



Association of Unity Churches International

Contact

Vol. 42, Issue 6

December 2008/January 2009

Appreciating Our

Sacred Land,

"Green Roofing" Unity of Fairfax

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Social Action PAGE 5

11 Days of Global Unity
PAGE 17

How to Go Green in Unity
PAGE 26

PLUS: Does Religion
Cause Violence?
and Regional News

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EDITORIAL PURPOSE

To support thriving ministries by providing timely, practical information for ministries and individuals.

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Letter From the Editor

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. —1 Cor 13:1

It's a joy to bring you this issue of *Contact*. We appreciated the response to our last issue, which was all about how international ministries are spreading the word of Unity.

As a follow up, this issue speaks to spiritual social action. When I first began working at the Association thirteen years ago, I remember that the seeds were just starting to sprout into service to the larger community. The change I've seen in our movement over these years is dramatic. This issue demonstrates that.

Once, there was a feeling that it was more important to develop the inner person than to serve the community. While the inner person's development is still primary, there has been a general movement toward a both/and attitude, rather than an either/or one.

To live the Truth that we know, we can engage in practices that help us to manifest the kind of person through whom the Christ has a clear channel. The more traditional Unity practices of silence, meditation and affirmative prayer are such practices. What has become clearer is that service is also a practice that affects us on the inside, helping to form our inner

selves into conduits for the Christ. We don't just do these things to help people, we serve because in doing so, we take our place side by side with the human family as our Wayshower did. We become the kinds of people who are clear channels for the Christ Presence, for love.

So, here we have an issue full of service to the human family and one another. We celebrate the results of the 11 Days of Global Unity and the ways that Unity people are manifesting the Christ in places from Mali to Detroit. We celebrate the ways that we can care for the earth, and the ways that Unity people are serving the elderly as well as youth. From reaching out to community leaders to giving practical help to those most vulnerable and forgotten. These are all the lessons of spiritual social action and the evolution of its presence in Unity. Enjoy the celebration.

Lisa Wittman, Supervising Editor
lisa@unity.org



Genesis of *Spiritual Social Action*

by John Strickland

Six months ago a first-timer showed up at Atlanta Unity Church in Norcross, Georgia. He had been to Unity and Unitarian churches before but this time he felt at home. He loved that Unity has not thrown Jesus and the Bible out with the bathwater! Dr. Allan Gathercoal is founder and president of Flying Doctors of America. He was a traditional Christian minister who had taught church missions, church growth, and church planting in seminary, but he found the traditional church too confining and not honoring enough of other religions. Twenty years ago he went on retreat to ask God for a new direction. Flying Doctors emerged, and since then he has been traveling the world serving those who have needed help for medical and dental concerns. But he was missing a church family. He found us when we were looking for more that we could be doing.

Allan took a quick assessment of our ministry and pronounced that we had many wonderful things going for us: the



Temple of the Sun at Machu Picchu

message, the music, the place, the youth education, the adult education. But he saw that spiritual social action was missing. He is convinced that by doing good works the church gets energized, the youth get energized, and the church grows. His simple message for church growth is: Bring them in, build them up, and send them forth. For the past six months I have been mentoring Allan in Unity and he has been mentoring me in missions. These are not missions to knock on doors and “convert” people. These are missions to do good in the world.

Allan has a love of Peru and is married to a Peruvian. He has built an orphanage in Cusco, the heart of the Incas. The first week in October will see The Flying Doctors doing good works in the community. The second week in October will see fourteen beautiful souls from Unity going to the orphanage to volunteer by painting and working with children.

Allan says, “There are 3,000 to 5,000 English-speaking expatriates in Cusco from the United States, Canada, and Europe. Start praying about having Unity there!” So, we will hold prayer services and teach classes while we are there. We will also take a long, one-day trip for a little sightseeing at Machu Picchu. (Editor’s Note: Article was written in September for this issue of *Contact*.)

What we have is the genesis of something wonderful for Unity. There are a number of other Unity churches who are reaching out into their own communities and across the oceans. This is a great new energy in Unity. For too long we have been the best-kept secret. We see ourselves now as reaching inward so that we can go out into the world with a message and works that transform the world.



Be the change
that you want to
see in the world.

—Mahatma Gandhi

Knowledge With Character

Deepening Our Ethical Core

by Marilyn Muehlbach
unlimitedmtm@netzero.com

One of the biggest changes in the Unity movement over the last ten years is our churches reaching out to serve the world. One of our most popular and fastest growing ministry teams is Spiritual Social Action. Because we are so richly blessed, we have a deep desire—even a sense of responsibility—to be a blessing to others.

We show up as outreach groups from our churches reaching into our communities to pick up litter along the highways, paint houses for an elderly neighbor, crochet hats for newborns in the hospital, provide meals or blankets for the homeless, provide a gathering place for returning veterans. We show up as groups of Unity people digging a well for a village in Africa, building a school in Haiti, climbing mountains to give mattresses to people in remote villages, working with AIDS orphans, teaching children to speak and feel peace. Wherever we go, our presence makes a difference.

A few years ago I put together a seven-week fall series based on Eknath Easwaran's book *The Compassionate Universe*. The book is full of stories and suggestions of how we can care for the earth. It is structured around Gandhi's "Seven Social Sins" (Knowledge Without Character, Science Without Humanity, Wealth Without Work, Commerce Without Morality, Politics Without Principle, Pleasure Without Conscience, Worship

Without Self-Sacrifice), which, when turned around (i.e. Knowledge with Character, etc.) is really about deepening our ethical core and building character, and therefore being able to give from a more powerful center. Members of the Northwest Region's Earth Care Team have professionally edited and packaged the series for national distribution. What I like most about the series is that it combines Spiritual Social Action in caring for the Earth (Doing) with solid character development (Being). (For information on downloading this free series and about Easwaran books and other resources, see the resources section in this issue of *Contact*.)

The needs of the world are great. When we nourish the soul, our goodness wells up and overflows, and we can't help but make a difference in the lives of others. "Centered in God, we co-create a world that works for all." That's how Spirit rises in the world.... through us! God is blessing us all in this great work. Thank you for all you do and are.



Spiritual Trailblazers

Carry Unity Principles Into Service

by Robin Goff
info@lightcenter.info

Over the past five years, Spiritual Trailblazers have been creating a new style of doing “missionary” work in the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa. Lovelight is The Light Center’s volunteer outreach project, which was created to respond to the needs of the millions of children who are orphaned and vulnerable due to the prolonged pandemic. Volunteers carry their unique gifts to share with the children and the grandmothers who are raising them, offering trainings in gardening, handcrafts, and healing touch. Even more than what we do, we show up as learners open to all we can absorb about the complex culture of South Africa and the ramifications of a devastating pandemic. It is challenging to witness the stories of beautiful children experiencing things that no child should ever have to endure. It is overwhelming to share intimately with grandmothers who

have buried their own children and carry on to provide for their grandchildren. It requires that we be willing to look at the things that are hardest to see. It is transformative work that impacts our lives deeply.

The stories of Africa provide a wake-up call for all of us. They prompt us to respond, to look at our own lives, and discover how we can serve as clear channels for the Light to work in the world. When we set aside any agendas to rescue, fix, or save, that leaves us with a massive learning curve. It is time for all of us to apply our Unity principles to address the challenges facing our human family. It is a conscious practice of holding a healing presence of peace and wholeness right in the midst of overwhelming loss. That demands a dedication to self-care and a willingness to keep our hearts open to feel it all.

Looking back at the American culture from the other side of the world provides a heightened awareness and inspires a deep commitment to create change. During this holiday season Lovelight invites Unity people to join in our ENOUGH! Challenge. What if each of us would simplify our holidays so that we have more to contribute to others? Knowing there are 15.3 million children orphaned in Sub-Saharan Africa is enough to call us to respond. Let’s spend less on gifts, food, and drink, and turn those funds toward making a difference in the world. Whatever we do is enough!

Robin Goff, RN, BSN, MAV, LUT is the spiritual leader of The Light Center, an alternative Unity ministry, which serves as a healing sanctuary in the woods of Kansas offering retreats and workshops. www.Lovelight.info

Two long-term volunteers of Lovelight, Brenda Brock and Kelly Sturgeon (both members of Unity Church of Overland Park in Kansas) with children from South Africa



Robin Goff with children from Baphumelele Children’s Home

Blessed Are the *Peacemakers*



Christine Elliott, with husband John McNeil.

*Imagine
all the people
living
life in
peace.*

*You may say
I'm a dreamer,
but I'm not
the only one.*

*I hope someday
you'll join
us, and the
world will be
as one.*

—John Lennon

by Christine Elliott, christine@afdop.org

The recent election highlighted many pressing problems our new president must tackle. Surprising was the absence of any discussion of violence as an urgent national issue. From war, to gangs, to spousal abuse, to child abuse, gunshot deaths, homicide, suicide, prison violence, terrorism, school bullying—surely we cannot solve the crucial problems we face until we learn to get along with one another.

As spiritual beings, we share the values of peace, compassion, and making our world a better place. In August 2004 my husband, John McNeil, and I decided to become involved in the grassroots movement to establish a cabinet-level Department of Peace and Nonviolence (DOPN) embodied in a bill currently in Congress (H.R. 808). Grassroots activities are geared toward building from the 69 members of the House who now support the bill, toward the majority of 218 needed to pass.

Our initial action was to ask our minister, Wendy Craig Purcell, if she would be willing to have our meetings on church premises and support this work. Not a small request, considering the potential obstacles for a church community to consider. After deep inquiry and prayer, Wendy took the bold step of endorsing and sponsoring our DOPN work, for the following reasons:

1. **Legal:** We acquired a legal opinion which satisfied 501(c)(3) nonprofit concerns.

2. **Inspirational:** The DOPN represented a way to fulfill the second half

of our church's mission statement, "... transforming our world with love."

3. **Practical:** Says Wendy, "... the right people with the right consciousness, skill and commitment to take it on."

4. **Philosophical:** We recognized the important distinction between "separation of church and state" on the one hand, versus "spiritually-motivated participatory democracy" on the other.

5. **Spiritual:** We observed that the guiding principles of the DOPN movement are spiritual principles in practice: nonjudgment, compassion, peace, and inclusivity.

From its inception in August 2004, the DOPN campaign in California has attracted supporters in 47 of the 53 congressional districts across the state. There are active groups in all 50 states. We love Margaret Mead's quote: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Christine Elliott is a member, facilitator, and class instructor at The Unity Center, San Diego, California, www.theunitycenter.net. In 2006 Christine retired from her practice as a law firm business coach to become a full-time volunteer with the Department of Peace movement, in which she and her husband, John, are the Southern California State Coordinators. Christine also serves on the board of The Peace Alliance, www.thepeacealliance.org.

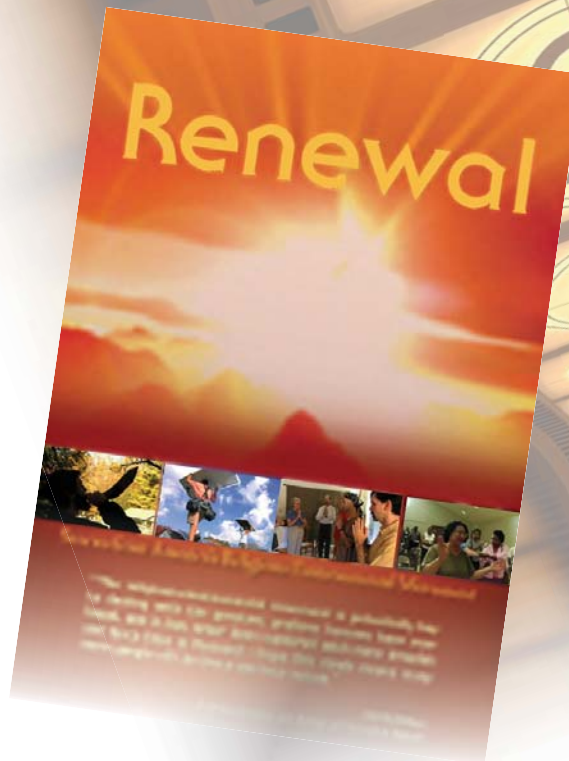
Eight Inspiring Stories From Around the Nation

Reviewed by Kathy O'Connor,
ktahimsa@yahoo.com

The faith-based environmental movement may be one of the United States' best-kept secrets. Since the early 1990s, a growing number of Christian congregations and other religious communities are including creation in their worship, making their church facilities more earth-friendly, and working for social and environmental justice in their local communities.

Renewal is a sampling of this groundswell, presenting eight inspiring stories from around the nation that convey a sense of hope for the future.

Renewal's stories interweave social action and cross-cultural dialogue with caring for creation. In Illinois, an organic farmer provides (humanely-raised) meat for an Islamic community in Chicago, who in turn feeds the homeless. Other segments visit a Baptist-based community struggling with toxic sediments deposited by Hurricane Katrina, an Evangelical group concerned about strip-mining in Appalachia, a Jewish nature camp for urban preteens, and Roman Catholic and Native American people holding a traditional celebration of water in New Mexico. My personal favorite is of a small Episcopal church in New Jersey, which—with a grant that covers most of the cost—installs solar panels on their roof and sells electricity back to the grid.



Although some of the vocabulary in the film (such as references to “sin” and “environmental crisis”) may challenge some individuals, these are presented in context and the film is intended to be ecumenical and inclusive.

In addition to the merged documentary film, the DVD includes all of the stories as individual segments. With some added footage, each segment is from 9 to 17 minutes long and designed for showing to study groups. The Interfaith Power and Light program has created a one-page discussion guide for the film, which is available for free download at www.theregenerationproject.org/Resources.htm. The DVD can be ordered from the film's website at www.renewalproject.net/dvd.

Renewal makes a compelling case—with poignancy and heart-warming humor—that caring for people and caring for the environment are inextricably linked. If you want to inspire your congregation to take small but positive steps towards making a difference in the world, consider showing *Renewal* in your ministry.

Based in Spokane, Washington, Kathy O'Connor is a licensed Unity teacher and a founding member of the Northwest Region's Unity Earth Care program.



CODENI in Guadalajara, Mexico

Danielle Strickland is living her Unity principles in Mexico. CODENI children's rights cooperative, founded in 2004, is directed by Danielle, 1997-1998 YOU President for Unity of Roanoke Valley in Roanoke, Virginia. Here is Danielle's story:

When I was 9 years old, my parents took us on vacation to Cancun. One day they rented a car and took us out of the tourist district. I have a clear memory of children my age, shoeless, dressed in rags, "cleaning" the rental car's windshield with dirty newspapers and asking for change. I had never seen poverty before and was completely moved looking into the eyes of a boy about my age and realizing how different our lives were.

My Life Changed

It was clearly a life-changing experience for me. From that day forward I became interested in learning Spanish and knew that my calling in life was directly linked to impoverished children in Latin America. Many people praise and admire what I've been doing since I graduated college and moved to Guadalajara in 2002, but that usually makes me chuckle. I consider myself to have one of the most amazing occupations in the world, for truly the more you give, the more you receive, and the gratification I receive from helping street children and their families is much more valuable than any paycheck. My heart has been filled by an illiterate mother hugging me and telling me through tears that I am an angel for giving her son the opportunity to attend school; a little girl having a "light bulb moment" and finally understanding long division at which point she turns to me and says, "It's all thanks to you, because you were the only one patient enough to teach



Danielle Strickland (center) with students



Danielle Strickland (right back row) lives her Unity principles in Mexico

me to subtract and multiply—if it weren't for you, I'd only ever have learned how to add;" and the opportunity to arrange a trip for indigenous migrants to return to their village for the first time in ten years and see them reunited with family.

What I do day-to-day is no more impressive than other *Contact* magazine readers. The difference is the opportunities which come into my life. I have been blessed with the opportunity to live in Guadalajara, learn Spanish, and develop relationships with genuinely needy and gracious families. I simply give what I can, try to teach by example, and follow my calling in life to spread the abundance of God's good to those less fortunate.

CODENI

To learn more about CODENI see www.CODENI.org.mx or AHALA (American Hands Aiding Latin American Youth) at www.AHALA.org or contact Danielle Strickland at dmstrick@cox.net.

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Purpose, Will You
Know Which Path will
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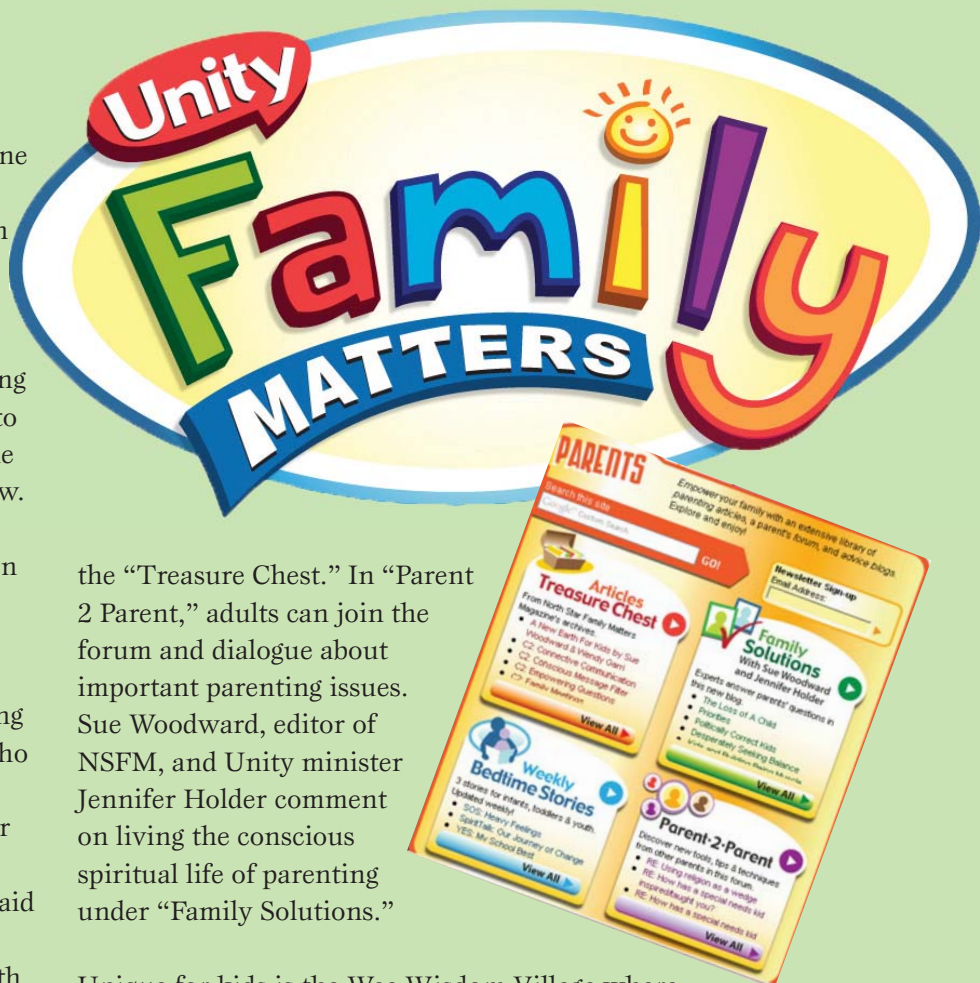


Unity and NSFM Introduce Joint Website

What happens when you cross a magazine that empowers kids and conscious parenting with an organization's passion to reach young families and children? Unity Family Matters is the result. In December of 2007, North Star Family Matters and Unity School began exploring the possibility of a partnership to tap into the 27 million spiritual seekers under the age of 40. In June 2008 the website, www.unityfamilymatters.com, went live. The beginnings of the possibility conversation were manifesting!

North Star Family Matters, NSFM, is a team of dynamic entrepreneurs consisting of a mother, daughter, and son-in-law who all share a strong passion for kids and conscious parenting (holding a vision for who parents and children truly are, and living from that awareness in all that's said and done). This concept of empowering children and families is in alignment with Unity teachings. As we focus on the good, empower our children (because they have all the wisdom and guidance accessible within them), and take responsibility for ourselves as adults, we can bring up a generation of young people who embrace themselves, each other, and a global perspective of Oneness. What a fit!

On the website there are parent- and child-focused areas. Rich resources for parents and grandparents are available in articles from past issues of the NSFM magazine in



the “Treasure Chest.” In “Parent 2 Parent,” adults can join the forum and dialogue about important parenting issues. Sue Woodward, editor of NSFM, and Unity minister Jennifer Holder comment on living the conscious spiritual life of parenting under “Family Solutions.”

Unique for kids is the Wee Wisdom Village where children can play games, print out coloring pages and discover characters like “Spunky the Skunk,” “Alley the Cat,” and “Willow the Owl.” Brand new original bedtime stories by the NSFM team are also on the website. Parents are encouraged to share in a *Wee Wisdom* tradition and read the adventures of these characters in this modern-day Wee Wisdom Village. The stories are intended to be thought-provoking, perhaps conversation starters that engage parents and children in the body-mind-spirit dialogue. Coming soon is the labyrinth game, forming affirmations and stories submitted by you, empowered parents and kids. Come tour Wee Wisdom Village and empower yourself with positive inspiring spiritual ideas for yourself, your families, and your community.

Unity® is a partner organization to the Association of Unity Churches International. It provides education, prayer through Silent Unity and publishing of *Daily Word*, *Unity Magazine* and other materials.

Diversity Awareness

by Joy Wyler and the Association's Diversity Awareness Team

The Diversity Awareness Team grew out of the Association's Spiritual Social Action Team. The very first objective identified is to create a Diversity Awareness Kit that ministries could use to explore diversity more fully in their community.

As the team began sharing personal stories and areas of expertise, the divine paradox began to arise. Diversity awareness challenges us to acknowledge the infinite variety of expressions of our humanity and to acknowledge that we are one in Spirit. In conversation, we looked at diversity, and in connecting, we found love. As the team explored more and more aspects of the diversity of our humanity, we began to identify the subtle ideas and beliefs that we are socialized to accept that allow us to see ourselves as separate. The team identified that the broad spectrum awareness work and the discovery of the divine paradox precedes going deeply into any one area of diversity.

Upon completion, the kit will include recommendations for how ministries may explore diversity. It will provide a slide show to illustrate the unique expressions of our humanity that are our diversity and a number of workshop options to explore diversity and uncover some of our conditioned beliefs. It will have ideas for church-wide activities and services. It will also provide resources for deeper exploration of specific topics that may arise in your spiritual community. The Diversity Awareness Kit is intended as a tool for ministries to use to continue the healing and growing process as we all proclaim,

"We believe that all people are created with sacred worth. We promote greater understanding among people in a spirit of unity." Increasing diversity awareness fosters unconditional love without judgment. As Unity pursues its intention of building thriving ministries, diversity awareness helps create a world that works for all; thus building the entire Unity movement.

Joy Wyler



Diversity Awareness on a Local Level

Since the inception of Christ Church Unity's (Orlando, Florida) Diversity Awareness Team, in April 2008, we've explored our uniqueness and the importance of our individual contributions. We discovered at the core of our being, we are all one. It is the mission of the Diversity Awareness Team to share this awareness within our church community and outward.



Booth display highlighting the Diversity Awareness Team from Christ Church Unity in Orlando, Florida

As a team, we have explored opportunities to educate, discuss, and experience our oneness within our own spiritual community. Listed are a few things we've done so far:

- Collaborated with youth education program to develop artwork which represents the diversity in our community and the world.
- Sponsored the film documentary "For the Bible Tells Me So" hosted by the filmmaker with open dialog regarding how scripture is sometimes used to discriminate when taken out of context, but used this as the opportunity to educate ourselves as well as our community.
- Hosted a Sunday potluck celebrating diversity by sharing food from around the world.
- For the "11 Days of Global Unity:"
 - Created a "Peace Flags" project displayed at our church.
 - Shared in interfaith prayers of world peace at multiple places of worship.

If you would like additional information about this church's team please feel free to contact: DiversityTeam@ChristChurchUnity.net.

Appreciating Our *Sacred Land,* “Green Roofing” Unity Of Fairfax

Richard Hartley, ezkayak@gmail.com

Looking back, it all started in the early spring of 2005. Serendipitously, the Unity Prayer Ministry was asking for a meditation garden, while unknowingly, a couple in the congregation was moving and looking for a home for all their garden plants, many of which were native species. By June, the meditation garden was in and certified by the National Wildlife Federation as a Wildlife Habitat. Soon, composting was added and a landscape policy adopted which prevented the use of pesticides, herbicides, and chemical fertilizers. As landscaping developed on our five-acre site, special attention was given to reduce erosion and to slow and direct water runoff. River jack was used to control these problems, and appropriate native

Mildred Park Center
at Unity of Fairfax in
Fairfax, Virginia



plants were always considered first for their hardiness, adaptability, and beauty.

Benefits of Greening

Then, in March 2007, it was evident that the church needed a new roof on its Mildred Park Center. It could spend \$35,000 on a standard replacement flat aggregate roof of 4,500 square feet with a life of eight to ten years, or spend \$76,000 to retrofit a “green” roof with a 40-plus year lifespan, and importantly, have a major, positive impact on our environment. A properly installed “green” (vegetative) roof could:

- Drastically reduce stormwater runoff and flow rate
- Conserve energy
- Improve air quality
- Provide insulation qualities
- Suppress noise and reduce interior sound levels
- Extend life of the roof—minimize UV and temperature impact
- Restore ecological and aesthetic value to open spaces
- Reduce maintenance costs over the life of the roof

By the time the membership voted to construct the green roof, over \$31,000 had been awarded in grants to fund what we called, “The Unity of Fairfax Stormwater Management Project.” The project included installing a green roof; planting a stormwater detention pond to clean the water by further filtering the decreased roof runoff; and creating a demonstration site for educational interest in the community.

A Revealing Ride

For those closely associated with the Unity of Fairfax Stormwater Management Project, this journey has been a wonderful revealing ride. So much has happened that reminds us of a Higher Power. We did not know what the end would look like when we started with the meditation garden. One door closed as another opened. Our



Planting “plugs” on green roof of Mildred Park Center

task has been to read the signs, be willing to work, love the land, and get out of the way as God directed the work and gave us the energy to bring it to fruition.



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– Rev. Ron Scott
Renaissance Unity
Warren, Michigan



The
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Mr. Gary A. Boland
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Unity Admissions: 703.229.5452

Main Office: 703.229.5450

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Calendar of Events

2009



January 9-10

Thriving Ministry Model Workshop, Murrieta, CA; contact Rev. Patricia Campbell, 951.304.0268

January 10-17

SEE Hawaiian Cruise; contact www.SEEOurWorld.org

January 19-29

SEE in the Field; contact Sandra Cousens Kale, therevkale@hotmail.com


January 26-29

Association Mid-Year Meetings, Unity Village, MO; contact Bets Kirby, bets@unity.org

January 30-31

Thriving Ministry Model Workshop, Unity Village, MO; contact Cathy Christy, cathy@unity.org

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Debra Lynn

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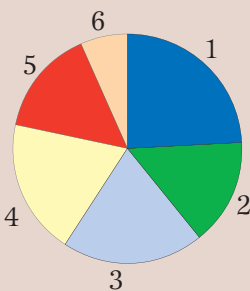
Financial Statement

FOR THE PERIOD OF
10/1/2007 TO 8/31/2008

	Actual (YTD)	Annual Budget
Love Offerings (Undesignated)	\$ 2,312,511	\$ 2,792,621
Love Offerings (Designated)	318,520	55,700
Grant Incomes	276,945	550,444
Program Incomes	<u>525,262</u>	<u>922,474</u>
Total Revenues	\$ 3,433,238	\$ 4,321,239
Less: Tithe Paid (on undesignated donations)	<u>(285,918)</u>	<u>(279,262)</u>
Program Expenses	(2,358,025)	(3,137,378)
Support Expenses	<u>(1,010,582)</u>	<u>(1,344,590)</u>
Total Expenditures	\$(3,368,607)	\$(4,481,968)
Increase from Operation	\$ (64,631)	\$ (160,729)
Increase in Net Assets	<u>(221,287)</u>	<u>(439,991)</u>
Capital Expenditure and Adjustment	47,253	(121,500)
Net Cash Flow	<u>159,460</u>	<u>75,734</u>

In order to fully implement the programs called for in the strategic plan, we must reach our budgeted funding. The current revenue shortfall is \$1,497,331.

WHERE DOES OUR MONEY GO?



- 1) Education, Leadership & Ministry Development
- 2) Minister & Ministry Services
- 3) Communications
- 4) Administration/Building
- 5) Executive Office
- 6) Tithe

DOES OUR ASSOCIATION TITHE?

10/1/2007 to 5/31/2008

Unity Institute	43,034.69
Silent Unity	21,228.65
Unity	15,834.15
Spiritual Life Center (Unity)	25,000.00
Subtotal Unity	\$105,097.49
Complaint-Free World	\$25,750.94
Unity work in South Africa	11,416.80
<i>The Secret</i>	9,916.80
International New Thought Alliance	29,172.99
Association for Global New Thought	43,562.24
Academy for Peace of Costa Rica	19,833.59
St. Luke's South Hospital	1,500.00
The I Am Foundation	39,667.17
Total	\$285,918.02

11 days OF GLOBAL UNITY

A Season of Interfaith Celebration

News from Unity ministries on how they celebrated this special event:

From Ames, Iowa:

At Unity Church of Ames, Iowa, in addition to our regular midweek and end-of-month peace meditations, we:

- Held a “Peace Expressing” weekend with Chris Foster, Unity songwriter/musician.
- Opened the church on September 11 for private prayer; concluding with an interfaith peace service with participants from the major world religions.

In the community, we:

- Facilitated a planning team with wide community representation.
- Arranged a mayoral proclamation and dedicated a Peace Pole to the city.
- Created a series of 11 articles from a wide variety of citizens of all ages on various aspects of global unity, carried in the local paper and the community website.



Opening breakfast at Unity Church of Ames.

- Canvassed 250 organizations about their events occurring during 11 Days.
- Widely publicized over 40 diverse events including: peace meditations and vigils, family and cultural events, book and film discussions, major conferences on the environment, and community conversations on diversity.
- Organized an opening “inter-continental” breakfast and a closing community picnic with entertainment.

www.11daysofunity.org

IMAGINE PEACE

ONE PEACE MEDITATION EVENT

Doctor **A. T. ARIYARATNE**

From: Clarkston, Michigan

What is the sound of ten thousand people meditating for peace? That is what the multicultural and interfaith planning committee for the One Peace Meditation Event wanted to find out. This United Nations International Day of Peace celebration featured Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne, founder of the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka, Nobel Peace Prize nominee and Ghandi Peace Prize winner. Michael Bernard Beckwith and Rickie Byars Beckwith volunteered their gifts to the program; Agape International Spiritual Center joined Sarvodaya U.S.A. and the One Peace organization as sponsors for the event. Held at the Convocation Center on the campus of Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, the event culminated eight months of planning and two weeks of consciousness-raising events in southeast Michigan highlighting the International Day of Peace and the 11 Days of Global Unity.

Dr. Ariyaratne inspired us to be peace, “When our minds are silenced, we create the space for certain unbelievable things to happen,” and led us in a half-hour silent meditation. By the end we were all standing together as one: many religions, many nationalities, many faces, all holding hands and moving together as One Person, One World, One Peace.

**Matthew E. Long, Unity Minister
Peace Unity Church
Clarkston, Michigan**



The United Nations International Day of Peace celebration in Clarkston, Michigan, featured (left to right): Rickie Byars Beckwith (standing), Michael Bernard Beckwith, Matthew Long, Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne.

The United Nations International Day of Peace event was held at the Convocation Center on the campus of Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti.



From Miami, Florida:

Unity on the Bay celebrated 11 Days of Global Unity with a smorgasbord of offerings deepening awareness and responsibility of living peace. We created a website, peace-a-thon.com, and a campaign to reach beyond our walls. We were written about in local newspapers and invited to speak on radio shows with a representative of the United Nations.

On World Day of Prayer we offered a powerful interfaith service that included an Imam and a Rabbi sharing their message of Peace. Friday we hosted a Silent Retreat. Saturday was our Transformational Journey day with a bilingual burning bowl service and over 25 workshops. Sunday we were blessed by Deva Premal and Miten in concert offering the healing sounds of peace and beauty. The rest of the days were filled with celebrations—we drummed, chanted, danced, meditated, and set intentions for world peace.

We were so inspired by Unity's initiative of 11 Days of Global Unity that we based our annual in-home program on the book *Peace Is the Way* by Deepak Chopra. Currently we have over 500 people participating in the program. We are rejoicing in being a presence for peace.

Elizabeth Longo, associate minister
Unity on the Bay
Miami, Florida



Unity minister Elizabeth Longo at Unity on the Bay in Miami, Florida

SILENT
RETREAT

INTERFAITH
SERVICE

TRANSFORMATION
JOURNEY

From Tustin, California:

Unity of Tustin, California, initiated its new Global Peace Project with 11 Days of Global Unity in collaboration with Unity, the Association for Global New Thought (AGNT), and the Association of Unity Churches International.

Starting with Unity's World Day of Prayer on September 11 and continuing daily through the United Nations International Day of Peace on September 21, our Unity of Tustin mystical community held several events to raise our collective consciousness for peace:



Unity of Tustin's Peace Pole dedication

- Dedication of a new peace pole in our meditation gardens
- An 11-day prayer vigil
- Daily peace walks in our meditation garden with interfaith prayers
- Healing gathering for peace
- One-day silent retreat for peace
- United in spiritual blessings evening with Christian, Native American, Buddhist, Kabala, Muslim, and Hindu spiritual traditions
- Seven-week course based on Deepak Chopra's book, *Peace Is the Way*

PEACE
POLE

PRAYER
VIGIL

SPIRITUAL
BLESSINGS

From Unity Village, Missouri:

Unity Village was alive with music, dance, films, thoughtful discussion, powerful presentations and spiritual oneness during “11 Days of Global Unity: Celebrating Oneness, Healing the World,” Sept. 11-21.

The celebration encompassed Unity’s 14th annual World Day of Prayer, but also marked the first year of Unity’s participation in 11 Days of Global Unity. Each year the 11 Days stretch from Sept. 11, commemorating the sobering impact of 9-11, to Sept. 21, the U.N. International Day of Peace.

Special activities and presentations throughout the event included best-selling author Gregg Braden; an Earthdance; concerts with songs written and performed by New Thought artists from across the country; author Lynne McTaggart; a Transformational Film Festival; playwright Leonard Jacobson performing his one-man play “Liberating Jesus!”; grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, Arun Gandhi; and a symposium by Pachamama Alliance on “Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream” and what we can do to bring forth an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, and socially just human presence on Earth. Sunday, the U.N. International Day of Peace, was a day for quiet reflection and worship as the 11 Days celebration drew to a close.

Ministerial student Kelly Isola was instrumental in planning and orchestrating the 11 Days series. “Amazing and dedicated people came forward with grace, joy, and a huge commitment to celebrating oneness and connecting Unity with other global organizations. We absolutely inspired and awakened individuals and, as such, did our part to help create a world that works for all,” she said.

Paula Coppel
VP Communication
Unity



Special activities at the 11 Days of Global Unity, included (top): a panel discussion with Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi; and authors Lynne McTaggart (middle) and Gregg Braden (bottom).

EARTHDANCE

FILM
FESTIVAL

SPIRITUAL
ONENESS

From Kingman, Arizona:

Unity of Kingman, Arizona, celebrated the 11 Days of Global Unity by kicking off their churchwide recycling program. Kingman is in the northwest corner of Arizona, the gateway to Las Vegas, Nevada, and California. Kingman is a very conservative town and has no citywide recycling programs as of yet. We hope to begin some community education as one of our spiritual social action programs.

Our World Day of Prayer program began with a candlelighting to honor our country's healing from 9-11. Karen Drucker's song, "I'll Light a Candle," in honor of the 9-11 victims and families, was the musical prelude. Our guest speakers, two Muslim physicians, participated in the candlelighting along with their families.

Nearby Unity of the Mohave Valley in Bullhead City, Arizona, joined us in a Native American Sweat Lodge Purification and Renewal Ceremony performed in the Lakota tradition. You can see more photos of our events at www.unityofkingman.org.



Recycling at Unity of Kingman (top). A Native American Sweat Lodge Purification camp (middle) and members of Unity of Kingman and Unity of the Mohave Valley in Bullhead City join together for this beautiful tradition from the Lakota tribe (bottom).

RECYCLING
PROGRAM

CANDLELIGHTING
CEREMONY

RENEWAL
CEREMONY

From Pomona, California:

People from the Pomona Valley in California came together in various ways to build relationships within our diverse population. Opening to each other is the first step in building understanding and respect within communities that are constantly growing and changing. As we came together, we began to recognize the various ways different parts of the community envision peace and work to create peace in our hearts, in our homes, in our communities, which then affects the entire world.

This is only the beginning, for as we build trust and respect and awareness of what is happening in our community, we can then work together to “create a world that works for all.”

Our Unity movement and local Unity churches are natural leaders in this peace-building work.



Pomona Crime Prevention booth during Unity of Pomona neighborhood blessings (top left); Minister Jan Chase at Interfaith booth (top right); Unity booth at Upland Fun Day (lower left); participants in the Claremont Islamic Center Festival (lower right).



PEACE
CONCERT

PEACE
FILM
FESTIVAL

DRUMMING
CEREMONY

Neighbors and members of Unity of Pomona (right); native prayers and drumming for peace (middle left); Laura Gozolez and minister Jan Chase accept an award for Unity of Pomona (middle right); film festival booth about helping local families (lower left); Unity minister Jan Chase blesses a dog at the neighborhood watch blessing for pets (lower right).



PET BLESSINGS

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

BUDDHIST INCENSE CEREMONY

INTERFAITH
PRAYER
SERVICE

MISSION
SERVICE DAY

PEACE
INTENTION
PROJECT

From Huntsville, Alabama:

On Thursday, September 11, we had a special prayer service inviting members of other faiths to participate. We had two guests from the Islamic Community who are followers of Rumi. We handed out candles that would burn for 11 days, gathered around our Peace Pole in front of the church, and each person read the Golden Rule as presented through other faith traditions. We closed with "Yes There Is Peace on Earth." (The local TV station showed up and we actually made five seconds on the 10:00 news.)

The church participated in the "Interfaith Mission Service Day of Service and Unity" on Saturday. We took care of the registration process, I was part of the opening gathering, and many then went out to service projects around the community.



We were involved in the "Peace Intention Project," at the Sunday morning service.

The following Sunday evening, September 21, we had a closing peace ceremony where we blessed all the countries in the world and closed with candles and the Peace song.

**Carol Landry, spiritual leader
Unity Church on the Mountain
Huntsville, Alabama**

The Spiritual Social Action Worldwide Peace Ministry Team

would like to thank all those who came together for the 11 Days of Global Unity. If you are interested in participating in next year's event, save the dates **September 11 to September 21, 2009**. For information, as well as to download resources and ideas, please visit www.11daysofunity.org.

To find out more about the power of focused intention, you can visit Lynne McTaggart's website, www.theintentionexperiment.com and HeartMath's Coherence Initiative at www.glcoherence.org.

IMAGINE PEACE
www.11daysofunity.org

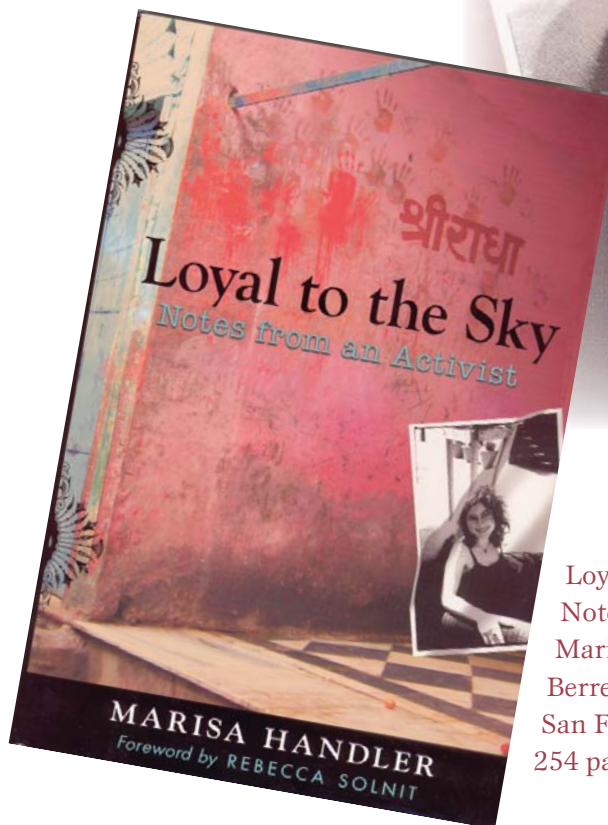
Loyal to the Sky: Notes from an Activist

Reviewed by Rebecca Johnson

If you've ever donned a black armband to protest the war in Vietnam, burned a bra, or took to the streets for a Civil Rights march, you will enjoy the strong clear voice of this young Jewish activist. Part personal, part political, and part poetry, Melissa Handler, a true citizen of the world, takes us on a journey of self-discovery where we not only applaud her growth and vision, we recognize our own. The book opens in the schoolyard of an all-white primary school in Cape Town at the height of apartheid in South Africa. Here she discovers a still, small voice inside and finds herself speaking an unpopular truth: a black person could be president. We all know the feeling. One minute you're a hero, the next minute you've lost all your friends.

When her family immigrates to the United States, we follow Marissa and her mother down aisle five of a Los Angeles grocery store as they search for a simple box of raisin bran. Overwhelmed by the choices in cereal alone, we see through her eyes as she recognizes the "early warning sign of a society severely off-kilter."

But it is her stints in Jerusalem, Nepal, and India as a college student where Marisa must confront who she is that gives seasoned armchair travelers something to chew on: if we aren't all activists, if we don't take action, if we don't truly believe that together we can create a healthier, safer planet, then we've lost the ability to imagine peace is possible in our lifetime.



Loyal to the Sky:
Notes from an Activist
Marisa Handler
Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
San Francisco, 2007
254 pages

We can march against war, rally for free trade, try to save an indigenous culture, or picket a national political convention in San Francisco, Miami, Peru, and New York as Ms. Handler did. Or better yet, we can listen to her song "Loyal to the Sky" and ponder the possibility of saying no to social and economic injustice and building a movement without a common enemy.

This book is designed for discussion with questions in the back and a companion website to help everyone find their inner activist, open their minds, and speak their universal truth.

Rebecca Johnson is a freelance writer who attends First Unity of St. Petersburg, Florida, where she's actively involved in senior minister Temple Hayes' LifeRights movement and encourages you to get involved <http://liferights.org/>

How to Go Green in Unity!



Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.

—Desmond Tutu

by Kym Farmer, earthcare@unity.org

No need to wonder any longer about how to proceed down this spiritual path—your Association now has a very active EarthCare Team which has developed documents, resources, guidelines, mentoring, and a “certification” program for your center.

The current environmental situation can be an invitation for all of us to practice our spiritual principles by actively recognizing the face of God in each expression of creation. Your Unity Churches International EarthCare team (UCIE) is here to assist you on this journey. We now have many tools readily available to help you incorporate the acknowledgment of the Divine in creation into your center’s vision and activities.

Available Now

Here’s what’s available to you right now:

- A detailed and thorough threefold plan to guide your center in “going green.” Choose to make a covenant, make a church-wide active commitment, or seek certification. (Go to unity.org/bethechange for information and forms.)
- Resources to help you meet any needs particular to your own center and situation—everything from websites to films to community organizations. (See website above for the resources list.)
- A mentor to respond with support and specifics for your unique “green team” needs. (Contact Kathy Harwood Long at long.kathy@sbcglobal.net to receive guidance and to join in conference calls.)
- A growing network of Unity centers, including regions committing to assist centers and churches in “going green.” (Contact earthcare@unity.org.)

And coming in 2009:

- A new Small Group Ministry seven-lesson booklet for teaching about spiritual social action (including EarthCare) in your church center.

Church Examples

There are endless inspired ways to bring forth the particular vision and action that fits your unique situation. Here’s what some centers have already done:



Members of Christ Church Unity, Orlando, Florida, with free seed packets they received as one of the “greening our church” ideas.

- Put up a “green board,” updated weekly with “go-green tip of the week,” community green events, and how-to pamphlets from national organizations.
- Incorporated “divine creation” themes into Sunday lessons, such as on Earth Day, Mother’s Day, Epiphany, etc., and added earth-centered prayers to every service.
- Conducted energy audits via local power providers, who suggested ways to green the buildings and grounds.
- YOU group devoted 1132 service hours to create and lead “Love your Mother” rally and train neighboring region in EarthCare.
- Established a compost bin behind the kitchen—and recycling bins in Fellowship Hall, along with recyclable plates and utensils.
- Mulched and landscaped with native plants to reduce water usage.
- To encourage church-wide interest, launched the start of their green program with a special event, such as a showing of the films “An Inconvenient Truth” or “Kilowatt Ours”—or even a presentation by a nun who had built two solar houses.
- Switched to fluorescent and LED lighting everywhere, on motion sensors where feasible, plus zoned thermostats. (Had the added benefit of freeing up quite a bit of extra money for the ministry!)
- Adopted a small public park to care for and honor.
- Gifted congregants with saplings to plant at their homes or at church.
- Encouraged a “green Christmas” with live trees, recycled paper, and gifts of classes rather than material goods.
- Developed a program for a youth ministry event.

This is just a small smattering of what some centers are doing. With so much creativity endlessly available to us, we can expect an ever-growing richness of ideas.

Continued on page 35



Unity of Corvallis, Oregon, maintains a community trail during its annual Season for Spirituality and Ecology (in September).

EarthCare’s Roots in the Northwest Region

by Kathy O’Connor

EarthCare in Unity began in the Northwest Region, where it “grew from the grassroots.” By April 2002 when EarthCare was adopted regionally, several ministries were already holding special services and educational events. Unity Church of Portland had self-published the booklet, *A Moving Guide to EarthCare*. After the conference, interest in EarthCare spread. Marilyn Muehlbach, then minister at Unity Church of North Idaho, took home Portland’s *Moving Guide* and almost immediately started a Green Team. “The congregation was ready for EarthCare—all I had to do was ask,” she says.

Practical actions by Unity ministries—energy efficiency, community gardens, trail maintenance, tree plantings, and stream cleanups—are the heart of EarthCare in the region. The regional board’s EarthCare Team shares ideas and success stories in its quarterly newsletter and on its website. The regional team has also given workshops at churches, regional events, and the 2007 Association of Unity Churches International Convention.

The Northwest team encourages ministries to follow its “Path to EarthCare” model. They recommend starting with prayer and special services to inspire a “creation-care consciousness,” and working with the leadership and congregation to vision “green” actions appropriate for the ministry. A brochure describing the path, along with Unity Church of Portland’s *Moving Guide* and other resources, may be downloaded from the region’s website, www.unitynwregion.org, under Programs/EarthCare.

Each year since 2004 the Northwest regional conference has opened with a “Gathering of the Waters Ceremony.” In 2008 the conference week included Earth Day, April 22, when the conference body unanimously adopted a “Declaration for EarthCare.” In part, the declaration reads,

“There is a standard for the practice of being human. We are called to be stewards of Earth.... We declare our covenant with God to walk upon Earth for the greatest good of all creation.”

During their free time in the afternoon, conference attendees pulled weeds and laid rocks for a labyrinth. Participants found the work rewarding and the EarthCare Team hopes to include stewardship projects at other regional events.



How Search Engines *Find You*

by Rob Wheeler, spirit@unitymedford.org

Did you know that over 70 percent of the population in North America (237,168,545 people) are now online? When people come online, for the most part, they are seeking information. Over 60,000 searches occur every month for the term “unity church,” 74,000 look for the phrase “mind body spirit,” and over 2.7 million look for “prayer.” Are they finding you?

The search engines send out a “spider” (robot or crawler) which is a software program that is used to find what’s out there in the ever-changing web. When it visits your site it loads the pages’ contents into a database. Then the text of your page is loaded into the search engine index (a large database of words) and where that text occurs on different web pages.

Robots

When it arrives at your site, the first file the spider looks for is Robots.txt, which is a simple text file that you upload to the root directory of your website. Robots.txt tells the spider what pages they are allowed to fetch. (This is so important that I have prepared a video that shows you how to build one—www.unitymedford.org/region/robots.html)

Sitemaps

We live in exciting times. In the past, to gain traffic, we submitted our website URL (address) to many search engines. Now the major search engines are finally working together on standards; the latest of which is XML Site Maps Protocol. Sitemaps are an easy way for you to inform search engines about pages on your sites that are available for crawling. In its simplest form, a sitemap is an XML file that lists pages for a site along with additional data about each page so that search engines can more intelligently crawl the site. Using a sitemap doesn’t guarantee that your web pages are included in the search engines, however it provides hints for robots to do a better job of crawling your site. To create a sitemap, I highly recommend GSite Crawler (www.gsitecrawler.com) which, as of this writing, is free.

By placing both the robots.txt file and a sitemap of your web pages, you will be helping the search engines find and index your site, and more importantly provide a way to reach out to your community. Need help getting this done? Send me an email. It would be a pleasure to be of service to you.

Rob Wheeler (spirit@unitymedford.org) is an Internet marketing consultant and webmaster who has been playing on the net since 1998. He is a lifelong Unity student currently serving as the coordinator and administrative director of Christ Unity Church of Medford, Oregon. (www.UnityMedford.org)



Spiritual Social Action Leads to Unity in the Community



by Jane Simmons, jane@unity.org

It is difficult to watch the nightly news without feeling concern for the planet and its inhabitants. Severe climate change, wars and violence, shortages of food and water, poverty, species extinction—how can we respond to these alarming conditions and make a difference?

Unique Perspective

Unity has a unique perspective to offer the world—our foundational belief that there is only one Presence tells us that whatever we do to another we do to ourselves. If oneness is the true reality, then the question is, “Where should our circle of compassion end?” What if the world had a role to play in our spiritual journey? What if these conditions have arisen, not as something done to us, but to motivate us into grounding our spiritual awareness into authentic action? Imagine if the key to our awakening was rooted in loving and compassionate service to one another.

When we bless others through our actions, we are in alignment with the Truth of who we are—spiritual beings in a physical universe. Service—to God and to all beings—is the highest form of love in action. The Golden Rule, found in all traditions, calls us to treat one another with kindness and respect. In Unity, our version of the Golden Rule might read: “Whatever you put out into the universe returns to you, multiplied.” This teaching has its roots in our foundational belief in the oneness of all life.

New Thought Spiritual Social Action

Here are some ways that New Thought beliefs work with spiritual social action:

- Empowers each individual rather than invites dependency
- Creates sustainable living, allowing the receiver to give back
- Honors the wholeness of Spirit within all beings, no matter what the outer appearance may be
- Comes from the consciousness of love and compassion, understanding there is no “other”
- Moves us from the role of “benevolent giver, handing down to a needy receiver” to instead, the conscious realization of the privilege of service to the divine

Rather than trying to fix what appears broken, we go within to our Source in prayer, ask for guidance and then take action, always remembering that we are God’s hands in expression. Unity’s fifth principle tells us that we must put principle into practice if we are to see transformation. Spiritual social action is the practice of loving service in action.

Our movement has the opportunity to make a difference in our planet. Our Association’s vision statement reads, “Centered in God, we co-create a world that works for all.” In the words of James Trapp, “We are going to be busy for awhile.” To find out more, visit www.unity.org/bethechange.

*Centered
in God, we
co-create a
world that
works for all.*

Does Religion Cause

by Barry Vennard

The jury is probably still out about the “cause” of war. The “reasons” people give for wars are many. Religion is often one of them. War has been used to impose religious beliefs on others as well as to seek religious freedom.

Ken Wilber’s integral theory states that empire building, which often includes the waging of war, is a stage of human cultural development. If that’s so, war may be a product of evolution and the pre-disposition for it may be inherited. Evidence of that exists in nature.

Inter-species violence occurs in many primates. Lethal, organized violence has been practiced by our closest genetic relatives, the chimpanzees. In one instance the males of one chimpanzee troop were observed systematically attacking and killing the males of a neighboring troop, taking over their territory and their breeding females.

Warlike violence has been documented and demonstrated in virtually every period of human history. Since WWII, humans have engaged in over 250 major wars! Over 23 million people died, ninety percent of them were noncombatants. The recent, historical increase

in the death of noncombatants is mostly due to the extraordinary lethal weaponry that humans create.

If choosing war is part of human nature, so is the power to reject it. As religion evolves and, as we human beings awaken to a spiritual experience of a Universal God, we are also becoming acutely aware that war is a strategy that no longer serves us. That’s especially true as we evolve into a global community and culture. If we’re unable to transcend war, it could easily be the cause for the demise of our species. (It would take less than 50 nuclear weapons to wipe out the human species and create a mass extinction event and we have over 20,000 of them on hand, ready to go.)

The good news is that war can be eliminated through our capacity to consciously experience God and channel that experience into the ongoing evolution of culture. In genuine spiritual experiences of God, we awaken the oneness of all life. Awakened, we have the power to reject war and create a world that works for all. This was the spiritual message of Jesus Christ and that good news will be the salvation of our species.

Barry Vennard is an ordained Unity minister and has served ministries in Texas. He now serves as a transition minister with the Association of Unity Churches International.



Violence?

by Thomas Shepherd

It depends on what kind of religion. Some religions, the ethical monotheisms, believe there is a solitary Supreme Being separate from and ruling over the cosmos, Who punishes evil and rewards good. The goal for an ethical monotheist is obedience—to discover what God wants and then do it. Since God both rewards and punishes, there can be no compromise. People who disagree with the true faith of God are not merely wrong, they are evil.

It's a small step from "anybody who thinks differently is evil" to a place where violence against an unbeliever is viewed as positive good, even a religious duty. Today Islam has its jihadi's, but Christianity had its Crusaders, and ancient Israel supposedly slaughtered cities full of innocent people to take possession of the Holy Land during the Exodus from Egypt. One might argue that what these three religions have in common is that they are all ethical monotheisms. My friend, the Buddhist monk Bhante Wimala, says that no army ever marched to war in the name of Buddha. True, there have been Buddhist soldiers, even all-Buddhist armies, but they fought for other goals, not to spread the teachings of Gautama Siddhartha. The ethical monotheisms of humanity have given us the worst forms of religious warfare.

Unity is a wide meadow with lots of room to explore alternative beliefs, but we have emerged from an ethical monotheism, and the body of our religious language

still bears the nail-marks of that ordeal. We use the word God as freely as any religionist, even though the meaning beneath it runs much deeper than most people have ever imagined. What if ... ?

What if God is just another way of saying Existence Itself? What if God is not a Supreme Being but a Supreme Process? What if reality is not governed by some distant Creator who dwells unchangeably in Heaven, unable to do anything but admire His static perfection? What if the cosmos is God in action, an expression of divine energy, a flurry of colors flying from the brush of the Creative Artist, and we are those colors, and we are that Artist? What if everything is in God, and God is in everything, in all Its myriad forms and expressions and possibilities? How can anything be separated from its true nature, or assail another work of art because the colors shaped a different picture? What if the nature of reality was more about becoming than being, more about creative possibilities than getting everything right?

Sure, religion has caused lots of violence. But it doesn't have to. Religion is best when it's more art than science ...

Thomas Shepherd is an ordained Unity minister and chair of Theological and Historical Studies in the Ministry and Religious Studies Department of Unity Institute. He is best known for his popular Q&A column "That's a Good Question" in *Unity Magazine*.



Regional News

Western

Participants from 17 churches—52 teens and 16 adults (6 were NGU-age) came together for the 19th Annual UNITREAT “The Power of Us” sponsored by Western Region Association of Unity Churches Youth Ministry. The Uniteens experienced and reflected on the tone they send out into the world, represented by the bamboo tubes in a huge wind chime that now hangs about 30 feet up in the trees of Cispus. It has a very organic sound as the wind meets the sail that then sends the striker against the tubes. The sail was woven by the Uniteens using recycled materials. Each group chose the tone they wished to send out into the world: La Bella Vida (the good life) Strength, Love, Harmony or Laughter. The sixth tube was left blank representing Great Mystery. Through manifesting and realizing their connections, they experience “the power of us.” The youth faced physical, emotional, social, and spiritual tests on the challenge course where both individual and group thoughts and actions affected the experience of all. Our youth are filled with insight, energy, and wisdom and are vital contributors within our spiritual communities. Thanks to Bill Brock and Ginger Landtree! —submitted by Chris Castaldi



Participants of the 19th Annual UNITREAT, sponsored by Western Region Association of Unity Churches Youth Ministry

Northwest



Correction: Donald Jennings, with his loving family, accepting the Charles Fillmore Award. Don was to receive this award at the 2009 Convention. Don passed away in August.

In Memoriam: **Hilde Wolsentholme**, licensed teacher from Portland, Oregon.

South Central

Unity Texas formed about six years ago to join the forces of all Unity churches in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex (and then beyond!) in marketing Unity. Joint advertising and publication of activities/speakers to all mailing lists were funded primarily by contributions from the churches themselves. Today, Unity Texas is focusing on two things. First, as a supportive, prayerful place for Unity ministers to share and support one another. Second, we support projects that mutually benefit and foster Unity in our congregations. Projects in the past few years include Gary Simmons’ workshops, Appreciative Inquiry with Larry Wynn, and an annual prayer breakfast open to all congregants. Unity Texas also supports the joint prayer chaplain training, that many churches in our area participate in, by providing the food. We are currently looking to plan an area-wide adult retreat to Unity Village and finding a community project.

—submitted by Linda Taylor

In Memoriam: Licensed teacher **Freda Butner** from Lee’s Summit, Missouri; and licensed teacher **Helen Hansen** from Grand Junction, Colorado.

Southwest



Suncatcher with owner Tiffany Chiu (right) and Unity minister Trish O'Connor-Weisman.

pigs, bearded dragons and even a pony! Suncatcher's owner, Tiffany Chiu, accepted the certificate given to him following the blessing by minister Trish O'Connor-Weisman. Pony rides were given to the children following the service. Due to the success of last year's event, we expect even more beloved animals this year.

Unity Church of South Bay, located in Torrance, California, will host their second annual "Blessing of the Animals," October 5, 2008. Last year's blessing brought out several dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea



Four former Association presidents/chairs enjoy time together in Prescott, Arizona, at a regional ministers' luncheon. (left to right: Jimmie Scott, Joel Baehr, Larry Swartz, and Robert Stevens)

Eastern

When an article in our local newspaper announced the appointment of a new mayor of our town, Neptune, New Jersey, we wrote a letter congratulating him and inviting him to our church. He replied in two days and came a week later to our Sunday service. He wrote in his letter, "... Thank you to you and to your congregation for the welcome, the support and the show of love that you all gave me during my visit this past Sunday. It was wonderful to not walk into a 'church' but to visit a community of people brought together by their shared beliefs, their sense of justice and their faith not only in God but in the power of love that I believe is God within us all ..."

—submitted by Joanne M. Murphy

West Central

In Memoriam: Unity minister **Waltraut Vicki Arden** from Carson City, Nevada; and licensed teacher **Linda Shupp** from Auburn, California.

Send us your regional news so we can share it with others!

Southeast

On Christmas Day, a group of 30 from Unity of the Palm Beaches in West Palm Beach, Florida, visited a local nursing home. The church team divided into groups, some visiting residents in their rooms, others singing Christmas carols in the main dining room. One gentleman said, "I know all the words, but sometimes I can't remember my own name. I guess I'll just have to go through life singing!" These beautiful people were so happy to be remembered on this glorious day. We were deeply touched by their gratitude and happiness in having us share Christmas with them.

In Memoriam: Unity minister **Connie Haines** from Clearwater, Florida.

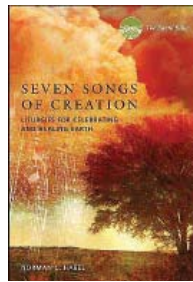


Members of Unity of the Palm Beaches sing Christmas carols at a local nursing home

Resources You Can Use

Seven Songs of Creation: Liturgies for Celebrating and Healing Earth by Norman C. Habel

Ecumenical resource for Christian worship by the editor of the Earth Bible series. Related website, www.seasonofcreation.com, has activity calendars and a wealth of worship resources available for free download.



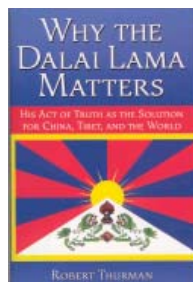
Menu for the Future: A Six Session Discussion Guide, Northwest Earth Institute, 2008

Study guide discusses how our food reaches the table, the emerging alternatives of sustainable practices and community-supported agriculture, and how to create equal access to healthy food in our communities. Other non-religiously-based study guides from the Northwest Earth Institute are designed for community and workplace discussions as well as church groups. www.nwei.org



The Compassionate Universe: The Power of the Individual to Heal the Environment by Eknath Easwaran

Shares a vision for healing our relationships with ourselves, each other, and the environment, from the author of *The Wisdom of Gandhi* and *Strength in the Storm*. Though twenty years old, Easwaran's examples of a world in need of healing are even more relevant today. For Marilyn Muehlbach's seven-week series (with bulletin inserts, affirmation cards, study guides for small discussion groups, Sunday talks and guided meditations, and setup materials)— visit www.unitynwregion.org, go to Programs/EarthCare.



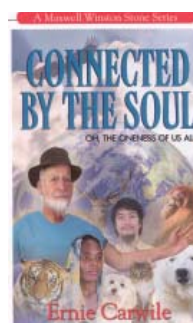
www.storyofstuff.com

A 20-minute, fast-paced, fact-filled look at the underside of our production and consumption patterns. Exposes the connections between environmental and social issues, and calls us together to create a more sustainable and just world. It'll teach you something, it'll make you laugh, and it just may change the way you look at all the stuff in your life forever.

Unity in Springfield, Illinois shares information on making their church "green." Check it out at www.unity.org, click on Network, then Info Exchange, then Green Living.

Why the Dalai Lama Matters by Robert Thurman

An extraordinary example of a life dedicated to peace, non-violence, and unity. Explores why the Dalai Lama has earned the world's love and respect and offers revealing, provocative solutions for a world in conflict, dealing with the very fundamentals of human rights and freedom.

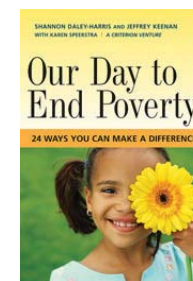


Connected by the Soul: Oh, the Oneness of Us All by Ernie Carwile

Dedicated to the connection that exists between all things, animate and inanimate, on this planet.

Our Day to End Poverty by Shannon Daley-Harris and Jeffrey Keenan

Makes the case that ending poverty can begin with small actions taken by us all throughout the course of an average day.



www.campaignforconsciousness.org

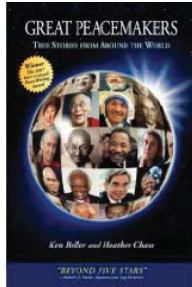
A global community utilizing conscious intention and unified affirmation as the critical force and foundation for social activism. The campaign runs annually, Sept 10 to Oct 19 with a different vision each year.

www.PeaceTodayMovie.com

View a video of Faith Rivera's song "Peace Today," produced by www.makeadifference.com.

Great Peacemakers by Ken Beller and Heather Chase

Tells the true-life stories of twenty peacemakers from around the world, including famous leaders as well as less-known individuals who are making a positive difference.



www.thrivinginunity.org

Gives all the program information for Thriving in Unity, which includes steps in going green and engaging in spiritual social action.



www.commontables.org

Common tables provides a resource for members to celebrate those things they have in common, while respecting the traditions, beliefs, and cultures that are different from their own. Members pay an annual fee to be “seated at a table” of up to eight members with different religious, spiritual and/or philosophical beliefs. The result is a greater understanding, which is believed to result in a global alternative to bias, bigotry, racism, and religious intolerance.

www.unitynwregion.org

Free downloads and information on book discounts for Unity churches.

www.easwaran.org

Information about books by Eknath Easwaran and resources of the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation.

*Go Green
Cont'd from page 27*

Learning From Experience

Those who have already initiated green programs in their churches have offered some “Dos” and “Don’ts” to help make your initial launch more successful. Below are some that might prove useful to you:

Do:

- Make sure that board and ministers are all “on board” ahead of time.
- Make decisions within the group by consensus. (“I agree, or at least I can live with it.”)
- Establish criteria for actions that are in alignment with Unity’s positive approach to life. (Example: Choose to buy locally-made products rather than staging a public boycott.)

Don’t:

- Don’t bite off more than you can chew. Small is beautiful, too! There will always be plenty of room to grow.
- Don’t exclude any teams in the church: music, youth ministry, hospitality, prayer chaplains, staff, etc.
- Don’t think you have to own your building in order to participate. We can help!
- Don’t forget to always include prayer in this God-centered work.

In becoming involved with Unity Churches International EarthCare, you are embarking on a fulfilling and energizing spiritual adventure. You have many companions on this journey who are excited to join with you in this very holy work.



Community vegetable garden at front of Unity Church in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, planted by the YOU, maintained by its Green Team

If There Is *Light* in the Soul

“If there is light in the soul, there will be beauty in the person.

If there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the home.

If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.

If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.” —Confucius

By Stephanie M. Seigh, revseigh@ptd.net

Over two thousand years ago, Confucius prescribed four stages to achieving peace in the world. “If there is light in the soul, there will be beauty in the person.” Peace ultimately begins with each one of us making a commitment to cultivating inner peace. As a young teen, I read *The Nun’s Story*, and for weeks I walked around my home and school with my hands clasped in front of me, eyes downcast, being “holy.” In recounting this story, I have to laugh at my idea of what peaceful was at that early age! Since then, I have seen that being peaceful is less a posture and more a state of being based on the practices of being present, grateful, and forgiving.

“If there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the home.”

Harmony in the home Doesn’t this phrase conjure up images of June and Ward Cleaver? Perfect parents, obedient children, an immaculate home, dinner on the table promptly at 6:00 p.m.? We recognize this as fantasy, and yet I believe we also use this as our baseline for “harmony in the home.” As such, it is impossible to attain.

Inner Peace, Harmony at Home and Nation

Learning from our personal lessons, we are able to now see that the qualities that lead to inner peace—presence, gratitude, and forgiveness—also contribute to harmony in the home. Conversely, as Martin Luther King, Jr. taught us, “The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence” Just as harmony in the home can lead to order in the nation and peace in the world, so violence in the home leads to chaos in the nation and wars between nations. We all know the statistics—abused children become abusers. Violence begets violence. It has never been more important for us to create harmony in our homes.

“If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.”

The analogy continues Through our personal commitment to peace, and the energy of love and acceptance that brings to our families, we are able to see how this will carry over into the affairs of our



nations. Our leaders will come from healthy, loving homes, where open discussion and exploration of many ideas are the norm. Nonviolence would be the rule, rather than the exception. Our focus will be on building relationships, on honoring and respecting our differing opinions and lifestyles, rather than despising and fearing those differences.

Peace in the World

“If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.” Based on the order we have created in our nations, we would choose discussion and compromise over war. Differing religions, beliefs, and traditions would be celebrated and honored between nations. We would share our natural resources between countries and continents, based on need, not power or profit. We would literally beat our swords into plowshares, converting defense spending into education, healthcare, and food. We would teach our children to “do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” a core belief found in every major tradition on the planet—and we would mean it. One person, one family, one community, one nation at a time—we can create peace in our lifetime, in a world that works for all!

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We Lifted Detroit in Prayer— Now Lift *Your* Community

by Greg Barrette

On the afternoon of Sunday, September 14, at Hart Plaza, the epicenter of the Detroit experience for over three hundred years, nearly 1000 diverse souls gathered for “I Lift Detroit in Prayer!” At this spot, the destination of the Underground Railroad that carried slaves to freedom, a powerful prayer energy was ignited that is still reverberating in the hearts and minds of the people of Detroit. This was the number-one lead story in the newspapers and news broadcasts the next day.

World Religions Pray for Detroit

At the event, which included participants from all the world religions and groups living in Detroit, only a few words were spoken—by David Crumm, editor of *Readthespirit.com* and Greg Barrette, lead minister of host church Renaissance Unity. Unity licensed teacher and founder of the Center for Enlightenment, Jane Hart, led a brief meditation, during which everyone envisioned a one word affirmative prayer for their community. As Juliaette Hamilton sang Renaissance Unity’s Gospel Truth selections, the participants lined up to write their prayers in specially designed and blessed books, inscribed with the “I Lift Detroit in



Hart Plaza’s jumbotron sign in Detroit, Michigan

Prayer” logo, which were then distributed to all the faith communities in the city by those who came.

This was the climax of a twenty-one day prayer vigil kicked off with special Sunday services at Renaissance Unity and many area churches, mosques, and spiritual communities.

The slogan “I Lift Detroit in Prayer” was emblazoned on 25,000 yellow bumper stickers and seen by over one million souls who passed by Hart Plaza’s jumbotron sign during the weeks preceding the event.

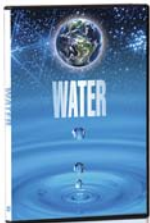
What’s Next?

We are now forming dozens of “I Lift Detroit in Prayer” Master Mind groups, which use the eight-step Master Mind prayer group format to embark on a transformative journey in our

neighborhoods. We will each say a prayer for ourselves, our family, and our community, picking one simple project to lift up our locality—such as pulling up the weeds in a median strip, baking a dinner for an elderly neighbor, or clearing out a vacant lot. Then, each week, we will hold ourselves accountable by reporting back to the group what we have done. In this powerful way, we will make a difference in our cities and towns. The format for these self-organizing groups can be found on our website, www.renaissanceunity.org. Just click on the “I Lift Detroit in Prayer” logo.

“I Lift (Your Community) in Prayer” is an opportunity to transform the consciousness of any city. The changes in Detroit have just begun!

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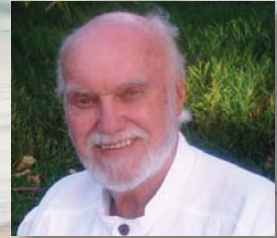
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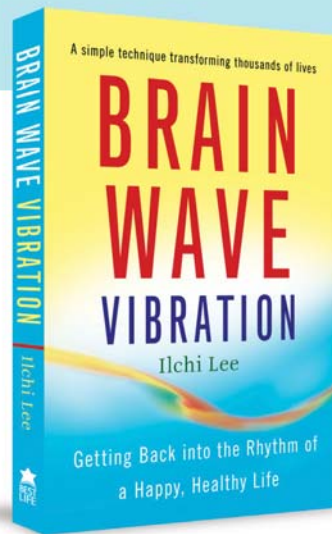
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