

**Minutes**  
**Monthly Envoy Conference Calls**  
Tuesday, January 21, 2020 6pm Eastern

- I. Welcome & Introductions.
  - a. In attendance:
    - i. Allison Hess (UN Office, NYC)
    - ii. Jeannie Lewis (San Marcos, TX)
    - iii. Carroll Webber (Greeneville, NC)
    - iv. Bill McPherson (Seattle, WA)
    - v. Phyllis Baxter (North Hatley, QC)
    - vi. Janet Bendowitz (Shelter Rock, NY)
    - vii. Peggy Montgomery (All Souls, NYC)
    - viii. Chris Blasman (Newbury Park, CA)
- II. Updates from the UN: LGBTQ rights at risk
  - a. The UU-UNO made a big impact starting in 2008 towards getting the United Nations as an institution to be supportive of human rights relating to sexual orientation and gender identity. Since then, all UN agencies have now some are of their work that addresses sexual orientation/gender identity. The UN Secretary-General and High Commissioners for Human Rights were supportive and made SOGI human rights a priority. However this has changed in recent years. In addition to a change in leadership at the United States Mission to the UN (along with President Trump) in 2017, that year also saw a new UN Secretary-General (Antonio Guterres) come into office and a couple of years later - at the end of 2018 - a new High Commissioner for Human Rights (Michelle Bachelet). Sexual orientation and gender identity have not been a priority for any of those new leaders, and the environment for activists at the UN on that topic has become more and more hostile. In recent months, LGBTQ program staff at the UN have also left, including a close friend of the UU-UNO in the Human Rights office, [Fabrice Houdart](#). It's becoming clear that it is high time for a much stronger presence at the UN on the part of civil society pushing for SOGI rights to be upheld, now that the UN as an institution is no longer providing the same kind of support. The UU United Nations Office will be working on re-establishing coalitions of faith-based organizations at the UN as well as the SOGI subcommittee of the NGO Committee on Human Rights in order to strategize how we might together make an impact and ensure that SOGI human rights are protected. More to come as far as how congregations can be involved. In the meantime, lift this up in your congregation as one of the many issues at stake within the U.S. elections this year!
  - b. Peggy: Why now/what's changed?
    - i. General trends globally in the direction of authoritarianism, ethno-nationalism, and lowered respect for human rights all over the world. Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human Rights, has done nothing since she started in that role to advance or even talk about SOGI rights and the UN staff that have left that work are not being replaced as far as we know.
  - c. Chris: Do you think your fellowship is aware of this change at the UN?

- i. Janet: Strong LGBTQ committee at the congregation, they have a table every Sunday, and they invite the congregation to go into NYC often to speak up, and get support from the congregation for that.
    - ii. Jeannie: SMUUF is a Welcoming Congregation. Very active in promoting LGBTQ rights. Support PFLAG (association for LGBTQ+ folx and their parents, friends, and allies) and donate to them. Were one of the supporting organizations that helped them organize in San Marcos and they met in the church at the beginning. Also support Wemberley Pride which sponsors the pride march every year and do other things in the community. As far as connection with the UN: Allison spoke to the congregation about this when she came to visit but it's not a continuing message that we get out.
  - d. Allison: UNO Director Bruce will be sending out a message about this later this week in his monthly email to UNO Supporters & Envoys; feel welcome to share that email with fellow congregants/as widely as you'd like.
- III. UU-UNO Upcoming events & announcements
- a. In March, the UN hosts its Commission on the Status of Women. The UU-UNO will host two workshops which we hope to record (or live-stream if possible):
    - i. March 17 from 4:30 to 6 PM "By My Side: Utilizing Doulas in Vulnerable Communities" - Description: Doulas are professional birth coaches that provide women emotional, informational, physical, and mental support during all stages of birth. Their work is essential specifically in communities that lack access to adequate health resources across the world. The panel will focus on the role of doulas within vulnerable communities, such as those in poverty and migrants. Panelists will discuss the challenges among these communities to receiving adequate mental and physical health care during all stages of childbirth and the role of the international community to create policies and practices that benefit and ensure the safety and the support of new mothers.
    - ii. [I don't know the specifics about the other panel, will share when I get a chance! It's to do with the practice of forced sterilization of trans folx]
  - b. Intergenerational Spring Seminar is coming up soon. Early-bird registration closes Feb 3rd, apply by Jan 17 for further reduced registration rates. Excited that this year's Seminar falls during the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, so we hope to make our Theme Panel part of that event. (Theme Panel takes place inside UN Headquarters and is live streamed on UN Web TV.) More details about the Seminar at [www.uua.org/unspringseminar](http://www.uua.org/unspringseminar)
    - i. Janet: Posted twice in the congregation's magazine, hope to get a good showing from UUCSR folx this year
    - ii. Jeannie: Would love to send Becky Allen from the congregation.
    - iii. Bill: put it in the State-wide calendar to share the news with 30 congregations.
    - iv. Phyllis: had been hoping to go, but daughter is expecting a baby at that time. Will see if there might be someone else from the church who could go.
- IV. Programs and plans, recent and upcoming, in congregations:
- a. Jeannie: Yesterday was Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. A few years ago, Jeannie had read that Austin hosts a Pie Social for MLK Day. Took a few years (not a good image for a

predominantly white church to take over MLK Day celebration), so reached out to a couple of local congregations including a historically black church and a Hispanic center, and joined together to host a Peace Pie Social. “Everyone deserves a piece of the pie” is the slogan – the three organizations donate pies, and at the end of the MLK Day March, there’s a huge table where folx could eat pie. It has been a big popular event within the community. This is a tradition in many communities across the U.S. – encourage other congregations to start doing this, especially if you can work with other organizations in your community that are not (as many UU churches are) majority white.

- b. Janet: Congregation is in the enviable position of having millions of dollars via the Veatch Program (which was formed in the decade when MLK was leading civil rights movement). Have many grantees, many of whom are coming next week to present to the congregation. Grantees work on many issues such as: galvanizing the power of women, social justice, workers and immigrants, incarcerated mothers, survivors of sexual assault, people on frontlines of climate change, trans women of color, LGBTQ justice, and so many more! Big responsibility to make sure we’re working within UU principles. (the UU-UNO is also a grateful grantee of the Veatch program!)
- c. Bill: Washington state is doing something the national government is *not* doing: passing laws to reduce carbon content of fuel, increase electric vehicles, etc. Bill is working on state-wide election activities.

V. Adjourn