



Association of Unity Churches International

Contact

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June/July 2009

Thriving **in Unexpected Ways**

Enthusiastically stepping into growth and expansion

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From the Thriving in Unity
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PLUS: Church: Ministry
or Business? **and** Is Your
Website Sending the
Right Message?

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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

When we are clear, focused, and united, our impact is immense.

J

June is a big month for the Association, as our international convention takes place. We are presenting new programs and progress on our existing ones. The networking and community that we feel at convention never fails to remind me of the impact we do, in fact, have on our planet.

This issue, in a sense, reviews where we've been in this last year. The focus is Thriving in Unity (TiU 1.0), a program we introduced at Convention 2008. So many wonderful stories of growth, of fresh eyes, of transformation, came to us through this program, and we share some of them here.

People found the program heightened their group's excitement about Unity, helped congregants feel ownership for the ministry, and stretched congregations beyond the walls of the spiritual community to the larger community. Different parts of TiU 1.0 spoke especially to different ministries. As we begin the launch of Thriving in Unity 2.0, I'm excited that there has been such progress this year.

The most beautiful aspect that came through almost everyone's comments about the program was that they were inspired by sharing a program that many others in the movement were also doing. It speaks to the quote above that we've had as a theme for TiU. We are getting ever more focused on what we, the Unity movement, bring to the world that is special. And the proof is in the stories in this issue: our impact is greater when we unite.

If you haven't had the opportunity to check out the program, you'll find both 1.0 and 2.0 at www.unity.org/thrive. Whatever programs and projects you undertake this year, I see you thriving and living in the abundance of God.

Lisa Wittman, Supervising Editor
lisa@unity.org



Feedback

Have something to say about what you have read in *Contact*?

Send your comments to dom@unity.org.

Perspectives

As I finished reading the February-March 2009 issue of *Contact* magazine I noticed that the minister's reasons about teaching the Bible to our youth lacked understanding of what it really teaches. There are many simple teachings in it about life that need no metaphysics added for confusion.

We need to teach the Bible from an Easterner's point of view: Psalm 23, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." Think of David as a young shepherd boy tending his father's sheep. He had to take them to good pasture for food and still waters to drink for if the water is rough the sheep won't drink. David also had to protect them from wild animals and other dangers. The sheep knew David as a trustworthy person to follow and went wherever he led them.

The teaching from David to us is that God will take care of us just as He took care of the sheep. Here is a God you can trust for your every need.

Other teachings that need no great depth of understanding are:

"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."
"As you sow, so shall you reap."
"He that leadeth into captivity shall be led into captivity."
"He that killeth with the sword shall be killed by a sword."

Also, "God is Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Forget the metaphysics for the kids and teach them straight from the Bible. They know more than you or I think.

Norman L. Conaway

Regional News

I was reading the February/March 2009 issue of *Contact* magazine and noticed in the regional news section on page 27 there is mention of my friend, Amy Gillespie, who is working with AIDS orphans in Mozambique. Unfortunately, that blurb says she's a former member of Unity, which is not correct.

When Amy comes to Colorado Springs, it's a whirlwind of people interested in hearing updates from her as well as newcomers interested in finding out what she's been doing. But when she goes back to Mozambique, she experiences "out of sight, out of mind," so this article is rather ironic.

Sharlene Yabe, member
Unity Church in the Rockies
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Forget the metaphysics for the kids and teach them straight from the Bible.

To Thrive Is To Flourish

James Trapp, ceo@unity.org

Your Association has taken your ideas and input to create and improve programs to help you and your spiritual community to flourish in today's environment. Thriving in Unity and the Practice of Thriving are initial by-products of that input. We will continue to look for ways to improve our existing programs and services as we evolve the comprehensive leadership and ministry development offerings. Our intention is to not only meet your current needs, but to also position and tailor your Association to support visions and aspirations yet to be determined. It is an adaptive process. The willingness and the ability to adapt are essential in today's environment.

There is a maxim that says: "May you be born in interesting times." We indeed are living and experiencing interesting times.

The economic uncertainties that have unfolded over the past year have directly or indirectly affected a large swath of our planet including some of our spiritual communities. Yet such times can be the most exciting moments to practice and embody spiritual principles to help us spiritually flourish. This is particularly true when we go through what the world calls a crisis; because within the crisis usually lies a lesson or a blessing. Right now, we have the opportunity for the power within us to break free, express itself, and help us see possibilities that we may not have previously recognized. Every crisis is a disguised steppingstone to greater spiritual awareness.

Since we are a composite idea of all that God is, we have everything we need. Our task is to remove the inhibitors that are blocking what we need from expressing itself. Jesus reminds us in the Gospel of Thomas, "If you bring out that which is within you it will save you." Thriving is about releasing, revealing and bringing into full bloom that spark of divinity that is inherent in each of us and our communities. When we set this intention, we thrive.

Every crisis is a disguised steppingstone to greater spiritual awareness.

What's In A Benchmark?

Thriving in Unity provides growth opportunities for Unity ministries

For those who missed Thriving in Unity 1.0, introduced in June 2008, you may be reading this issue and wondering what all the articles are about. The program is designed for churches of every size, with or without a credentialed leader, to further their development as a spiritual community. Here's a short list of the benchmarks included:

Leadership and Vision

Share the "Thriving in Unity" video in Sunday service and add the "Unity: One Movement, Two Organizations" video and "Thriving in Unity" video to your new members classes.

Send your ministry leadership to a Thriving Ministries Model workshop (formerly integral model workshop) or sponsor a workshop at your ministry.

Outreach Initiatives

Define a welcoming practice for your ministry.

Develop a web presence or update your web presence to accurately reflect your ministry.

Schedule and hold at least one bring-a-friend Sunday.

Congregant Service Opportunities

Identify and train a ministry champion and begin implementing a Chaplaincy program at your ministry.

Plan at least one ministry-wide Spiritual Social Action event.

Congregant Spiritual Development

Hold a book study on one of these three books:

Loving What Is, Byron Katie

I of the Storm, Gary Simmons

A New Earth, Eckhart Tolle

Hold a workshop on peacemaking skills or non-violent communication.

Ministry Prosperity

Implement the Practice of Thriving Program.

Best Practices

Conduct a Green Facilities Assessment.

Track weekly worship service and class attendance.

Churches of all sizes have successfully completed the program. All materials required for the benchmark are provided when you enroll.

Sign up for the Thriving in Unity 1.0 or 2.0 any time, at no charge. Also, check out www.unity.org/thrive for more information.

Planning for Extraordinary Change

Marilyn Muehlhach
unlimitedmtm@netzero.com

What a year! What a ride! Spirit rising . . .
but not at all as we expected!

During our midyear meetings, the Future Trends Team made a report to the board and the staff leadership team. Their report was based on a book by John L. Petersen, *A Vision for 2012: Planning for Extraordinary Change* (published in early 2008). Petersen starts out talking about the breakdowns happening around us (economy, financial sector, depletion of oil, climate change, the possibility of breakdowns we haven't seen or thought of yet). Then he moves to what is breaking through (technology, alternative fuels, etc.), asserting that we don't know what most of those breakthroughs will be because they haven't happened yet. His bottom line is that in five years (i.e. by 2012) human beings will be different.

He says "In the face of almost certain uncertainty, our job is to rise to the occasion, to evolve—in our thinking, our perspectives and in our commitment to make this transition as positive as possible. We will probably become some new kind of human at the end of it all—it is that big and important."

Further along in the book, Petersen outlines three possible scenarios:

1. After a catalytic event, or series of events, we decide we must live differently. We experience a paradigm shift and rapidly embrace fundamental change, which is broad-based ... a new set of priorities will emerge.
2. A series of major global disruptions with serious degradation of institutions and systems, but almost all familiar systems remain.
3. The shocks are so great, all systems fail. We are left with no infrastructure on which to build.

During the Future Trends presentation, the board and leadership team broke into three groups, each group taking one of the scenarios above, answering two questions: "How would this affect the Association and our churches?" and "How should we respond?"

The interesting part was that all three groups came back with similar observations. They said that regardless of the scenario, change is happening. People



will feel stress and seek relief and comfort. When rapid change is happening and the familiar is breaking down, openings are created through which infinite possibility can move. But change is uncomfortable and often we try to restore equilibrium, hoping everything will return “to the way things have always been,” thus closing off that opening. The board, leadership and Future Team all agreed that it would be essential for our focus to include:

Strong **community** creates a place for people to support each other, and supporting each other will be crucial. A spiritual community offers hope, makes sense of the changes and provides a structure in which people can work together.

Prayer and Meditation connect us to a deeper, higher purpose and the life force of the universe. We must teach prayer and meditation, offer opportunities for people to pray and meditate together, and, above all, pray and meditate.

Vision—If we are to make the big leap to a world that works for all we must know what that looks like. Holding a high vision gives us a picture of what is possible, a goal to move toward, and a plan of action that will help us accomplish that goal.

John Petersen says, “The future doesn’t just happen; we make it happen. It is the product of our desires, interests, perspectives, visions, and actions. What we think and what we do makes a difference. It makes the only difference.”

I know that’s true. I’ve seen it happen. Spirit is rising in us, around us, all over the world.

As we move forward, keep your eye on what is breaking through. Let’s make this time of change count! Thank you for sharing this wonderful year with me. Thank you for the difference you make in the world.

Marilyn Muehlbach has been chair of the Association’s Board of Trustees since June 2008. A new chair will be installed at our June Convention this year.

GoToMeeting

The Association home office is using the GoToMeeting web access for online meetings. All participants can view working documents, PowerPoint presentations, collaborative projects and other information. Discussion is either by phone connection or VoIP (voice-over-internet). Keyboard and mouse control can be shared among participants or handed off between presenters.

Meetings can be scheduled in advance or for immediate access at any time. An email goes out to all participants with an access number; a click to “join a meeting” brings them aboard at the designated time.

Our board of trustees, ministry teams, and other working groups are finding this service useful. To get an idea of how it works, or for a free trial, see www.gotomeeting.com. To use the Association’s corporate service, contact Bets Kirby, bets@unity.org for additional information.

How Easy?

- **Easy Meeting Entry:** You and your attendees can join meetings in seconds, without having to set up complicated video feeds or webcams. Attendees don’t even have to register for an account.
- **Simple Feature:** Easily share keyboard and mouse control or switch presenters. Share just a certain program or your whole screen. Even record your meetings.
- **Integrated Audio:** Phone conferencing numbers are included in email invitations and on the Control Panel, and VoIP begins instantly when you start the session. For more information watch the Audio Tutorial.

Unity on the Mountain

Thrives Through Change

by Cynthia Vermillion-Foster

It has been a challenging year for Unity on the Mountain in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. We recently sold the church property—a place that had been home to this congregation for 25 years. Since there was so much history between this church and this property, it wasn't an easy decision. We discussed this situation with the board, and collectively decided to bring in a facilitator to do some strategic planning with us: the idea was to look at the issue of the building in the light of the entire context of the organization. Our facilitator did an incredible job creating a process in which everyone and all perspectives were heard. When the final vote to sell came before the congregation, 100 percent of those present voted “yes.”

An Opportunity and a Partnership

We sold the building to a wonderful organization called SISO that assists refugees in settling in Canada. They are doing much needed renovations to the building rather than tearing it down—and they gave us 6 months free rent while we looked for our next location. On the other end of the sale is another wonderful partnership—we will be leasing space from a United Church. Again the price is really good, allowing us to live within our means. We are talking about partnering with one another on outreach projects, a green team,

and who knows what else. Meanwhile, we have \$1.4 million in a guaranteed investment, providing us with investment income, a sustainable future, and resources to buy/build when the time is right.

A Life Change for the Community

The board has helped walk this church through an enormous period of change, and has demonstrated tremendous courage, great personal integrity, selfless service and an incredible dedication to this spiritual community. Collectively, we have not always gotten along. There have been challenging personality conflicts, but we have worked through them from principle and truly come together as a synergistic team in the past few months.

The board has really learned to live by the Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love Covenant, and we are beginning to see the repercussions of this in the congregation. There is less tolerance for triangulation. People are learning to go directly to those with whom they have differences. The tendency to make decisions based on individual upsets is gradually being replaced by principle and vision-based decision making. We are pleased with our progress.

Thriving in Unity

In the midst of all this change, we embraced the Association's Thriving in Unity program, and it has been tremendously helpful to us. The 11 Days of Global Unity was an exciting time of



uniting with other organizations in the Hamilton area around common goals. We are continuing to build on the relationships initiated at this time and finding ways to support each other in making a difference in our community and collectively creating a world that works for all. Our theme for 2009 is Thriving in Unity, and we kicked the year off with the Thriving in Unity series which really got people interested in and excited about the greater Unity movement.

There is even talk of joining with other churches in the area and hiring a bus to go to Overland Park for the People's Convention. This church has always enjoyed doing Friendship Sunday, but the materials in the Thriving in Unity program helped us do it even better, and to involve more of the congregation in making this event a success. People are really enjoying the Sacred Circle experience with Eckhart Tolle's *A New Earth*. And we are attracting new people to the church through this experience even though we didn't do any external promotion for this event.

Woven into the Tapestry

All the Thriving in Unity benchmarks have deepened our experience and understanding of what it means to be a community and work together to co-create our future. In fact, I would say that the Thriving in Unity program has become part of the tapestry of this organization, threads that weave us together and help us to recognize our oneness. I am deeply grateful to all the individuals who have created these materials and to the Association for holding a vision for thriving ministries and providing tools to help us all get there. Thank you!

Cynthia Vermillion-Foster serves as co-minister with her husband Don Foster at Unity on the Mountain in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.



Board of Trustees of Unity on the Mountain



Unity on the Mountain in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Excerpt from

Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love

COMMITMENTS FOR UNITY
CONGREGATIONS IN TIMES
OF DISAGREEMENT



IN THOUGHT

- Accept Conflict
- Affirm the Truth
- Commit to prayer

IN ACTION

- Go to the other
- In the spirit of humility
- Be quick to listen
- Be slow to judge
- Be willing to negotiate

IN LIFE

- Be steadfast in love
- Be open to peacemaking
- Trust the community
- Be the expression of Christ

Thriving in Murfreesboro

by Felicia Searcy

Last August we requested our Thriving in Unity program binder from the Association along with so many others in our movement, excited and eager to dig into the process. When I received it, I sat down, went through its contents and took a deep breath. As we examined it further and talked with key people in our congregation, we became excited about the systematic way it gave us to look at different aspects of our ministry. There was also something special about Unity Church of Life joining with other Unity churches all around the country that were embarking on the same journey.

We discovered that the eight-month program offered a comprehensive guide to reviewing and implementing programs and best practices in our ministry. Right away, it offered lots of opportunity for others to get involved. We saw how we already had people championing different elements of the program. So, they took their respective pieces and ran with them. I personally knew that I did not want to be in charge of every piece. That seemed counter-intuitive to the purpose of the program. The Thriving in Unity program provided a great start toward creating a healthy growing church with greater ownership and shared responsibility.

We began by attending the Thriving Ministry Model training with Gary Simmons in Nashville. Because it was so close, several church members including board members, lay leaders, and interested folks were able to be there. People became energized about the new way of doing

church that Gary shared. Since then, one of the attendees came on the board, another entered the prayer chaplain's training, and yet another has stepped into the role of team leader for our greeter's team. We continue to refer to the training as a guide for our decisions and vision for the future.

Meaning and Ownership

I then attended Lei Lanni Burt's Prayer Chaplain Training in October. I had attended her training before and tried to establish a prayer chaplain program in our church but was unsuccessful in this endeavor. But this year felt different. For some reason, the benchmark made the whole process more meaningful. It was not just another random event or activity that we were trying. We saw how the prayer chaplain piece was a vital part of what the Thriving in Unity Program was creating with all twelve benchmarks.

We saw how the benchmarks were designed to create a sense of ownership, empower leaders and instill vision and purpose throughout the ministry. Each one was powerful by itself. Taken together, they created an unstoppable force for change and transformation. The intention to create a sustainable, healthy, growing ministry was woven throughout the program. Each benchmark was designed to foster a deeper sense of spiritual awakening, greater service and shared leadership in the church.



Felicia Searcy

I attended the chaplain training again with renewed hope that as a ministry we were ready to establish this powerful program. I have since initiated our prayer chaplain's training and am excited to say that this spring Unity Church of Life will have a prayer chaplain program to offer its community.

Not Just a Check-off

As we implemented other benchmarks, we saw how they weren't simply things that we checked off but were real aids to help us shift the way we do things. For example, we have become much more intentional with our greeting practice. We had a good one in place already, and found by examining it further and sharing our insights on the benchmark sheets, we were able to see what was working and what we could do to improve things.

The Practice of Thriving was also a wonderful accomplishment. We did a seven-week Sunday prosperity series and offered the six-week class using Edwene Gaines' material and the guide offered in the binder. The program culminated with a visit from Edwene herself. It was wonderful to watch people take the leap of faith and step into tithing. As a result, many of our members share how their lives are richer and happier in all areas.

Changing Lives

Our church has had some amazing successes since implementing the program in September. Our attendance went up by eight percent for December, January, and February. Our income for the year 2008 was the highest yet since the ministry was founded eight years ago and Unity Church of Life continued to experience record-



Members participating in one of many special programs at Unity Church of Life.

breaking income during the first three months of 2009. Our events have had great attendance. Classes consistently have seen higher participation and people are becoming excited and involved. Bottom line, people's lives are changing for the better.

The Thriving in Unity program has been a wonderful way for us to look at our ministry with a different pair of eyes. It directed our attention to important elements in our ministry and helped us become more effective in our capacity to help others change their lives for the better. And isn't that what it is all about?

Felicia Searcy is the founding minister of Unity Church of Life in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where she pioneered it eight years ago. She graduated from the Association's Field Licensing Program in March of 2008 and was ordained at her church that same year. She is the author of *Trust the Chaos*, an essay featured in *Sacred Secrets*, and her latest book *Do Greater Things* published by Unity House. She is a regular featured guest on Unity.fm's "Hooked on Classics."

“ [Thriving in Unity] helped us become more effective in our capacity to help others change their lives for the better. ”

Enlightened Leaders



There is great need of leadership under Christ whose banner is love.

—Charles Fillmore



by Deborah Frownfelter

What types of leaders are needed to call forth thriving ministries in the post-modern world we live in? Research into best practices and experience tells us that the answer is enlightened leaders.

The Association home office staff has created a visionary statement that describes some of the characteristics of enlightened leaders. This statement pulls together the ideas of leaders in the Unity movement, best practices research, and leading-edge thinking:

Imagine thriving ministries in which all the leaders truly act from a place of enlightened consciousness. They embody and model spiritual principles and core values. They take the time to center in God with a daily spiritual practice that results in a confidence and calmness that permeates everything they do. They live, work, and breathe in the moment. Being an enlightened leader is just that—being. It is not only what these leaders do and how they do it, but the inner source from which they operate. Their leadership comes from within.

Enlightened leaders demonstrate self-awareness. They listen, observe and process their own behavior and assumptions, and take responsibility for how their presence and involvement make a difference. As enlightened leaders, they build trust through their integrity and authenticity. While looking to what is possible, they move from a point of purpose rather than a point of view.

Enlightened leaders draw forth the shared vision and mission from the collective

community, then inspire and generate highly energized sustained action to achieve them. As leaders they know that they do not need to have all the answers; rather they know to ask powerful questions and create an environment that allows the divine answers to emerge from within others. It is in the voice of the many or in the voice of just one that wisdom may be revealed. They listen carefully while remembering to give credit where credit is due.

Enlightened leaders foster transformation. They ignite the fire of Spirit and creative flow within people, maximizing their capacity to grow and thrive. They act as the catalyst to help others remember who they already are. Enlightened leaders mine the treasures within others and create environments in which others can shine and put their gifts and passion to good use. They serve as coaches and mentors as they inspire, guide and support people to find and respond to their inner call to serve and take action. They empower effective teams.

Enlightened leaders seek out and embrace change and shift and welcome the opportunities it brings. As leaders, they help others cope, engage, and flourish as they grow through transitions. They identify tensions and incongruities and guide their resolution. They facilitate shifts in consciousness and perspective which liberate people



to try new things and together shape a world that works for all.

Enlightened leaders serve in all sizes and types of ministries and are not limited to a certain age or status. They are youth, prayer chaplains, ministry team leaders, board members, licensed Unity teachers, ordained ministers, and everyone else who, through loving and abundant service, create the thriving ministry all enjoy.

Enlightened leadership involves shifts from traditional ways of leading. The Enlightened Leaders Program, part of the Transformation Experience project, will provide opportunities to explore those shifts together with others in your ministry's leadership team, to deepen your ability to live Unity principles, to develop new mind—and skill—sets. It will engage you and others in your ministry leadership team in both individual and team development projects that will foster a greater experience of thriving in your spiritual community.

The Enlightened Leaders Program will begin this fall. If you are interested in participating, go to our website, www.thetransformationexperience.org for information about programs and registration, or contact Shannah McAleer, Director of Leadership and Ministry Development, leadership@unity.org.

Contact June/July 2009 • www.unity.org

Thriving Ministry Model™

Strategies for Creating Thriving, Coherent, and Integral Ministries

Experience the power of church transformation with The Thriving Ministry Model™, a new paradigm for ministry growth and development based on the Integral theory of Ken Wilber. With the groundbreaking research of Gary Simmons, this seminar offers high impact strategies to help you increase your congregation's support of its ministry.

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A Changed Ministry Emerges from the Thriving in Unity Program

by Bonnie Jean Young and Bonnie L. Staebler
When the Association of Unity Churches announced its Thriving in Unity program, Unity of Salem embraced the concept. The idea of “co-creating a world that works for all” fit beautifully with our mission of “empowering people and building community.” We had a small paid staff and a large, willing group of volunteers. The twelve required benchmarks would add inspiration to our volunteers, momentum to our progress and vital content to our new focus. Little did we know, it would also change our ministry forever.

Teams and Leaders Reinvented

The first change was how we set up the church calendar. Our past practice was to schedule events as they arose. As a result of the benchmarks, the senior minister, Georgie Richardson, her associate minister, and Bonnie Jean Young, whom we appointed Ministry Champion for the program, met to infuse the calendar with required benchmark events. We produced a plan of events for an entire year. Instead of posting events by the month, the plan for the full year was posted in the office and each event was linked to a benchmark outcome.

In order to accomplish the tasks associated with the benchmarks, it was necessary to make changes in our team structure. We formed new teams, increased the size



Senior minister
Georgie Richardson,
and licensed teacher
Diana Moskal visit
with Gary Simmons.

of existing teams and changed the style of leadership within our teams. Working with volunteers demands a more inclusive, gentle approach than most secular teams. We knew this process called for additional skills in our leadership group.

To assist in the implementation of the new approaches, we appointed a Director of Leadership Development. Team leaders were enrolled in a class that provided information on group processes, decision-making, adult learning characteristics, and leadership styles.

We were amazed at changes in team functions. Advisory groups were formed in some of the larger teams, such as our chaplains. New leadership collaborations were formed. For example, the buildings

and grounds team decided to form a leadership triad. The sacred circle team added a co-leader to its structure. The choir changed its commitment from special events to monthly performances. Readers theater membership increased from twelve to twenty-five members. Volunteer clean-up days increased in number from an average of nine people to over thirty-five. Additional volunteer teachers were added to our youth education program and a new director was hired.

Knowing the Community

But perhaps the greatest change occurred as a result of our determination to increase contact with our greater community. Instead of 100 teddy bears at Christmas given to our local homeless program, 269 bears were collected and distributed. For the first time we painted fire hydrants for the city of Salem. We opened our nine acres to host the First Annual Interfaith Peace Festival. This was part of the “11 Days of Oneness Celebration” and planned as a way to meet the requirements of Benchmark 7. To our surprise over 400 people attended. We found our church featured on the front page of the local newspaper. Presenters ranged from the Buddhist monks to the Apache Crown Dancers. Eleven different faiths were represented. Our team has remained intact and is hard at work preparing for our Second Annual Interfaith Peace Festival. Our greater Salem community knows us now and we know them much better than ever before.

Our grounds have changed considerably as well. We built a labyrinth for meditation, a gazebo for wedding ceremonies, a meditation grove for silent prayer, a pea patch community garden for growing food for the community, and an abundance corner in our bookstore for members in need of food and grocery items. Our new backyard wildlife group is working diligently to obtain national certification. We have assessed our grounds and buildings for eco-friendly practices and products. We have beautified our grounds with donated trees, shrubs, and flowers.

Extending the Welcome Further

As for our Sunday services, we have revamped our welcoming practices to include a new “host” position to assist new families in finding classes for their children. We have increased our greeters from three to seven every week. We greet from the parking lot to the exit ramp. We have updated our welcome packets to include CD’s and DVD’s of church programs and a \$10 gift certificate to our bookstore.

In our Living Legacy multi-media project, we interviewed long-standing members as to what attracted and sustained them at our church. This helped our welcoming team to understand what people valued about our church and to implement those aspects

in our welcoming procedures. We were surprised by the number of new people who were attracted to the church through our web page and newsletter. As a result, we hired a newsletter and web page editor. This led to a revitalized web page and newsletter in color.

We created several “bring a friend” events around holidays such as Christmas, Easter, Mother’s Day, Thanksgiving, and “Bring a Friend” Sunday. Our new members class and ceremony were completely redesigned. Participants were enrolled in a weekly class with a personal mentor. New members were presented to the congregation by their mentors, presented a certificate of membership from the minister, and were blessed by the congregation. We used the time to renew our own members as well.

Continued on page 27



Apache Crown Dancers

The Transformation Experience: What's New?



And all of us,
with unveiled
faces, seeing
the glory of the
Lord as though
reflected in a
mirror, are being
transformed into
the same image
from one degree
of glory to
another: for this
comes from the
Lord, the Spirit.

—2 Cor 3:18

by Shannah McAleer

What's new with the Transformation Experience? Here are developments to date:

- Application forms and follow-up online survey completed by each of the ministry teams applying.
- Telephone contact by members of the Transformation Experience Pilot Group Application Review Team (TEPGART, made up of field ministers).
- Financial Stability Index filled out by those responsible for maintaining the finances of the church. Review of financial records of applicants by one of the members of the TEPGART.
- Notification of results of vetting process and ministries included in the lottery for possible selection of up to 15 members as Pilot Teams.

By nature a pilot program is a grand experiment. We believe that the methods and ideas that have come into place to create this opportunity will lead to increased numbers of thriving churches and enlightened leaders, and yet it is the experiment and journey itself that is the greatest gift of all.

Acknowledgments and Thanks

We are thrilled to be holding the lottery during the business meeting at the June Convention 2009! A special thank you to the field ministers who have made up the TEPGART: Julie Armour, Bonny Gilbert-Ashe, Pat Bassey, and Carla McClelland.

Other members of the team include: Donna Dearmore and Barbara O'Hearne who did not participate in the screening process, but actively participated in its creation. The minds behind the project, Gary Simmons and Deborah Frownfelter, from the home office, offered invaluable guidance and creativity from day one in this grand experiment. Without the hard work of each of these individuals and the vision and support of the Association leadership such as James Trapp and Marilyn Meuhlbach (chair of the board of trustees) and the entire board of trustees, this would not be possible. Thank you to all who have supported the project so generously with finances, love, encouragement, talent and prayer.

We also acknowledge Cindy Henson and Mark Weaver, Toni Boehm, and Rima Bonario, whose creative powers as consultants drew us deeper into the experience.

Together we can accomplish anything when we dare to try things we have never tried before. Join us during the business meeting at the 2009 convention for the pilot churches selection.



Parliament of the World's Religions Takes Place Down Under

The 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions is scheduled for December 3–9 in Melbourne, Australia—summertime Down Under. New Thought organizations are working collaboratively to make presentations at the Parliament. Participating are the Association of Unity Churches International and Unity, Association for Global New Thought, United Centers for Spiritual Living, International Centers for Spiritual Living (formerly Religious Science International), Agape International Spiritual Center, International New Thought Alliance, and Universal Foundation for Spiritual Living.

A Wide Welcome

The Australasian Association of Unity Leaders and Unity ministries in Australia and New Zealand are excited about the opportunity to host some special events for visiting ministers and leaders. Unity of Melbourne reports it has been active on the local Community Advisory Committee, a group dealing with the smaller details of organizing an enormous event like the Parliament.

“Our members have also attended the first pre-parliament event which launched the two major themes of healing the earth and ‘hearing’ each other,” says William Livingston, minister at Unity of Melbourne. “We really enjoyed the concert of international music and the meal prepared by the Sikh community. As the year progresses, our sense of anticipation is mounting!”

The Melbourne centre is planning to hold an open house for anyone who would like to get away from their hotel, or take a break from the ongoing official program. Their invitation states, “We can offer you a friendly home environment and some relaxation time, while you make some new Unity friends. You may even enjoy meditating in our peaceful church for a while. Visit us at your convenience. We will be here to greet and make you feel welcome. Just call first and let us know you would like

to visit. Individuals or groups, you are all welcome!” They will also welcome Unity visitors at several Sunday services on December 6, with guests invited to talk at each service.

Sydney and Beyond

Ministries in Sydney are also eagerly anticipating visits to their beautiful city from parliament attendees. Long-time minister Grace Merrick notes that Unity has been in Australia since the 1930s. Some attendees may make the side trip to visit with centers in New Zealand.

Additional information about plans from participating Australasian ministries will be forthcoming. Delegates from several centers will attend the pre-conference meeting of New Thought delegates on December 2 and will also attend the Parliament.



Five Ways to Expand Your Ministry's Reach on the Web

by Angie Olson

The Internet offers more ways to reach congregants than ever before. Take your church's message worldwide with these five steps.

1. Host a Blog. Blogs are an easy way for ministers to share news and spiritual messages. They also allow congregants to communicate with church leaders and each other. Nervous about blogging? Websites such as wordpress.org or blogger.com provide easy instructions for novice bloggers. Remember to post new material frequently, and refer people to your blog.

2. Record and Post Weekly Lessons. Videotape or record weekly lessons and post them on your church's website. Potential congregants can see what your church is like, and others can access your spiritual messages 24/7. More than 50 Unity churches already feature podcasts or recordings on their websites.

3. Use unity.org to Promote Your Church. The Association of Unity Churches International and Unity School of Christianity have created one unified web presence for the Unity movement at www.unity.org. The site offers additional ways for you to promote your spiritual community.

List your church website in the "Find a Church" database. Visit www.unity.org/FindAChurch.

Submit original articles and testimonials for review and potential posting.

Submit your church's library of recorded lessons for listing on the "Church Podcast" page. See www.unity.org/homepageArchive/podcast.html.

Visit www.unity.org/homepageArchive/blogs.html to see the latest Unity blogs. You may also submit your own Unity blog for listing.

(For guidance on submitting information to unity.org, contact Angie Olson at olsonar@unityonline.org.)

4. Host a Radio Program on unity.fm. Unity's Internet-based radio network, unity.fm, offers a unique opportunity for Unity ministers and licensed teachers to extend their reach. The network currently offers 20 original programs a week. Go to www.unity.fm and click "become a host" to learn more.

5. Use Social Networking. Social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter are changing the way people connect, communicate and do business. You can create pages on these sites for your church or spiritual group and include news, photos, recordings and contact information. Your congregants can add these pages to their list of "friends" and share the pages with others.

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.

Unity Center for Spiritual Living (UCSL) Thriving in Unexpected Ways!

By Judi Venturini, revjudi@ptd.net

Early in 2008, I set the intention that the ministry I pioneered three years earlier would buy into the vision of this ministry and step boldly into commitment. Up to then, everyone loved UCSL—but even my steering committee lacked the spirit necessary to take UCSL to its next step. As a result, I decided to invite my steering committee to attend the Thriving Ministry Model Workshop facilitated by Gary Simmons in May, 2008, at Unity Spiritual Center, Asbury, New Jersey. The results were greater than I could have imagined! One hundred percent commitment from every member to grow UCSL into something awesome—and the results of that commitment have shown up in every corner of our ministry: more people, more income, more enthusiasm and lots of volunteers.

Implementing the Model

Since that time, we have implemented the Thriving Ministries Model for our budding ministry—only to quickly find out that in order to “thrive” we would have to relocate! We all knew that the day would come that we would have to leave our comfortable nest—a beautiful community room where we held our services, a large room for Sunday school, a kitchen, and a storage closet—located in a green building in the middle of the community I came to pioneer—and all for free. Now we have been given the task to find a new spiritual home by June 2009.

At a community meeting held on January 18, our members discussed this potential move and explored how we will go about finding our new space. One person echoed everyone’s feelings when she said, “We cannot thrive here. We have to find the right environment to thrive.” Another said, “Thank you God for everything!”

After much discussion the group decided that we want to find a space that is more than a sanctuary for Sunday services—one that can be utilized for our Namaste’ café and bookstore. One that can embrace a project that is bigger than ourselves and that supports a social justice issue. The ever-increasing needs



around homelessness, especially when it involves woman and children, seemed to speak to our hearts. A place where we can offer holistic services, classes, workshops and where spiritual cinema can be part of this burgeoning ministry—a place that will become a bridge to those who live in the north and south of Bethlehem and all areas of Lehigh Valley—a place that will support our humanity and express our spirituality. And this is the very beginning.

Thriving in Unity

As part of the Thriving in Unity project, our congregation is addressing twelve benchmarks given to us by the Association of Unity Churches International and we are enthusiastically stepping into this energetic field of growth and expansion for our Unity movement.

Continued on page 27

Practicing Thriving Transforms Ministry One Benchmark at a Time

by Sheryl Padgett

When I was first presented with the Thriving in Unity program I was somewhat skeptical. Would a church our size (around 50) have the energy to complete the requirements? Would the program be geared towards a larger congregation? Would there be clear steps and goals? Would it produce tangible results? Was this yet another program which will end up on the shelf in a couple of years? With the wary consensus of the board, we signed up. My skepticism waned when I received the handbook. Each benchmark has a clear focus and set of steps to accomplish as well as having plenty of resources on a CD and the Association website. Best of all, the goals were achievable regardless of size and resources.

What are the results? After showing the Thriving in Unity DVD during the service, one woman remarked how she felt connected to the Unity movement in a way she never had before. The environmental assessment made us aware of simple steps we can take to become better stewards of our earth. We reviewed our welcoming practices for ways to make the Sunday experience one of connection and acceptance. A simple “welcome home” sign placed in the foyer of the church brought in a new member.

A Deeper Level

The greatest impact on our organization came at a deeper level. *The Work*, *The Four Spiritual Laws of Prosperity*, and *The I of the Storm* were all catalysts for old patterns to be released and a new sense of personal responsibility to emerge. A shift occurred, not just in participation, but at all levels. There was a new transparency and honesty about the board in which even tough issues were dealt with openly without making anyone “an enemy” or taking it personally. Gossip and triangulating were met by the leadership through encouraging people to speak directly with the person involved. I



A time of fellowship.



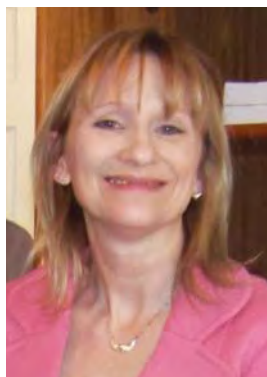
Children's Choir

felt supported in a way I never had before and at the same time, called to a greater expression of “who I came here to be.”

Growth from Inside Out

Thriving in Unity is not a program designed to boost attendance and revenue—though it increases that possibility. As I shared with members in my congregation, Thriving in Unity brings the principles we talk about every week into all aspects of the community. This program has helped us to improve on what we already do well and become more aware of ways in which we can do other things in excellence. Thriving in Unity creates growth from the inside out—and isn't that at the heart of what Unity is all about?

Sheryl Padgett, ordained in 1997, has been the leader at Christ Church Unity in Augusta, Georgia, for over six years. She comes from a background of engineering.



A Congregation *Led by Spirit*

by Beth Kuntz

Today, Unity of Dayton is a thriving, growing congregation that has united together in realization of the divine family formed by every person on the planet. We have come far as individuals and as a spiritual community. Last year at this time, we were \$27,000 in debt and attendance was significantly low each Sunday at the two services we had.



A small group of us met on Good Friday 2008. We shared a simple meal of bread, soup, and salad together, and prayed, placing our trust in God's leadership and having faith in Spirit to see our church through whatever was to come. That night was the beginning of a year filled not just with challenges, but the overcoming of those challenges. As essential positions were opened, those positions were filled, and thanks to the wonderful administrator we were blessed with, the necessary cuts were made to our spending and adjustments were made to begin paying off our debt. We are grateful for our Youth and Family Ministry Coordinator and all of the serving souls that share as we welcome more and more youth to come and grow with us!

Recently we had our Annual Meeting, and it seemed to take on a celebratory nature as we looked at where we have been and where we are headed. We feel positive and excited about our future, knowing that it is the presence and power of God that is binding us closer together in Spirit. May each of us, as we at Dayton continue to, realize that it is not one person who makes a church function, but it is each individual sharing the gifts they have been given and uniting together to serve God through teaching Truth and loving people.

Thriving Through Outreach

Unity Church Builds Its Future

by Lynn O'Dell

Often small churches feel that their outreach also has to be small. They ask “What can we do?” As the minister, I have heard this question from smaller churches and in the halls of my own ministry, Unity of Toledo. Edward Lorenz expounded on a theory he called “The Butterfly Effect:” the idea that the flap of a butterfly’s wings can alter weather patterns across the globe. According to Wikipedia, “The butterfly effect is a phrase that encapsulates the more technical notion of sensitive dependence on initial conditions in chaos theory. Small variations of the initial condition of a dynamical system may produce large variations in the long term behavior of the system.” Just as David defeated Goliath, small churches can produce large effects by shifting the question to, “What is ours to do?”

Unity of Toledo has participated in several smaller outreach projects over the years. At Christmas we collect bears for Lucas County Children’s Services, a small gesture that impacts hundreds of children each year by asking our members to bring a bear or two to church. Our women’s group makes Easter baskets, Valentine gifts and Christmas packages for the home bound members of Unity of Toledo.

Signs of Health

A sign of a healthy congregation is when the members look beyond themselves and see where help is needed by the greater community. In 2006, we wrote new mission, vision and values statements, which include, “We live our commitment to local and global welfare through prayer and partnership.” As we began to grow into this vision, we knew 2008 was the year to step out of our comfort zone and make a commitment to reach out.

In 2003, the Multi-Faith Council of Northwest Ohio decided to sponsor a Habitat for Humanity build, bringing together fourteen different faiths for one big outreach project. The last several years Unity of Toledo has had one or two members participating. The 2008 build was our opportunity to really get the church involved. We put a link to the registration form on our new website, passed around sign-up sheets, and touted it every Sunday. Twenty-four people from the congregation signed up to participate, a full third of our regular Sunday attendance. Even though our primary workday was rained out, we still had much more participation than in years past.



Photo by Judy Troutman

Lynn O'Dell hard at work.

A Sense of Connection

Judy Troutman of the MultiFaith Council of Northwest Ohio, said, “The MultiFaith Habitat Builds have been an excellent way to really engage people of different faith traditions together in a common purpose. A lot of interfaith work is fairly academic and head level. The Habitat Builds engage at heart level. Many people see a common set of values and spiritual intention.”

Habitat Builds have a place for everyone to serve. Builds are an outreach project in which every member of the church can participate. Young people were working side-by-side with 70+ year-old-women preparing meals and giving the home a final cleaning. Men and women were working together installing siding on the exterior of the house and painting the interior. With the Multifaith Council sponsoring the build, our members worked alongside members from the Mosque, Brethren, United Methodist, Unitarian and Jewish communities. Working side-by-side with each other and individuals from other faiths strengthens our sense of connection with something much, much larger than Unity of Toledo.

Building as Metaphor

Leigh Macaro, our bookstore manager said, “I never realized how much went into building a house and I only saw a small part of that process. I guess the same is true of building a family, a friendship, or a community. I think this experience has helped me to recognize that my relationships are so much more than the work my hands alone do.”

The first step in any building process is clearing the area and preparing the ground for the foundation. We begin to build community by removing all that stands in our way. Next, you install the plumbing and pour the foundation. We put in place the practices that allow us to remain in the flow after the foundation



Photo by Judy Troutman

Unity church members worked alongside members from other faiths for a common cause.



Photo by Judy Troutman

Leigh Macaro, bookstore manager at Unity of Toledo.

is set. Then the framing, wiring and walls go in, the support and the energy begin to form within the community. On the outside, the roof and siding provide lasting protection from unpredictable midwest weather.

The gathering community creates a sense of wellbeing that spreads beyond the walls of the church. On the inside, the paint, flooring and cabinetry create a sense of a new beginning. Stepping outside of ourselves facilitates an ongoing flow of new energy throughout the church community. Finally, we hold a dedication of this new home for a family whose hands helped in the building. As we have worked through each of the Thriving in Unity benchmarks, we have seen our “home” built from the ground up by our church family.

Working on this build together has opened the door to service for us as a community, making outreach a part of the foundation upon which we can build our dream home.

Lynn O’Dell has been senior minister at Unity of Toledo since 2006.

A Sense of Unity in Oklahoma City

by Patrick McAndrew

Over the past seven months, I have had the extraordinary delight of working with the Association's new Thriving in Unity program. It has truly helped to point our spiritual community in the right direction, or perhaps it would be better to say, it has given us a very positive charged energy.

As a Unity minister, and someone who is always down in the ministerial trenches hard at work, I sometimes struggle with knowing what might be the next best book, or the right program or class series to help inspire my congregation. This year the Association helped me to decide what class series, programs and projects our spiritual community would become involved in with the Thriving in Unity program; and they gave me an outline on how to do it. Wow! No one has ever helped me by giving me an outline for classes and projects before.

Granted, some of the classes and programs we had already done earlier in the year, but that just let me know that I was on the right track with my ministry. The other awesome part of the program was that it didn't come down with the iron hand as some theologies might do. It never stated that I had to do these classes, programs and projects in precisely the way that "they described." Rather it gave me and my community the flexibility to put our unique perspective and style into their implementation.

The Most Important Growth

I thoroughly enjoyed several programs that were new to me, especially the BePeace program taught by Rita Marie Johnson at Unity Village this past January. We are now laying the foundation for it to become a permanent part of our ministry. Currently we are immersed in "The Work" presented in Byron Katie's *Loving What Is*. However, the part of the Thriving In Unity program I believe my spiritual community benefited most from was knowing and feeling the sense of connection with hundreds of Unity churches around the country who were involved in the same program.



This sense of unity is not always felt in our Unity churches, especially out here in Oklahoma City where we, outside of our sister church in Norman, are the only Unity church for 120 miles in any direction. Sometimes it can get to feeling a little lonely in Unity, if we don't pause to realize and embrace that we are part of a much larger transformational movement.

Transformation Sweeps the Country

Yes, our Unity movement is, as CEO James Trapp said in the introduction of the program, on "the leading edge of a spiritual transformation" that is sweeping across the country. I believe that great awakening is at the core of our country's economic and cultural woes, and that we need to stop playing small and unite so that we can shine our light, Unity's light, into the darkness. The time is now to be One in Unity.

Patrick McAndrew was ordained in 1997, and has served at Unity Church of Oklahoma for the past nine years. He also serves as the vice president for the Interfaith Alliance of Oklahoma, on Association of Unity Churches' Licensing and Ordination Ministry Team, and with the Association's Field Licensing Program. Patrick is author of a new book, titled, *The Miracle Before Your Eyes*, about his own spiritual transformation, and is now looking for a publisher.

A Changed Ministry
Continued from page 17

To visually document our benchmark progress for the web and newsletter, we appointed a volunteer team of photographers. This proved to be highly reinforcing to our congregation as activities were featured in the newsletter, web page, and during the multi-media pre-service presentation on Sunday. Even the camera-shy participated with various levels of enthusiasm. New smiles appeared every week. In addition, we increased our media offerings to include the Deepak Chopra series, Wayne Dyer's presentation on finding your life purpose, a class and workshop on Dr. Sha's *Power of Soul* text, and the Abraham DVD series, *Ask And It Is Given* and *The Secret*.

Beyond Events, Structure and Outcomes

The changes that occurred, however, went beyond events, organizational structure, and outcomes. Participating members changed on a personal level. Despite the challenge of collecting individual tracking sheets, we used them to play a vital role in the individual ownership of the program. It was clear from the beginning that a personal commitment of many members was needed to sustain the level of change we were undertaking.

It was not enough for our congregation to change our church. Individuals had to assume the responsibility of applying the new content in their own lives. When we documented specific accomplishments through the individual tracking sheets, we applied the new practices. Application assures continuation. For example, the tracking sheets on the eco-friendly practices illustrated that congregants were generalizing these practices to their homes. The Fifth Unity Principle, "knowing and understanding the laws of life are not enough; a person must also live the Truth that he or she knows," was vitally important to us. Our Champion spoke to this often and a total of 49 individuals signed up to complete the benchmarks as individuals.

Forty-nine of us, who chose the route of personal commitment, recognize that our benchmark experience has gone far beyond an activity level. The changes have been lock-stitched into the very fabric of our church life. We have changed our policies, practices, and organizational structure, as well as our physical surroundings, leadership styles, and the depth of our personal commitment to our church.

Finally, we are very grateful for the Thriving in Unity program. We acknowledge that our changes may not have occurred without the leadership of our Association. It is certain the changes would not have been as rapid or as far reaching. The structure, assistance,



Unity Kid's Church Clean-up Day.

and materials provided to us, proved to be the vehicle for change that came to us at a pivotal time in our development.

Dr. Bonnie Young is the president of the board of Unity of Salem and serves as the ministry champion for the Thriving in Unity program. She is a retired professor from Western Oregon State University. Dr. Bonnie L. Staebler is the director of Leadership Development of Unity of Salem, a retired elementary school principal, and an adjunct professor at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon.

Thriving in Unexpected Ways!

Continued from page 21

Making a powerful intention to thrive causes change, and with change comes the realization that the old must pass away so something new may be born. This is what Jesus meant when he said in Luke 5: 37-38, "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskin." So we are excited to let go and let God! From the standards of the world, this might seem improbable—but UCSL knows that with God all things are possible.

Ordained in 1992, Judi worked at your Association's home office as coordinator of the Year of the Child and later as the national consultant for children and Uniteens. Prior to pioneering UCSL, she served as associate minister at Unity Christ Center in Gaithersburg, Maryland, and senior minister at Unity of Lehigh Valley in Emmaus, Pennsylvania.

Unity in England— A Small, But Mighty Minority

by Doreen Davenport

Here in England we have, since the reign of Henry VIII, had an established Christian church. There are and have been churches in every town and city, and in the early days life for the average person revolved around the church calendar and the Julian calendar.

Up to the reign of Henry VIII, the church was under papal authority, and after the English reformation the church gained political support and developed its own movement. Over the centuries a vibrant nonconformist church community arose including the Methodists, Quakers, and others. In more recent times, the established church has sat side by side with a wide range of Christian and other faiths.

Church attendance in the established church and in the nonconformist churches is not high; however, half the people in England consider themselves Christian, 24 percent say they are spiritual but do not belong to a particular organization. All denominations are seeking to find a way to attract and engage people in active church communities.

Seeking the Special Spark

From this, one could assume that interest in things spiritual is very low. However, there have always been people who have

believed there is more to life than purely material concerns. This has often led them to seek that extra special spark that they feel is missing in organized religion. Talking to individuals, we find that there is a strong belief in a power and intelligence beyond man. They want to find the secret and learn how to apply this in their lives so that they may enjoy a more fulfilled and peace filled life.

Unity was and is a minority group here in England. It has inspired and quickened individuals through lectures, literature, classes and prayer. Many people have been stirred to apply the teachings of Unity and to find a greater understanding of their true potential. We draw people from all walks of life, backgrounds, and religious beliefs through our prayer ministry and many come back again and again, coming to know and live the Truths in their daily lives.

We print and distribute *Daily Word* from Maidenhead, Berkshire, and have the Silent Unity Prayer ministry manned by trained workers, many who are volunteers. In addition we run classes and courses for credit linked with the Association of Unity Leaders—there are several home groups and two active centers.



Financial Statement

FOR THE PERIOD OF
10/1/2008 TO 3/31/2009

Tested Daily

I do believe it requires a certain type of person to serve in a country where there is already an established church. I feel it requires a person who has courage, inner strength and a real dedication and deep commitment to the teachings we love and live by, for like all ministers, we are being put to the test daily.

I am sure that many of you who have gone out to do pioneer work in the field will be able to relate to much of what I have said. We have all had days when we seem to be standing still. Days when, like Myrtle Fillmore, we ask, "will our faith hold out?" when the hours we put into the work does not seem to warrant the response we receive. This happens here, and this is when we have to take a step back and remind ourselves that this is the Father's work; we are merely channels through which He flows. I believe that our ministers and teachers are all dedicated to this end.

Doreen Davenport, the director of Silent Unity Maidenhead, England, from 1977 to 2007, retired in 2007. She and her husband trained at Unity Village in 1958, and went back to England in 1960. 1970 found them in Oakton, Virginia, for seven years. They returned to England in 1977 to continue their life's work.

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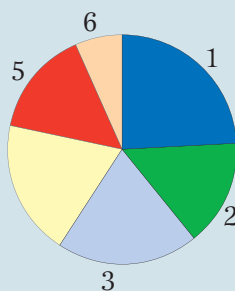
email robert@yourspiritualreportcard.com

(This is a consciousness test using kinesiology)

	Actual (YTD)	Annual Budget
Love Offerings (Undesignated)	\$ 1,092,229	\$ 1,721,277
Love Offerings (Designated)	274,491	18,700
Grant Incomes	0	175,000
Program Incomes	207,052	407,880
Total Revenues	\$ 1,573,772	\$ 1,509,018
Less: Tithe Paid (on undesignated donations)	(124,731)	(172,128)
Program Expenses	(1,191,597)	(1,817,594)
Support Expenses	(385,954)	(606,841)
Total Expenditures	\$(1,702,282)	\$(1,638,112)
Increase from Operation	\$ (128,510)	\$ (129,094)
Capital Expenditure and Adjustment	29,450	28,677
Net Cash Flow	(99,060)	(100,417)

In order to fully implement the programs called for in the strategic plan, we must reach our budgeted funding. The current revenue shortfall for this period is \$629,048.

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?

10/1/2008 to 3/31/2009

Unity Institute	28,737.14
Silent Unity	14,150.06
Unity	23,953.59
Subtotal Unity	\$66,840.79
Complaint-Free World	\$7,727.59
Unity work in South Africa	6,313.19
<i>The Secret</i>	1,414.40
International New Thought Alliance	8,704.96
Association for Global New Thought	11,096.74
Academy for Peace of Costa Rica	8,704.96
The I Am Foundation	5,657.63
Total	\$124,730.95

The *Thriving* Ministry Model™

by Gary Simmons, Th.D.

The application of Ken Wilber's integral theory to issues of church growth and development has led to the formulation of the Thriving Ministry Model—a whole system framework that focuses on growing consciousness and transforming lives. In a recent conversation with Ken, I shared how Unity and the New Thought movement are using integral principles to create a new paradigm of ministry. He was pleased to learn that we are in the midst of putting theory into practice with the launch of our Pilot Program for the Transformation Experience.

Applying Integral Theory

While integral theory can be a challenging subject, its application allows us to understand ministry as living system and map its development in terms of evolving organization, relational dynamics, cultural imperatives, and leadership intentionality. Within each of the developmental domains (quadrants, shown on page 31) it is possible to suggest developmental milestones. In the organizational quadrant, for instance, the developmental line of organizational structures represents the movement from simple to complex; from top down to bottom up. In the relational quadrant, social systems evolve from family to egalitarian systems. Congregational identity (Culture) evolves from pastor- or minister-centered to community-centered.

And in the consciousness quadrant, leadership intentionality shifts from being steeped in predict and control strategies to leading from purpose. Each of these movements or shifts in all of the quadrants comprise the “tetra-evolution”—moving from the pastor/flock model of ministry to the community-centric thriving ministry model.

As Within...

Another key principle to the integral approach is summed up in the saying: As within, so without; as above, so below. The left and right hand quadrants represent the interior and exterior elements of the ministry—the Being and Doing poles of the living system. The upper and lower quadrants represent the Agency and Community dynamics of ministry. Agency pertains to leadership and the executive aspects of the ministry such as organizational structures, practices, and systems. Community refers to the dynamics of people within the context of congregational identity, values, history, relationships, care-giving systems, and conflict norms.

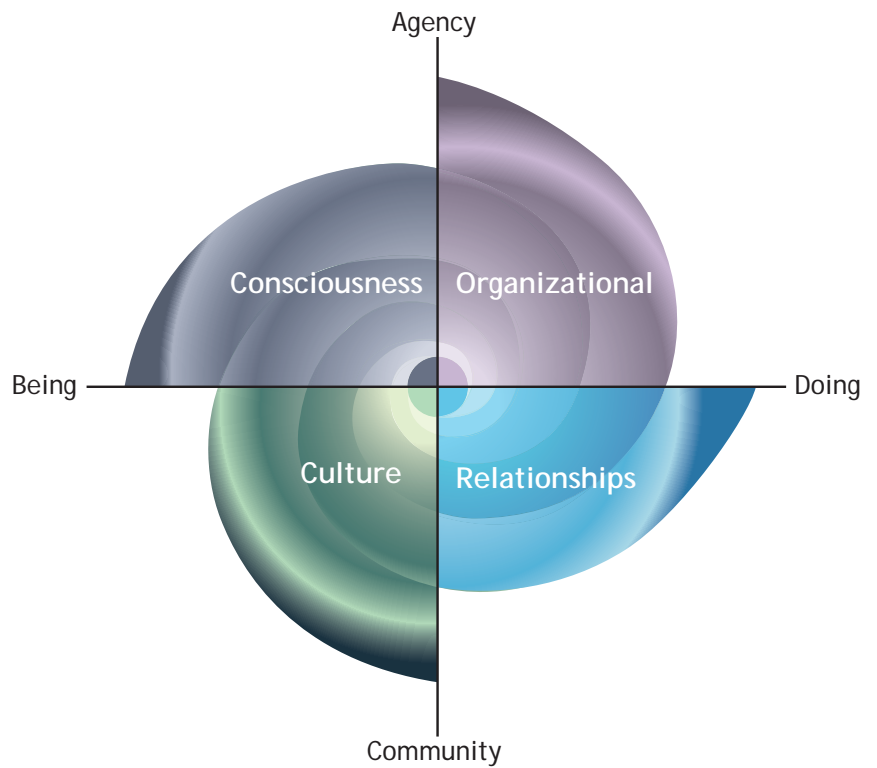
With regard to “as within, so without,” whatever is happening in the doing of ministry arises from the ministry's culture and the consciousness of its leadership (being). With respect to “as above, so below,” the demonstration and capability of the Community cannot exceed the



Agency of the organization. In other words, what the leadership models and demonstrates (either intentionally or unintentionally) is reflected in the behavior and capacity of the community. For this reason, the Thriving Ministry Model relies heavily on the capacity of leadership to create the resonance field within which greater ownership and organizational coherence can emerge.

A Sound Method

The Transformation Experience is not only a whole system integral approach to creating thriving ministries, it is a well-researched and theoretically sound method that puts theory into practice. The ministries selected for the Pilot Program will help inform future programs and support services that are slated to become a part of our Thriving in Unity initiative. As a Unity leader, no matter where you are in your ministry service, you can align yourself with the benefits to come by learning more about integral principles and the theory behind the Thriving Ministry Model. A good place to start is *The Integral Vision* by Ken Wilber.



The Thriving Ministry Model™ is derived from Ken Wilber's Integral theory.

Join us at the
2010 Unity People's Convention

Circles of Divine Love

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

Watch for details at www.unity.org/convention

Church: Ministry or

“Doing Church” from A Ministry Perspective

by Eileen Goor, eileengoor@aol.com

Writing a five-year business plan for our pioneering church held no appeal for us. Robert’s Rules seemed counter to the Unity principles we sought to live and teach. Knowing the Fillmores depended on prayer and discernment to guide their work, we believed this was the appropriate “plan” for us as well.

Two books by Charles Olsen encouraging worshipful work came to our attention. Over several months, we took the seeds these books planted, nurtured them in the soil of Unity principles, watered them with our love and focused attention until they germinated into a very exciting process we called *Participating in God’s Unfolding*.

Without going into detail, I want to share the advantages we enjoy by doing our work from this ministry perspective:

- The process inherently eliminates personal agendas and potential conflicts, revealing alignment through acknowledgement of common values and principles. When participants yield to the process, it produces clarity and the confidence to move forward as one; it establishes a convergence of the group mind, reminding us there are no sides in God Mind.
- Individuals joyfully engage in each *Gathering of the Mind* (comparable to a board meeting in a business model) because work that unfolds through spiritual discernment is uplifting and empowering. Everyone agrees to serve on an equal basis (including the minister), knowing each person is there by divine appointment to offer unique contributions.
- Financial decisions are not made by looking at bottom lines, weighing pros and cons or juggling budget items but by Spirit revealing *what is ours to do*. Our “business” is to know *what*, not *how*. When we are faithful to the results of our discernment, the *how* appears. God has already provided total abundance and pure love, and our assignment is simply to reveal *what is ours to do* to live perpetually in this awareness.

- This approach creates a space for healthy, authentic interactions, open communication and unification of purpose. It establishes an environment for honor, respect, and love while identifying and releasing fears, blocks, and negativity. Strengths, skills, and gifts are identified and celebrated. The resulting trust is a reward I found sorely missing when participating in business models of “doing church.”



Perhaps this whole approach to “doing church” as ministry can be summarized by words from our wise co-founder, Charles Fillmore:

To trust Spirit you must know of its guidance by experience... Does that same Spirit pervade man’s consciousness? If you decide that it does, and you have made up your mind to cultivate its acquaintance, you may rest in the assurance that the proof will be forthcoming. (*Talks on Truth*, p. 95)

Eileen Goor pioneered New World Unity Church in 1996 in Springfield, Virginia. The church’s unique operating structure has been shared with more than 70 Unity churches nationwide and thousands of individuals have experienced *Participating in God’s Unfolding*. Since moving to California last year, her attention is on completing a book about the discernment experience.

Business?

Church as a Business



by Donna Johnson

From a business perspective, our product is service to God by providing for the spiritual needs of our community. Truthfully, I do not believe it is possible to separate ministry from business in a church, nor should we. Every bit of

business is enfolded in prayer. Nonetheless, I offer some basic rules for decision-making:

Rule #1: Always do what is best for your church. Make this your cornerstone; make this your mantra. It will help when you must release staff. It will help when you, as spiritual leader, are personally caught in an equation where there seems to be no answer. Do what is best for your church even if it means removing yourself. There is no other way to be of service. Anything less is self-serving.

Rule #2: Choose competent, compatible staff, let them do their job (which may also be to educate you), and appreciate them for the work they do and the unique spirit they bring. Have clearly defined job descriptions and policies, but be flexible when life calls for it. Give regular feedback and co-create goals where improvement is needed. Be authentic and take time to develop meaningful relationships. A happy staff can work miracles in the face of challenge. And don't forget to regularly celebrate your successes!

Rule#3: Be proactive in risk management. Know the law and do the work that pertains to state and federal requirements as well as your own bylaws. File reports, financial and otherwise, and play by the rules. If legal review and paperwork is not your forte, delegate this task to someone who can be accountable for seeing things are in order. Not abiding by law places you and your congregation at risk. Conduct background checks on youth education teachers. Place your accountant/bookkeeper under bond. Carry liability insurance. Communicate with your vendors if bills are overdue and create a plan for payment.

Rule #4: Be clear and transparent except where confidentiality prohibits, and do so in an appropriate manner with appropriate means. We have quarterly community dialogue meetings so congregants can ask questions. An informed congregation, board of trustees, and staff are the foundation for a unified vision and focused course of action in fulfilling the mission, vision and goals. Everyone pulls together to overcome rumors, assumptions, and misperceptions when the facts are freely and regularly communicated.

Rule #5: Let your board and congregation support you. Many talented and successful business people are within our congregations, seeking ways to contribute in a meaningful way. Through their gifts of time and talent, much can be gained.

Ordained in 1996, Donna is senior minister at Unity of Fairfax in Oakton, Virginia. She previously served as associate minister at First Church Unity in Nashville, Tennessee. Active in the work of the Association, Donna is currently a member of the Board of Trustees.

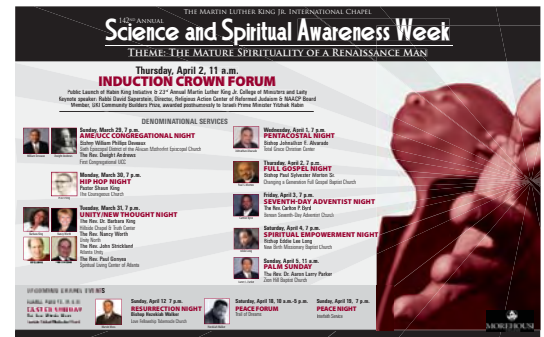
Southwest

Sharon Connors, minister at **Christ Church Unity of El Cajon, California**, reports on its activities and special events during the Season for Nonviolence. The mayor presented the church with a proclamation. Each Sunday our service opened with a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., or Mohandas K. Gandhi on love and nonviolence and the congregation was then invited to greet their neighbors in the name of love. Children wrote poems which they presented during three different Sunday services. Founders/directors of two different community nonprofits who work with children and families teaching the principles and practices of nonviolence spoke on two different Sundays and presented workshops. One came back to work directly with our teens. We also sponsored a spaghetti dinner to raise funds to present cash awards to two nonprofit organizations in our community. The congregation was asked to nominate candidates. We closed the season on April 5th with a special ceremony for this year's winning nominees, presenting them with a certificate and a check from the church. We got great press coverage too! In the end, the congregation was energized as well as proud to be a contribution to our community in a big way. The children were inspired and everyone involved felt blessed, including our guest presenters and awardees.

Jan Chase, senior minister of **Unity Church in Pomona, California**, was awarded 2009 Volunteer of the Year for the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for the whole of Los Angeles County. Four community partners that Jan work with at the Pomona office of Children and Family Services attended the event with Jan and Jim Jensen. The five county supervisors were present to honor the 100 people honored by the county for their service this year. The DCFS is building partnerships in the community, especially faith-based partnerships. When Jan was invited to attend DCFS meetings, she went and found people who deeply cared about children and families in the community. She also found an openness to creative ideas and change. As Jan looked at how she and her church might serve (DCFS) and their families, she realized that her building could be used to host court ordered visits for children to spend time with the families that had been split. Eight people in Unity Church of Pomona went through the



Southeast



A "Unity and New Thought Night" was held recently at Morehouse College in Atlanta as part of their Science and Spiritual Awareness Week. Nancy and Bill Worth of **Unity North Atlanta Church** and John Strickland of **Atlanta Unity Church** joined ministers from Hillside Chapel and Truth Center and the Center for Spiritual Living in presentations at the college's Martin Luther King, Jr. International Chapel. Choirs from the ministries also performed. "This was a great honor and lots of fun," says Nancy. "It was a very successful evening and Morehouse President Dr. Lawrence Carter invited us all back next year." Nancy and Bill have also been inducted into the Martin Luther King Jr., Board of Preachers of Morehouse College.

required fingerprinting and volunteered to host these twice a week visits monitored by trained personnel. This pilot program has been so successful that visits are now being scheduled at other sites on other days. During the 11 Days of Global Unity in 2008, DCFS co-sponsored a Peace Film Festival in a number of local churches, building relationships with a number of congregations while the message of peace was being spread.

Is Your Website Sending the Right Message?

by Scott Lindquist

Most churches give little thought to their website until something goes wrong. It's typical for the church to first turn to a volunteer for website design, because the price is right. This can work for a while, but generally falls short when the site becomes out of date. It's important to understand that before you put up a site, you should give it some thought. Whenever I design a site, I first do an analysis of the church's needs and site's structure.

When a visitor sees your church's website, are they impressed? Ask them if they found the church through the website. If not, maybe it's time for a website re-creation. Here are some tips to help.

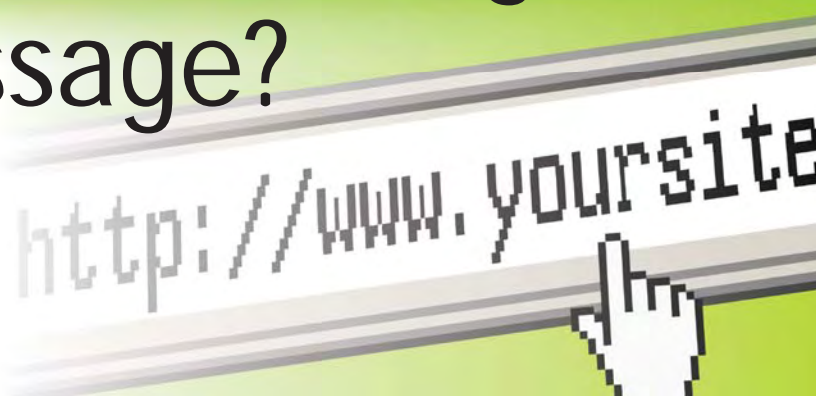
1. Use pictures of your people, looking at the visitor. It helps to convey a message of loving and satisfied people. Remember, you're in the "people" business, not the "church building" business.
2. Easy navigation—Let your visitor find service times, directions, and contact information quickly.
3. Atmosphere—Your design and content should accurately reflect your church's essence. Make your website colorful and fun, with pictures of events and activities.
4. Remember—The average user reads only 28 percent of your webpage. Don't overwhelm them with lots of text. Keep

it simple. Put yourself in a visitor's shoes; look at the site from their perspective. You'll be amazed at how much content can be trimmed.

5. Beware of Flash and other gimmicks—The maximum length of time an average visitor will wait for a page to load is now only 4 seconds. If you have to use Flash animation, give your visitor a way to turn it off.
6. Make your website unique. After all, your church is different from other churches, so why not make your website different as well?

The primary job of any church website is to get people to come to church. I have worked as a graphic designer for four Unity churches, and I can tell you that when it comes to Unity church websites, there is much more we can do to improve our overall web presence. How does your website compare with other church websites? If it's not impressive, consider investing in professional design. I invite you to take a look at our new website at Unity of Gainesville. www.unityofgainesville.org.

Scott Lindquist is a professional graphic designer/writer and marketing director at Unity of Gainesville church, where his wife, Sydney Magill-Lindquist, is the minister. You can visit Scott's website for more information: www.scottlindquist.biz



The Emerging Church

A Must Read For Those in Ministry

by Shannah McAleer

Bruce Sanguin begins the prologue of his book with a few simple lines that capture its entire essence: “I want our churches to be fully alive.” Is this not the wish of all of us—that our spiritual communities are awake, alert, and alive—on fire with the love and joy that comes from God? Through easy-to-read yet profound strategies, he leads us into a process of growth on a personal level that is made manifest in the outer realm within the congregations we serve. His steps are basic yet filled with a wisdom we sometimes forget.

The first step is to grow from the inside out, which he describes as emergence. Next is the realization that no matter our comfort zone, shift happens. How we handle it sets the stage for amazing growth to occur. The third step is to learn to discern our non-negotiables: what is within each of us as the heart and mind of the Christ? Fourth, what is your vision and mission? We have heard many ways to create vision and mission, yet this one is so well laid-out anyone can follow it.

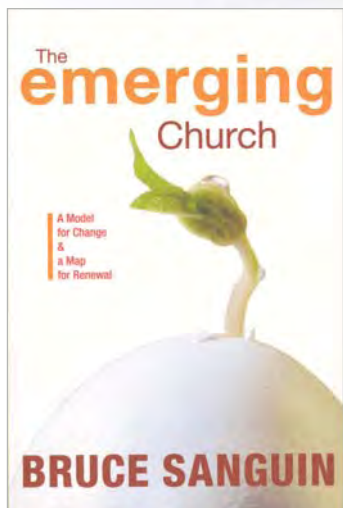
His next phase of growth is from what he calls moving from “church spires to spiral dynamics.” This discussion takes place within the exploration of value systems and congregational life.

Sanguin’s chapter on “What Color is Your Christ,” is one of the most creative ways to look at our view of the Christ that I have read. Is “your” Christ tribal, warrior, traditional, modern, postmodern, integral, mystical, a combination, or something beyond that? What does that mean for you? Other interesting discussions include looking at the psychological and the spiritual foundation of leadership. What is the difference?

Sanguin leads us from pastoral chaplain to spiritual leader—from co-dependence with individual congregants to networks of pastoral care, small group ministry and the organic and synergistic church model. This is a must-read for those in ministry at all levels who seek to be a part of taking the spiritual community from a “church building” to an organization of emergence. Who wouldn’t want to at least take a peek at what he has to say? A simple and yet deepening read for all of us.

Shannah McAleer serves in the home office of the Association of Unity Churches International as the director of Leadership and Ministry Development. Shannah oversees the Transformation Experience: an invitation into the creation of thriving churches and enlightened leadership. For more on the Transformation Experience go to www.thetransformationexperience.org.

*The Emerging Church—
A Model for Change &
a Map for Renewal*
Bruce Sanguin
CopperHouse, 2008
205 pages



There is Unity, in unity.org



by Susan Velasquez, susan@unity.org

By now, you may have seen our new combined website with Unity School at www.unity.org. Because our goal was to integrate our information as much as possible, I hope you have found it to be an improvement over our two separate sites. Though we launched the site in January, there is still much work going on to keep it fresh and continually improve its usefulness for you.

Here are a few highlights of what is new:

Wholesale Accounts

If you are a ministry, you qualify for wholesale pricing. To see your wholesale pricing, follow the information in the yellow box on the Shop homepage, left sidebar, that looks like this:

If you are a church or center, please register to see the appropriate wholesale prices on products. Follow the easy steps below to register.

1. Click [My Account](#) at the top of the store home page.
2. Designate a username, password and other information requested. (You will need to enter both a first and last name for your account.)
3. Next, e-mail Sales at sales@unityonline.org. Let us know your account is established online, and provide us with the exact name of your center and/or the first and last name on your account.
4. Sales will then designate your account as "wholesale."
5. Sales will reply to your email once your account is ready. Once you receive this email, you can then log in to your account and see the wholesale prices.

Job Openings

Ministers and licensed teachers need to register in the upper right corner at www.unity.org. Once the user is registered, please email info@unity.org with name and email address and request that status be changed to (minister or LT, whichever is

appropriate). The display on the new site is still being tweaked for readability, but the information is up to date.

We are working on a new directory that will focus more on "finding a church near me." There will be a zip code search for the churches in the US and Canada. For other countries, the search will continue to be by country/province/city. The new directory will contain churches and study groups, ministers and licensed Unity teachers. We will no longer list musicians and speakers who are not credentialed Unity leaders. We will pre-populate the directory with the churches and study groups, however, **individuals will need to create their own listing**. Check the website for specific instructions to add or change information.

We are also working on a dynamic event module that will tie into the directory module. A church or individual will be able to enter their own event. The events will be searchable by category, date, and location.

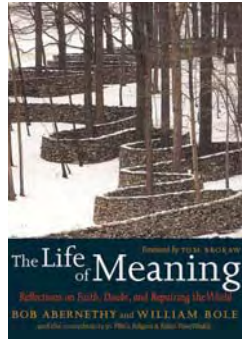
To keep up with our progress, the best thing to do is to keep checking our site. And no article about the site would be complete without a request to you to come on-line and post your stories. We (and the world) would love to hear how you found Unity, what your first church experience was like, and what it has meant in your life. Happy surfing!

Susan Velasquez is Information Technology coordinator at the Association of Unity Churches International.

Resources You Can Use

The Life of Meaning,

compiled by PBS' Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly program staff, presents fifty-nine extraordinary contributors speaking candidly about their search for meaning in their own personal lives, their experience of God, and for some, the struggle to reconcile faith and doubt. They include Jimmy Carter, the Dalai Lama, Studs Terkel, Desmond Tutu, Marianne Williamson, and many others.



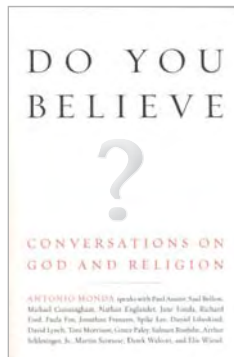
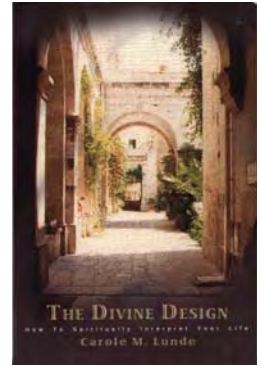
Association **free downloads** for marketing your ministry at www.unity.org, click on the top tab labeled Ministries & Leaders, then click on Church administrators (marketing and media is in this category), then click on Advertising Your Church (marketing page). Here you will find radio spots, print ads, and a bulletin about Newcomer Ministry—a collection of the best wisdom on what works to welcome new guests into your ministry—among other helpful resources.



Marketing Research Bulletin: Newcomer ministry—a collection of the best wisdom on what works to welcome new guests into your ministry. Free download at www.unity.org, click on Ministries & Leaders (top menu), click on Church Administrators, click on Visit our Marketing page, click on Marketing Research Bulletin: Newcomer Ministry.

The Divine Design, How To Spiritually Interpret Your Life by Carole M. Lunde

This is a book you can use now, five years from now, and for all of your life. It is relevant wherever you are in your growth and development, even when you need to stop, go back, redo, and recycle life lessons.

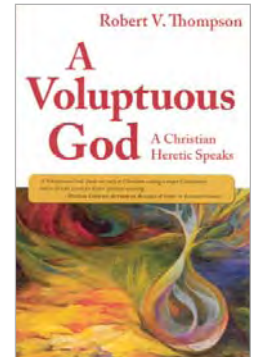


Do You Believe? Conversations on God and Religion by Antonio Monda

Some of the best known and most respected cultural figures of our times enter into intimate and illuminating conversation about their personal beliefs, about belief itself, about religion, and about God. Includes conversations with Saul Bellow, Jane Fonda, Spike Lee, Grace Paley, Salman Rushdie, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and Martin Scorsese.

A Voluptuous God, A Christian Heretic Speaks by Robert V. Thompson

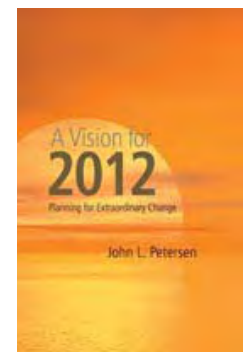
This book engages the mind, embraces the heart and shakes us free of our complacent relationship to the Divine. It celebrates the deepest questions and challenges the easy answers.



The Integral Vision is a very short introduction to the revolutionary integral approach to life, God, the universe and everything.

A Vision for 2012: Planning for Extraordinary Change by John L. Petersen

A provocative yet hopeful book, *A Vision for 2012* outlines an effective approach to the immense challenges—and opportunities—that lie ahead.



Calendar of Events



June 22–26

SEE Classes, Raleigh, NC; contact Paula Graff, 919.832.8324

June 24–27

Peacemaking Skills Institute, Wimberley, TX; contact Cathy Christy, admast@unity.org

July 19–23

International YOU Peace Ambassador Training, Unity Village, MO; contact Jane Simmons, you@unity.org

July 19–24

SEE Classes, Oak Park, IL; contact Helice Greene, unity@unityoakpark.org

August 18–20

Credentialing Team Meeting, Lee's Summit, MO; contact Cecilia Holman, 816.524.7414

August 24–27

Peacemaking Skills Institute, Unity Village, MO; contact Cathy Christy, admast@unity.org

September 15–19

Music Conference; contact Richard Mekdeci, music@unity.org

September 21–24

Admissions, Unity Village, MO; contact Cecilia Holman, 816.524.7414

October 19–22

Southeast Regional Conference, Pensacola Beach, FL; contact Arlene Meyer, unityofsavannah@comcast.net

December 1–9

Parliament of the World's Religions; Melbourne, Australia; contact www.parliamentofreligions.org

Contact goes quarterly!



The Association is pursuing ways to become better stewards of our resources. *Contact* is changing from bi-monthly to quarterly. Issues will come out in September, December, March, and June. Deadlines will be:

If you have questions, contact Barbara Quinn at radiomd@unity.org. We look forward to keeping up the quality of the magazine you're used to!



HOLY LAND

NOV. 4-13, 2009

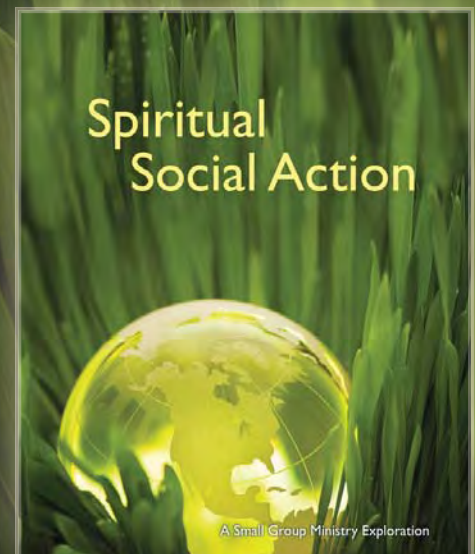
Hosted by Unity's Bible Historian,
Rev. Mary Anne Harris

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Grow Your Small Groups with *Spiritual Social Action*

Spiritual Social Action (BA1118) is the name of our newest 7-week small group study. It looks at social action from a spiritual perspective. Connect social action with Unity's basic teachings, consider the relevance of social action in your life, contemplate how to be a peacemaker, and examine how connections among diverse faith groups enhance the experience of giving.



Order online in our Shop at
www.unity.org or call 866.236.3571
for wholesale orders.