

**Minutes**  
**Monthly Envoy Conference Call**  
Tuesday, February 21, 2021 12pm & 6pm Eastern

I. In attendance:

a. 12pm EST

- i. Allison Hess (UUA Int'l Office)
- ii. Terry Van Brunt (North Shore UU Society, LA)
- iii. Jeannie Lewis (San Marcos UU Fellowship, TX)
- iv. Bruce Knotts (UU@UN, NYC)
- v. Barry Lee (North Shore UU Society, LA)
- vi. Joanne Spivey (UU Congregation of Frederick, MD)
- vii. Ron Glossop (First Unitarian Church of Alton, IL)
- viii. Phyllis Baxter (UU Church of North Hatley, QC)

b. 6pm EST

- i. Allison Hess (UUA Int'l)
- ii. Sylvia Heap (All Souls UU Church in Watertown, NY)
- iii. Irvin Waller (First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa, ON)
- iv. Rebecca Allen (San Marcos UU Fellowship, TX)
- v. Gabor Kiss (Morristown Unitarian Fellowship, NJ)
- vi. Anna Mone (All Souls, NYC)
- vii. Bill McPherson (University Unitarian in Seattle, WA)
- viii. PJ Deak (Unitarian Society of New Haven in Hamden, CT)
- ix. Jerry Ross (First Parish in Bedford, MA)
- x. Markly Wilson (UU Congregation at Rock Tavern, NY)
- xi. Janet Bendowitz (UU Congregation at Shelter Rock)
- xii. Nasreen Sarah Gagner (UU Congregation of Long Beach, CA)
- xiii. Jim Hemstock (First Unitarian Church of Victoria, BC)
- xiv. Marietta Tanner (UU Church of Arlington, VA)
- xv. Janet Nortrom (First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee, WI – now in Tennessee)
- xvi. Marilyn Mehr (All Souls, NYC)
- xvii. Peggy Montgomery (All Souls, NYC)

II. Updates from the UN

- a. António Guterres spoke to the Human Rights Council yesterday about white supremacy and neo-Nazi movements and the threat they pose to countries all around the world, and the support they have from people in positions of power. S-G is calling for coordinated action to address this globally. (Today U.S. Congress is looking at perpetrators of the insurrection)
  - i. Terry: Does the UN have any ability to monitor exchanges between white supremacist groups in different countries?
    - 1. Bruce: Yes, monitoring in the Human Rights Council. Russia is big funder of right-wing groups including the NRA in the U.S. (and more) and Front National in France. UN is doing everything it can to monitor the situation, but it's hard. The UN depends on governments coming

together to address things together, and if you have governments who are actually leading it – especially in the world

- ii. Barry: How does the UN define whiteness/white supremacy in a global sense, given different definitions of what it means in different countries?
  - 1. Bruce: Hard to define “whiteness” per se, but “white supremacy” is clear – whoever defines themselves as white arguing they’re supreme over others. Similar phenomenon in other places in the world Han Chinese oppression of Uighurs and Tibetans... Bruce sees Hindu supremacy in India, ethnic Turkish supremacy in Turkey. Perhaps “ethnic supremacy” might be a better word for the global phenomenon? Though the specific trend of white supremacy is distinct and growing in many places.
- b. Myanmar coup, military took control and arrested Aung San Suu Kyi. Massive pro-democracy demonstrations right now, don’t know how it’s going to end. The UN is watching the situation closely as it develops. Usually the UN Security Council would step in and try to take action. As with much that happens at the SC, the Permanent 5 have veto power and can stymie the council from taking action: in this case, China and Russia are blocking action.
- c. Syria remains a great concern humanitarianly. Only one route currently open from Turkey to Syria. The NGO community has been lobbying for months now for more routes to open up but the Syrian government won’t allow it (and they’re supported by Russia so the UNSC can’t do much about it)
- d. Yemen has the worst famine in the world at the moment. Just before the Trump admin left office, then Secretary of State Pompeo declared the Houthi rebels terrorists, preventing the UN and other aid orgs from providing any humanitarian assistance to anyone in the territory under Houthi control. Current Sec. of State Blinken has lifted that designation so getting some access now but still a challenge.
- e. Cameroon is going through a very serious civil war at the moment. A conflict between the English speakers and French speakers. (Concerning that in so many places in Africa there are divisions between people with the same ethnic groups & native languages but different European colonizers)
- f. Guinea has a serious outbreak of Ebola – handling it much better than last time since health workers are better prepared and local response is better coordinated. The WHO is watching that situation very closely.
- g. Pandemic of course... The U.S. has absolutely the worst record in the entire world – shameful position to be in – we’ve just crossed 500,000 deaths as commemorated last night by the White House. There’s concern about variants increasing as the virus continues to spread. Must continue vaccinating, masking, and social distancing. Vaccines prevent serious symptoms and death but can still spread it which means there’s the threat of variants. The UN is concerned that rich countries are buying up all the vaccines and – like climate change – unless we are all safe, none of us is safe. As long as the virus is out there, it can travel and harm people anywhere. The Biden admin has given \$4 billion to the WHO for vaccine efforts, hopefully that will continue.

- i. If Moderna, Pfizer, and J&J were to share their technology, that would allow India and other countries with the capacity to make vaccines to make and distribute them more widely. The production capacity is limited because of the unwillingness to share the technology and formula.
- ii. Terry: Does the WHO recommend or buy a certain vaccine, and could they make it part of the contract that drug makers share technology?
  - 1. Bruce: They're talking about sharing technology but at this point just trying to get vaccine asap so not making it a condition of the contracts.
- iii. Phyllis: Canada does not have the capacity to make vaccines now, and because the U.S. won't sell vaccines to other countries, Canada's been getting them from the Netherlands. However they've recently shut down their factories, preventing Canada from access to those vaccines. Getting back on track a bit now as Biden and Trudeau are in conversation. Unlikely the border will open soon. Quebec has a curfew at the moment, under lockdown and cannot be out after 8pm. With variants and vaccine not getting around as quickly as needed, need to be very careful.
- iv. Gabor: Is vaccine hesitancy a phenomenon outside the US?
  - 1. Nasreen: Just have heard anecdotally in Colombia there is a lot of resistance to Venezuelans coming into the country and, allegedly, bringing covid, and there's also vaccine hesitancy in Colombia. In Iran people are anxious to get vaccinated but the country has not been able to purchase or distribute vaccine widely. There's some skepticism of the Russian vaccine Sputnik V that Iranians have access to.
- v. Rebecca: The Indigenous People of Amazonia are in dire straits with COVID and lack of oxygen in hospitals; deforestation continues to feed beet to the rich countries. There is an SOS Amazonia (Also called Be.1) group that meets Wed at 12:00 noon EST and others days, also. This group has been working directly with some Indigenous people in Amazonia and we have been sorting out what they need. Join here <https://zoom.us/j/595172819>
- h. Tigray region in Ethiopia. Bruce is in conversation about what's being called a genocide there with UU churches in NYC and with an ambassador in region who said it was an internal affair. It's reached a high level of concern – there is some talk of getting this on the agenda of the International Criminal Court. Bruce was a Peace Corps volunteer in Ethiopia in the 1970s and there was a conflict between Amharic and Tigrayan speakers, so long-existing animosity. Interestingly, leaders of Tigray were co-leaders with the current government in Ethiopia; they fought in the revolution together then had a falling out and are now in conflict with one another. Nobel peace prize was awarded to current Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali for bringing democracy to his country.
  - i. Similar phenomenon in Myanmar. Got their peace prize for establishing democracy but it didn't last. Does the Nobel committee even have a process for taking away a peace prize? Unknown.
    - 1. Terry: All these things stem from the toxicity of colonialism and power structures imposed

- a. Bruce: Rohingya issues stems from British bringing the Rohingya workers into the country to work on railroads. Now being told they don't belong in the country. Ethiopia has colonial past with Italians having favored Eritrea. SO much of current conflicts.
- i. Terry: UN deal with Iran?
  - i. Bruce: The deal is still in effect, even though the U.S. has reimposed sanctions on Iran, but less effective. Iran is now quite a bit further towards making nuclear weapons than when the U.S. withdrew. Biden administration is trying to get back in the deal. It took two years to negotiate in the first place, with each side giving up things they didn't want to give up, so it will be a difficult challenge to get back in but it's certainly worth the effort. Bruce thinks the Iranians want back in, would rather have sanctions lifted than have nukes.
- j. Ron: Huge appreciation to Bruce for all the information he provides for us – it's great to get inside word about what's going on. We're living through revolutionary times in many ways. What is a solution to all these conflicts? Need to amplify global institutions, e.g. World Federalism and Esperanto.
  - i. Bruce: Esperanto community is well-represented at the UN and Bruce is in frequent conversation with them.
  - ii. Ron: UNESCO currier is now available in Esperanto.
- k. Terry: Is there any process for getting rid of the veto in the SC?
  - i. Bruce: Changing the Charter is like changing the U.S. constitution. IF we did it now, giving the Charter to the countries now to update, they'd probably make it worse. Bruce says let's keep the flawed documents for now rather than
  - ii. Does International Criminal Court have a role in setting Human Rights standards?
    - 1. ICC has jurisdiction over individuals, can hold individuals accountable for their role in HR violations (e.g. Ethiopian prime minister)
- l. Rebecca: Recent climate change studies show that during lockdown Earth's temperature has risen. Reducing fossil fuels doesn't actually reduce the earth's temperature – need to actually cool rather than just reduce the heating.  
<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/02/210202164535.htm>
  - i. Bill: 2020 tied with 2016 as hottest year on record. There's a lag built into the climate system from the accumulation of CO2 from greenhouse gases over time, so there's a cumulative effect that builds up. For those interested in a US development: we have rejoined the Paris Agreement and there is a Conference of Parties (COP26) in November in Glasgow, Scotland so watch for more on that from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. There will be reports prior to that COP from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Believe that Secretary-General is hosting a climate summit in Sept.
    - 1. Allison: There's a Food Summit in Sept, possibly also a Climate summit – unknown. They are very much related issues! (see Spring Seminar 2021!)

### III. UU@UN news

- a. Sixth Principle Congregation Award is the new way UU@UN recognizes supportive congregations (replacing the Blue Ribbon Award)
  - i. Reminder of qualifications: Must complete at least three of the following activities and submit a report before the March 31 deadline. At least one of the three qualifications must be in the Donation category.
  - ii. Donation Category:
    - 1. Congregational Gift: Minimum donation of \$100 or \$2/member to the UU@UN
    - 2. Supporters: At least 5% of members or 15 individuals become UU@UN Supporters
  - iii. Action Category:
    - 1. UN Sunday: Host a United Nations Sunday service
    - 2. Intergenerational Spring Seminar: Send congregants to attend the Seminar
    - 3. Discussion Group: Host a UU@UN-related film screening and/or discussion group
    - 4. Action Event: Organize and lead a global justice action event in your congregation
  - iv. The calendar cycle to meet the award qualifications begins April 1 and goes through March 31 the following year. So for this current cycle, you may for example have had congregants attend the Spring Seminar in April 2020 and that counts. If members of your congregation are registered to attend the Seminar in April 2021, that can count towards *next year's* 2021-2022 Sixth Principle Award.
  - v. Janet Nortrom: Is Bruce visiting congregations these days?
    - 1. Allison: Yes, virtually (and so am I) Sometimes several on one day!
    - 2. Gabor: Bruce will be sharing the sermon for the Morristown Fellowship's virtual UN Sunday service in a couple weeks!
  - vi. Markly: What do people do to achieve the award?
    - 1. Jerry: We usually do a UN Sunday service, and have a sizeable group of people who attend the Spring Seminar. Jerry is an adult Envoy and usually works with a few youth envoys in the congregation. Sometimes the congregation makes a congregational gift or designates a special collection to the office. Also have had at least 5% of members (~15 individuals) make individual donations to become UU@UN supporters
    - 2. Sylvia: In Watertown, the congregation has had a Blue Ribbon Award each year and have had a UN Sunday service, and have had contributions from both individuals and from the Board. Devote time and energy to our UN office and the feeling we have – even though virtual – is very much in support of our office at the UN. Want to have a virtual service this fall as well, would appreciate ideas from others on how to make that happen.
- b. Events coming up soon
  - i. Sustainable Fashion event tomorrow Wednesday morning 9:30am -11:30am Eastern on Zoom and live streamed on Facebook and YouTube

1. Speakers from ILO, South Africa, Bolivia, the UN global communications dept, Fordham, and UNA NYC pushing against fast fashion which exploits designers and workers. Promoting sustainable manufacture and good working conditions for workers, and local shopping. Includes beautiful fashion on display and an interesting panel discussion.
- ii. March Commission on the Status of Women virtual forum March 15-26: we're hosting two panels, and we're cosponsoring three others that are hosted by the International U\*U Women's Convocation. See what events we're involved with: <https://www.uua.org/international-justice/events/csw65-ngo-forum>
- iii. Intergenerational Spring Seminar is coming together. We're especially looking forward to:
  1. A Keynote from Soul Fire Farm! If you're not familiar with them, check out their website: [www.soulfirefarm.org](http://www.soulfirefarm.org) A brief description from their website:
    - a. "Soul Fire Farm is an Afro-Indigenous centered community farm committed to uprooting racism and seeding sovereignty in the food system... We bring diverse communities together on this healing land to share skills on sustainable agriculture, natural building, spiritual activism, health, and environmental justice..."
  2. Interactive and reflective workshops:
    - a. the intersections of race and colonization with food equity and climate justice
    - b. specific actions we can take individually and within our communities to advance climate & food justice
  3. A panel of UN and international voices focusing on the global picture of climate justice and food security
  4. Abundant opportunities for intergenerational dialogue, including in InterGen Small Groups – which attendees of prior seminars will recognize as "Collaboration Groups"
  5. Plus worship services and fun evening activities!
- iv. Some key things to know about the Spring Seminar:
  1. All online starting in the afternoon Friday April 9 and running through the end of the day on Sunday April 11. **Registration is open through Thursday, March 18**
  2. This event is for folx of all ages 14+ not just for youth! And there's flexible registration – cost should not be the reason someone doesn't attend this event.
  3. We're working on diversifying the format of programming to give people breaks and make sure they're not just sitting and staring at the screen all day. BUT there's only so much we can do so apologies in advance.
- v. Irvin: We did a prep workshop on 20 Feb with about 20 people talking about UN, SDGs and UNO but need more information on intergenerational event. We

do another prep on March 14 hoping to generate more interest - not sure numbers but hopefully 25 to 30

IV. Other topics from congregations:

- a. Anna: All Souls NYC is putting on a panel this Sunday 2/28 from 1-1:45pm ET featuring Allison, Bruce, and youth and adult members of the Envoy Team! The event will focus on getting Youth involved with the UN – Allison will include info in the Envoy News so others can attend.
- b. Gabor: Looking for videos! The minutes from last month mentioned a 10-minute video that a youth made – might we see it? And potentially share in worship service, with permission?
  - i. Allison: this was something Jim had mentioned from his congregation! Jim will share the video.
  - ii. How about short videos about UN75? Allison share video from UN 75 with Gabor.
  - iii. Irvin: We have a list of good videos that we used for our 20 feb prep for intergenerational seminars. They were focused on folk 18-25 but fun for folk 14 to 99 plus
- c. Rebecca: The Immune Boosters is a subgroup of the SMUUF. We provide Immune boosting foods for those in need, education and food demonstrations. We have a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/kale4us>. A few weeks ago we provided Joya Wesley's healthy cooking demonstration, "Freedom Food: Soul Food for a Future" for the Calaboose African American Museum and will be glad to present to another group on Zoom.
  - i. Nasreen: Can I participate in the things Rebecca mentioned? Yes, Allison will share Rebecca's contact info
- d. Irvin: 16<sup>th</sup> UN Congress on crime prevention & criminal justice March 6-12 Irvin is involved in 3 events including one he's organizing on violence reduction. Heard rumors there will be a high-level event in September.
  - i. Allison: Good to have this on our radar. Not participating in the March one but hopefully UU@UN can be involved in September.