

Minutes
Monthly Envoy Conference Calls
Wednesday, November 14, 2018 1pm and 6pm Eastern

I. Welcome and Introductions

a. 1pm

- i. Allison Hess (UN Office, NYC)
- ii. Derek Mitchell (Washington, DC)
- iii. Monica Greene (UU Congregation of Frederick, MD)
- iv. Peggy Montgomery (Unitarian Church of All Souls, NYC)
- v. Astrid Trefzger (Kingston Unitarian Fellowship, ON)
- vi. Lynda Wilson (UU Church of Birmingham, AL)
- vii. Rebecca Allen (San Marcos UU Fellowship, TX)

b. 6pm

- i. Allison Hess (UN Office, NYC)
- ii. Derek Mitchell (Washington, DC)
- iii. William McPherson (University Unitarian Church in Seattle, WA)
- iv. Phyllis Baxter (UU Church of North Hatley, QC)
- v. Martha Wilson (UU Church of Halifax, NS)

II. About the Holdeen India Program

- a. The Holdeen India Program is part of the UUA's International Office, established in 1984 as a grant-making program, making long-term flexible grants to grassroots organizations in India. Some of our partners we've been supporting for 30+ years!
- b. The organizations HIP partners with are ones that share similar values and principles as UUs as we work in solidarity with them to advance equity and progress.
- c. We (the UUA) got involved in this work all the way back in 1984, when few others doing this work in India. Our support is about the organizations themselves and the work they're doing, rather than telling them what we think they ought to be doing.
- d. Jonathan Holdeen made the American Unitarian Association the beneficiaries of multiple trusts back in the 50s, with some to be used in India. For various reasons, we could only get access to the funds in the early 80s. Slight mystery: Holdeen was not a Unitarian and had never been to India! Currently UUHIP works with ~30 organizations in about 13 states.

III. Parallels between issues in India & USA:

- a. Some of the issues we're paying a lot of attention to in India are related to discrimination and social exclusion – in many ways this is parallel to African Americans and other discriminated groups in USA (criminal justice, advancement in jobs, etc.)
- b. Labor issues are global – the informal economy/gig economy is growing everywhere in the world, where people get paid for just enough to get the work you need done, without giving them a full-time contract.
- c. We are building on the larger focus of the UUA on advancing racial justice, being an ally as opposed to always trying to be a leader, standing with communities rather than in front of them, taking these issues into account as far as our relationship between us as grant-makers and our partners as grantees. We try to be a donor that's supporting as an ally, based in solidarity and trust. This approach has continued to grow and evolve.
- d. Some of our partners' work involves livelihood development, access to credit to develop women-owned enterprises – everyone needs to make a living. We work with a group in Delhi that has a cooperative credit society, as well as an institution that's been set up as

a company: many women have specialized skills like weaving or embroidery that they do in their homes. Many companies internationally source those products through middlemen, and we support them in building their capacity to work directly with the market so that the women themselves can profit from what they're making.

IV. Questions for Derek?

- a. Lynda's son works w/ Indian NGOs on coal ash contamination of water
 - i. UUHIP works with communities on access to land and resources. Sometimes conservation orgs are focused on conservation of resources not so much the people who have a right to live there.
- b. Lynda: How is UUHIP funded?
 - i. Holdeen Trusts form the foundation of our work, but as we've grown we've had to also do fundraising with foundations and individuals
- c. Bill: There's a challenge in India as far as conflict between development and climate issues. Expanding nation-wide solar energy, but also expanding coal.
 - i. Derek: A number of our partners are dealing with these issues.

V. How to be involved on the congregational level:

- a. We've worked with a number of congregations where the minister comes to visit some of our programs in India and afterwards goes back to the congregation and preaches about UUHIP.
- b. Individuals have come to India to volunteer, sometimes through UU College of Social Justice, and offer their skills to work for a few months as an intern with a partner organization.
 - i. We always ask for volunteers/interns to come for at least a month so that they can really understand and get to know the work and the issues more deeply.
 - ii. Minister of music in Golden, CO and his husband asked about engagement around music. One of our partners runs a school for Adivasi indigenous children – the couple from CO went there for a month to teach and learn music with the kids. They later brought a delegation from the congregation on a UU-CSJ trip to visit India and did a follow up visit again to teach again at the school.
 - iii. Cost of living as volunteer with a partner would depend entirely on where they are – could be rural, could be in a city.
- c. Congregations invite Derek or colleague in India to preach, lead a workshop, show film, and/or host Q&A
- d. We're working on developing materials for worship including stories from our work
- e. We have a film that can be shown. It's about 30 minutes long and talks about history of the program. It was made for our 30th anniversary a few years ago and we're working now on updating/re-editing it slightly. We also have some films about partners' work.
 - i. Lynda has a film committee at the church – these are community-wide events. Possibly propose this as an option to screen HIP film.
- f. Contact Allison if interested in access to the portion of our website with further details about the program for UUHIP supporters.

VI. Envoys thoughts about connections w/ UUHIP

- a. Lynda, wants to talk with minister about opportunities to be involved, would love to follow up with film committee. Will lay the grounds about internship and volunteer opportunities that might be available.
- b. Astrid: How about in Canada? Is there a connection between CUC & UUHIP as there is for UU-UNO?
 - i. Allison: Not sure actually...

- c. Astrid: Knows of a number of recently retired volunteers (e.g. lawyers, physical therapists, social workers)
 - i. Derek: We'd love to have skilled volunteers like that and to put them in touch with our partners!
 - d. Astrid: Many congregations in Canada support Child Haven Int'l started by Canadian Unitarians that opened orphanages and homes in India/Tibet/China/Nepal they do something similar as far as helping women start businesses and become self-employed/independent of systems of oppression. One of the things the Kingston Fellowship does is have a dinner w/ Indian food provided by local restaurant, followed by an auction, and a Bazaar – wonderful evening of celebration. The goods are brought directly from the women making them. All middlemen are taken out so profits are split. It's one way they raise money.
 - i. Lot of awareness about this specific program that has folks concerned broadly about India. A number of young people and recent retirees that would be interested to volunteer.
 - ii. For those who want to connect more with the root causes of what leads these children to orphanages >> volunteer with UUHIP partners.
- VII. A few announcements for Envoys:
- a. Intergenerational Spring Seminar "Equity in Action: Gender in an Intersecting World" registration will open on December 3rd! Dates: April 10-13, 2019 in NYC. Special rates for Young Adult participants! Details at www.uua.org/unspringseminar
 - b. In early December, Bruce will be in Katowice Poland for COP24, UN Climate Change conference!
 - c. Reminders:
 - i. Blue Ribbon deadline is March 31st: <https://www.uua.org/international-justice/un/blue-ribbon>
 - ii. Submit sermons to the Greeley Award (same theme as UN Sunday = advancing just migration) by February 1st: <https://www.uua.org/justice-programs/awards/greeley>
- VIII. Envoys share about UN Sunday and other events
- a. Lynda: Two refugee families spoke, one from South Sudan, lived in Uganda refugee camp, made his way to Birmingham, Now Refugee interest group supporting family from Colombia. Allison gave feedback on sermon. Lynda might submit to the
 - b. Lynda: Once a month, the congregation discusses a UU World article. Recently discussed an article about the UU-UNO. It was a nice way to introduce more people to the work.
 - c. Astrid: UN Sunday service was extremely well attended, people were crowded in their seats. Used the exercise mentioned in the UNHCR website with scarves and water resources. People were supposed to decide what to do with disparate recourses represented by colored marbles. The little kids ended up methodically distributing the marbles by color. Astrid didn't even discuss the exercise afterwards, just thanked children for showing what to do, making sure all have access to resources. Then when kids left, showed UNHCR "[second-a-day](#)" video. A lot of people felt very engaged during this service. This was the first time KUF did UN Sunday as an intergenerational service and it was a success!
- IX. Rebecca: would still like to do a UN Sunday, though it's not scheduled yet. Would it make sense to use video/etc. of the Parliament of the World's Religions in a UN Sunday service?
- a. Yes – lots of parallels between the Parliament & the UN

- X. Phyllis: UN Sunday service went pretty well. They had been hoping for someone to come from Bridges not Borders, but she couldn't physically be there, so she was there on the screen and answered questions. Three people from the congregation had participated in some meetings and in serving as witnesses to refugee claimants entering Canada from the States.
 - a. Needs to send UN Sunday report.
 - b. Congregation has also been collecting scarves, hats, mittens to send to people at the border – that's something that is needed.
- XI. Bill: The new organization JUJustice Washington – formed from two organizations that combines legislative advocacy and issue advocacy outside the legislature – launched Oct 20. Bill made 2 presentations, one on legislative advocacy and one related to climate change. Both seemed to go well, with good participation. Will soon be going before the legislature to promote our positions on these issues. (climate change, criminal justice reform, economic justice, indigenous rights issues).
 - a. Unfortunately the carbon tax initiative was unsuccessful due to gas lobby putting a lot of money into stopping it. Canadian neighbors across the border are working on this too – Washington state is using British Columbia as an example of what we can do!