

**Minutes**  
**Monthly Envoy Conference Call**  
Tuesday, May 19, 2020 3pm Eastern

- I. Welcome and Introductions
  - a. In attendance:
    - i. Allison Hess (UU Office at the UN/NYC)
    - ii. Nasreen Gagner (UU Church of Long Beach, CA)
    - iii. Terry Van Brunt (North Shore UU Society in Lacombe, LA)
    - iv. Gabor Kiss (Morristown Unitarian Fellowship, NJ)
    - v. Jeannie Lewis (San Marcos UU Fellowship, TX)
    - vi. Bill McPherson (University Unitarian Church in Seattle, WA)
    - vii. Janet Bendowitz (Shelter Rock UU Congregation in Manhasset, NY)
    - viii. Bruce Knotts (UU Office at the UN/NYC)
    - ix. Barry Lee (North Shore UU Society, LA)
    - x. Ron Glossop (First Unitarian Church in Alton, IL)
- II. UN News:
  - a. Trying to build collaboration and solidarity to respond to COVID-19 and to launch the Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals
  - b. Bruce has met with members of the Security Council who are working from home as we are. The other parts of the UN – General Assembly & etc. – have not yet figured out how to work remotely and effectively. However the UNSC has met regularly. They are working to endorse and pass a COVID-19 ceasefire (called for by the Secretary-General); unfortunately the U.S.-China friction has made passing that resolution nearly impossible. Bruce met with the U.S. Mission yesterday and learned that they'd be happy to pass a "clean" ceasefire resolution but China keeps putting in amendments to endorse the WHO, which the U.S. government is opposed to. Everyone we've talked to has said that the UN Security Council can only work when they're united. When two of the major superpowers are purposefully not agreeing it makes it very difficult for the Security Council to work. Talked about Syria, Rohingya, Yemen, South Sudan, and always the tension between China and the U.S. makes it hard to move forward (also Russia-U.S. tension on Syria issues)
  - c. The annual High-Level Political Forum this summer will happen virtually in July, following NYC guidelines and travel limitations. The HLPF is the opportunity to regularly assess progress toward achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. this HLPF will focus on accelerated action for the SDGs as we enter the Decade of Action for the SDGs (to achieve all 17 goals before 2030),
  - d. Don't know yet about how UN General Assembly will work in September. If it's still difficult for people to travel to NYC it is likely they will make that virtual somehow.
  - e. Gabor: Online meetings are somewhat better than in-person. Any chance the UN will make more things happen virtually in the future?
    - i. Getting used to virtual format for voting in the Security Council. However, working out differences has presented a challenge. One hopes that if they can meet face-to-face they could work out differences, but the difficulties lie in that

UN representatives are simply following the instructions given from their head of government.

- f. Ron: This year was supposed to have many celebrations of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary – are those going ahead?
  - i. Likely many will be shifted to next year. (review of the Non-Proliferation Treaty also) Not possible to do this sort of thing during the pandemic so will likely do that next year.
  - ii. UN General Assembly body has recently been more active in challenging the Security Council's power: GA passed a resolution in 2017 abolishing nuclear weapons which is usually an area for the UNSC to address. Members of the GA are tired of being pushed around and are beginning to assert themselves – but there are limits to what they can do under the current UN Charter.
- g. Terry: Anything we can do to put pressure on China and the U.S.? How we can politically isolate and put pressure on that?
  - i. Bruce is on the Steering Committee of Religions for Peace USA: they issued a Statement that deplores the U.S.'s defunding the WHO. Lots of countries have issues with how the WHO operates and uses its money. We can study how it can do its job better, but those issues should be left to when the pandemic is over.
  - ii. Best thing UUs can do for the UN and our UU Office is vote and make sure everyone else votes. Elect a government that will work with the UN and with China. (Prez. Obama got China to agree to the Paris Agreement – that's the kind of diplomacy we need. Trump has removed us from the Paris Agreement, UN Deal with Iran to limit nuclear weapons, and Trans-Pacific Partnership [TPP has nothing to do with the UN]. The TPP would have kept U.S. as primary trading partner with Asia-Pacific region but taking us out of TPP made China the primary trading partner in that region.)
- h. Ron: Interested in the International Criminal Court; Obama got the U.S. to at least go to the meetings so they knew we were interested. (not able to get Senate ratification)
  - i. John Washburn was one of the key figures to lead the faith-based caucus for the international criminal court (and is now a volunteer working on disarmament issues with our office). He has just written an article on the ICC investigating the human rights violations in Israel and Palestine. That article is in the Disarmament Times which can be found at [Ngodisarm.org](http://Ngodisarm.org)
- i. Bill: Whilst the administration is extracting the U.S. from the Paris Agreement, a large group of states, counties, cities, and companies called "We are still in" is adhering to the principles of the Paris Agreement. There will be programs on the agenda at virtual UUA General Assembly in June to work on Local- and State-level participation in the Paris Agreement goals. The "We're Still In" movement represents the U.S. at COPs more prominently than the U.S. government's official delegation.
  - i. Bruce: Speaking of local action for UN policies that the U.S. refuses to be part of, also encourage congregations to be part of Cities for CEDAW (CEDAW = the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) Find resources here:
    1. [Cities for CEDAW Toolkit \(PDF\)](#)

2. Abundant [further resources from the Cities for CEDAW campaign](#), including nuts & bolts, tips for talking to an official, templates for city ordinances, reports, videos, and more
  - ii. Gabor: States are forming their own compacts around COVID-19.
    1. Bruce: book called the 12 Nations of North America – divides U.S. into many different countries based on strong regional differences
- III. UU@UN News:
- a. Getting ready for virtual summer internships
  - b. UN Sunday
    - i. Working on UN Sunday resources which should be available in June
    - ii. Recommendation to get a date for UN Sunday on your church calendar
      1. Suggested date for 2020 is October 25 which is the Sunday closest to United Nations Day on Oct. 24
    - iii. This year's UN Sunday theme is "All In for Climate Justice: People, Power, Planet" – focus on climate justice; specifically: Centering the **people** most at risk, shifting **power** away from polluters/destroyers, and protecting the **planet** for a sustainable future.
  - c. Preparing for events with the Parliament of the World's Religions on LGBTQ inclusion & religion (no dates yet but stay tuned) in English and Spanish
    - i. Bruce is part of the Taskforce against hate, war, and violence. They're putting on three sessions, one of which will be in Spanish.
      1. June 23: Webinar on creating a more inclusive future.
      2. July 7: Spanish webinar featuring LGBTQ people who've founded religious organizations in Latin America that provide spiritual support for LGBTQ people.
      3. July 21: LGBTQ inclusion in faith spaces featuring several faiths; the UU speaker will be Vyda Ng, executive director of the Canadian Unitarian Council. Share the stories of overcoming obstacles to get congregations to be more inclusive.
  - d. Working through a strategic planning process with UU@UN Advisory Board
  - e. Beginning to start planning for next year's Intergenerational Spring Seminar...!
    - i. Encourage youth or adult leaders (including you, Envoys!) to apply to be part of the 2021 Planning Committee. Applications at <https://www.uua.org/international-justice/un/spring-seminar/volunteer>
- IV. Envoy actions & plans for the summer?
- a. Ron: Tech experts at the congregation have set up a YouTube feed so everyone can tune into services
  - b. Janet: Zooming interminably. Tremendous support groups such as for people living alone, etc. In a way it's almost busier than it was. Usually on hiatus during the summer but this time people are very motivated to get involved. "Conversation café" happens after the service.
  - c. Jeannie: ditto what Janet said re: interminable zooming! Also a question: Had an issue in the church relating to gender identity and wondering: do the programs address people who identify as non-binary?

- i. Yes. It is typical of the LGBTQ movement overall for groups (congregations for example) to be comfortable with the LGB part and slower to be inclusive of trans and non-binary people. Need to recognize every person's identity as are.
    - ii. It's all about what it's always been about which is allowing people to be themselves and be who they are, respecting their inherent worth and dignity.
  - d. Terry: Thinking about how to tie in other UU programs – have you collaborated with UUSC Guest at Your Table program?
    - i. No, but do work closely with them on other things. I.e. being in touch re: meetings with diplomats and lifting up questions in those meetings that pertain to UUSC's work.
  - e. Terry: Regarding the interfaith groups UU@UN is involved in: how can that inform our local interfaith work?
    - i. Definitely should be working on an interfaith basis. Best way to work on an interfaith basis is to work for a cause i.e. through Interfaith Power & Light or Religious For Peace or another organization (or create your own alliance for addressing a local issue on an interfaith basis)
  - f. Bill: Register for virtual UUA General Assembly! We will have programs and a virtual exhibit hall pertaining to climate justice work.

V. Adjourn