

Minutes
Monthly Envoy Conference Calls
October 19, 2017, 1pm and 6pm Eastern

I. Welcome and Introductions

a. 1pm

- i. Allison Hess (UN Office, NYC)
- ii. Rev. Chris Antal (UU Congregation at Rock Tavern, NY)
- iii. Jo Paoletti (UU Church in Silver Spring, MD)
- iv. Eryl Court (First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto, ON)
- v. Harry Davis (First Unitarian Church of Dallas, TX)
- vi. Jerry Ross (First Parish in Bedford, MA)
- vii. Joanne Dufour (Northshore UU Society in Lacombe, LA)
- viii. April Naturale (First Parish in Brewster, MA)

b. 6pm

- i. Allison Hess (UN Office, NYC)
- ii. Rev. Chris Antal (UU Congregation at Rock Tavern, NY)
- iii. Peggy Montgomery (All Souls, NYC)
- iv. PJ Deak (UU Society of New Haven, CT)
- v. Janet Nortrom (First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee, WI)
- vi. Nancy Nowak (First Parish in Duxbury, MA)

II. Rev. Chris Antal – Educate your congregation about Drone Warfare and Implement the Creating Peace statement of conscience. [Here's the flyer for congregations!](#)

- a. Memorial Drone Quilt is hanging behind Rev. Antal in the video – each square is in memory of a person killed by a US Drone Strike, most of whom are women and children.
 - i. This one was constructed by participants in this year's Spring Seminar on the theme of Disarmament
 - ii. There are about a dozen of these quilts, each with 36 panels
- b. Drone program dates back to the Bush administration (2003), escalating exponentially under Obama (and continuing to expand, both in frequency and number of countries where strikes are happening, under Trump).
- c. Showed a spreadsheet of all US bombs dropped in 2016, not exclusive to drones, but includes drone strikes, with a total of 26,172 bombs dropped in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, and Pakistan. Don't know how many people have been killed, but likely *at least* one with each bomb dropped.
- d. Collateral damage from lethal drone strikes: US gov't estimate ~300, as opposed to civil society estimate of 7-10,000.
- e. Effort under Obama to move authority for drone strikes to Defense Department (more oversight than CIA which currently has authority) – that effort didn't end up being implemented under Obama and has been abandoned under Trump.
- f. Rev. Antal was a chaplain in the US army endorsed by the UUA, for about 5 years during the time Obama was the commander in chief. Obama authorized a drone strike, killing a

US citizen and his 16-year-old son in Yemen. Outcry over killing of US citizens without a trial.

- g. Army Sergeant Joel Tavera's vehicle exploded and he was severely burned. Rev. Antal understands the concerns of protecting US service members from harm, don't want to put them in unnecessary risk or harm. Moral argument for drone program is that it protects service members from harm by using remotely piloted aircraft to target enemies without risking US casualties.
- h. [UUA Common Read 2014-15](#) was *Reclaiming Prophetic Witness: Liberal Religion in the Public Square* by Paul Rasor. Talks about the [UUA Creating Peace Statement of Conscience](#) – avenue for UUs to speak prophetically about demilitarization.
- i. A lot of drones stationed in Afghanistan were bombing targets in Pakistan. Rev. Antal learned about a drone strike that killed a grandmother and harmed two of her grandchildren. US administration failed to acknowledge these strikes and has never paid reparations. Still no action, even after testimonials from survivors & relatives of victims before Congress.
- j. As chaplain in Kandahar, Afghanistan, Rev. Antal began speaking out against what US has been doing with lethal drones.
- k. Rev. Antal has been involved with an Interfaith Network on Drone Warfare (INDW) and went to visit National Security Council staff and discuss the drone program & recommendations. The letter of recommendations has been signed by many denominations, including the UUA. (See page 3 of [this document](#))
- l. Report on the [Humanitarian Impact of Drones](#) by Rachel Stohl: Trump administration has increased drone strikes from one every 5.4 days during the Obama administration to one every 1.5 days, and a lowering of the threshold to conduct lethal strikes, such as what defines an imminent threat and relaxing the requirement that no civilian lives be threatened. (Published by Women's International League for Peace & Freedom)
- m. INDW's Educational Curriculum: www.interfaithdronenetwork.org has five (soon to be six!) 30-minute videos, each with a discussion guide, and a flyer. Very well done videos which can be shown at congregations. (INDW received a grant from Open Society Foundations to build the capacity of faith communities to advocate for this issue.)
- n. Grounded well in our Creating Peace statement of conscience, which is a good place to start (look at number 4 which speaks directly to the US drone program). The bottom line is: the US is actively killing people every day in our name with these weapons all over the world.
- o. UN involvement in this issue: Tomorrow (Fri 10/20) there is a forum at the United Nations on UAVs organized by Pax Christi, featuring speakers from Yemen, Amnesty International, and the Stimson Center, and on Oct. 10th, the human rights clinic at the Columbia law school (recently published a report called [Out of the Shadows](#)) made a joint civil society statement before the First Committee about the use of lethal drones, endorsed by over 25 civil society organizations including the Interfaith Network on Drone Warfare

- p. Looking for Envoys to commit to implementing this program in their congregations. Please register at interfaithdronenetwork.org to get the program going and reach out to Rev. Antal if you need any additional support. (antal@uuma.org)

III. Qs for Rev. Antal?

- a. Joanne: following hearing Rev. Antal's presentation at GA, someone from her congregation made the appeal to show the drone presentation at the congregation as well as at the Women's Center. Good showing at the congregation, but no success at the Women's Center, so will try again.
- b. Jerry: How to watch the videos? Harder tech-wise to stream at congregation
 - i. Rev. Antal – contact the Network folks and they can send you a DVD, even have some budget to help with food etc. if you have an event
- c. Jerry: How to get a quilt?
 - i. Go to <https://dronesquiltproject.wordpress.com/> and put in a request to host an exhibition, usually the quilt gets sent to you and you have to pay the shipping to the next place. Be careful of express shipping (expensive!) with the stands and all - Give yourself more time and maybe don't get the stands.
- d. April: Other groups we can partner with on this issue?
 - i. Rev. Antal – Veterans for Peace has been quite active. In terms of religious community, nothing else as well organized as the INDW
- e. PJ: So many competing issues that, trying to address one that's less visible (though equally important) is challenging.
 - i. Rev. Antal: Many connections with white supremacy issue, since the people targeted by drones are not white. There are ways to be involved without being a strain on the limited resources of the congregation: can be petitions to your congressmen during coffee hour, etc. The Network is moving towards legislative change.
 - ii. One way to bring people in to discuss this issue is to provide food such as Scones & Drones for breakfast, and Calzones & Drones for lunch. The Interfaith Network might be able to provide money to support that work.
- f. Peggy: How many people are being killed in drone strikes?
 - i. Rev. Antal: We don't know. There aren't people on the ground doing follow-up, the US is not counting casualties. Most of the time we don't know if we're killing the people we intend to kill, and no way of providing reparations.

IV. UNO and UN News

- a. Upcoming [UU-UNO Fundraiser](#) this Saturday 10/21 at Cedar Lane UU Church in Bethesda, MD 4:00-6:30pm
- b. US Budget reducing impact on development
- c. Lots of blog posts in the works that will be on our blog & in the Envoy News at the end of the month.
 - i. [Blog for UN Day "The United Nations: it's your world"](#)
 - ii. Stay tuned for posts on Disarmament & gun control, Refugees, and Religious freedom & women's rights

- d. This week has been Africa Week at the UN. Over the course of the week, sessions have been focused on addressing some of the issues that the African continent faces towards achieving the SDGs and the AU's Agenda 2063. Recommended [film on the impacts of climate change in Africa](#).
- V. UN Sunday is coming up!
 - a. Jerry: Bruce is coming to Bedford, MA this weekend. Jerry's trying to recruit a Youth Envoy! Bruce will meet with the Youth when he comes. Always fighting the fact that kids tend to be even busier than we all are. The seat for the Envoy program at Bedford congregation is the Peace & Justice Committee.
 - b. Janet: UN Sunday in Milwaukee this weekend: Children are doing trick-or-treat for UNICEF, and a lot of congregants participate have a big UNA-USA event at the local library with UU-UNO materials
 - c. Peggy: 5th grade RE program talks about RE principles each October including the Goal of World Community. They learn about Every Child is Our Child and have a bake sale in November to raise money to support the partnership in Ghana.
 - d. Please share info about your UN Sunday service at <http://www.uua.org/unsunday/services>. All congregations will need to share here in order to achieve Blue Ribbon status.
- VI. Adjourn