

Minutes
Monthly Envoy Conference Calls

Tuesday, December 12, 2017 2:30pm and 6pm Eastern

- I. Welcome and introductions
 - a. 2:30pm
 - i. Allison Hess (UU United Nations Office, NYC)
 - ii. Bruce Knotts (UU United Nations Office, NYC)
 - iii. Joanne Dufour (North Shore UU Society in Lacombe, LA)
 - iv. Rebecca Allen (San Marcos UU Fellowship, TX)
 - v. Dan Kohnstamm (Glacier UU Fellowship in Kalispell, MT)
 - vi. Harry Davis (First Unitarian Church of Dallas, TX)
 - b. 6:00pm
 - i. Allison Hess (UU United Nations Office, NYC)
 - ii. Bruce Knotts (UU United Nations Office, NYC)
 - iii. Bill McPherson (University Unitarian Church in Seattle, WA)
 - iv. PJ Deak (Unitarian Society of New Haven in Hamden, CT)
 - v. Peggy Montgomery (All Souls Church, NYC)
 - vi. David Vita (The Unitarian Church in Westport, CT)
- II. [Every Child is Our Child](#) – Bruce speaks about his recent visit
 - a. About ECOC: Partnership w/ Manye Krobo Queen Mothers since 2005
 - i. Ghana is one of the most democratic countries in Africa, with smooth transitions between parties, presidents. Underneath the western-style democracy, the traditional chiefs & queen mothers retain some authority locally.
 - ii. Farmland in the Manye Krobo district (in Eastern Ghana) was flooded by a dam, causing high rates of migration to the city for work, and leading to high HIV infection rates. Many children were orphaned by the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, and the Queen Mothers were responsible for caring for them. They did not want to do an orphanage, so the children are living with Queen Mothers, extended family, or whoever is willing to take them in.
 - iii. 2005 UU-UNO leadership (including Fran Mercer, Dick Ford, & Genia Peterson) went to Odumase Krobo and asked the Queen Mothers how they could help. The Queen Mothers asked for the UU-UNO to help send the orphans to school with uniforms, supplies, etc.
 - iv. We also provide national health care cards for the children & everyone in their care-giving families
 - v. Program began as an effort to address the Millennium Development Goals (Empower women & girls, End HIV/AIDS, primary school for all children) – and now it's addressing the Sustainable Development Goals
 1. We weight the program for to especially support girls' education, by sponsoring 2 girls to every 1 boy student.
 - vi. Since the children don't have parents, the children belong to the Queen Mothers, and by extension, to the UU-UNO/community, hence "Every Child is Our Child"

- b. Bruce hasn't visited the program in about 3 years (since May 2014) so it was good to visit. (Last UU-UNO visit to Ghana was in November 2015)
 - i. Manye Esther (Queen Mother Esther) had been running the program, but she passed away recently so now the program is run by Manye Machuko as program director
 - ii. The new Paramount Queen is very young (late 20s?), articulate, smart and Bruce is looking forward to working with her. (elected by fellow Queen Mothers in the Manye Krobo district)
 - iii. Also met with the King (the "Kono") – he studied in the US for university (with Dick Ford, hence UNO connection) and is interested in coming to the UN to speak about cooperation between traditional leadership working with civil society to tackle problems like taking care of orphaned children.
 - iv. Visited the children /care-givers in their homes. The children in the program are in very poor circumstances, but many of the students we sponsor are top of their class, feel responsibility to study hard.
 - v. Visited the 3 schools we work with. One of the schools we sponsor has a real computer lab, thanks to a grant several years ago from USAID. However, there's an issue: The building has serious structural flaws so the administration is concerned that the building could collapse on top of the kids. Computers are in fine shape, but the building will need ~\$4,000 to repair.
 - 1. Students in that school have markedly higher scores in all subjects than the other schools in the district, and the only difference is the computers, so it has a huge impact beyond just learning computer skills.
 - vi. We started off sponsoring children grades 1-10, and now we also are sponsoring a small number of students also at the high school level (which is much more expensive). Now there are three students who have done exceptionally well in high school who want to go to university... We'd like to see these 3 girls go to university, but that's not part of the program so we're not sure what we'll be able to do financially.
 - vii. Need to put in a large effort to find ways to support this project. The funding we give allows children the chance to go to school and change their lives.
 - viii. Because we are helping 120 students, other students are moving into the area in hopes of being added... We want to be able to expand the program, but the UU-UNO doesn't have the financial capacity to do that, and are even struggling to raise the funds to keep the overall program going.
 - ix. Finally, Bruce met with the U.S. Ambassador to Ghana, Rob Jackson. Mentioned we'd like to bring a donor group in 2018, hopefully with Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, and Amb. Jackson said he'd be delighted to meet with them.
- c. Rebecca: has a friend from a Baptist church who visited Ghana. A lot of the people there mostly ate plant-based foods. What can you tell us about the food the kids are eating?
 - i. Bruce: One of the schools (Assitey) has school lunch served. The government aspires to have feeding program added to other schools, but... not yet. Lunch served to the children (primarily rice and vegetable-based), plus they send some

- food home with them such as rice and oil to share with the families. This helps the children to remain in school.
- ii. Considered serving lunch to the kids we sponsor, but then their classmates would still not have lunch.
 - d. Joanne: are the 120 kids in the same school, or mixed with other kids?
 - i. They're in schools with other students, we work with 3 different schools in the district.
 - e. Bruce: the kids understand that this is their chance to break out of crushing poverty so they are very serious about their studies.
 - f. Joanne: What if any compensation for the care-giving families?
 - i. Bruce: Health care cards for all members, if children attend Assitey school the families get some food, plus general good graces of the Queen Mothers
 - g. Joanne: What can we do to bring this to the congregations beyond just the sharing info and encouraging donations.
 - i. Bruce: Really the thing we need is money... Have had some attempts to conduct a skype session between kids in a congregation and kids in the program in Ghana, but, aside from the logistical issues, they don't have a lot they can talk about because of the poverty the ECOC kids live in – UU kids can't really relate.
 - ii. Former UU-UNO employee Celestine visited Ghana, 2 girls followed her around the whole time and at the end she asked them "What do you want?", promising to give them whatever they said they needed. One girl said "If you gave us bread we could eat it." And the other said, "No, don't ask for bread! If you gave us paper and pencils we could do our homework."
 - iii. ECOC Program Monitor Joseph gets the kids shoes by tracing each child's feet to know the size, and bringing the tracings to a shoe store in Accra to buy all the shoes.
 - iv. Infographic on our website shows the value of a dollar for the ECOC program: <https://www.uua.org/international-justice/un/every-child/get-involved-ecoc>
 - v. 120 kids through grade 10, a few go to high school, and none in university so far.
 - h. David: Not fully funded for current students... what's the gap?
 - i. Bruce: ~\$20,000. Don't need to disperse this year's funds until September, so have time still to raise it, but...
 - ii. David: How much would it be to help the 3 girls go to school? Bruce has tasked our program monitor Joseph and the two social welfare interns to find out how much it would cost to sponsor them. Stay tuned...
 - 1. BTW, Ghana has a national policy that all university students have to complete a year of national service after completing their degree, spending a year in a different part of the country from where they're from. (Christian south >> Muslim north etc.)
 - iii. How about the funding for the students coming from outside areas for the three schools? It costs about \$120/year to support one child to school (Grades 1-10). High school is more expensive.
 - i. PJ: What fundraising mechanisms exist so far to fundraise for the program?

- i. Stewardship & Development sends out appeal letters etc. but they haven't done it much (focusing on ECOC) recently.
 - ii. They're missing the boat because this is a very compelling story.
 - j. David: What if each Blue Ribbon congregation strived to raise \$1,000 for ECOC?
 - i. David Vita is committing right now to give \$1,000 for ECOC. It would be good to do a real focused effort on ECOC to the Blue Ribbon Congregations, provide them with the story that can be used to talk to members, put in newsletters, etc. and make it a success. "Connecting communities"!
 - k. Peggy: Tradition at All Souls in which Peggy spoke with the children in 5th Grade about 6th principle and talked about ECOC and the kids had a bake sale. Has been very successful, didn't work out this year but Peggy will make sure to bring back the energy.
 - l. David: UU World article about Bruce's visit? Maybe to raise interest for the donor trip? Let's be creative! Use existing congregational structures for fundraising such as Share the Plate.
 - m. PJ: Thoughts about raising funds at UUA General Assembly? Sometimes it's hard locally to *keep asking people for money*! Maybe larger audience with higher giving prospects?
 - i. Maybe we'll do an ad?
 - ii. Writing from constituents/congregants can be more effective in getting things done than suggestions from UUA staff.
- III. Office updates –
 - a. Human Rights blog posts shared on UU-UNO social media in the week preceding Human Rights Day. Check out the blogs:
 - i. [Women's Rights & Religious Freedom](#)
 - ii. [International Apathy towards Rohingya Human Rights](#)
 - iii. [The Call from Pacific Islanders – Human Rights and Climate Change](#)
 - b. Working on proposals for Commission on the Status of Women forum at the UN in March relating to this year's theme of empowering rural women
 - c. Make sure to register early for the UU-UNO's 2018 Intergenerational Spring Seminar! Registration is open now "When Crisis Calls: Advancing Just Migration for All" and prices will increase after January 22nd – Envoys get a \$50 registration discount! There will be an Envoy Lunch on the final day of the seminar (Saturday April 7).
www.uua.org/unspringseminar
- IV. Programs Envoys are working on in their congregations –
 - a. Rebecca: Fourth Sunday of each month the congregation holds a conversation about environmental issues.
 - i. This month they'll be talking about a book called [Carbon Dharma](#) by Sailesh Rao
 - b. Joanne: Continuing to show the Drone series – making their way through the 5 drone films. Interfaith group that has produced a series of video on drones. Conversation about the church reaching out to religious leaders in the area to have a special showing for those leaders in hopes that they will bring it to their church. Very powerful films showing many angles. [Interfaith Network on Drone Warfare](#) website, and all resources shared by Rev. Antal at Oct. Envoy call are on the [Envoy Resources webpage](#).

- c. Joanne: For Human Rights Day this weekend, the religious education group read a kids version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the minister mentioned at the beginning of the service that it was Human Rights Day (baby steps!)
- d. Rebecca: Trans Day of Remembrance was honored in November and the fellowship is involved with and supports a DACA group called Manos Amiga, started by one of their members. The congregation also sponsored a Citizens Climate Lobby event.
- e. Harry: Climate Action Team is working with ministerial staff to become a green sanctuary – well on the way to doing that! Locally, taking steps toward Dallas becoming a carbon-neutral city. School bus system is going to be shifting to new buses in the coming year, so pushing diesel school buses to change to natural gas instead which will be a great step forwards towards carbon neutral status.
- f. Joanne: recently saw a video of the Nobel Prize acceptance speech from ICAN (Int'l Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons). It's truly inspiring!
https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2017/ican-lecture.html
(video will be available at that site later, currently: transcript)
- g. Rebecca: want to move forward to plant-based food. Any churches working toward climate justice in terms of recommending plant-based food?
 - i. Harry: In Dallas several of the things the climate group is involved with include sustainable farming and ranching practices – teamed up with “Mighty Birds” working with Tyson Foods to get them to commit to sustainable practices in meat processing. They process 20% of the meat in the US and the pollution from that is devastating to environments. Congregation also has a group working on Meatless Mondays to encourage less meat consumption.
 - ii. Joanne: knows the Seattle group is working on consciousness-raising of practices every individual can do to make daily tasks better for the environment, with a competition between different groups in terms of how they're improving their lifestyles to help the environment. The project is called Big Foot something... University Unitarian Church – this is a community-wide project, not just the church. Groups of 7 compete to make significant changes, with a check-list of activities.
- h. PJ: Guest speaker this weekend Jennifer Fenton – guest lecturer at Yale who is connected to UNHCR.
 - i. On Friday, USNH showed the film [Age of Consequences](#) which connects climate change with forced migration, violence around the world, terrorism, closing borders. Disheartening film, but wonderful to watch. Followed up on Sunday afternoon with open-ended books discussion on the topic of forced migration – 10-11 people talked about various different books each person had read relating to forced migration. (a lot focused on Middle East or Africa, not so much Central America) Hopelessness of the film picture got into the book conversation and ended up really hopeful by discussing concrete small things that can be done.
- i. David: Congregation in Westport does Right for Rights w/ Amnesty International each Human Rights Day, so did that Sunday afternoon after the service.

- i. Gun violence prevention event in honor of the anniversary of Sandy Hook w/ organizations in the area, ~200 people attended, state senator spoke, music, candle lighting
- ii. Also working a lot on helping to settle refugees, working with CIRI (Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants) helping with setting up apartments, fundraising, job hunting, Ethnic Eats (food made by refugees, share a piece of their culture), and will be doing expanded accompaniment support service training in January to support people going to court hearing/ICE, expanded beyond just courts, etc. so doing research work, accompanying them to doctor's appointments, and more.
- iii. Peggy: All Souls is having a hard time going outside of the congregation! How do you do it?
 - 1. David is a staff member of the congregation, "Director of Social Justice" – if you put resources into the work, it's easier to see change.
 - 2. PJ: It makes a huge difference to have someone on staff to boost the volunteers so the volunteers can *help* instead of trying to fully organize everything.
 - 3. Peggy: Possible to connect David with the new minister at All Souls?
Yes! David@uuwestport.org
- j. Bill: Intensive capital campaign going on right now so it's a struggle to get people to keep giving money, but will make an effort to encourage gifts for ECOC!

V. Adjourn