

Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office

www.uu-uno.org

Empowering UUs to participate in the UN's work to build a just international community

The Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office (UU-UNO) connects UU congregations throughout the world with the vital work of the United Nations. The stress is on “We the Peoples,” as expressed in the Preamble to the UN Charter and included in Singing the Living Tradition Covenant Reading #475.

As stated in our Mission Statement, “The UU-UNO promotes the goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all, as reflected in the United Nations Charter. Through targeted education, advocacy and outreach, we engage Unitarian Universalists in support of international cooperation and the work of the UN.” This Mission Statement guides our *2005-2008 Strategic Plan*, outlining goals for setting program priorities, building professional capacity of the office and interns, and proactive fundraising.

Increasingly, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the UU-UNO participate at the UN as networks or coalitions. Working together strengthens our voice. UU-UNO serves as a two-way bridge, as we engage UUs on timely issues and encourage UUs—as individuals and as congregations—to put UU principles into practice through the local-global connections, and communicate experiences and insights.

While the challenges in our world community are humbling, the results of relationships are heartening:

- *UN Sunday Resource Packet* and *World AIDS Day Resource Packet* used by dozens of congregations;
- More than 80 AIDS orphans in Ghana supported through “Every Child is Our Child Program”;
- Internship Program fosters youth leadership; participants link UN/NGO stories and congregations;
- Intergenerational Spring Seminar—*Stop Modern Day Slavery: Break the Web of Human Trafficking*—changes participants’ lives, inspires informed action; enhances UU visibility at UN;
- Collaboration on Darfur advocacy, human rights, Millennium Development Goals, peacebuilding.

During this year the UU-UNO has renewed efforts in three organizational service areas: **communicating** ways UUs engage with the UN Millennium Development Goals and UN reform; providing resource materials for **congregations**; and building **collaborative** relations for education, advocacy and outreach.

Communications

We continue to diversify avenues for communication, trying to shift from an information-flow to a more dynamic engagement with Members, Congregations and other UU entities. In addition to the *Window on the World* newsletter, we have distributed e-alerts or e-information most months, developed stand-alone program and topical flyers, and fielded a growing volume of e-mail and phone inquiries. We invite your participation and feedback. We also value the opportunities for Staff and Board members to visit congregations. These opportunities to share the UU-UNO experiences is matched with listening for ways that existing and emerging congregational initiatives connect local issues to global discussion of issues.

NGO credibility at the United Nations mirrors the accountability any group has with stakeholders and public. Our stakeholders are UU-UNO Members and UU Congregations; our public is our broader reach. Our challenge is to transform a mosaic of UU journeys—views and voices—into UU messages at the UN.

Congregation Envoys, and associated committees, provide significant links to the UU-UNO. Since congregation contexts and polity vary, these Envoys are vital to help communicate for us within the congregation, and help communicate to us about their congregation needs. The UU-UNO Envoy Program, now coordinated by Peggy Montgomery, has been re-tooling through a new directory and Action Guide.

Resources for Congregations

The UU-UNO has also been guided by congregation religious professionals and youth, encouraging us to cultivate ways to work with congregations *beyond* UN Sunday. For decades, we have heralded the key date of October 24—when the UN Charter came into effect in 1945—and we continue to promote this anniversary promotion of our relationship to the UN community. For some, the annual UN Sunday is the peak of an *integrated* approach to weaving global issues in the intergenerational year-round fellowship calendar. The Peace Calendar on our website and activities suggested in the UN Sunday Resource Packet help deepen involvement through a variety of occasions and variety of type of time commitment.

The 2007 and 2008 UN Sunday Resource Packet follows the theme, *“Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development in our Interdependent World Community.”* Additional Resource Packets were launched in November for World AIDS Day, and in May for the 2008 World AIDS Orphans Day. Additional materials are being developed to coincide with the mid-point of the Millennium Development Campaign, and in conjunction with the UUA Study Action Issue on Peacemaking process.

Collaboration for education, advocacy, outreach

The efforts for communication and developing resources relevant to congregation life are not in a vacuum. The UU-UNO is proud to work with a variety of UUA offices, the CUC and other UU entities. Materials for the World AIDS Day Resource Packet and World AIDS Orphans Day Resource Packet reflect collaboration forged during the 2006 UUA General Assembly, with the UU Global AIDS Coalition and the UUA Washington Office for Advocacy legislative assistant for international affairs. The UN Sunday Resource Packet incorporates suggested music provided by the UU Musicians Network, and activities gleaned from UUA and Canadian Unitarian Council camps experiences.

Advocacy for Darfur has been in conjunction with the UU Service Committee and the UUA Washington Office for Advocacy. During September the UU-UNO—as the associate organization based in New York—served as the hub for organizing UUs for a Darfur Rally in New York’s Central Park. The emphasis was promoting the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution for Peacekeepers in Sudan, which has become a hybrid partnership with the African Union. Emphasis during Global Days for Darfur in late-April included divest for Darfur. UU-UNO will assist UUSC with “Drumbeat for Darfur” training for activists as people gather for the UUA General Assembly in Portland.

Additionally, the UU-UNO has been developing reciprocal relationships with the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU), and deepening mutual appreciation of histories and visions through conversations with the UU Women’s Federation, Partner Church Council, and Ministry for the Earth. Notably, participation in an International Convocation in Annapolis led to suggestions for timing the 2009 International Convocation of UU Women so that international travelers to Houston might also attend the 2009 UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York.

Such conversations yield a variety of opportunities. The UU-UNO is proud to be nexus to broaden the scope of occasions for exercising UU voices in UN arenas and NGO events. Not only does the UU-UNO enable some UUs to observe and/or participate in major UN meetings, but welcomes UUs who attend while wearing hats from other organizations. The place in the Church Center for the UN is a home base.

During the past year the UU-UNO has fostered participation in the Department of Public Information NGO Conference, the UN Commission for the Status of Women, the Commission on Sustainable Development, and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Statements to the Commission on Social Development, on community capacity and HIV-AIDS, were UUA-sponsored through the UU-UNO, and co-sponsored by the NGO Committee on HIV-AIDS. The UUA Statement of Conscience on Climate Change/Global Warming was shared at multiple meetings, and the Action of Immediate Witness “Stand

Up for the UN Human Rights Council” provided framework to sign-on letters concerning developing more effective tools for reportage and Human Rights Council transparency.

These activities also reflect the partnerships the UU-UNO enjoys through the Conference of NGO Committees, and the UNA-USA Council of Organizations. The most celebrated partnership, however, is with the Queen Mothers Association of Manya Krobo District, Ghana, as part of the **“Every Child is Our Child Program.”** UUs have contributed enough to sponsor more than 80 children affected by AIDS, through their junior secondary (grade 10) education. Moreover, the caregiving families are provided health insurance. This generosity means turning lives around, achieving Millennium Development Goals.

D.A.N.C.E.—

Demystifying the UN, Advocating, Networking, Congregation involvement, Educating UUs

UU-UNO staff, interns, Envoys and Members educate, advocate. In many ways, the outreach among UUs, NGOs and UN offices and UN Member States is like facilitating a D.A.N.C.E.:

- Demystifying the UN, in quest to return to the idealism of the UN Charter;
- Advocating for UU voices at the UN, and linking UN and UU experiences;
- Networking among NGOs, working among religious-based and thematic coalitions;
- Congregation involvement, valuing the local initiatives which shape world community;
- Engaging and educating UUs, respecting traditions of open minds, open hearts and open hands.

The www.uu-uno.org website serves as a vital resource to become involved with our work, and to use as a gateway for information about various UN themes and civil society engagement. In addition to the website, the UU-UNO seeks to demystify the UN through newsletter articles, speaking opportunities, Intergenerational Spring Seminar, internships and visits to the UN. Numerous congregations visited for a Department of Public Information NGO briefing, or a customized discussion in the Office. We welcome this, to enrich attention to UN arenas year-round.

Congregations are also engaged in promoting dignity-of-all through exploring partnerships for microfinance, exploring ways to replicate best practices shared during the 2005 UN Year of Microfinance. The UU-UNO has recently started a Microfinance Program to share background resources, toolkits and case studies.

Global citizens raise questions, perspectives— “listening loudly” as a learning community

The UN is an invaluable forum, sometimes leading to Programs of Action. Sometimes it seems that Member States are “listening loudly,” and sometimes it seems they are just being “loud”...without the listening. Likewise, youth group and congregation discussions on social justice engage UUs on issues. Insights from one topic can help raise attention to the underlying causes of many less-reported humanitarian crises and violations of human rights, or the success stories of UN involvement.

The UU-UNO encourages congregations to share summaries and insights that might benefit discussions among NGOs and other UN actors. Our reinvigorated Envoy Program aims to significantly increase the number of congregations/clusters with Envoys. We thank congregations that have already shared models of their UN/Global Affairs committee. We appreciate examples of collaboration with local United Nations Association chapters and other civil society groups that have affiliation with the UN Department of Public Information and/or the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Thank you for initiatives!

Indeed, the weekly encounters enrich the life of the UU-UNO and brings meaning of UN challenges home to small and large communities. PLEASE JOIN US IN THIS COMMON QUEST.

Jim L. Nelson, Executive Director