



Starting Unity EarthCare in a Region

Your Unity Churches International EarthCare Team (UCIE) is happy to assist you in all steps of helping your church “become green.” We can help you get started, support your specific needs along the way, and connect you with others proceeding along the same path. The information here can give you a general idea of how to begin. Please contact us at earthcare@unity.org for any further questions or explorations.

The Spiritual Path of Unity EarthCare

The steps of the **Spiritual Path** to Unity EarthCare are: Pray, Vision, Inspire, Learn, Share, Act and Renew.

The “**Sample Action Plan**” on a later page is based on experiences with the Path model. Although a group may enter the Path through any of the steps, beginning with consciousness through the Pray and Vision steps is recommended. What follows are general thoughts regarding the Path model.

- **Pray and Inspire (worship)**

Prayer “holds the center” of this work. It is recommended that each step of the Path be accompanied by prayer. Inspiration comes through prayers and special services for creation (such as Earth Day Sunday). For example, the Northwest Unity Region encourages churches to pray for creation in Sunday services and have sponsored a “Gathering of the Waters” ceremony at Regional conferences. They have also created an Earth Care banner for other churches to use.

- **Vision (regional vision for Unity EarthCare)**

Once a regional team is formed, a vision statement can be created and an action plan developed for the first year of work. A modest annual budget (ca \$500) for buying informational materials as well as other expenses such as travel and postage can be requested of the regional Board.

- **Learn (education)**

After reaching a vision for the work, the next priority is learning. There is a wealth of materials available from interfaith organizations and other denominations. The following websites have excellent resources and links:

Association of Unity Churches: <http://www.unity.org> (click on bethechange, then on Earth Care)

Unity Northwest Region: <http://www.unitynwregion.org>

National Council of Churches: <http://www.nccecojustice.org>

Earth Ministry: <http://www.earthministry.org>

Interfaith Power and Light: <http://www.theregenerationproject.org>

Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns: www.emoregon.org, go to /INEC/
Unitarian/Universalist, "Green Sanctuary Program" <http://www.uuministryforearth.org>
Web of Creation (Lutheran): <http://www.webofcreation.org>

- **Share (communication and networking)**

Regional teams, communicating with Unity churches, develop the majority of action steps for the Region each year. One early step is to identify churches in the Region that are already engaged in Earth Care (both within Unity and other denominations), and then to publicize their activities through regional newsletter articles, E-newsletters, and on a webpage. Their examples make the work "real" for others.

- **Act (Sustainable Living and Stewardship of Natural Resources)**

Action steps tend to be the focus of church Unity EarthCare teams. For Regional Unity EarthCare teams, actions may include holding a "green" regional conference, having an outdoor work project at conference, communication, and networking.

- **Renew (Sabbath)**

Energy may ebb and flow in church green teams, in our own work, and in nature. These cycles are in Divine Order and not a negative symptom. Periodic prayer and visioning anew allows the Region to reassess where to focus its efforts.



Sample Action Plan **for Unity EarthCare work in a Region**

*** Vision (Regional vision for Unity EarthCare)**

- Talk with Regional president and other board members as necessary regarding submitting the proposal. Some Regions set their agenda a year in advance.
- Submit proposal at Regional conference to adopt Unity EarthCare as a focus work for 1-5 years. (See Agenda Item Form below.)
- Request an operating budget from the region.
- Form an Unity EarthCare Regional team, with leader/contact person and interested members. Communicate information to Unity Churches International EarthCare Team via Association website.
- Prayerfully develop an action plan for the team.
- Prayerfully develop goals, vision and mission statements.

*** Pray and Inspire (worship)**

- Write a prayer for your team.
- Write and/or share Creation-based prayers in Regional newsletter and website.
- Create special services for Unity EarthCare. Encourage their use in ministries and host them at regional events.
- Create a symbol (or use UICE artwork, available for use by all regions) and circulate it among churches in the region and at regional events (see for example Northwest Region's Earth Care banner).

*** Learn (education)**

- Promote a model for beginning Unity EarthCare in a church, such as the UCIE EarthCare Covenant; the UCIE EarthCare Commitment Program; or the UCIE EarthCare Congregation Certification. (See website for these.)
- Become familiar with materials from interfaith organizations, other denominations, and websites.
- Develop a "tool kit" of materials and information for ministries to start Unity EarthCare.
- Share educational materials at Regional events (Regional conference, family retreat, youth ministry training) and with individual ministries.
- Develop and/or gather from the UCIE website or Unity ministries, Unity-based educational materials for creation care and share them.
- Give presentations, workshops, or classes at Unity ministries and Regional events.

* Share (communication and networking)

Communication:

- Notify the UCIE Team of your existence, contact person, and team members.
- Set up e-mail addresses and email list (by working with the Regional board).
- Notify all Unity churches in Region of existence of Unity EarthCare Regional Team and contact person. Encourage Unity EarthCare Teams for individual ministries.
- Create Regional Unity EarthCare brochure.
- Write regular column in Regional newsletter.
- Publish articles in Unity national publications.
- Develop web page on Regional website. Establish link to Unity Churches International EarthCare Team website.
- Make personal contacts with ministers, lay leaders, etc., in your Region.

Networking:

- Find “green” ministries in your region (Unity or other denominations) and share their successes.
- Foster networking among Unity EarthCare Teams; this may include holding special conference calls or workshops.
- Encourage Unity EarthCare Teams to mentor new teams within their sub-Region or metropolitan area.
- Network with interfaith Earth Care organizations and other denominations in your Region.
- Network with Unity EarthCare Teams from other Regions (attend conference calls, etc.).

* Act (Sustainable Living and Stewardship of Natural Resources)

- Work with Regional board to identify actions the conference body of the region will support.
- Consider “greening” regional conferences by participating on the Conference Committee and ensuring use of recyclables at the hotel.
- Host a service project at Regional events.
- Sensitively share information on regional and national environmental issues.
- Some Regions may adopt a UCIE Covenant. (See the Unity Churches International EarthCare website. Other examples are available from interfaith organizations. See websites listed under “Learn”).

* Renew (Sabbath)

- Review, revision and celebrate the work yearly.

(Adapted from Unity Northwest Region, www.unitynwregion.org/programs/Earth_Care.)

**Commitment to EarthCare as a Region:
Agenda Item for the
Annual _____ Regional Conference**

Date: _____

Submitted by _____.

Proposal that:

1. The _____ Region begin a work of inviting and supporting Unity ministries and study groups in environmental earth care during the next five years through prayer, visioning, education, networking, dialogue, and interfaith efforts.
2. The _____ Region adopt EarthCare as an ongoing work and begin by creating an EarthCare Team (leader and members) to investigate and report on the possibilities of:
 - Networking with the Association's Earthcare Team, other Unity EarthCare Teams, and with interfaith organizations; and participating in interregional conference calls on Unity EarthCare.
 - Mentoring and training churches to develop local EarthCare Teams through individual contacts, sharing resources, and making presentations (at Regional events, individual ministries, and nationally).
 - Developing new activities for an EarthCare resource book and bibliography. Researching materials available from other denominations and interfaith websites and sharing this information.

Background: This proposal is based on the successful implementation of an earth care program in the Northwest Region, adopted in April 2002, and supported by an annual budget of \$500.00. There is now an EarthCare Team sponsored by the Association of Unity Churches International, which can offer networking and support ideas. Please contact for assistance and guidance: earthcare@unity.org

As of January 2009, several Unity Regions have adopted EarthCare as a Region-wide program, and have identified an EarthCare Team leader. By bringing all of the Regions on board, we have the potential of making Unity a "green movement."