

Minutes
Monthly Envoy Conference Calls
Tuesday, January 18, 2022, 3pm & 6pm Eastern

- I. Welcome & Introductions.
 - a. 3pm EST
 - i. Allison Hess (UU@UN)
 - ii. Jeannie Lewis (San Marcos UU Fellowship, TX)
 - iii. Mandy Mynhier (All Souls Community Church of West Michigan)
 - iv. Nasreen Gagner (UU Church of Long Beach, CA)
 - v. Marilyn Mehr (Unitarian Church of All Souls, NYC)
 - vi. Peggy Montgomery (Unitarian Church of All Souls, NYC)
 - vii. Marietta Tanner (UU Church of Arlington, VA)
 - viii. Ron Glossop (First Unitarian Church of Alton, IL)
 - b. 6pm EST
 - i. Allison Hess (UU@UN)
 - ii. Bill McPherson (University Unitarian Church in Seattle, WA)
 - iii. Phyllis Baxter (UU Church of North Hatley, QC)
 - iv. Jim Hemstock (First Unitarian Church in Victoria, BC)
 - v. Bruce Knotts (UU@UN, NYC)
 - vi. Markly Wilson (UU Congregation at Rock Tavern, NY)
 - vii. Terry Van Brunt (North Shore UU Society in Lacombe, LA)
 - viii. Barry Lee (North Shore UU Society in Lacombe, LA)
 - ix. Anna Mone (Unitarian Church of All Souls, NYC)
 - x. Janet Bendowitz (UU Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, NY)
 - xi. Joanne Spivey (UU Congregation of Frederick, MD)
- II. UN and UU@UN Updates
 - a. Bruce: UN planned to start the new year by opening its doors to NGO representatives, but then Omicron came along and now there will be no in-person meetings in January. Also, grounds passes for the UN will be available for just 3 representatives per organization so we're disappointed that we can't get passes for all our interns.
 - b. Bruce: The UN's primary task is to keep us out of WWII. Not looking good now. Issues of particular attention:
 - i. Russian troops on the edge of Ukraine, hacking Ukrainian computers.
 - ii. North Korea is testing missiles, goal to hit any target they want within the United States.
 - iii. JCPOA – deal to get Iran to stop producing weapons-grade uranium – when Trump removed U.S., Iran started working on uranium and now have capacity to make nuclear weapons (haven't yet, but they could). JCPOA was a miraculous agreement, brought together so many parties who are never in agreement. U.S. is now trying to get back in, Iranians wondering how to trust the U.S.
 - iv. China has been flying military flights over Taiwan – clear threat.
 - v. In task to prevent third world war – security council is working on all these issues. On Working Group. We meet with all permanent representatives to discuss all these issues.

- c. Bruce: Climate Change – fairly successful conference in Glasgow. Agreed to have another conference this year in Egypt. UUA had a delegation there and worked with other interfaith collaborators.
 - i. Bill: COP27 is coming up in November. Working on plans for that, right?
 - ii. Bruce: Yes. We will send representatives on behalf of UUs – working in partnership with UUSC and UUMFE.
 - iii. Allison: UU@UN is joining together with other UU organizations whose work includes climate justice to strategize how we can effectively mobilize Unitarian Universalists in the lead-up to COP27. Very exciting. This will include (if approved) a workshop at UUA General Assembly, and more beyond that.
- d. Bruce: A few days ago, Bruce participated in an important session at Community Church of NY re: situation in Ethiopia. Concern that this could turn into a regional conflict with all the different parties involved. As part of civil society, we try to hold the UN and member states accountable. We also feed them with information to make sure they're informed. Amazing that civil society organizations working on the ground are able to tell member states information they don't know. Fact is governments don't know anything, so organizations working with frontline communities in the field have more information to help inform the United Nations and Member States.
- e. UN responding to Omicron, still limited in access to vaccines. Motto: Nobody is safe until everybody is safe. COVAX has just delivered its 1 billionth dose! But so many remain unvaxxed. Of the 194 WHO member countries, 36 have vaxxed less than 10% of their population, and 88 less than 40%. "COVAX's ambition was compromised by hoarding/stockpiling in rich countries, catastrophic outbreaks leading to borders and supply being locked. And a lack of sharing of licenses, technology, and know-how by pharmaceutical companies meant manufacturing capacity went unused," the agency explained. ([article](#))
 - i. The surges of Omicron in East, Central, and Southern African have begun declining which is good, though North and West Africa are still seeing a rise in infections – along with many other parts of the world.
- f. Volcanic eruption and tsunami near Tonga: Communication is very challenging. Lots of infrastructure damage, and the UN is working on how to get humanitarian aid in – with care for preventing introduction of COVID into the archipelago nation.
- g. The UN's role is largely one of monitoring, convening, researching, recommending, and – in some places – providing humanitarian assistance and/or peacekeepers when invited. Situations in Tigray, Yemen, Syria, Myanmar, Cameroon are very much within the UN's attention right now, *and* the organization is limited in what it can do to respond. Humanitarian assistance is blocked in some of those places.
- h. Question received about how the UN is operating one year into the Biden administration, and what repair has occurred to overcome the damage from the Trump administration. To some degree, the damage has been permanent because so many leaders (Orban, Bolsonaro for example) have been inspired by Trump to disregard the international community.

- i. The U.S. has been engaging much more at the UN, for the most part positively, including at the Human Rights Council to which it was re-elected in October and rejoined on January 1.
 - i. Jim: Can you comment on Afghanistan? U.S. wants to keep money out of the Taliban's hands but so much suffering due to lack of funds.
 - i. Bruce: UN is clear on this issue: You don't punish innocent people with starvation as a way to punish governments you don't like. As the international community, WHO, WFP, UNICEF are all in Afghanistan trying to get food, medicines, etc. to the people. Assets have been frozen, UN can't unplug the money but it is continuing to get whatever aid possible into the country.
 - j. Terry: Is North Korea a member state?
 - i. Bruce: Yes. Taiwan is not. UN has subscribed to the "One China Policy." Taiwan calls itself the Republic of China, also consider themselves the singular China, but they are prevented from any representation at the UN. Can't even take a tour/visit the UN if you have a Taiwanese passport.
 - k. UU@UN Events coming up. Not a lot of details yet but will share more soon.
 - i. February: Event about arts and activism
 - ii. March: We're hosting two parallel events during the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) summit.
 - 1. Workforce Struggles of LBTQI+ Women. Reminding the CSW that sexual orientation and gender identity should be a focus for women's rights.
 - 2. Impact of Climate Change on Women and Girls
- III. Intergenerational Spring Seminar
- a. Seminar basics:
 - i. Theme: "Displacement and Human Rights: All In for Climate Justice"
 - ii. Dates: Friday, April 22 – Sunday, May 1 (including the intervening week but max 3 hours per day)
 - iii. Format: Online programming with opportunities for congregations to host Local Gatherings – attendees who live nearby can come together in person for a few hours each weekend for discussion and to take local action.
 - iv. Registration: Open now! through April 3.
 - b. Congregational participation in the Seminar: We hope that this virtual Seminar with in-person local gatherings will give congregations a chance to have several people attend the Seminar "together" so that they can take their learnings onward into continued action beyond the Seminar itself.
 - i. Anna: What got me excited about the idea of local gatherings is the local activism element. Go hands on with other UUs in your community – maybe turn this into a routine to make this part of your local community action.
 - c. Hosting a Local Gathering
 - i. About hosting a local gathering page: <https://www.uua.org/international-justice/un/spring-seminar/preparing-seminar/local-gathering> (includes a checklist)
 - ii. If you're interested in hosting, here's a Sample email to see if congregational leaders would be supportive:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uM21obdkNbo1s5jiqAkN4ln9TTeo7MN EeKwM11tRukc/edit>

iii. Hosting Interest Form: <https://uua.wufoo.com/forms/m1x4mvl70jybwk/>

d. Re: Seminar theme of climate-forced displacement

- i. Marilyn: it would be helpful to have a short elevator pitch about what the Seminar is about and why it matters.
- ii. Marietta – it is so important with rising rates of people displaced by climate change. Not sure how it will be relevant locally for everyone.
 1. Allison: The local connection to the theme will definitely be different depending on where you're located.

e. Janet: How do we host a local gathering?

f. Jim: Normally we think of displacement re: third world countries, but we've been experiencing a lot of it in Victoria and the rest of British Columbia. We had a heat dome that had an entire town burned down. Huge numbers of deaths caused by extreme heat in the province. Climate displacement is going to be a problem in British Columbia. Fires, heat dome, atmospheric river (2,000 km long, 300 km wide as much moisture as 20 Mississippi rivers. That hit us last fall, wiping out all main highways between the coast and other side of the mountains. 5 bridges were washed away. No fuel deliveries for 6 weeks or so.

i. Bill: We're neighbors in Seattle. Had similar experiences with weather disasters.

g. Jeannie: How much will registration cost?

i. Allison: Tiered registration fee structure between \$20 and \$140. If everyone paid \$80 we estimate we'd break even so that's the "full fare" – and people should pay more or less depending on their ability.

h. Mandy: What are some ideas on doing in-person activities?

- i. Allison: Here are some [suggested activities on the seminar website!](#)
- ii. We're really encouraging the local gatherings to build connections with organizations working on addressing these issues in your area. They already will have programs and experience you can support – much more effective than starting something from zero that you don't have a lot of experience with. This can be the start or continuation of long-term local partnerships.

IV. Other Topics

a. Nasreen: Need help to know how to support and direct the congregation's new Youth Envoy. No youth group right now in the congregation, mostly older people. Want to develop a group of congregants in the younger generation

- i. Peggy: We have two young people who are in some ways more involved/working than the older Envoys! Enjoy working together.
- ii. Marilyn: Find space and time to meet together. Talk with Religious educators to see if there would be interest in presenting to youth group about the Seminar and UN initiatives. Strategize together goals for the year ahead.
 1. Have done a bake sale in the past giving them a chance to interchange with members of the congregation.

iii. Allison: Reminder for those working with youth: UUA policies for communication require at least two adults on all messages. You can copy

Allison, an Adult co-Envoy, and/or the youth's parent. Just no one-on-one messages between adult and youth.

- b. Jeannie: Congregation has taken on a new project. On a regular basis, the community takes a Point In Time (PIT) count of the homeless population in the county (all done in one day), to apply for governmental assistance. Homeless Coalition in San Marcos is relatively new, I'm on its board representing the UU fellowship. The person organizing the PIT count asked if anyone could donate t-shirts for volunteers to wear for the count. I suggested having vests instead, made by the congregation's sewing guild, that can be re-used. One of the congregation's members owns a coffee bar and will be donating coffee and snacks to supply to volunteers the day of the count. Many in the congregation will likely be volunteers too. Glad that the church can support the effort! It is a great way to be involved – recommend seeing if a similar initiative exists in your community.
- c. Jim: Sponsored a family from Afghanistan. They brought some relatives who are now working on bringing their own relatives, so now hoping to sponsor another family. This would be up to 8 or 10 Afghanis sponsored. They're all doing really well once they get here.
- d. Joanne: Feeling disconnected from my congregation right now. Shut down again in December after being open for a few months. It's hard to stay involved without having close contacts and a chance to be together.
 - i. Terry: Small congregation, back to virtual services. Hard to make connections and get involved with new programs.
 - 1. There are several organizations in the area working on the issues relating to the Spring Seminar! Will be good partners for a potential local gathering activity.

V. Adjourn.