

Taking Flight

Sharing the news of Unity's young adult ministry
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and the Association of Unity Churches International

Fall 2006

This Issue's Theme: Local Connections

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What is NGU?
Next Generation of Unity serves the spiritual needs of Unity's young adults aged 18-35ish. Our method is twofold: fostering the development of Local Connections and facilitating spirit-centered retreats.

Announcement: Coming Summer 2007

International Next Generation of Unity Conference 2007 will be a spiritual retreat at Unity Village July 19-22. This is an invitation for young adults to take the next step in their spiritual growth—an opportunity to go deeper or to recommit to living a spirit-filled life. This retreat event will include a Rite of Passage welcoming ceremony for young adults leaving one experience and moving on to the next. Childcare will be provided throughout the event. Stay tuned to www.unity.org/ngu for current information!

Local Connection Reports



Sacramento NGU

Welcome to International NGU's first Local Connections themed newsletter! A Local Connection is a small group within a Unity congregation which provides opportunities for deeper spiritual connection with peers. Local Connections also enable young adults opportunities to participate in Sunday services and other congregational activities. It is our intention that this issue of *Taking Flight* will provide ideas, information, and support to Unity centers working on effectively serving young adults. The Local Connection reports contain both success stories and challenges so that we can learn from the experiences of others.

Northwest

- **Third Eye Seattle**

"Third Eye," a Northwest chapter of NGU, has been burgeoning as of late. We are affiliated with Seattle Unity in Seattle, WA. We have been going for almost two years and have a consistent turnout of 8 members. It seems as though many people

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www.unityonline.org

www.dailyword.com

come for a few months, get what they need from the group, and move on. This creates a rotating membership. We have been a small tight-knit group up until very recently. About a month ago we put an ad in the online site www.meetup.com and have expanded to 12-15 in this short time. The site costs about \$50 to list a group but it has proven to be very worthwhile.

Our generation is disgruntled with anything resembling church so it is good to emphasize that the group is an open, spiritual community. Coming up with a name for your group helps as well. We described the group as a “spirituality discussion group” for people in the age range 18-35. This has proven to attract many people who don’t know anything about Unity but are longing for a spiritual community. Meetup.com is a great way to open up to your local community and grow.
Report submitted by Damien Abel, Third Eye Organizer

Great Lakes

- **Minneapolis NGU**

Minneapolis NGU is affiliated with Unity South Church in Bloomington, MN. Our ministry is currently in transition awaiting our next senior minister. We began monthly gatherings at the church in February 2006, and our most recent meeting was in July 2006. Our Local Connection is currently inactive. We would have found more success this year with a stronger team of committed leaders offering energy and material.

Report submitted by Tony Plocido

South/Central

- **Fort Worth NGU**

Fort Worth NGU is affiliated with Unity Church of Fort Worth in Fort Worth, TX. We began meeting in Fall 2002. We meet each Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. right before the 7:00 p.m. Wednesday Inspiration service lead by the ministers. We use the prayer/cloud room in the sanctuary building, and are lead by Miriam Cocoonower.

Fort Worth NGU provides an environment of love and acceptance for anyone 18 to 40 years old, including singles, couples, and families. We love reading any text that provides spiritual food. The benefits our NGU Local Connection enjoys are the fellowship, friendship, and love we share. The most challenging thing has been getting lots of people to attend regularly.

Report submitted by Miriam Cocoonower

- **Lee’s Summit Young Adult Study Group**

Lee’s Summit Young Adult Study Group is affiliated with Unity Village Chapel and Unity of Lee’s Summit, MO. We began weekly meetings in October 2006 at the Association of Unity Churches International’s home office on Tuesdays at 7 p.m. We are working with the book *Meditations on the Mount* by Ed Townley. We have an altar in our meeting room, and people bring sacred objects to create a sacred place. It has been challenging to find a meeting time that works for everyone who is interested in participating. Our favorite part is engaging in insightful spiritual discussions with people our own age.

Report submitted by Rachel Simpson

Southeast

- **Atlanta NGU**

Atlanta’s NGU Local Connection is affiliated with Atlanta Unity in Atlanta, GA. We began meeting on October 1, 2005, and have bimonthly gatherings. On the first

Local Connections

A Local Connection (LC) is a meeting space for Unity's young adults (aged 18-35ish). LCs provide small group ministry and peer interaction. Local Connections must be affiliated with a Unity church, Unity minister, or licensed Unity teacher.

If you are interested in starting a LC or locating an existing LC in your area, contact your regional coordinator (listed below) or the INGU Local Connections coordinator, Tiffany Emitt at southeastNGU@gmail.com.

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Rebecca Avery

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Sunday each month we meet at Atlanta Unity after the 11:00 a.m. service. Once per month we have a social event out and about in Atlanta (such as a restaurant, lounge, or bowling).

At Atlanta NGU, anyone can plan and organize an event, however we have two primary facilitators and organizers: Lauren Bundy and Jordan Robinson. Everything we do on behalf of Atlanta NGU is passed by our senior minister. We find success with lesson materials and activities which are pre-written, social events with food, service projects, hanging out informally, and being outdoors. We like to be able to meet without a lot of preparation beforehand. We found that intensive planning sessions don't work well for us.

Our favorite aspect of our NGU Local Connection is the support we have from the congregation and senior minister. Atlanta Unity embraces NGU and supports us in every way possible. The most challenging thing about our NGU Local Connection is consistency. Sometimes we are a small group, other times we are larger than life! Report submitted by Lauren Marie Bundy

- **Augusta NGU**

Augusta NGU is affiliated with Christ Church Unity in Augusta, GA. We began meeting in January 2006. After holding monthly meetings at several local coffee shops, with very little participation, we changed our meeting schedule to 1st and 3rd Sundays. Our intergenerational planning team recently met and discussed the question, "What is NGU?"

We are still figuring out what will work for our group. We really love how supportive our congregation is. The most challenging thing about our NGU Local Connection has been an apparent lack of NGUers.

Report submitted by Janey Goldman

- **Gainesville NGU**

Gainesville NGU is affiliated with Unity of Gainesville in Gainesville, FL. We first met in the Spring of 2006, and currently hold our meetings each week on Tuesday evenings at 8:00 p.m. Our meetings are held at the church and in our homes. The group has been in a continuous process of evolution, and we are continuing to rediscover what it means to be a part of an NGU group. When we first began our group in March, we held our meetings on Sunday after church. This, however, became an issue with quite a few people because they usually made other plans after service and coming to NGU started feeling like an obligation. This issue was quickly addressed by moving our meeting time to a weekday evening around 7:00 p.m. This worked really well and helped generate some extra interest.

Growing our group membership, overall, has been a slow process. We currently have about 4 regular members including myself. We have been primarily focused on reading and studying the *Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle, which has been a hit with everyone. We've had many deep spiritual discussions, and everyone enjoys meditating at the end of our session. As time goes on we are growing closer and closer to each other and are becoming more and more like a family.

Report submitted by Gabriel Coleman

- **Knoxville NGU**

Knoxville NGU is affiliated with Unity Church of Knoxville in Knoxville, TN. We began meeting in November 2005. In the past we have had meetings once per month at the church or at a restaurant. We are currently discerning what is ours to do. Our favorite thing about our NGU Local Connection is having a chance to be with peers and create a safe, spiritual home for young adults. Our most challenging thing has been inspiring a willingness to participate in lesson planning.

Report submitted by Tiffany Emitt

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- **Orlando NGU**

Orlando NGU is affiliated with Unity Church of Christianity in Orlando, FL. We began meeting at the end of 2005, and we meet once per month on the 3rd Sunday. We attend the 11:00 am church service together, and then we stay after for lunch and our NGU meeting. Our leadership structure is set up so that whoever wants to run a meeting just volunteers. It works for us to have food and a good lesson.

When we first began, we started meeting three times per month, but that was overwhelming for everyone. Our favorite part about our NGU Local Connection is the catch up time during lunch, where we get to chat with one another. We find the most challenging thing is having a variety of leaders.

Report submitted by Lisa Mendoza

West Central

- **Sacramento NGU**

Sacramento NGU is affiliated with Christ Unity Church and Spiritual Life Center, both in Sacramento, CA. We began weekly meetings on August 6, 2006. We gather on the 1st and 3rd Sundays, and 2nd and 4th Mondays each month, in the evening, at Christ Unity Church. We have also hosted a Friday movie night and a weekend camping trip. Our initial leadership team of 3 members met a few times in the two months leading into the launch of our Local Connection. Since then our leadership team has grown to 7 members. Our weekly attendance ranges from 7 to 23.

Some people who come to Sacramento NGU are life-long Unity students, and for others, NGU is their first exposure to Unity. We have marketed our group by listing it in the Sunday bulletin and by making announcements from the platform at both of our sponsoring congregations. So far it is working well for us to have monthly themes: August was "Manifestation," September was "Letting Go," and for October we are doing "Prosperity." November will be "Self-Awareness," December will be "Relationships," and January will be "Global View." Our sessions are usually facilitated by a member of the leadership team. Sometimes we will have a guest presenter such as senior minister Rev. Jim Lee or licensed Unity teachers in training Mike Gomez, Patrice DeHart, Jen Shilen, or Mark Matranga.

We find that it is important for our group to offer both child care and a meeting space that is wheelchair accessible for each meeting. Sometimes people don't come on time, and we are learning to be okay with that. Right now it seems like we have several activities coming up which require a lot of planning and attention; and it is sometimes hard to find the time to do that. The most challenging thing has been putting together meaningful content and completing all of the preparation necessary for success. Our favorite thing about Sacramento NGU is the connection we feel with each other. Longtime friendships are deepening, and new relationships are being established.

Contact us: www.myspace.com/sacramentongu or sacramentongu@yahoo.com
Report submitted by Jen Shilen

Contact *Taking Flight*

Do you have a comment, prayer, poem, story, or report to contribute to this newsletter? Send submissions to:
ingunews@aol.com

Note: Not all submissions may be used due to timing & space constraints. Content submitted may be edited or altered slightly if necessary.

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Sacramento NGU

Commentary from Sacramento NGU leadership

NGU is a needed resource in this day and age. In our circle of friends, work, and school we are with people all the time but feel alone in our minds. Sunday services at Christ Unity and Spiritual Life Center do help establish a sense of community. However during the week we get caught up with business, chasing money, the craziness of phone calls, emails, and text messages.

NGU provides time for us to gather with like-minded people our age, not family, or co-workers. It is time to create NGU groups to support each other in a spiritual community and provide a place to come apart for a while from the seeming insanity of the outer world.

- Sterling Smith, Sacramento NGU leadership team member

Regional Reports



Southeast NGU

The Southeast Regional NGU Team had a visioning meeting the weekend of July 28-30th in Atlanta, GA. During this meeting we were blessed to have dinner with Rev. John Strickland and a couple members from his church. The purpose of the meeting was to use Appreciative Inquiry to find out what is currently working in our region in order to expand those ideas to better serve our NGU. This process helped us find out exactly what is ours to do. We received so many Spirit-led ideas and we are excited about putting them into play. We are going to be trying some new things at our retreats. We have decided to do a yearly regional service project that you can take part of in your home town. In addition, we are putting up monthly Local Connection material ideas on the calendar of our website, which you can access at www.se.nextgenerationofunity.com.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed material to this issue of *Taking Flight!*

- Damien Abel
- Lauren Bundy
- Miriam Cocoanower
- Gabriel Coleman
- Janey Goldman
- Tiffany Emitt
- Lisa Mendoza
- Tony Plocido
- Jen Shilen
- Rachel Simpson
- Sterling Smith

Our Southeast NGU Fall Retreat will be held Nov. 10-12, 2006 at Unity Christ Center in Suwanee, GA. The theme for the weekend is "Loved One." Come join us for a weekend of exploring and understanding the importance of healthy relationships. We will be discussing our evolving relationship with God, the sacred self, and those that we love. We will discuss topics such as unconditional love, choosing the path to your highest self, establishing and maintaining boundaries and embodying an image of self love. There will be workshops led by Dr. Walter Busby who is a retired professor of psychology from the University of Florida and founder and director of the Institute for Holistic Education—and he's Unity to boot! We will have small group activities, and service activities that help to experience the theme for this weekend. We are going to have a celebration for the Revs. Steve and Mary Bolen during the weekend, as this will be the weekend before their last Sunday serving the church. They have been extremely supportive of NGU in the Southeast Region. Please come and help celebrate with us. We hope to see you there!

To find more information about the retreat and the insights gained from the visioning meeting, please visit www.se.nextgenerationofunity.com.

Blessings,

Tiffany Emitt

Southeast Young Adult Ministries Coordinator

- **West Central**



Our 3 Consultants: Jen Shilen, Young Adults; Jerry Sharp, YOU; and Shirley Barbula, Youth Education

West Central NGU has been primarily focused on launching the Sacramento NGU Local Connection over the past two months. We will now take what we have learned from our experience in Sacramento and begin to travel to other churches in the region and help start new Local Connections. West Central NGU looks forward to its first regional NGU retreat in 2007.

September 15-17 was West Central Region's annual retreat at Asilomar, in Pacific Grove, CA. The theme was "Spiritual Transformation—Pulled by a Vision." Keynote speakers were Rev. Michael Moran, Rev. Jim Lee, and Rev. Cherie Larkin. There were four attendees in our twenties who got together at the end of each day to process our retreat experience in a peer group. It was a wonderful experience.

You can get updated information about West Central NGU by visiting www.myspace.com/westcentralngu.

-Jen Shilen, West Central Region Young Adult Ministries Consultant