

Minutes
Monthly Envoy Conference Calls
October 19, 2021 3pm and 6pm Eastern

- I. Welcome and Introductions
 - a. 3pm EDT
 - i. Allison Hess (UU@UN)
 - ii. Janis Daly (Don Heights Unitarian Congregation in Toronto, ON)
 - iii. Bruce Knotts (UU@UN)
 - iv. Mandy Mynhier (All Souls Community Church of West Michigan)
 - v. Marilyn Mehr (Unitarian Church of All Souls, NYC)
 - vi. Dan Kohnstamm (Glacier UU Fellowship, MT)
 - vii. Dana Burch (Community Church of New York, NY)
 - viii. Marietta Tanner (UU Church of Arlington, VA)
 - ix. Markly Wilson (UU Congregation at Rock Tavern, NY)
 - x. Peggy Montgomery (Unitarian Church of All Souls, NYC)
 - xi. Ron Glossop (First Unitarian Church of Alton, IL)
 - xii. Tom Zeller (Towson Unitarian Universalist Church, MD)
 - xiii. Everardo Aguilar (First UU Church of San Diego, CA)
 - b. 6pm EDT
 - i. Allison Hess (UU@UN)
 - ii. Nasreen Gagner (UU Church of Long Beach, CA)
 - iii. Janet Bendowitz (UU Congregation at Shelter Rock, NY)
 - iv. Terry Van Brunt (North Shore UU Society, LA)
 - v. BJ Allen (San Marcos UU Fellowship, TX)
 - vi. Bill McPherson (University Unitarian Church, WA)
 - vii. Anna Mone (Unitarian Church of All Souls, NYC)
 - viii. Barry Lee (North Shore UU Society, LA)
 - ix. Elaine Nelson (UU Community Church of Washington County, OR)
- II. UN News from Bruce:
 - a. There's somewhat of a civil society revolt right now at the UN. We want to get inside the UN, but aren't given access. Diplomats and heads of state were able to be in the building during UN General Assembly, as were the press, but civil society couldn't be there. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have put out strong messages asking when we'll get access to the UN. The UN understandably wants to protect their people, and there are thousands of civil society organizations so would increase dramatically the density of people. They might need to come up with a vaccine verification protocol.
 - b. Meanwhile we continue to meet on Zoom with UN Staff and with Permanent Representatives from security council. Lots going on – COP26 of course. Terrible things in Myanmar, Tigray/Ethiopia.

- i. Thanks to congregants at Community Church NYC I learned what was happening in Tigray earlier than anyone else at the UN and was able to start asking questions. For other congregations who may have connections: Let us know what you're hearing about so we can start probing to see what's happening.
- c. Syria needs humanitarian assistance and the UN continues to struggle to get access. Also big focus on Afghanistan: Secretary-General António Guterres has said he doesn't believe in collective punishment – don't like Taliban govt but that doesn't mean people should starve to death. Working hard to get humanitarian access to relive the dire medical and food crisis in the country.
- d. Note: We have a lot of urgent things. Nuclear weapons continue to be an urgent crisis. DPRK is testing missiles. Systemic racism. We're working on demilitarization of police – people of color and marginalized communities targeted in U.S. and so many other countries. None of this is back burner stuff. All needs urgent action and puts a strain on the UN. It's the member states that actually *do* the work – UN encourages countries to do work. We need to push governments from our side too as citizens.
- e. Terry: What about global covid vaccine distribution?
 - i. Yes, getting global support, funding, and donations to the Covax facility remains a huge priority for the UN and especially the WHO.
<https://www.who.int/initiatives/act-accelerator/covax>
 - ii. BJ: I learned of a study of plant-based diet's benefits for covid:
<https://plantbasednews.org/lifestyle/health/vegan-diet-can-slash-severity-of-covid-19-study/>
 - 1. Research:
<https://nutrition.bmj.com/content/early/2021/05/18/bmjnph-2021-000272> note from BJ: In the conclusions it says: "In conclusion, individuals who reported following plant-based diets or pescatarian diets had lower odds of severe COVID-19-like illness." Please note that to have those who eat fish do well, they added people who ate a whole plant-based food diet to the fish eating group.
- f. Janis: Very interested to learn about the UN Food Systems summit and counter-summit. People say the UN is irrelevant. Want to come up with an answer in support of the UN but also acknowledge the ways it is problematic.
 - i. Bruce: The same criticisms are also heard about congress & parliament; I believe it's our responsibility to make them relevant. The UN brings nations together to try to get them to do the right thing in the world. The UN can take some blame for when things aren't going well, but major blame falls on member states especially those who have power and wealth who do not act.
 - 1. I love the slogan of WHO that no one's safe until everyone's safe. Those countries hoarding vaccines doesn't really help because variants will crop up in other places. Up to us as citizens to continually urge our governments to chip in.

- ii. Bruce: Food Systems Summit had quite a division. Regular food summit in many ways was dominated by agribusiness. Interfaith dialogues, including our organization and others, were pushing the idea that we should follow essentially the UUA ethical eating resolution of 2011 – plant based diet, locally grown food, work toward carbon neutrality. What we eat has a lot to do with climate change.
- iii. Allison: Counter summits were very powerful in convening those who were excluded from main summit by agrobusiness (esp. Indigenous communities, peasants, fisherfolk, small-scale farmers, etc.). Also point to Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, [Michael Fakhri](#), who's doing really great work. He and other Special Rapporteurs are appointed by the UN Human Rights Council to be independent advocates for human rights, pointing out where the UN and governments are out of alignment with HR, etc.
- g. Dana: What can you tell us about the capture of UN discourse by corporate agribusiness and economics in nation states where private business is preventing progress and full funding for things like climate adaptation? Where is the alternative voice in the UN for new vision about economics and new discourse that's not captured by private financial institutions.
 - i. Bruce: Major voice is civil society. Special Rapporteurs as well, they have a lot of independence. They're appointed by the UN but they have a lot of autonomy. A lot of what's wrong with countries and wrong with the UN is money (big money, dark money, corporate money). Will be hard to get control of that; need to control *within member states* and in the UN.
 - ii. Dana: Is there an agency / office in the UN that's particularly prophetic in regarding alternative economic vision at the scale of multilateralism?
 - iii. Bruce: UN staff are pretty good. UNEP (UN Environment) and OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) are saying the same things we are, want the same outcomes. They are employed by the UN and UN is "employed by the member states" that put money into their coffers.
 - iv. Dana: A peripheral agency I know of is trying to stand up: the Task Force for Social and Solidarity Economies (UNTFSSSE); would love for them to have stronger, more central place in the UN.
 - v. Bruce: Unfortunately have never heard of UNTFSSSE but would like to learn more. Even for member states it's hard to get heard. UN tends to be dominated by big powers and economies.

III. COP26!

- a. UN Climate Summit known as COP26 is starting in 2 weeks! Guterres has said this is "Code Red" – great urgency, we need to do something for climate change. U.S. government has been unable to get real action so far via congress. China stopping funding for coal mining outside the country, but there are still mines in the country. Similar situation in India.

- b. Allison: In Paris in 2015, countries submitted Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) committing to action they'll take to address climate change. The commitments submitted then were insufficient to achieve the Paris Agreement goals, and need to be revised every 5 years. COP in 2020 was postponed due to Covid pandemic, so new NDCs will be submitted this year at COP26 in Glasgow.
- c. We have a delegation determined in partnership with UUSC. Rev. Peggy Clarke of CCNY is going, Doris Marlin of All Souls DC is heading the delegation, and other representatives from Fiji and the Philippines representing UUSC partners dealing with climate change effects ("[Pacific Climate Warriors](#)"). COP has a big task ahead of it: Bruce was at COP25 in Poland, where developing countries were very angry. In Paris, there was a promise for a global climate fund where rich countries commit money to help developing countries adapt, and it hasn't been funded at all. High emissions countries are not acting enough like its urgent. Guterres will make that point at COP26 as will many others.
 - i. Marietta: pre-conference meetings have been taking place all over the world. Will they be working with special rapporteurs? Assembling en masse at COP26. Greta Thunberg spoke out about lack of substance happening at COP. What will their role be at the convention beside protest?
 - 1. Bruce: this is one of the reasons we have an official delegation as observers. They get more access than someone who doesn't get that status. Green Faith and other organizations are making strong statements. Need governments on board – they're the ones with the power to really influence the UN. US and Canada both have governments willing to listen somewhat but not enough. Leaders somewhat want to do the right thing but need to be pushed to go further.
- d. Marietta: This Sunday 10/24 at 4pm Eastern there's a UN Day Forum "Taking Action for Climate Change" hosted by UN Association of the National Capital Area and DC Metro Area UU Congregations. Ambassador Donald Bliss is heading it up and delegates from COP26 will be there representing John Kerry, U.S. special presidential envoy for climate. Will be an opportunity to advocate for a strong U.S. position. All are welcome to attend this free event; must RSVP: <https://www.uua.org/international-justice/events/un-day-forum>
 - i. Bill: UN Day Forum will be a good introduction to COP26 and U.S. role in COP26. The U.S. NDC (Nationally-Determined Contribution) is based on the 2005 level of emissions. Biden has pledged 52% reduction by 2030 and 100% reduction by 2045. This would meet the terms of the Paris Agreement. The Paris Agreement requires zero emissions by 2050 which Biden has pledged as well. For the list of major countries who made pledges in April 2021 at the Biden Climate Summit, see <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-kEJARTUI7-cjVU1y4bSsmjJpityfq26DNX-eGGGak/edit>

1. The U.S. pledge on climate is at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/22/fact-sheet-president-biden-sets-2030-greenhouse-gas-pollution-reduction-target-aimed-at-creating-good-paying-union-jobs-and-securing-u-s-leadership-on-clean-energy-technologies/>
- ii. BJ: Has Earth's temperature ever gone down between COPs?
 1. Bill: No, earth temp still increases. Concentrations of CO2 continues to increase, even if at slower rates. Emissions went down last year because of covid, but there will be a long lag before temperatures begin to decrease as we need the overall CO2 *concentrations* in the atmosphere to decrease not just decrease in rate of additional CO2 being added.
- e. Next Thursday, October 28, at 7pm Eastern join a special session to prepare for COP26! Will be a chance to delve deeper and understand what to expect from the conference and how to be involved. This will include an interactive Model UN-style component – should be fun! Register now: <https://www.uua.org/international-justice/events/preparing-cop>
- f. BJ: In addition to the official UU delegation, there are also UUs in a group called Climate Healers who will have an event on COP26 including early morning on the 31st. Also: *This weekend* there will be a Vegan World 2026! Convergence for those who are vegan and vegan curious in your congregation – you can register for free www.bit.ly/VegTix26 Anyone can speak at the convergence!

IV. UN Sunday

- a. Marietta: We had UN Sunday this past week, it went well. Now lots of people want to do gardening, permaculture, interested in COP26
- b. BJ: Have a planned speaker for RE on UN Sunday! Those presentations can last an hour or more, whereas sermon is only 20 mins or so.
- c. Terry: Created an Order of Service, submitting it to service chair and will find out if it'll be approved. Using the video of the Greeley Sermon Award-winner. Hoping it goes well. Want to educate people. Buy-in is pretty week, so want to emphasize this is the best option we have, there's no other UN.
- d. Elaine: We're also using Lóre Stevens's sermon and Allison's how-to-donate video. I'm adding on to talk about how to get involved locally and there is so much going on that people can do, I keep discovering more!
- e. Janet: I couldn't get a UN Sunday for the 24th so did it last Sunday. Created a page on the church's website with many resources as a follow-up. Had to keep it to <2,000 words so focused on ethical eating. One thing I did: I had 2 bowls of vegetables, one with peppers from China, tomatoes from Mexico, etc. and the other bowl of the same produce but locally grown. Spoke about the difference in carbon emissions impact between each bowl. Donations via text and some in person. Shared plan-based food recipes and more.
 - i. Allison: Unrelated but this reminds me: <https://www.google.com/flights> now shows a column with a Kgs of CO2 estimate for each flight, right next to price and time!

- f. Elaine: Can we get UU@UN logo? Want to put it on our website. (Allison will send)
- g. Terry: Soul Matters is distributing stuff to be used on social media. Our Soc Med designee has been doing a great job of promoting the church via social media and have had a lot of new people join us on Zoom. What's the social media presence for UU@UN?
 - i. @UUOfficeUN is our handle on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Please follow us and encourage the people who manage your congregation's social media to share things we post if/when relevant.
- h. Mandy: What kind of things are people doing for Time for All Ages? Mostly have been doing books, now having trouble narrowing it down
 - i. Marietta; Had always done something for UNICEF, had kids in costume, collect money during the week then return on Halloween to share their collection. This year tried to contact UNICEF but they just want you to send money so it didn't really work out. Red story about stone soup. Made point about collective accomplishments.
 - 1. Everardo: Very limited UN Sunday this year at First UU Church of San Diego. UNICEF has said it'll be entirely online this year as it was last year, no orange boxes again. I put announcement in newsletter with how to log onto trick-or-treat for UNICEF. Not just for kids anymore, now it's for everybody! I'm sure you can do collections like normal; if you collect change and take it to a Coinstar, you can donate to UNICEF and its free, and they give you a receipt (info about Coinstar charity partners here: <https://www.coinstar.com/charitypartners> - not all charities are available on every kiosk but they have a search function online). If you collect bills and checks you can send them to the U.S. Fund for Unicef. Here's some extra info: <https://www.unicefusa.org/trick-or-treat>
 - ii. Allison: My favorite Time for All Ages story for this year's theme is called "Super Tiny" and it's a story found in UUA Worship Web collection. Very apt for "food equity and sustainability" theme. Here's a link to the story: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/story/290065.shtml>
- i. Janis: Trying to right a video that's relevant to share in service, looking online at events at the UN. Haven't found a good one that could generate some discussion. Booked a musician that plays world healing music. Materials from UU@UN are good for opening and closing – not that good for content for writing a message.
 - i. Last year used one ~30 mins focused on the UN 75th anniversary (that video, "Nations United" is on this page: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>) which got the attention of the congregation; wish they had a follow-up for this year!
 - ii. Dan: Found a good video from UN Sunday site dealing with farming methods (video with Leah Penniman): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZA3KysRiYX4>

- iii. Marietta: I've found materials to be very useful and helpful with references to get more information. Another person in my church attended the Seminar but I didn't know it! He contributed to the UN Sunday service talking about the plight of Black farmers who have lost land to corruption and segregation etc. Very interesting contribution and people asked him a lot of questions. Made the UN Sunday more dynamic to have another adult presenting.
 - j. Elaine: We have a plan to put out a donation ask and discovered that the donation form <https://giving.uua.org/uuatun> doesn't ask for congregation, but <https://giving.uua.org/unitednationsoffice> does! (Allison will try to get this fixed ASAP! In case people have already donated via the first form, it's okay. There are often other ways of linking up a person's gift with the congregation for Sixth Principle Award purposes.)
 - k. Tom: I'd asked for a UN Sunday service a while ago but thought it wasn't happening, but now they want me to do something for this weekend; trying to get in touch with other major players in Sunday service to try to put something together.
 - l. Dan: I suggest the chalice lighting from Burundi, also the hymns we used that worked well were: "One More Step" and "Mystery" (is this "Where do we come from", #1003?)
 - m. Dan: How does Text-to-donate work?
 - i. Just text "UNSunday" (all one word; not case sensitive) to the number 51555 and click the link you receive in reply. It leads to a special UU@UN donation page!
 - n. Shared from Mandy as follow-up: Waterbear Network is a website and app that has soooo many excellent documentaries about a range of environmental topics, all intersectional. It specifically has a section that is about UN SDGs. https://join.waterbear.com/?gclid=CjwKCAjw2bmLBhBREiwAZ6ugowHejSVWZTvUQw2bPsj8-ul4toZTMADhq61q6lrRPJNv5ZAfNEmNpRoCH6YQAvD_BwE
- V. Other topics:
 - a. Dana: How can Envoys organize with one another around mutual interests in the ordinary course of the year? Even just to start building little bridges.
 - i. Allison: In the past we've tried to do this via a Facebook Group, but it hasn't been very active and I don't want to go encourage people to use Facebook more since Facebook is evil. Would be great to have some other platform though!
 - ii. Mandy: Slack is used by Side with Love
 - 1. Also UU the Vote used/uses Slack and it was used – and worked okay – for the 2021 Interger. Spring Seminar.
 - iii. Tom: Discord or sthg similar, we've used that to play and it's worked well
 - iv. Dana: Basecamp? That's what we use as a bulletin board for UN/Global Affairs group at the congregation
 - v. Allison: Slack seems like it might be the best option. Stay tuned!!
- VI. Adjourn