

## Inspire

With inspiration, our prayers and vision begin to move into outer expression. Ministries can inspire care of the earth by including an earth focus in their activities, such as Sunday services, prayers, songs, and special ceremonies. The Truth that God is everywhere present in Creation then becomes alive in people's minds and hearts, and translates into daily action.

## Learn

It is important to gather information and resources to educate ourselves in preparation for future action. Further, sponsoring educational activities in our ministries opens a space for individuals--and the community—to explore, pray, and discern greater understanding about complex environmental topics. Such experiences may bring into ministries the challenging issues of life on earth and create spiritual connections with them. Educating people to pray first and act upon guidance fosters unity and God-centered action. Obvious avenues for communication include the ministry newsletter, Sunday bulletin, and displays.

## Take Action

To express loving care for the earth requires a commitment of time, energy, and money. The specific actions taken will depend on the needs and vision of the community. The activities may be simple or complex, contained solely within the ministry, or reach out into the broader community.

We encourage EarthCare Congregations to express their vision and creativity by adopting sustainable lifestyle practices. The actions of the ministry can be a model and encourage individuals to make changes in their personal lives as well.

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## Share

Sharing our ideas and successes through word-of-mouth, presentations, and news media, is important for fostering the work within our congregations and the larger community. Networking with other groups and programs reminds us that we are not alone in the task of caring for creation. Unity ministries may network with local conservation groups, interfaith creation care centers, and spiritual centers of other denominations with creation care programs. As we become aware of the work within Unity and elsewhere, our common ground—Earth—becomes a sacred home for unity. By raising awareness of our common cause, we can unite our actions to care for humanity and the planet that sustains us.

## Renew

Every work has its seasons. There are ebbs and flows in EarthCare work. However, even during a “winter” season of low energy for projects, we can maintain sacred space for creation through Sunday services and special ceremonies. Prayer and visioning anew, perhaps annually, allows the ministry to re-assess where to focus its efforts.

\* Based on the “Path to Earth Care” from the Northwest Region of the Association of Unity Churches International, 2007. UCIE revision 2009.



Please contact us at [earthcare@unity.org](mailto:earthcare@unity.org) for more details about pursuing these Tracks or involving your ministry in EarthCare.

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# EarthCare Congregation Program

## Overview

The EarthCare Team, a ministry team of the Association of Unity Churches International, has designed the *EarthCare Congregation Program* to assist congregations in integrating an earth-oriented spirituality into their ministry.

The program consists of 3 components:

- **EarthCare Covenant**
- **EarthCare Commitment**
- **EarthCare Congregation Certification**

Congregations may choose any of the three Tracks. They are designed with increasing levels of commitment and activities, from setting an intention with the Covenant, to accomplishing some meaningful actions in the Commitment Program, to expressing EarthCare in all aspects of the ministry by becoming an EarthCare Congregation.

Regardless of the option chosen, it is important that the ministry leadership be included in discerning EarthCare actions that are appropriate for the ministry.

We welcome questions that will help your congregation discern which component(s) of the *EarthCare Congregation Program* to choose. We are also willing to support you in implementing those component(s). Please contact us at [earthcare@unity.org](mailto:earthcare@unity.org).



## Tracks for EarthCare Involvement

### • Track A - EarthCare Covenant

An EarthCare Covenant is a sacred trust between the congregation and Spirit. A covenant expresses a conscious awareness of our oneness with creation and a commitment by the congregation to care for the earth as a significant component of the ministry.

Congregations may choose to adopt a provided **EarthCare Covenant** or create their own. Writing their own covenant can be extremely meaningful for the congregation as they develop their vision for the work. We suggest that the covenant be presented and signed at a ceremony involving the entire community, and posted in the ministry as a declaration of their sacred trust.

### • Track B - EarthCare Commitment

In this Track, the congregation and ministry leadership are invited to create a vision for EarthCare and then take actions that demonstrate a commitment to caring for creation.

Congregations may choose any **three** of the seven steps described in **The Path to EarthCare** and identify actions for those steps that are appropriate for the ministry.

There are many easy ways to begin to care for creation. Some examples follow.

- hold a special service for Earth Day Sunday
- include prayers for creation in each Sunday service
- recycle office paper
- replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs
- minimize waste by using washable dinnerware for hospitality
- show a documentary film on an EarthCare topic
- hold a study group on sustainable living or voluntary simplicity
- participate in activities already planned by other organizations, such as local stream/neighborhood/park or roadway cleanup days, The Nature Conservancy's *Plant a Billion Trees* campaign, etc.

### • Track C - EarthCare Congregation Certification

Some congregations may decide to complete the entire EarthCare Congregation Certification process, as described here and outlined in the **Certification Checklist**, and then become certified as an *EarthCare Congregation*. The EarthCare Congregation Certification track is a guide to active fulfillment of the ministry's vision for EarthCare.

Based on **The Path to EarthCare** the EarthCare Congregation Certification track is a comprehensive approach to an earth-oriented spirituality that touches the entire life of the ministry. This track is centered on cultivating a consciousness for EarthCare that includes both spiritual and practical actions. It is our experience that, by following this process, EarthCare can be integrated into the life of the ministry in a way that is sustainable over time.



## “The Path” to EarthCare

*A conscious strategy can help us achieve success in any undertaking. This 7-step Path is recommended because it recognizes spiritual commitment and visioning as essential parts of reaching our goals. Ministries pursuing a commitment to EarthCare would likely cycle through these steps many times as they proceed along their path.\**

### Pray

Our consciousness of God opens the way for ideas, inspiration, and guidance. To begin EarthCare in a ministry, first create a consciousness for the work through prayer. Prayer guides the ministry to its own unique expressions of caring for creation.

### Vision

Once a ministry discerns, through prayer, a call to adopt EarthCare, they should create a vision for the work with the ministry leadership. This may take the form of a vision statement, a mission statement or covenant to care for creation.

When developing a vision for EarthCare, the congregation may hold a prayerful dialogue by asking questions such as: “How do we perceive God?” “What is our relationship to God’s creation?” “How can we be good stewards of Earth?”

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