Allison can come virtually to Shelter Rock for UN Sunday this year? Allison will follow up)
  - c. Elaine: People want information about what's happening and want to know what they can do locally that will be in the right direction. If limited energy/capacity, where should we focus our efforts? Currently looking into local food pantry, restoring heritage grains.
  - d. Jeannie: Last UN Sunday, SMUUF had Bruce present virtually, Allison was in person the year before that. Materials are great, and thusfar have depended on UU@UN staff more. The congregation plans to start meeting in-person in the fall, however the

building has mold so not renewing lease. If we do a service that's in person, would love suggestions for someone to invite as a guest speaker who lives relatively nearby and would not have to travel far.

- e. Dana: Is the UU@UN in direct contact with Senior Ministers re: UN Sunday?
  - i. No but we do share announcements about this through UU Ministers Association
- f. Mandy: This will be my first time planning a UN Sunday Service so would appreciate any and all resources please
- g. Ron: When looking for guest speakers, keep in mind any local schools and colleges. Most universities will have professors who may have expertise in the topic or the United Nations
  - i. Allison: Another thing to keep in mind: UN Sunday doesn't have to be (or doesn't *only* have to be) a worship service. A professor who has expertise in the topic or in the UN might not be super comfortable giving a *sermon*, but you might invite them to lead a program before/after church or another day that week that's more lecture or workshop style.
- h. Elaine: Videos were indeed super helpful! Now the congregation is in the beginning of ministerial search so are without a minister. Videos would be a great help.
- i. Janet: Refer to resources from the Spring Seminar – many of those sessions were recorded and can be repurposed for UN Sunday.
  - i. Allison: We do hope people who attended the Seminar will take their learnings and share with their congregation via UN Sunday. (We'll be doing some of this with the resource collection)
  - ii. Might also see about renting the virtual keynote presentation from Soul Fire Farm for a congregational screening and discussion. ([info on that here](#))
- j. Dana: how many congregations hold UN Sunday?
  - i. Allison: 30 ish? It's sometimes hard to know because congregations hold a service without letting anyone in our office know. Hoping to increase these numbers in the year(s) ahead using our expanded contact network.
- k. Jeannie: SMUUF had never done a UN Sunday before Jeannie started as an Envoy a few years ago and it's a really great program, a good opportunity to let people know about the UN and the UU@UN.
- l. Janet: Might be nice to join up with other congregations for UN Sunday. Invite smaller congregations in the area who might not have a UN Sunday service regularly to join yours, and they might be inspired to host their own in future years.
- m. Mandy: What's the format for the resources that are shared?
  - i. Webpage (somewhat clunky but hopefully clear enough?) here's last year's [www.uua.org/unsunday](http://www.uua.org/unsunday) (and this is where the new one will be)
- n. Nasreen: Have a fellow congregant who is interested in being a co-Envoy! Would need captions in all Envoy meetings. (Allison can turn on auto-captioning for all meetings! Just forgets sometimes and appreciates this reminder)
- o. BJ: Congregation is making the connection between food and climate. Would be useful to have a collection of UUs who have gone vegan, vegan recipes, to help people feel like its more normalized

- p. BJ: Would be good to frame UN Sunday with a positive message, like spreading “the gospel” (good news) about solutions to climate change that we have and are possible!
  - q. Irvin: Have a new settled minister starting in August. Know he’s heard of the UU@UN but doesn’t know much about it, so would appreciate some basic stuff to help with content for sermon and the rest of the service. The videos the Ottawa group collected to get ready for the Seminar might get reused. Want to highlight success stories of the UN. Congregation is pretty excited about climate issues and about food issues. Aside from UN Sunday can be doing things during the summer as well, and the congregation hosts a major lecture every year.
  - r. Nasreen: Helpful for new minister to get lots of information about all of this.
- IV. Sixth Principle Award. Congregations were notified today if they qualified; let Allison know if you thought you would but didn’t get an email. This is the first year after the shift from “Blue Ribbon Award” – does it feel okay? Anything still confusing?
- a. Good to be thinking about the award as you go into UN Sunday planning. If you host a UN Sunday service and have a collection in support of the UU@UN, you’ve already met two of the requirements! (need 3 total; 6 to chose from)
  - b. Jeannie: For third requirement: SMUUF hosted a workshop and discussed one of the topics relating to the UU@UN.
  - c. Janet: Appreciate the renaming. Lots of work in the congregation right now on the 8<sup>th</sup> Principle, so it’s a good reminder of one of our other core UU Principles. (“Blue Ribbon” didn’t really mean anything!)
  - d. Peggy: Really appreciate having the new structure! All Souls was never able to qualify for the previous version of the award but did this year! The Envoy Team is already talking about what we’re going to do for GA and bring back as Envoys to the congregation.
  - e. Irvin: It’s encouraging for people in the congregation to get some recognition through this award – there are a lot of people who are involved in one way or another. Will put this on the home page of the website because we think it might attract people.
  - f. Phyllis: Our little church has had Blue Ribbon status for years – feeling a little out of the loop with the new Sixth Principle Award because of church services and everything else virtually. Allison will check in with Phyllis re: their status.
  - g. BJ: one of the things that worked really well in helping SMUUF get the award this year was one of the requirements is basically “do something” that has to do with the UN and one of the programs. It meant that we learned things I didn’t expect to learn. Had a nice audience and it was interesting to research and put together that event (squeezed it in before the deadline!)
- V. Discussion of the SDGs
- a. In the Envoy News, there’s a section called “Time to Act” that gives suggestions on how you can take action locally to address the Sustainable Development Goals. It focuses on a different Goal each month and gives recommendations – not that you’d necessarily get your congregation to take action on a different thing every month, but to help you think about the types of things that you might do. Have people noticed this? Is it useful? See collected suggestions on this page: <https://www.uua.org/international-justice/un/envoys/resources/sdg-resources> \*\*\*

- b. Nasreen: Noticed the Envoy News generally and used it especially when requesting UN Sunday service – forwarding information to the minister.
- c. BJ might not be subscribed to the Envoy News – Allison will look into this...
- d. Irvin: Learned a lot from the Envoy training – hadn't noticed this specific part of the Envoy News before but was planning to look at them. So much stuff in the congregational newsletter, and priorities are set by someone else. The way to get people mobilized in the congregation is to talk about things that align with the congregation's focus and local action people can take. Congregation is re-establishing the action group on the UN – have a major lecture, summer sermon, 9am forum every two weeks one on Environment and one on Social Justice – in both of those the SDGs come up a lot. Group here is interested in trying to get the city of Ottawa to take on the doughnut economics plan
  - i. BJ: There is a talk that combines doughnut economics and the nine planetary boundaries in a talk by Sailesh Rao. If anyone is interested, BJ will post a recording in the Envoys Facebook Group:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/uuofficeunenvoys>
- e. Phyllis: First heard of the SDGs when Allison presented about them in Ottawa in Oct 2019. Hadn't been educating the congregation on the goals, but just getting started doing that now. Would love materials like from Allison's presentation to share it with the congregation. Interested in finding out what happens with these issues
- f. Irvin: Videos the congregation used in the lead-up to Spring Seminar were super useful. Allison will add these and other videos that pertain to the SDGs to the link above\*\*\*. Got Bob Ray, Canadian Ambassador to UN (very well-known), to share a special message
- g. Prior editions of the Envoy News: <https://www.uua.org/international-justice/un/envoys/envoy-news>