

Visioning a world in which all humanity lives in a spiritual consciousness manifesting as loving co-existence with all creation and care for our Earth home.

Summer 2008

The **EarthCare Team**, a ministry team of the Association of Unity Churches International, arose from the deep desire to express Unity's belief in our oneness with all of divine life in ways that directly care for our planet home.

The EarthCare Team offers the following services to the Unity movement:

- Guidance and expertise in developing EarthCare spiritual action in Unity ministries and regions.
- A voluntary enrollment program with standards for recognizing Unity ministries as "EarthCare Congregations."
- Quarterly mentoring calls for idea exchange among ministry EarthCare teams.
- Lists of suggested activities and resources.
- Seminars and information at Unity People's Conventions.
- E-newsletter with success stories and news of events and possibilities.
- A subscription Blog for idea exchange, announcements, and commentaries on important EarthCare topics:
uecc-uniearth.blogspot.com
- An upcoming webpage at www.unity.org/bethechange/ with links to resources.

Contact us at earthcare@unity.org to ask questions, subscribe to our newsletter, and request assistance!



GREENING OF UNITY

—**Barbara Wilson, Northwest Region, USA**

The "Greening of Unity" initiative came out of the Regional Appreciative Inquiry Summit held last September 2007. Its purpose is to encourage ministries to go green to minimize environmental impact. Its goal is to have 75% of our ministries green by 2012.

To work towards this goal, the EarthCare Team is working on four areas for the 2008 Unity Peoples' Convention in June.

"Creating a Greener Unity" seminar

Our Association of Unity Churches International vision of "a world that works for all" includes the wholeness and wellness of our entire planet. This forum will focus on simple and effective strategies to support the greening of your church and a healthy planet. These strategies can also raise the visibility of your ministry in a positive way and help you to be a better steward of your church resources.

Green Information

Our table in the exhibition hall will feature green ideas and resources.

Green Gifts

Convention attendees will receive a tote bag, a water bottle, and a journal, all made from recycled materials.

Green Convention

We have been at work on several ideas with the assistance of Debbie Ball, convention coordinator. The convention center assured Debbie that fair trade products and local produce will be used as much as possible. Water conservation is practiced with regards to room towels and bedding. A recycling center will be set up for our use. Instead of bottles of water for refreshment, there will be water and perhaps lemonade dispensers to fill our personal water bottles.

See you in Phoenix!

EARTHCARE TEAM MENTORING

—Sheryl Polikoff, Unity Church of Windsor
(Ontario, Canada)

Welcome to all who are contemplating starting up an EarthCare team in their church and those who have just taken those courageous first steps. Rev. Kathy Long, associate minister at Peace Unity Church in Clarkston, Michigan, hosts quarterly mentoring calls for EarthCare teams. On these calls we share program ideas and support each other, building community across ministries and regions. With support and encouragement from Rev. Long, we successfully formed an EarthCare Committee at Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

Windsor Unity operates without a minister or our own church building, and with a membership slightly over 50. I talked to Rev. Long, one of our visiting ministers, about starting a committee after viewing the Northwest Region's program at www.unitynwregion.org. Late in 2006 I set a date to show the film An Inconvenient Truth despite concerns that the film was too political. Two days before the showing a bipartisan government committee validated global warming. We had a discussion after the film and I petitioned the board for permission to form a committee, receiving approval several months later.

Since forming, our committee has convinced our board to use recyclable cups and plates instead of styrofoam; inserted prayers and messages in the bulletins and newsletters; sponsored a water ceremony for our congregation on Earth Day; and hosted a display table at the local market for Water Day. Future projects include offering safe disposal for compact fluorescent light bulbs and planting flowers with the youth at the local hospice. These may be small steps but we are growing, and more of the congregation is becoming aware.

If we can do it so can you—so come and join us!



EARTHCARE CONTACTS

As of April 2008, six U. S. regions of the Association of Unity Churches International have adopted EarthCare as a focus work! Region and area contacts are listed below.

Contact your area's EarthCare representative for more information. And if your ministry is already engaged in EarthCare, let your regional team know what you are doing.

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The next **Mentoring Call** is scheduled for June 14 at noon Eastern time zone. Contact us at earthcare@unity.org if you'd like to attend.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A GREEN CHURCH: GETTING STARTED AND KEEPING IT GOING —Mike McCord, Unity Church of Overland Park (Kansas, USA)

Unity Church of Overland Park is on its way to becoming a “Green Church.” In a “green church” the staff and congregation are committed to protecting and preserving our environment. Through leading by example, the church’s commitment spurs the members to do more in their own lives. Collectively we demonstrate ways to live our lives in spiritual harmony with the earth.

The idea for our church to become “green” sprang out of a church-wide visioning process in late 2003. Out of fifteen areas proposed, conservation of the environment placed second! Taking this as a mandate, in February of 2004 we formed our environmental committee. Our mailing list is now about 60 people and the breadth of our activities has continued to grow. Along the way we’ve learned many things. I hope the following ideas will help others successfully turn theirs into a “green” church:

- *It’s vital for the work to be spiritually based and have the support of the minister and Board of Directors. Start with prayer and create a vision with the minister and church leadership. Also consider adopting a covenant of EarthCare that states the congregation’s commitment to be good stewards of the environment. Its adoption should be recognized and celebrated by the entire congregation.*
- *Diversify the committee’s leadership as much as possible. While every Green Team needs at least one “champion” to keep the committee energized, more than one person must be committed to ensure long-term success.*
- *Identify areas of interest and create an Action Plan. Pick the “low-lying fruit” first. By participating in events planned by other organizations, you can achieve some quick successes that stimulate interest and enthusiasm for EarthCare.*
- *Balance your activities between nurturing a spiritual commitment to EarthCare and achieving practical “on the ground” results that benefit the church and larger community.*

We’ve used these ideas to guide our work at Unity of Overland Park. It may not be easy “being green,” but as we’ve found out, it’s rewarding!

EARTHCARE CONGREGATION PROGRAM

The EarthCare Team has designed the *EarthCare Congregation Program* to assist congregations in integrating an earth-oriented spirituality into their ministry. Congregations may choose to follow any of the three components of the program:

EarthCare Covenant – Ministries are invited to adopt a covenant that expresses a conscious awareness of our oneness with creation.

EarthCare Commitment Program – Ministries identify actions in three areas of their choice that express their vision and commitment to EarthCare.

EarthCare Congregation Certification – A voluntary enrollment program in which ministries agree to take action in seven areas, including: creating a vision through prayer; celebrating Earth in special services; taking practical actions in sustainable living; teaching others about ways to care for creation; and sharing their successes. Upon completing the program, they are certified as an EarthCare Congregation and invited to share their experiences with other ministries.

To learn more about the *EarthCare Congregation Program*, contact the EarthCare Team at earthcare@unity.org.

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

www.theregenerationproject.org **Interfaith Power and Light** initiative between faith communities and utility companies encourages energy efficiency, congregational covenants, and rebate programs for individuals, churches, and businesses.

www.ncecojustice.org **National Council of Churches of Christ—Eco-justice Working Group** has educational materials on environmental spirituality, including Earth Day worship packets, Environmental Congregational Covenants, and an Energy Stewardship Guide.

www.seasonforcreation.com **Season for Creation** promotes celebrating Creation during the month of September through the Feast of St. Francis on October 3. The website has numerous worship resources available for free download.

UNITY VILLAGE HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTER EARNS LEED CERTIFICATION

The new Unity Village Hotel and Conference Center is one of the first LEED-certified hotels in the nation, and the first in the Midwest. The unique building promotes both environmental stewardship and occupant well-being and comfort.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a green building rating system developed by the U. S. Green Building Council. LEED encourages design and construction practices that significantly reduce or eliminate the negative impact of buildings on the environment and occupants.

(Go to www.unityonline.org/aboutunity/news/leedCertification.html for the article.)



UNITY CHURCHES INTERNATIONAL EARTHCARE TEAM

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