Church of the Future

How will spiritual seekers connect with spiritual principles? **Page 5**

Unity Needs Young Adults In Order to Grow **Page 7**

Unity Plays Crucial Role at the Turning of the Christian Faith **Page 10**

Twitter Will Never Replace the Spiritual Community **Page 16**

PLUS: What Does Church Look Like In the Next 25 Years and Branding Underway for the Unity Movement
Features

7 Unity Needs Young Adults In Order to Grow
by Rachel Simpson / The future of young adults and Next Generation of Unity (NGU)

8 Branding Underway for the Unity Movement
by Lisa Wittman / Ministries invited to participate

10 Unity Plays Crucial Role at the Turning of the Christian Faith
Bishop John Shelby Spong on the direction of Christianity

12 A Timeless Message for Changing Times
by Donna Johnson / Future Trends Team serving the Association of Unity Churches International

15 Unity Leads With AWE
by Kitty Benson / Alternative worship experiences

16 Twitter Will Never Replace the Spiritual Community
by Sandy Diamond / Unity and technology

18 Answering the Call
by Kathryn Kellogg / Serving children
In Every Issue

20 Back to the Future Search
Future Search Conference 1999

28 ‘SBNR’ Is Not A Threat; It’s A Gateway
by Ian Lawton / Spiritual-but-not-religious movement merits attention

32 Future Church Is All Over the Web
People are talking about it

34 Parliament of World Religions in Melbourne Includes New Thought Groups
by Jane Simmons / Highlights of the 2009 meeting in Melbourne, Australia

4 Letter From the Editor

5 From The President

6 News From Our Chair

14 News from Unity®

22 Resources You Can Use

23 Calendar of Events

24 Technology
by Tamie Rising / Using Videos and YouTube in your ministry

25 Regional News

25 Financial Statement

26 Web Highlight

30 Perspectives
What Does Church Look Like in the Next 25 Years?

31 In Theory
Letter From the Editor

Do not men and women by their constant efforts to peer into the future prophesy a wisdom that knows all future? They certainly do, and when man looks in the right direction, he always finds such an oracle.

—Charles Fillmore, *Keep a True Lent*

It’s true that we constantly peer into the future in an effort to predict where we will be then. For centuries, we have seen predictions come and go, sometimes with accuracy, sometimes in ways that we chuckle at for their naiveté and quaintness. Knowing that the right direction to look in is Spirit, we open to any channel Spirit may choose as an oracle.

In reality, the future is now. This issue includes many sources of information about what is happening now and how this takes us toward the future of the spiritual community. Many things are already happening in ministry, as well as more specifically in our Unity movement. We see our future unfolding into a more unified, cohesive movement. With all the changes we are undergoing as a culture, spiritual communities are under ever greater pressure to respond. This is something we, as a movement, can do most powerfully together, in Spirit.

One thing is sure: whether you agree with the ideas presented here or not, we are on the edge of something new. In fact, we may have already crossed the threshold. The question is, can we, as a movement, really focus together? Or will our desire for diversity and autonomy fragment our efforts? Many of you have voiced the feeling that Spirit is calling us to go beyond where we’ve been before.

Will we find a way to unite, while honoring diversity, and stand on our Fillmore teachings in a way that the yearning world can hear? We are responsible for what happens next; do we have the will to make the breakthrough to the next level toward which Spirit is drawing us?

It is a narrow path, the path to something new, while we keep all that is valuable about our current and past reality. This issue cannot answer the questions—it can only show possibilities. More than anything, I hope it stirs questions for all of us, questions that will spur us to move forward together with Spirit and Unity.
From Our President

Thought Starters: Church of the Future?

by James Trapp

We are experiencing one of the most significant paradigm shifts in modern history. While the future is uncertain, one thing is clear—what lies ahead will be very different from what we’re leaving behind.

I recently spoke with a spiritual leader from another denomination. He represents an example of a form future spiritual communities may take. A number of years ago, he was the senior minister at what would be considered a traditional church. They held services in a typical church building, had Sunday and Wednesday services, day and evening classes, did community outreach and had paid and unpaid staff members. From appearances, the spiritual community had all the trappings of a normal church. A decision was then made to close the church down and do church strictly via the internet. He converted the church building into a studio and also built a home studio. The church members and attendees now attend church online. All services and classes are conducted by live streaming. There are no less than 1,000 online participants for each of the activities. Love offerings and fees are collected electronically over the internet.

From his perspective, the members and attendees are extremely committed and loyal to this form of church. Members serve as volunteers at the studios and there is a paid staff. Yet, unlike the typical church, people don’t go to a church location, the church comes to them—their home, at a coffee shop, a library or wherever one has access to a computer with an internet connection. As I queried this minister further, it became clear that this spiritual community demonstrated spiritual and material prosperity. Interestingly, this community focuses on Unity texts as well as other New Thought teachings.

At the summit gathering that took place at January midyear meetings, one of the sub teams of the summit focused on the importance of maintaining “Priority of Principle” in all that we do as a movement. One of the guidelines that the team articulated is: “While universal spiritual principle may express through the structure of traditional church or religious observance, it can also be appreciated and expressed through a rich variety of spiritual paths, inspired teachers and forms of creative expression.”

Is the church-by-internet a future creative form of expression for disseminating Unity principles? Perhaps. Perhaps not. At the very least it gives us food for thought that will help us imagine what may lie before us as we ponder the future of how spiritual seekers will connect with and learn about the universal spiritual principles that Unity is based on.
News From Our Chair

The Future of Faith Based Communities

by Julie Montague

I find here on planet Earth that human beings worry about the future a lot. So, I have been asking myself, what is the payoff for us in worrying about the future? Does it give me a sense of security? Do I get attention from others when I share my fear of, “What is the world coming to?” Do I feel less alone when I connect with others over my fears of what might happen?

I have just returned from the Parliament of World Religions in Melbourne, Australia, where thousands of ministers, monks, rabbis, imams, shamans, nuns, pastors, and believers gathered to discuss how we could come together to make a difference and heal the world. What I noticed was, if you could cut through the jargon of each religion, we were all saying the same thing. In all our diversity we are one, all connected to all that is and we are all responsible to take care of all.

The Parliament focused on challenges we are facing right now—poverty, environment, healthcare, human rights, ending war, and how we can come together in interfaith communities and make a positive impact on these issues. New Thought has a history of being a role model for honoring all spiritual paths. If all faith communities could work together, our impact could be immense. I came home with a deeper intention to create more interfaith social action in my community.

In the book, A Vision for 2012, Planning for Extraordinary Change, author John L. Petersen writes, “More people have been born on planet Earth in the last fifty years than in all of the preceding five thousand years. Nearly half of those alive now are under the age of 25. That’s the largest youth generation in history. The overwhelming majority of these young people live in the developing world, and almost a quarter are surviving on less than a dollar a day.”

I believe the time is now to move into sacred social action. We can reach out to the young people of our world and all people, inviting them to be part of co-creating a world that works for all like never before. Do you also hear the call?

Today our Association is inviting your church to get involved in “Shoes 4 Unity.” We are spreading a feeling of oneness around the world by giving shoes to kids and adults that would otherwise never have them. Shoes may seem like a small thing but they can save lives in countries where medical services are not available. A puncture wound on a foot can turn into an infection that can cause death for a child without shoes. Helen Keller once said, I long to accomplish great and noble tasks, but it is my chief duty to accomplish humble tasks as though they were great and noble. I invite you to check out this humble task for your church by going to www.shoes4unity.com and getting involved.

Just think of what we can do when we all know our oneness and practice sacred service in humble ways; together we can accomplish the great and noble tasks we each long to do. Let us give up worrying about the future and let there be peace, love and compassion on earth, and let it begin with our entire Unity movement!
What is the future for young adults and Next Generation of Unity (NGU 18-35ish) in the Unity movement? When I asked this question, the answers were amazingly similar, even though the respondents covered a wide range: young adults, mature adults, ministers, longtime NGUers, and those raised in Unity.

Celebration
Almost unanimously, there was agreement that services would be different from what we typically see now. The flavor of the community is always a determining factor, however, being interactive, experiential, and casual rate high. Music, meditation and message may still be the pillars, but message does not have to mean a 20 minute lesson. It could be a 5-7 minute talk with a time for the congregation to ask questions/share, a powerpoint slide with conversation topics for small group sharing, or even having congregants text message their questions or topics of conversation in to the church during the week and have them be the discussion.

Time and location is also something that will shift. Sunday mornings aren’t always the best for the student who works weekends or the parents of kids with soccer practice. Sunday evening, weekday evenings, even afternoons may work better for the community. Deep, meaningful conversations happen in all sorts of places at all sorts of times, so why not church? Unity minister Don Foster, whose daughter is about to be an NGUer, says this, “I think as a minister, I need to go to where the people are—like to Starbucks for mid-week morning conversations, or on hikes that end with lunch and meditation.” Having opportunities for service in the surrounding community is also a key community builder.

Online Community
Social networking sites are where young people, and increasingly, everyone else, are. Creating an online community is a way for those who can’t make it every week to stay plugged in and for a sacred supportive community to develop. Online spiritual communities will also become more common as people continue to move all over the world. While that may seem impersonal to some, the younger generations for the most part find technology brings them closer to each other.

Young adults want to be engaged in leadership, whether it is leading the recycling team, being a prayer chaplain, or leading the mid-week worship experience. We’ve heard the saying that a great leader is always training their replacement. In the Unity of the future, everyone will be engaged in a leadership path that supports their passions and goals, so that the replacements are ready to take Unity to the next level.

The future of Unity is pretty grim if we don’t create a place for young adults. They are our future, and they can be our now.
by Lisa Wittman

Have you ever felt alone in ministry? With ministries in all corners of the globe, we are a far-flung movement. We all know we are truly one in Spirit, yet sometimes it may seem like we’re isolated by physical distance.

We’ve been working on a branding initiative to help us “get the word out.” Through extensive research with both Unity people and those outside Unity, we have gathered input that is both scientifically grounded and spiritually resonant. Imagine the difficulty that McDonald’s would have if they hadn’t developed the golden arches! The arches create a kind of shorthand that allows people to quickly and easily see the McDonald’s store. Establishing an effective brand allows people to find you, so that once they are familiar with your location in Louisville, Kentucky, they can easily find you in Palm Beach, Florida.

The Time Has Come

That’s why branding for the movement is an idea whose time has come. If you are still skeptical, consider these benefits to participation:

• By creating cohesion among ministries, each ministry is more likely to be recognized, and recognition is the first step on the road to bringing people into your ministry.
• We are much more powerful together than separately. The brand is the “voice” of our movement. If we all use it, we all become one voice.
• Your ministry can take advantage of professionally designed materials and themes.
• Branding will save you time, since we will create your marketing pieces for you.
• Branding will save you money, since our fees will be lower than that of comparable professionals. It will stay the same for a long period of time, so there’s no need to redesign your logo or materials.
• The brand is based on conclusive research that shows what Cultural Creatives, Dissatisfied Christians, and those already in Unity are seeking.

The consciousness that we are all part of something much bigger has been inspiring and helpful to many people, according to feedback we have received. And I cannot count the number of times I’ve heard a Unity person say, “If only I had found

To indicate your interest in participating, email lisa@unity.org
Unity years ago…!” Branding will help to strengthen our identity as a movement, which will increase the awareness of people who are seeking to know us, but may not yet. Demonstrating our oneness through branding can be more powerful than we even know right now.

Rolling Out & Improving
At this writing, we expect to begin with a small group of ministries to implement the new brand. With a smaller group, we can get our systems well in place to respond promptly to your requests. Besides, we understand that as ministries experience the benefits, new ideas and input will come forward to improve the service for all. Starting with a smaller group allows more ministries to benefit from the first group’s experience. This will continue to be an interactive process until we have addressed common concerns.

Adopting the brand is optional for our member ministries—those who wish to continue with their current brands may do so. However, to opt out is to miss the benefits listed. As soon as we have our systems in place, we will provide full details.

Still not sure?
Here is a sample list of the items we plan to provide to participants, for a nominal charge:

- Business cards, letterhead, and envelopes
- Ad/postcard templates
- Logo
- Tri-fold brochure
- Welcome packet materials
- E-letter template
- Print newsletter template
- Website in a format that you can modify for your purposes, including housing your site
- Future items to be created as needed
  - Online availability of T-shirts, mugs and other novelty items for congregants

These materials will all be customized for your ministry. You will also have the benefit of our partnership with an online printer, where all your printed materials are available. Stay tuned—we are getting everything in place before we bring it to you.
Consciousness is of God—when we broke through to self-consciousness, we became separate from God. It was a crucial mistake in religious history. We’ve built our whole religious system on our separation from God—our self-centeredness. We are seeing change in how people view the world. We are one with God. Not defining, but experiencing the reality of God. I no longer try to change God’s mind or manipulate God. We’re in a fertile field with new understandings. It’s the theistic definition of God that is dying, not God.

Differences are fading, oneness is growing. We don’t see ourselves as waging a war within ourselves, but being called into the healing of oneness. A radical new turn in Christianity is taking place. In this new turning of the Christian faith, at the heart of that turning is a vital, crucial role—there is a truth that Unity seems to hold fast to for the benefit of the whole Christian faith. That’s a vital vocation. And you are standing there holding it, and it must prevail, or there will be no Christian tomorrow. Spell out what your vocation is. Stand firm; you (Unity) occupy a critical place, and a fantastic turning, away from yesterday, and into tomorrow, of the Christian faith.

Unity’s Job
Unity churches that I see across the country are growing—there are very few that don’t seem to be growing. They’re growing because the message attracts people. You have a lot of broken people that come into Unity to be healed. They might not stay. They might get healed and go back home. And that will happen. You ought to rejoice in that. That’s a part of your ministry…. I tried to build a church in a seminary in Durham, but after 3 or 4 years, they all left. I couldn’t build my church. My ego got in the way.

My job isn’t to build the church in Durham, my job is to build the Christian movement. That’s what Unity’s job is. You’ve got to put your own needs aside for the needs of humanity. I think your message is growing. I talk about Unity a lot, and a lot of people don’t know anything about it—never heard of it. And once you get outside the major cities, you don’t find Unity churches.

We’ve lived in a model that doesn’t know how to move out there. I think evangelical religion is about forcing our religion on others where it doesn’t fit. I think it’s hostile. You can’t tell the good news of the love of God to anybody by being hostile. The only way you’ve got to do it is to live it.

Paul talks about the Christ experience that transcends the bounds that human beings have erected against each other. In Christ
there’s no Jew or Gentile, etc. The purpose of the Christ is to give life abundantly. You don’t give life abundantly by denigrating the humanity of any child of God. It is proclaiming the Gospel to defend the humanity of any child of God. It’s the essence of the Gospel.

Church of the Future?
Unity is playing a very important part in the Christian reformation, but Unity won’t necessarily be the church of tomorrow. I don’t think there’s any church in existence that’s going to be the church of the future, so don’t take it personally. Church is not eternal, it’s a human institution, and all institutions get born, grow old and die. Neither is a nation eternal. We are tribal people to our core, i.e., God bless America. There are elements of the tribal mentality in all our religions. The world, environment, interconnection of trade, all are drawing us closer together.

There’s an enormous evolution going on in the way human beings think about the world and in the way human beings think about God and themselves. As consciousness develops, you don’t go backwards. Nobody can turn the clock back on freedoms that you’ve granted to people. Consciousness is a one way street, and I think we’re becoming more human. I don’t believe that it’s a straight line, that every day things are getting better and better. There’s too much evidence that it’s just not so. But there’ll always be interruptions and backward movements in the trend. The long-term trend is to a deeper, more sensitive kind of humanity.

De-Mythologize or Adapt
We’ve gone through a real revolution of language in the last 50 years. For instance, what do you do with the creed—it assumes a three-tiered universe? So what you do is recognize it for what it is. It’s a love song that 4th century Christians sang to God. I’ve no trouble singing a 4th century love song. But it’s not a straight jacket. Once you begin to treat it as a straight jacket, then it becomes something evil. I can resonate with a lot of things that come out of the past, but I don’t literalize them. And that’s the problem—we’ve literalized all these things. It doesn’t make much sense in the world you live in. Either de-mythologize or adapt.

No Longer a Division of Denominations
Those who will partner with Unity in this change will transcend all denominations—the division in the church today is not a division of denominations, it’s a division between those that are open to the future and those that aren’t. They’re in every church. Clergy that are open attract people that are open and inquisitive.

There are individuals everywhere, and organizations emerging. There’s a lot going on, and Unity is a piece of that. The future of the Christian church is being nurtured in those voices, but won’t determine the shape of it. It will be something new, appropriate to its time, and quite different from my time. All we have to do is be faithful to our vision and our generation and not worry about tomorrow. They’ve (our children) got to be faithful to their generation. You’ve got to give them something to hang onto, and let them develop it in ways that you may not always be sure are right. You (Unity) are doing something very important. I hope you feel vindicated. You’re holding up for all of us a powerful part of the Christian faith, and because you hold it, it won’t be lost.

Lyceum Spring 2010 Theme: New Voices.
April 15-17, 2010, Unity Institute will offer a mini-Lyceum of presentations, primarily by students, recent graduates, and UI faculty. The program will feature the best papers and research projects produced at Unity Institute. All Lyceum 2010 presentations will be open to the public. Contact Lyceum Coordinator Camille O’Brien at Unity Institute (816.524.3550, ext. 2030) for details.
A Timeless Message for Changing Times

By Donna Johnson

Ah, during these times of rapid change in our world, wouldn’t it be nice to have a crystal ball? Though we may not have this, we do have our Future Trends Team serving the Association of Unity Churches International. Our job is to gather information, discern social and economic trends that may impact our mission and vision, and report to the board of trustees on a quarterly basis. For me, the central question is, “How can we continue to deliver our timeless message in ways that are relevant to our changing times?” Some interesting trends that may impact the answer follow.

Lifespan: Studies have shown scientists are very close to unlocking the secrets of aging. Pair that with advances in the biotechnology arena and it is feasible, that if you are age 60, you could live to be 200! How does that impact how you see yourself? Your work? Some predict that age-appropriate behavior will be a concept of the past. The important thing is not how many years you’ve lived but where you are in life, how you think about yourself, and what you are willing and able to do.

Population: The population of the world is rapidly expanding. Sony reported at their annual 2009 conference that within any five minute span, 67 babies were born in the US, 274 in China, and 395 in India. China will soon be the #1 English-speaking country in the world, and in India, 25 percent of the population with the highest IQ is now greater than the total population of the U.S.

Technology: In 2009, according to the Sony report, there were 37 billion Google searches per month vs. 2.7 billion in 2006. The amount of technology information is doubling every two years. We are currently preparing students for jobs that don’t yet exist, using technology that hasn’t been invented.

Questions to Consider

- What will be the spiritual and emotional issues of such a changing world?
- What are some of the things we may need to revise in the way we create community and do ministry?
- How can we bridge and meet the diverse needs of a multigenerational, international congregation?
- How do we carry the Unity message in a way that will support, and be supported by, future philanthropic giving?
- What will it take to mobilize our ministries and equip ourselves for meeting the demands of the future?
Economy: As the global economy teeters, local market economies will rise, perhaps with their own local currencies. Also, the wealthy may play an increasingly important role, compared to governments, in funding welfare projects. Commercial and philanthropic organizations will partner for the common good of all.

Charitable Giving: (From Tomorrow’s Philanthropist compiled by Ledbury Research in 2009 for Barclay’s Wealth by interviewing 500 high net givers ($10,000+) in USA and UK.) Historically, high net worth individuals have donated to charities, but 78 percent said they didn’t consider charities to be efficient organizations, and 82 percent agreed today’s charities would need to become more efficient and transparent to continue to appeal to today’s donors. Over half of wealthy individuals interviewed agreed the future will see more investing in individual projects rather than giving to large charities without a designation for how it will be spent. More wealth is being acquired at a faster rate among ages 18-34, and 33 percent of this age group agreed they felt a growing responsibility to share their wealth. Other age groups and percentages are: age 35-44, 27 percent; age 45-54, 22 percent; 55-64, 18 percent; 65+, 19 percent.

Ask yourself the average age at your church and then consider this: the age group of 18-34 is actually increasing their donations to charities, but there is a demand from donors to be able to measure impact. Fifty-nine percent of respondents age 18-34 say global causes are more important to them because $150 can completely alter the course of someone’s life in Africa whereas it would take $4,000 for the same impact in Chicago. Giving becomes a contract with the giver expecting the organization to provide evidence of how the gift has been used and what impact it has had.

Demographics: A March 2009 Time magazine article said that by 2025, there will be a surplus of 22 million large-lot homes (1/6 acre or more) in the US. People, young and old, prefer the amenities of an urban core. Empty malls are being “repurposed” for mixed use—stores, offices and apartments, and are becoming the “downtown” centers for suburbs.

Donna Johnson lives in northern Virginia and has served Unity of Fairfax for 11 years as senior minister. She serves on the Association board of trustees, the Enlightened Leaders’ ministry team, and is co-chair of the Future Trends Team.
The 2010 SpiritPath calendar offers a full lineup of Unity-centered retreats, including expanded volunteer opportunities to help congregations live and grow in faith together. “We welcome groups with flexible options to help make the pilgrimage to Unity School of Christianity an affordable and meaningful experience,” says SpiritPath vice president Martha Lynn.

“Taking time away from the demands of everyday life to be together as a church group on a retreat opens hearts and minds to experiencing God in wonderful ways,” says Patricia McNinch, Retreats program manager.

Unity-centered retreats are led by teams of highly qualified ministers and licensed Unity teachers supported by experienced volunteers. “Our priority is to create a safe and sacred space for each person to grow in spirit and discover his or her deepest connection with God. Caring, compassion and support are our guiding principles,” Patricia says.

One of the most popular additions to the SpiritPath calendar is the Nehemiah Retreat series, now in its second full year. In exchange for free lodging, dining and spiritual enrichment, volunteers spend the week helping repair and restore the sacred grounds of Unity Village.

In the words of one Nehemiah Retreat volunteer, participants are “becoming a family.” They have started their own Facebook page and have created lasting friendships. “People are choosing to return for another Nehemiah experience together. The series has been so well received that SpiritPath will host four Nehemiah Retreats in 2010,” Martha says.

Participants are asked to provide feedback on each retreat. Making new friends, creating new prayer partnerships, and finding healing and clarity are some of the benefits attendees consistently say they receive. “I feel renewed and able to better face the difficulties in my life, and to be here with my minister was extra special,” one attendee says.

Church groups can arrange time and space to combine their activities with a Unity retreat experience. Ministers and spiritual leaders interested in group opportunities at Unity Village are invited to contact Patricia at 816-347-5531 or mcninchpr@unityonline.org. For more information, go to unity.org and click on the Events tab.
Unity Leads With AWE

by Kitty Benson

Unity in Naperville is a pioneering ministry that several have referred to as an alternative ministry because we are unlike your typical Unity church. My passion in starting a new ministry was about attracting the 40% of Americans who consider themselves Christian but don’t attend church because they don’t agree with the “one way” message. I was also passionate about advancing Unity’s future by attracting a younger demographic of 25-50 year-olds. As I looked at what our typical Unity service had to offer these folks, I felt the time had come to try something new.

Contemporary Music & Prayer

As much as I love the traditions of Unity…the Lord’s Prayer, the Peace Song, the Prayer for Protection, I felt the need to shake things up and create a service that was dynamic, evolving and contemporary. We started with our name…Unity. Not Unity Church. Just Unity. This was to get past the negative feelings an external audience may have toward “church.”

Our music is modern, some written by our music director, Kim-Char Meredith. After several requests for the Peace Song, the band came up with a “James Brown version.” Kim-Char wrote a new song with the Prayer for Protection as lyrics. It’s sung in a rap style, using the congregation as backup singers.

During various services, we’ve had congregants sit in circles and discuss a provocative question, then pray over prayer requests. We’ve danced, constructed butterflies, let folks voice ideas about the message, even played baseball. (It helps to have a large room with no windows!) And our first Christmas Eve service will be held in an airplane hangar. Even our youth group has departed from the YOU name and goes by UNleashed!

Alternative Worship Experience

Probably our most out-of-the-box service so far was AWE—Alternative Worship Experience. Along with the regular elements of our service, we added some fun extras, including Jason & deMarco, who brought the house down with their powerful vocals. We also set up worship stations around the room so people could experience the divine in new ways. It included free hugs, body prayers, making cards for soldiers and mirrored pendants that reflected our oneness. We painted a community mural, made gratitude flags, threw boomerangs, and put bridges of prayer over troubled areas on a world map. Our normal attendance of 70 grew to 150 that day.

Our marketing team has just designed our first logo. It is “Unity…where your story unfolds.” True for the individual. And I pray it remains true for our Unity ministry…ever unfolding.

Kitty Benson has 25 years’ experience in radio & television, human resources and technology. She was ordained as a Unity minister in 2006 and is founder of Unity in Naperville, located in the southwest suburbs of Chicago.
Twitter Will Never Replace the Spiritual Community

by Sandy Diamond

I was having a luncheon meeting with someone recently and we were discussing the future of Unity and the challenges we presently face during these uncertain, radically shifting, economic and global times. He said to me, “Truth is Truth,” referencing the eternal timelessness of our teachings. I said, “Ah yes, but the people are different.” That little conversation sparked this article.

New Interfaces

Technically, what I was thinking about is the interfacing people do with technology every day as creating the difference. Yes, Truth is Truth…but the needs of the people are different. There was once upon a time in Unity when we could be (and were) oblivious to the outer world. However, those days are over. People are too connected through technology now for us to be unaware. To be blind to the cultural conditions and norms is not an option. The times…they are a changin’, as the song goes. While we cannot afford to dilute ourselves or our Unity movement by trying to be “all things to all people,” we cannot sit out the technology of our day either.

It is how we go about presenting our truth. In a way that is relevant to today’s society. Because we have “caught on” and so many people are preaching our teachings, I hear myself say, “Yes, I know about that preacher. And by the way did you know Unity has been around for over 100 years?” People always seem surprised to hear that. It gives us depth…it gives us longevity…it gives us stability during these radically changing and shifting times.

Relationship Looks Different

As co-chair of the Future Trends team, I am wholeheartedly aware of many of the current technologies (blogs, Twitter, Facebook, just to name a few) and how I, as a senior minister of a small-but-growing Unity church in Lincoln Park, Chicago, must know that these are aspects of many, if not all, of my congregants’ lives. Just as an example, my 91-year-old licensed Unity teacher sends me emails.

So what does this mean to me? It means that I must be constantly cognizant of the myriad ways that people can seek out a relationship with God in today’s world…be that blogging, twittering, or facebooking. This then begs the question of what is my role in today’s world. I have to out-depth these technologies. When people come to my church, I have to give them something they cannot get via the avenues of cyberspace.

No Substitute

What might that be? Well, it’s me for one thing…a ministerial presence they cannot get online. It is also a spiritual community of other spiritual beings having a spiritual experience. So what else? We create community, community that involves all of the senses. And we experience relationships. Sunday morning is all about experiencing relationship with Spirit, with one another, with the music and prayers of our hearts.
Although technologies will come and go, certain things will always be true. People will always need a hand to hold, a shoulder to lean on, someone to “be there” for them during life’s major challenges and changes, weddings, baptisms, memorials. As I often tell my people, “There are just some things one should not have to go through alone.” And that’s true.

Truth is Truth…and people are people. Just as our truth teachings are timeless, so are the basic human and spiritual needs of people. We will always need and want one another. Sunday morning allows us to be with one another, love one another, and shore each other up during these rapidly shifting economic and global times.

Yes, Truth is Truth and our teachings have an eternal timelessness. The ways in which we support and help one another are eternal and timeless as well.

Sandy Diamond was licensed and ordained in Unity in 1999. She currently serves at Unity in Lincoln Park, Chicago, where she has been the senior minister for the past four years. She has a background in academia, counseling and a special interest in C.G. Jung’s depth psychology. She can be reached at revsandychicago@aol.com.

Do you have a Thriving in Unity story? Email lisa@unity.org to share.
In Unity, our founding story for youth ministry is Myrtle Fillmore’s dream in which a voice within her asked, “Who will take care of the children?”

Who will take care of the children? Over the years, I have heard this question used countless times during recruiting drives. Ministers and youth directors have quoted it when desiring more resources (human, fiscal, or spiritual intent) for building a youth ministry department. Sometimes the ending was added, “You will take care of the children,” in hopes that the community would answer the call.

Yet it seems to me that the Unity community as a whole is still asking the question—not as a narrative that sets up a greater story on how we answered it—but as if we are hearing it for the first time.

Who will take care of the children? Do we provide youth ministry or not? Will we create a separate space for them or will we invite them into ours? We seem unsure of whether youth ministry is a given or not.

To Such Belongs the Kingdom

Humorously, I reflect that perhaps our collective subconscious remembers the more complete version of Myrtle’s dream where she recounted that she was surrounded by a crowd of people, including a number of unruly children. Unruly children—just as we feared—what will we do with them? My belief (or the story I created) was that the children were unruly because they were not getting enough attention. They clamored because they wanted to be touched by Spirit as captured in the New Testament story found in Mark 10:13–14, 16. When parents began bringing their children to be blessed by Jesus, the disciples moved to keep the children away from him. Those of you who know this founding story of the Christian community remember that Jesus was indignant and said to the adults, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” And he took the children up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Most Christian denominations are unflinching in ministry to children and teens because they believe they have been given a Biblical mandate to bring young people to Christ. Therefore, in order to “save” these young people and bring them into relationship with Christ, these faith
communities create amazing programming. Some of us in Unity have even secretly coveted their success.

However, Unity believes we don’t need to be saved and we all have equal access to Spirit. So what is our mandate? What do we believe to be true about young people and their relationship with God? What do we believe to be true about what a child needs to grow in strength and wisdom, to fully express their Christ-nature? How will serving children help us co-create a world that works for all?

Our Greater Story
I have my own answers for the above questions and am willing to share them whenever asked (said humorously but with passionate dedication), but it is time for us as a greater movement to come together and collectively decide whether we have a greater story to tell. As we begin to look at what constitutes thriving youth ministry, Unity communities need to answer the above questions. We can create and embrace a mandate that informs us within Unity, and those who come in contact with us, on how we perceive the spiritual lives of young people.

Who will take care of the children? Jesus told us not to hinder them, and Myrtle was told it was our work. How we answer that question in the 21st century may be the beginning of a marvelous story that, generations from now, Unity communities around the world will tell with pride in our success.

2010 Sessions:
May 10-13: Boulder, CO
Aug 23-26: Unity Village, MO
Nov 2-5: Gaithersburg, MD

For more information, contact Stephanie Seigh at revseigh@ptd.net
To register or for group pricing, contact Cathy Christy at 816-434-6841 or admast@unity.org.

The Peacemaking Skills Institute (PSI) outlines the principles of peacemaking and the skills needed to be a peace worker/transition consultant.

This training will help you:

- deal with challenges and interpersonal difficulties that arise in the life of the individual and the ministry.
- understand and work with conflicts, church growth, and transitional issues.
- be of maximum service to the people and communities you love.

Recently revised by Stephanie M. Seigh, PCC, Director of Peacemaking and Transitional Consulting, this training includes a newly added comprehensive board/leadership training. Bringing her coaching skills and experience to the training, Stephanie facilitates the Institute with a lighthearted approach that creates the space for us all to see where we’ve been and where we want to go on our spiritual journey.

Whether taken as a requirement for certification or simply to go from good to great, you will be supported in being of maximum service to the people and communities you love. Novice or experienced PeaceWorker, you are sure to leave with a greater understanding, as Pema Chodron would say, of “who we are and what this world is, how we tick and how our world ticks, how the whole thing just is.”
Back to the Future Search

So here it is 2010 (amazing, isn’t it?), time to recap that meeting held in Kansas City just prior to our 1999 convention.

More than 250 ministers, licensed Unity teachers, lay leaders, congregants and representatives from other organizations spent three days visioning for Unity’s future as we looked toward the 21st century. A number of sub-teams did further work following the conference to flesh out results that emerged. Here’s a look at initiatives that came out of that event and how they influenced where we are today.

Education: expanded, diversified, accessible education programs, and distance learning. Two specific desires that have come to pass are a master’s level program for ministerial candidates and the availability of on-line education. Expanded educational opportunities have continued to evolve nationally, internationally, and regionally, and now, for example, include the Association’s Transformation Experience Pilot and Enlightened Leaders programs.

Prosperity: creating abundance to do God’s good. High priority was given to encouraging consistent tithing and cultivating commitment to support the movement from the home ministry to the service organizations. The Association monthly tithes “10 percent of all unrestricted donations received by the Association to organizations or individuals who provide inspiration or support to the Association, the Unity movement or leadership of the Association.” (Full text available at www.unity.org.) The majority of those tithes go to Unity School, Unity Institute, and Silent Unity.

The Association’s Future Search Conference held in May 1999 was called “Unity 2010: Co-Creating Our Future.”
Technology: expanding and optimizing utilization of cutting edge technology. Of course, technology has outpaced what was considered “cutting edge” in 1999. Today, we make use of all the emerging resources from social networking sites, to webinars, blogs, online education, and so on.

Global: creating and supporting a growing Unity presence around the world. The vision of worldwide services as part of the Association actually came to pass in 2001. There are now eleven associations of Unity leaders worldwide (Argentina, Austrasian—Australia/New Zealand, Canada, Colombia, Dominican Republic, England, Germany, Ghana, Guyana, Jamaica, Nigeria.) Thirteen Unity national schools are also operating (Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Dominican Republic, England, Germany, Nigeria, Puerto Rico, Spain; the schools in Australia, Ghana, Guyana and Jamaica have been inactive during 2009.)

Inclusivity: supporting values, attitudes, programs, services and facilities for inclusive diversity of all people. This initiative was building on the diversity statement developed jointly by the Association and Unity School in 1995. It remains a key element in all we do across the movement.

Leadership: promoting shared and empowered leadership among all stakeholders. From a field survey in the fall of 2006, this desire for enhanced leadership development to build capacity throughout our movement was again voiced as a priority and became a focus of the strategic plan; the Transformation Experience Pilot and Enlightened Leaders programs are now moving forward successfully.

Strategic Alliances: bringing oneness to Unity, exploring structural and organizational integration and cooperation. The Association and Unity School are working collaboratively in a number of areas. Joint meetings of the boards of both organizations started in May 2008, with the stated intent “to focus on opportunities for collaboration so that Unity’s transformative message can be communicated with a truly cohesive focus.

Questions: “How do we most effectively partner and collaborate? How does that become operational? What is Spirit asking of Unity?” The two boards continue to work together, building on such projects as the joint website and the current branding initiative.

Positive Impact on the Human Condition: being the hands and heart of Christ actively serving our neighbors and communities in many and diverse ways. Spiritual social action continues to grow in scope across the movement. Unity ministries are making a difference in their communities with a wide variety of projects and activities, such as Shoes4Unity and the Earthcare certification programs.

Environmental Harmony: recognizing the unity and interdependence of all life, promoting life attitudes and choices that nurture our planet. “Green” is definitely on everyone’s mind these days and Unity ministries have embraced the commitment to healing this precious earth. The Earthcare team has also put together a certification program for ministires.

As the Association’s CEO, James Trapp, envisioned in 2007: “Through the work of our Association of Unity Churches International we are a major player in bringing forth ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ by helping people fulfill their spiritual potential and our shared vision of bringing forth a world that works for all.”

Together, we continue to move forward proactively—let’s just see where we’ll be in 2020!
Resources You Can Use

21stcenturystrategiesinc.com
A consulting website for Bill Easum and Bill Tenny-Brittain. Though traditional in language, you can’t go wrong with the advice and resources offered by Easum and Tenny-Brittain. Search “future church,” and you’ll find many free articles.

The Present Future, by Reggie McNeal, discusses six trends of the emerging church.

Association Resources:

Convention: For all the upcoming future trends in Unity ministry, mark your calendars for the next Unity People’s Convention, themed Circles of Divine Love, June 7–11, 2010, at the luscious Town and Country Resort in sunny San Diego, California. We have lots of inspirational, leadership, spiritual social action and ministry resources and fun in store for you there.

Thriving in Unity 2.0: Wanting to prepare your community for the future? Attract vibrant leaders and support their development? Connect to the world in powerful ways that make a positive difference?

Take a look at our Thriving in Unity 2.0 program—this entire program is a how-to handbook to help you prepare for the future. The program looks at developing your community’s leadership, assesses your youth and family ministry, increasing small group activity, offers spiritual social action activities, assesses finances, and examines ways to enhance Sunday Services. (For more information call, Debbie Allen at 816.434.6831 and visit www.unity.org/thrive.)

Youth Programs: Youth are the life blood of any church; they are the future leaders. Need help starting a program, recruiting volunteers and reaching out to youth? We have many resources to help you.

- Youth and Family Ministry Guide This is the bible for setting up, running and growing your youth program. It is loaded with questions, suggestions, forms (provided on a CD), ideas and resources to assist you in creating an exciting program for your children and teens.
- Youth Publications for great ideas read our Education Links, quarterly publication at www.unity.org/EL, and sign up for our bimonthly electronic newsletter E-Link by going to www.unity.org/enews.
Calendar of Events

**March 10–19**
Field Licensing Program Week, Unity Village, MO; contact Cecilia Holman, 816.434-6844

**April 12–15**
Skills Demonstration Seminar, Unity Village, MO; contact Shirley Kennedy, shirley@unity.org.

**June 7–11**
Unity People’s Convention, San Diego, CA; contact Kim Shawd, kim@unity.org

**June 12–18**
Adults of Unity Retreat

**June 14–17**
Ordination, Unity Village, MO; contact Cecilia Holman, 816.434.6844

**July 8–11**
A Woman’s Time Out Retreat

**August 1–6**
Nehemiah Retreat

**August 9–12**
Skills Demonstration Seminar, Unity Village, MO; contact Shirley Kennedy, shirley@unity.org.

**August 21–27**
Spanish Retreat

**September 5–10**
The Power of Prayerful Living: Prayers and Practices from Around the World

**September 20–23**
Unity Institute Admissions, Unity Village, MO; Cecilia Holman, 816.434.6844

**October 7–10**
Journey to the Inner Center Retreat

**October 14–17**
Touching the Stillness: Silent Retreat

**October 31–November 5**
Nehemiah Retreat

**November 8–11**
Skills Demonstration Seminar, Unity Village, MO; contact Shirley Kennedy, shirley@unity.org.

---

**IYOU Summer Event**

**Peace be Still**

**August 1-6, 2010**
Three Trails Camp and Retreat Center
Kansas City, Missouri (15 miles from Unity Village)

Join us for an exciting week of heart-centered prayer, meditation, music, dance, service, compassionate communication, laughter, and fun as we connect with each other, explore our Unity Truth principles and put them into practice. A day-long visit to Unity Village is also scheduled.

Wonderful guest musicians—Armand and Angelina!

Bring your head, heart, and hands, and don’t forget your PJ’s!

http://www.unity.org/iyouevent or facebook.com/youthofunity

---

Contact March/April/May 2010 • www.unity.org
Videos and YouTube
Our World Within Reach

by Tamie Rising

Around 5,000 spiritual leaders from around the world attended the Parliament of the World’s Religions last December. Among those leaders was our senior minister, Patricia Bass, who trekked 26 hours to be part of a unique dialog with other faith traditions. While attending, Patricia videotaped a short segment of her experience at the Parliament to show on Sunday morning in her absence. Although she was not physically present at our Sunday celebration service, video technology brought our worlds (hers in Australia and ours in Kansas) within reach of each other.

Video technologies and websites such as YouTube, an increasingly popular video sharing website, draw people in and bring them closer. According to eBizMBA, over 80 million people are connecting on YouTube every month.

At Unity Church of Overland Park we have established a YouTube account to expand our ministry walls. YouTube is free and is a great place to store videos because it is much easier to upload videos to YouTube than our ministry’s website. Viewers who are touched by our message are able to share the videos with others, creating a global congregation.

Ways to use video and YouTube within your ministry:

• Search YouTube for inspirational videos that support a Sunday message and show the video during service.
• Recognize volunteers by creating a video of congregant pictures of their spiritual social action within your church community and the world.
• Put ministry vision, mission, values and/or goals in video form. Incorporating the use of multi-media softens the communication of organizational strategies and goals.
• Video youth or family events and promote future events and activities by giving a glimpse of what’s to come.
• Film welcoming messages or invitations to join your services and special events. Post the video on YouTube, email your YouTube video link to your email list, and invite them to share with their friends.

Steps to begin your own video ministry:

• Seek volunteers and others who are keen on video and online technologies.
• Establish a free YouTube account at youtube.com. Click “Create Account.” You’ll have your own account within about 10 minutes.
• Obtain a video recorder. The Flip video camera is an inexpensive device you could use to shoot and upload videos, made easy for those with little technological savvy. Windows Movie Maker software is pre-loaded on most PCs and can be used to edit your movies.
• Upload videos to YouTube directly from the Flip or computer.
• For examples, browse Unity Church of Overland Park’s YouTube account (visit youtube.com and enter “2009ucop” in the search box.)
• We’ve also created a non-publicized ministry support page on our website. You will find our videos and can also access other materials to support lesson series at ucop.org/materials.

Post your message on YouTube, share the part you play in our world, and invite others to do the same. When you do, you will bring our world within reach to all!

Tamie Rising is the Director of Communications at Unity Church of Overland Park, Kansas. She can be reached at trising@ucop.org.
Atlanta Unity Center recently partnered with the Atlanta Chapter of the Art of Living Foundation in presentation of the 2009 “The Heroes of Humanity Award.” Atlanta Unity senior minister John Strickland says the event featured presentation of two humanitarian awards to Georgia residents exemplifying dedication to service and uplifting human values in the community. The celebration was part of the foundation’s initiative to create a violence free, stress free America.

In Memoriam: Catherine Garvey, Unity minister from Savannah, Georgia; Blanche Bartolone, licensed teacher from Boynton Beach, Florida.

South Central
In Memoriam: Unity ministers Patricia Anderson from Kansas City, Missouri; Warren Kreml from Greeley, Colorado and Karen Johnson from Abilene, Texas. Barbara McAdams, licensed teacher from Georgetown, Texas.

Northwest
In Memoriam: Scott McClintock, Unity minister from Anchorage, Alaska.

Great Lakes
In Memoriam: Kenneth Williamson, Unity minister from Bloomington, Minnesota; Juanita Hall, licensed teacher from St. Louis, Missouri.

Southwest
In Memoriam: Ann Martin, Unity minister from Palm Springs, CA.

Contact March/April/May 2010 • www.unity.org
Ministers and Leaders Page Gets New Face

Take a tour of the page designed just for you

Many of you may have noticed that the Ministries and Leaders (M&L) page at unity.org has a new look. Here is a quick tour of the sections for those who aren’t yet familiar with it.

Welcome
You’ll see words from our mission statement right up front. The link for the Quick Connect Guide takes you to a pdf document describing our many services, where to find them on the web, and who to contact. Each ministry also received a hard copy in October 2009. This online version is periodically updated here.

Ministry Support
Our Association services and programs can be thought of in two major categories: support for ministries and support for leaders. Under Ministry Support, you’ll find a list of items based on your interests. These are areas that can enhance your ministry’s effectiveness, save time and money, and support your thriving.

Developing Leadership
In this section, you’ll find ways to grow as a leader, whether you are a credentialed or lay leader. Thriving in Unity, while helping ministries to thrive, can help your leaders to come together around a common set of goals, thus growing your leaders as a team. The Enlightened Leadership program is the premier program for clergy and lay persons to stretch their leadership consciousness and capacity.

Feature
This section changes periodically to bring you stories of the ministries and leaders in Unity. Ministries are invited to copy these stories to beef up your ministry’s newsletter or website.

About Us
Here, you’ll always find information about the Association and contact information for our staff and board.

Events
Our annual international convention, events in regions and local ministries are posted here. You are invited to let us know about your event, if you would like us to add it to our calendar.
Media
If you want to see our latest videos or hear audio recordings, click here. We produce videos designed to be shared with leaders and congregants so that everyone can be informed of what’s new in the movement.

Banners
At the bottom of the page, you’ll see changing items and resources for your use.

Right-hand Menu
If you can’t find it in the areas described above, check the menu at right on our website. It shows greater detail.

Networking
In this section, you can sign up for our eletters, or read the archived issues. In addition Contact and Education Link archives are here. The directory of Unity ministries, ministers, and licensed teachers is also located here, besides at a button on the right.
Retired Calvin English professor Steve J. Van Der Weele feels that the spiritual-but-not-religious movement merits attention. That is an understatement. The church will ignore the mass exodus of people out of religion at its peril. The fact that so many people are claiming spirituality outside of religion is to be celebrated—and is far preferable to people leaving religion with nothing to put in its place.

The spiritual-but-not-religious movement is not in competition with religion. It is a clear alternative for those who are seeking new ways of relating to God and the world outside of mainstream religion. Steve Van Der Weele uses an interesting metaphor to suggest a pitfall of being spiritual but not religious. He says that water needs a container.

I resonate strongly with his metaphor, but for a different reason than the one he intends. Water does not need a container……

Human beings often seek containers. We want our lives to be framed by something more significant than our daily routine…… We desire a connection with something greater than ourselves. We belong to groups and movements that expand our circle of care and compassion. Once the container is limiting our growth and reach, it is a mark of human maturity to move beyond that container. Some will move beyond the religious container of their upbringing and explore other world religions. Others will explore the universal human connections that are beyond any one container……

Jesus was spiritual but not religious in the sense that he was more interested in connecting with people beyond his own tribe than he was with maintaining religious purity…… The poison of separation based on religious or ethnic exclusiveness is just as toxic as water pollution……

An increasing number of people are finding religion to be a Dead Sea, lifeless and stagnant. This is the religious challenge: Evolve into something relevant and meaningful or else fade into oblivion…… Water that is boundless and free is a wonderful metaphor for the sort of spirituality that Jesus encouraged. To seek the depths of life is far more empowering than materialism. The good news is that materialism is not the only alternative to religion. Thank God for spirituality without religion. People who feel no connection to religion can live with depth and love the world with abandon, in an ever widening circle of kindness, until the day when love conquers all hatred and no one and no thing is excluded from love’s inclusive embrace……

Ian Lawton is an ordained Anglican Priest who now leads the progressive Christ Community Church in Spring Lake, Michigan. He is the founder of SBNR.org. Read the entire article at www.sbnr.org/archive/sbnr-is-not-a-threat-its-a-gateway. Posted October 24, 2009. Used with permission.
Join us at the 2010 Unity People's Convention

Circles of Divine Love

Dr. Michael Beckwith  
Dr. Rickie Byars Beckwith  
Dr. Michael Beckwith  
Wayne Elsey  
James Trapp  
Dr. Rickie Byars Beckwith  
Joseph Myers

Leadership  
Fellowship

Doug Krug  
Barbara Marx Hubbard  
Julie Montague

Inspiration

June 7-11, 2010  
Town & Country Resort  
San Diego, CA

details at www.unity.org/convention
I’m relatively confident that many people, if asked this question, will predict the end of organized religion and/or the demise of the local church. It’s happened before. When I was in seminary (1973-76), all the talk was about empowering laypeople in leadership, because the church of the future was going to look much different. Professors were predicting the local church was doomed; the primary vehicle for Christianity in the future would be house churches where tiny groups gathered to worship and study in homes of members. Clergy who did weather the dismissal notices handed out by a religion-weary populace would have to move their dwindling flocks to facilities shared with civic groups, 12-Step programs and community counseling services.

What actually happened was that groups with vibrant programs flourished, albeit often in the form of soul-winning, salvation mills with good music and hand-waving praise celebrations. Mainline churches survived by consolidation and expansion into new ethnic communities. But regardless of the level of institutional success, people kept attending that pesky Sunday morning and expecting good sermons, prayer, Bible interpretation, and guidelines for effective living amidst the storms of life.

The Fillmores tried house churches, but people wanted Sunday services and a gathering place. Something about humans makes us want to erect temples and empower someone to stand in the holy place and speak the word of the Lord. Although it’s not as sexy a prediction as the post-Christian prognosticating I heard in seminary thirty-five years ago, I believe the church of the future will look pretty much the same as it does today. Only more of them will be Unity...if we do the work that is ours to do.

Thomas W. Shepherd is an ordained Unity minister who teaches Theology, Christian History, Ethics and World Religions at Unity Institute. His new book *Good Questions* has just been released by Unity House. Tom’s weekly internet radio program “Let’s Talk About It” is broadcast on Unity.fm.
When I close my eyes and visualize the church of tomorrow, I feel reassured that it will be so much more than based on religious precepts and the dogma that has been the governing rule for ages. I believe the church will move into the light and energy of Christ-based spirituality and will have a mass resurgence as people are drawn to the nurturing presence that will be found within each structure. The church itself will be immersed in peace, unconditional love and acceptance, rather than places of separation and judgment that have kept many away.

I envision it becoming more about spiritual connection and less about actual physical location. The time has come to reevaluate our intention and purpose as a church and as spiritual leaders in the community, as well as the world. **We will lead our congregations based on principle and no longer focus on the personality and ego of the individual.** The church of tomorrow is already being made manifest right before our eyes. New energy and consciousness abound as people are drawn to the nurturing presence that will be found within each structure. The church itself will be immersed in peace, unconditional love and acceptance, rather than places of separation and judgment that have kept many away.

In Theory

**Congregational Megatrends**

More than a decade ago (1996), Charles Jeffrey Woods wrote *Congregational Megatrends*. In 2010, we are still seeing these trends unfold:

**From mass to relational**—people are realizing that it is personal relationship that brings about transformation. Mentoring is a key to building transformational relationships, i.e., Jesus’ model—start with 12, who then go out and each have 12 they disciple, and on into infinity. Church is organized for multiplication—mentoring, small relational groups year-round, leadership involved in spiritual practice. Practices are emphasized in small groups and among leadership.

**Tribal to immigrant education**—it can no longer be assumed that people have any religious knowledge when they show up at the church. They need a foundation of Unity basics that includes metaphysical Biblical understanding. In a world where everyone knew the basic teachings of the Bible, we could teach other faiths without basics.

**Surrogate to hands-on mission**—instead of paying the minister to do the ministry for them, people want to do the mission for themselves and others. This is where empowerment comes into play.

**Reasonable to mysterious spirituality**—people want to get beyond just the intellect in their spirituality. If it’s all about teaching people how to understand Unity principles, it leaves out the mystery of the heart—the experience of the principles in daily life. It cannot all be explained, it has to be lived. Small groups emphasize discussion and living through life experiences together.

**Official to gifted leadership**—people are no longer leaders because they have been elected or are entitled to it through long years of membership. It is through exercising their spiritual gifts that people find their own leadership capacity. People are helped to identify their spiritual gifts, and then to use them in the ministry appropriately.

**Segmented to holographic programming**—instead of the church being organized around programs, the mission is implanted in its full sense in each person, who is empowered to minister to others according to his/her gifts. This means that we don’t create a ministry program, then look for people to staff it. Instead, we find out what gifts and passions exist in the congregation, and we only do those ministries for which there are gifted and called leaders.

**Secondary to primary planning**—people are no longer satisfied to serve on a committee where they make decisions about ministry that will be done by someone else. They want to determine how to do ministry themselves, and to be empowered in this through an understanding of the “DNA” (mission/vision/values) of the ministry. Committees making decisions are scrapped in favor of teams that do ministry together.
Many people are writing about the church of the future. A cursory glance at Google gave several interesting articles, some of which are excerpted here, with their web location:

**Missional Communities**
Todd Hunter is former national director for the Association of Vineyard Churches (U.S.A). Todd is currently the president of AlphaUSA.

www.next-wave.org/jan99/misscomm.htm

“As a passionate participant in (and observer of) the Church, I see God raising up ‘missional communities’ that can influence ‘from the margins.’ I can’t remember where I first heard the term ‘missional communities’, or I’d give the person credit. But the picture it paints in my mind is a group of people who are highly intentional about truly obeying Jesus’ commands so as to increasingly be like him. The individuals pursuing this life-goal are in community. They live out their new, loving, powerful kingdom reality not as ‘Lone Ranger Christians’ (going about their work-a-day life isolated except for an hour on Sunday), but non-negotiably as a vital part of a group of Christ-followers.

“An additional key attitude is that this Christ-imitating community does not ‘have a mission.’ A mission ‘has them!’”

**Beyond the Usual Routine**
David Bradshaw serves as a public relations consultant for Swiss America and Open Church Ministries and producer of The Future Church, a 12-hour audio-print resource.

www.myideafactory.net/futurechurch.html

“Today, a growing number of church leaders in America are talking about decentralizing, de-professionalizing, and de-institutionalizing the church. The rise of the house-church, cell-church, meta-church, open-church and church-planting movements are just an indication of the growing level of discontent with the traditional CEO-business-as-usual, gospel-enterprise church structure among both clergy and laity. Thank God! The era of spectator Christianity is now ending because the urgency of our present cultural crisis in America and abroad simply won’t permit it!

“If you could step into the future and visit your church ten years from now, you’d be shocked! Instead of the usual routine, you’d see things like:

- “Dozens of people eager to stand and share something they’ve learned from God this week.
- “Lives being changed before your eyes as people ask for prayer and others pray for them.

The era of spectator Christianity is now ending because the urgency of our present cultural crisis in America and abroad simply won’t permit it!
• “Heads turning this way and that, as one person’s praise or teaching builds on another’s.

• “Four or five speakers giving clear, impassioned messages from the Bible—because the pastor has passed on to them his gift of preaching.

• “Occasional cheering or clapping as the congregation praises God for something….

• “Songs and hymns are chosen spontaneously to respond to a particular contribution….

• “Even fraidy cats who never spoke before find the courage to speak from their hearts.

• “A city councilman rises to announce his longtime dream, a project that could change the whole moral atmosphere of the town.

• “Eleven others jump to their feet to offer support…

• “Time disappears as everyone gets caught up in the excitement of lives being transformed and hearts being healed, and after two hours, no one wants to leave….”

“A new consciousness has begun to shape an emerging yet coherent view of an interconnected world, where humans are inextricably linked to one another, whether we like it or not, and where all are connected to and dependent on the natural world in which we all live…

“…I want the Church to have a voice in shaping the emerging world consciousness and I suggest that the Church needs to change in several ways in order for it to be a vital force in influencing the shape of the future… To do so, both clergy and lay members must look beyond parochial institutional concerns and deliberately develop a broader view of the world and the role of the Church as a transforming agent.

“I also believe that the hierarchical structure of governance needs to be reformed into a more democratic one. Sacramental and governing authority traditionally vested in the clergy needs to be shared in a more profound way with members who are more than simply clergy helpers. Ministry is a common endeavor and a joint responsibility. Finally, the language of worship needs to incorporate more modern images relevant to a large population of unchurched younger people who do not have world views like our own.

“These steps are intertwined and cannot be neatly separated. I do not believe the Church can pick and choose. In other words, the Church cannot change its world view, but cling to its hierarchical structure. It cannot become more democratic without dealing with clergy authority…”

There is always something to be learned from other perspectives, even those from outside of Unity. What ideas do you see here that might apply to your ministry? If this interests you, check out our Enlightened Leaders program at unity.org/enlightenedleaders.

New Consciousness, New Structure
David Prescott is on the board of directors of the Institute for Servant Leadership. Following are excerpts from an article on The Center for Progressive Christianity website. www.religion-online.org

If you could step into the future and visit your church ten years from now, you’d be shocked!

Contact March/April/May 2010 • www.unity.org
Excitement was in the air as more than 5,000 people from 88 countries arrived “down under” to attend the Parliament of World Religions in Melbourne, Australia from December 3-9, 2009. The event featured a week of plenary sessions, panel discussions, workshops, observances and devotional programs, films, music, dance, and art. Members of 140 religious traditions attended the Parliament, including the major faiths of Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam as well as indigenous, nature and non-traditional religions. The 390-page program listed 650 workshops with over 1500 presenters. The panels and plenary speakers included many spiritual progressives such as Rabbi Michael Lerner, Andrew Cohen, Rev. Jim Wallis, and Sri Ravi Shankar. His Holiness, The Dalai Lama spoke at the closing plenary, sharing an inspiring call to awaken and take action.

One of the exciting highlights was the presence of a group of 15 New Thought youth and young adults from Unity, International and United Centers for Spiritual Living, coming together to share their vision for the New Thought movement by delivering their “Fifteen Minute Manifesto” at the pre-conference meeting. You can find their blog reports on the Parliament by clicking on newthoughtnewsservice.blogspot.com/.

We were blessed by the fabulous New Thought music of Erika Luckett, Lisa Ferraro and Faith Rivera along with some special performances by the Agape Choir and Friends. The “and friends” referred to several of the New Thought delegates who answered the call by Dr. Ricky Byars to join and be a part of the magic of Agape Choir.

Inclusive Variety
The opening plenary set the tone of inclusive variety with the sounds of the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra accompanied by an Aboriginal didgeridoo, followed by blessings in diverse spiritual traditions. The Parliament was an intriguing colorful array of saris, turbans, robes, indigenous body paint, three-piece suits, and tee-shirts. An interesting mix of sounds that included various forms of chanting, choir singing, drumming, gongs and sand mandala scrapers all combined to create a symphony that underscored the theme of the Parliament—Make a World of Difference: Hearing each Other, Healing the Earth.

Youth Manifesto Inspires New Thought Delegation
What follows is the “15-minute manifesto,” drafted and delivered during the New Thought pre-Parliament day by 15 youths attending the event:

• We believe in growth, and stepping into our own power.
• We believe in the power of kindness in action.
• We believe in co-inspiring youth raised in New Thought.
• We believe in demonstrating the power of being raised in New Thought.
• As a New Thought youth, my mission is to allow God to express through me in all that I do, so that I may always and continually be a radiant channel for love to manifest here on Earth.
• We embrace our differences.
• As evolved souls and spiritual beings living a human experience, we consciously apply spiritual principle in our relationships, in our workplace, with each other, living as our Higher Selves and inspiring the world to be and do the same.
• Individually, we are being the change we wish to see in the world.
• Collectively, we are the leading edge of a new paradigm that supports the evolution of a world that works for everyone.
• As New Thought youth, we raise the consciousness of the planet to levels unimaginable.
• We are the future of New Thought—the pulse of the global heart.
• We see the global New Thought movement in the future—in the now—as being a symbol of love, diversity, and peace. We’ve already accomplished so much, and as Erika Luckett and Lisa Ferraro sang, “If you’re not in awe, you’re not paying attention.”
• In 25 years, New Thought will be spread throughout the world as a means of peace, love, and happiness.
• We believe that we are one strand in an ongoing evolution, and that in 25 years, this New Thought will be old thought.
• As youth of New Thought, we are not discovering the divine. We are living, breathing, knowing, active manifestations of the divine. We are grateful for the foundation our ministers and teachers have laid out in front of us. We are your offering to the future.
• And in the words of Rev. Charles Hall, mentor of one of the young people, “They will know us by how we love each other.”
GET REAL

Learn to live from a radical new reality.

email your questions and comments to evolutionaryliving@unity.fm

Evolutionary Living

WITH REV. JAMES TRAPP & ROBIN FERGUSON

Thursdays @ 11:00 CST on

unity.fm

Visit facebook and become a fan of Evolutionary Living.