

**Minutes**  
**Monthly Envoy Conference Calls**  
Wednesday, June 14, 2017 1pm and 6pm Eastern

I. Welcome and introductions

a. 1pm

- i. Allison Hess (UN Office, NYC)
- ii. Bruce Knotts (UN Office, NYC)
- iii. Eryl Court (First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto, Ontario)
- iv. Kelli Siegwart (Kingston Unitarian Fellowship in Kingston, Ontario)
- v. Peggy Montgomery (Unitarian Church of All Souls in NYC)
- vi. Barbara Lacombe (First Unitarian Church of Portland, OR)
- vii. Peg Dobrinska (UU Fellowship of Centre County in State College, PA)
- viii. Andrew Mickle (UU Fellowship of Centre County in State College, PA)
- ix. April Naturale (First Parish in Brewster, MA)

b. 6pm

- i. Allison Hess (UN Office, NYC)
- ii. Bruce Knotts (UN Office, NYC)
- iii. Joanne Dufour (North Shore UU Society in Lacombe, LA)
- iv. Ron Glossop (First Unitarian Church of Alton, IL)
- v. Astrid Trefzger (Kingston Unitarian Fellowship in Kingston, ON)
- vi. MJ Pearson (The Gathering at Northern Hills in Cincinnati, OH)
- vii. Karen Miller (UU Church of Olinda in Kingsville, ON)
- viii. Cheyenne Mason (UU Community Church of Santa Monica, CA)

II. UN & Office Updates (Bruce)

- a. It used to be that summer was the downtime at the UN... Not anymore! Lots of busy things happen over the summer at the United Nations.
- b. Bruce was elected last year to chair the Executive Committee that represents 1500 NGOs with DPI (Department of Public Information) consultative status at the UN. The World League of Freedom and Democracy invites the chair to speak each year at their conference in Taipei. Bruce went last year, and was invited again this year. He went with an agenda to focus on the upcoming question of same-sex marriage in Taiwan. Met with lots of different groups there, including opponents. Strong opposition from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. Supreme Court in Taiwan just declared it is unconstitutional to deprive same-sex couples the right to marriage! Taiwan is now the first country in Asia to do this – hopefully will have some influence on Japan, Vietnam, and mainland China. ([Blog post about Bruce's trip!](#))
- c. Reception last night hosted by the missions of Germany and Switzerland asking for find pledges to support conflict prevention and human rights. Over 70 countries have signed up to support this initiative (somewhat a response to Trump's threats to cut funding to the UN, so it's good to see other countries stepping up!) High Commissioner for Human Rights was at the reception, as was the Commissioner for Human Rights from the African Union. Many representatives from member states were there.
  - i. Need to focus on non-violent means (*soft power!*) for longer lasting results to prevent conflicts and support human rights.

- d. Executive Committee is planning a 1-day event on August 1<sup>st</sup> – modeled after the Seminar. Intergenerational Dialogues on the Sustainable Development Goals. There's a Youth co-chair and a Senior co-chair. Both youth and seniors are growing populations with particular opportunities and challenges.
  - i. Session will be in conference room 4 which holds about 800 people so lots of people, so DPI NGOs get priority so likely all will be able to register
  - ii. Kelli will be attending the Midwives Conference in Toronto – she'll share information about this conference there. (Included in the midwives conference is a meeting of indigenous midwives, who may be particularly interested in the Intergenerational Dialogues conference)
  - iii. Bruce: Lots of interest at the UN on having a Convention on the Rights of Older People.
  - iv. Kelli: dead link for the conference details – registration isn't open yet.
- e. World Council of Churches & UN Office on the Prevention of Genocide (Adama Dieng Special Advisor of the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide) – working with faith-based organizations to launch an initiative on July 14<sup>th</sup> to work w/ religious groups to stop incitement to violence. The UN has engaged a lot of religious voices in that effort because a lot of religious groups incite people to violence OR state actors use religion to incite people to violence. It'll be a global effort.
  - i. Eryl: Trump's rhetoric is very worrying and he needs to be "trumped" by the voices of the people
  - ii. Chechnya genocide against gay men – very frightening. A lot of appeals have been directed at Vladimir Putin who "has talked" to the Chechen president, but clearly not very strongly – and Russia is one of the more homophobic and transphobic countries in the world, so Russia, while not *quite* as bad as Chechnya, is not on the right side of this.
    - 1. April: Uganda also has serious issues with the way they treat gay men
    - 2. Bruce: Actually Uganda's a lot better than some places, the African Union court struck down their "Kill the Gays" bill as a violation of the AU Charter. The African Commission of Human Rights is finally going to take up the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity. Not expecting a lot from them, but it's a step in the right direction.
- f. Treaty Negotiations at the UN –Over 130 countries are calling on the world to ban nuclear weapons – this is happening in the General Assembly where there is no veto. The smaller less powerful nations of the world are finally asserting their power rather than being. They'll be finalizing language for the resolution that will likely be passed this September at the General Assembly Meeting.
  - i. Eryl: Trudeau government is secretly part the hawkish side of things. Foreign minister Chrystia Freeland is in a very powerful position. This coming Saturday they'll be having a demonstration opposing her hawkish politics. There is
  - ii. Bruce: There's a great deal of pressure exerted by the nuclear weapons-possessing states (primarily US, Russia, China) to get countries not to support this initiative. Even Japan is not supporting the ban due to American pressure. Most of the NATO countries are being pressured as well not to support it.

Netherlands parliament instructed the government to support the ban. Maybe in Canada they can get members of parliament to instruct the PM to support the ban.

- iii. Ron: March this Saturday – “Women’s March and Rally to Ban the Bomb”

<https://www.womenbanthebomb.org/> (Join [UUs at the March!](#))

- iv. Joanne: Any particular backlash vis-à-vis Ban the Bomb due to Trump’s withdrawal from Paris Agreement? (Since the US is pressuring countries to stay out of the Ban the Bomb negotiations)

- 1. Bruce: There’s a feeling around the world that US is abdicating its place in international leadership. Angela Merkel is calling for progressive European and other world leaders to take up the leadership themselves since the US is falling away. The rest of the world is very aware and appreciative of American state-wide and local commitments to uphold the Paris Agreement.

- g. Ron: What’s the most important thing we should tell people about what the UU-UNO is all about?

- i. Bruce: It’s not really possible to nail it down to one thing; UNO is very active in providing a strong voice for peace, human rights, and climate change

- ii. Joanne: Bruce’s important influential position in the NGO community

### III. UUA General Assembly – plans?

- a. Andrew will be there, Joanne will be there for part of GA, MJ will be an online delegate
- b. [Complete list here](#) of international events at GA.
- c. Thursday 6/22 1:30pm Bruce is speaking on a panel on Human Rights & Climate Justice
- d. Thursday 6/22 6:15pm International Reception including presentation of Blue Ribbon Awards [GlobalConnections2017.eventbrite.com](http://GlobalConnections2017.eventbrite.com)
- e. Friday 6/22 11:30am Envoy Meeting! No lunch, just meeting – there’s time afterwards for people to grab food before the next workshops.
- f. Drone Conversations w/ Rev. Chris Antal – Thurs 7am “Scones & Drones” and Sat 12pm “Calzones & Drones”

### IV. Spring Seminar is coming up next year – we’re looking for youth and adult deans, in case anyone knows anyone who’s got lots of experience organizing and leading youth events. Application coming soon on [UUA.org/UNSpringSeminar](http://UUA.org/UNSpringSeminar)

- a. Next year’s seminar will be on Refugees & the global migration crisis.
- b. Adult dean must be age 25+
- c. Cheyenne’s congregation (Community Church in Santa Monica) is hoping to send youth to the seminar next year!
  - i. Astrid: Our youth had a grand time and were very enthused after the spring seminar!

### V. Summer Projects for Envoys

- a. Start planning now for UN Sunday in the fall. United Nations Day is October 24<sup>th</sup>, so this year’s recommended date for UN Sunday is Sunday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>.
  - i. The UN Sunday Packet is being finalized and will be sent out by the end of June – keep an eye on your email! It’ll also be posted at [UUA.org/UNSunday](http://UUA.org/UNSunday)
  - ii. This year’s theme is Arm in Arm: Interfaith Action to Disarm Our Planet

- iii. You can invite Bruce or Allison to speak at your UN Sunday service, be sure to invite them ASAP!
      - 1. Normally UNO staff ask for the congregation to cover transportation and lodging and if possible an honorarium in the form of a donation to the office. Lodging can be at a congregant's home, no need to book a fancy hotel!
    - iv. Eryl: spoke with their minister Rev. Shawn Newton (at Toronto First) and they're very hopeful about Ernie Regehr from Project Ploughshares as a speaker for UN Sunday.
  - b. Look for an update to the Envoy Timeline at the end of this month. Start strategizing for the coming year – what projects will you be planning? Activism events? Be sure to get things on the calendar now!
    - i. Meet with your Envoy Team or other folks at your congregation this summer
- VI. Eryl: We must find ways to interact with each other on a continuing basis. Envoys should have the ability to have conversations without going through Allison.
  - a. Kelli: Google Groups? Gives flexibility to have a digest at the end of each week.
  - b. April: Suggestion that if there are agenda items it would be good to have some kind of notification about a call, so you don't have to keep checking a forum.
  - c. Allison will set up a Google Group for Envoys to join.
- VII. Karen: Last year the UN Sunday packet was very informative and helpful – at her service, she showed videos of prisons in Sweden. Helen Caldicott (Australian physician & anti-nuclear advocate) is an interesting woman passionate about anti-nuke issues. [Here's a speech she gave a year ago](#) about whether nuclear disarmament is achievable. (search around on YouTube for more)