

EarthCare Connections

An Offering from Your Unity EarthCare Ministry Team

Spring 2017

Special Points of Interest:

- EarthCare Program Updates
- Green Star Award
 - * Unity Church of Overland Park, Kansas
 - * Unity of Richmond, VA
 - * Unity of The Blue Ridge, Mills River, NC
 - * Unity in Lynnwood, WA
 - * Unity of Fairfax, Oakton, VA
- EarthCare Mentoring Call



EarthCare Program Updates

In December 2016, the EarthCare Team added “Ecological Social Justice” as a new category under the Act step of the [EarthCare Program](#). (See page 7.) This important and highly relevant issue reads as follows:

Promote a socially just world in which everyone has a voice and equal access to the resources and opportunities of society. We affirm a world that is free from discrimination and oppression based on race, religion, class, gender, age, physical disability or sexual orientation.

Try:

- ◆ Monitoring government activity for action on contemporary issues.
- ◆ Developing actions, in accordance with Unity’s positive spiritual principles, both within and outside the congregation, which:
 - a. Educates congregants and the general public regarding relevant legislative activities.
 - b. Inspires policy makers to initiate creative ideas which support sustainable living and ecological justice.
 - c. Educates, supports and encourages individuals to align their individual lifestyle choices and actions toward creating a sustainable world.

Green Star Award

The EarthCare Team is pleased to announce that five congregations have been awarded the first annual Green Star Award for Congregational Environmental Excellence and will be presented the award at the 2017 Unity People’s Convention. The congregations and a summary of their activities in 2016 are as follows:

Uniy Church of Overland Park, Kansas

Rev Brandon Nagel, Senior Minister

- **Eco-Basket.** To promote sustainable living, in November the Green Team put together an “Eco-Basket” that was auctioned at the church’s annual “Fall Faith Gala.” The basket cost \$200 and was auctioned for \$250, with all proceeds going to support the church.

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Unity Church of Overland Park, Kansas

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- **What Was Old Is New Again.** A Christmas items “swap shop” in which people could donate holiday items they no longer wanted but that may be a treasure to someone else. Others were invited to take whatever they could use, free of charge.



- **Clean the Stream Day.** Ten volunteers picked up 30 bags of litter along Indian Creek in Johnson County, Kansas. (See photo at left.)
- The board of directors adopted a Climate Change Resolution.
- Facilitator Mike McCord presented the world premiere of *Awakening the Dreamer through Unity* at the church and at Unity Village, Mo.
- Participated in Interfaith Power and Light’s “Beyond Paris: Practical Action as Spiritual Practice.”
- Awarded Curt Straub the Green Star Award. Curt is the 10th person to receive the award since in inception in 2009.
- Hosted a Green Team Table at the church and at the Shawnee Mission Earth Fair that provided a variety of information regarding what individuals can do to live sustainably and become better stewards of the earth.
- Hosted *The Climate Crisis, Threats and Opportunities* by Craig Wolfe of the Kansas Sierra Club
- Hosted *The Soil Will Save Us* by award-winning educator, presenter and crusader Stan Slaughter



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Unity of Richmond, Virginia

Rev Richard Bunch, Senior Minister

- Provided a gardening workshop for Unity of Richmond and the surrounding community presented by the Richmond Virginia Cooperative Extension Office that addressed both organic and non-organic gardening.
- Planted medicinal herbs in the Unity of Richmond landscaping area in front of the church and continues ongoing care of the herbs.
- Planned and presented an Earth Day Program for the Unity congregation and surrounding community that included a formal Earth Day Program, free trees for distribution and planting provided by the State Forestry Service, and a separate showing of the movie *The Lorax* to the Unity of Richmond youth.
- Continued the existing church recycling program and provided educational skits during church services to teach recycling principles to the congregation.
- Switched from throwaways to recyclable/biodegradable coffee cups and lids.
- Participated in a Unity of Richmond Holiday Festival fundraiser, designing and creating crafts for sale using all natural resources, including sea shells, salvaged wood pieces and pinecones.
- Provided natural holiday decorations for the church using Christmas tree remnants and pine cones.
- Provided consistent indoor plant care.

Unity of The Blue Ridge

Mills River, North Carolina

Rev Darlene Strickland, Senior Minister

- **Mission Earth and Youth of Unity.** Worked with other area youth and a variety of local agencies to care for gardens, creeks, forests and pollinators in four locations of Dr John Wilson Community Garden in Black Mtn. They then convened to discuss with other groups how our beliefs affect the way that we care for our planet.
- **Four-part Sustainability Practices Education Program for our Unity congregation.** The following themes were selected: Water conservation, recycling, energy use and Earth-friendly products. A one-page summary of each topic was posted in the bathroom stalls.
- **Adopt a Highway.** Unity of The Blue Ridge has committed to care for a one-mile section of highway near our church. This entails trash pickup each quarter for 4 years. Each pickup has approximately 12 congregants teaming up for a Saturday outing, yielding an average of 15 bags of trash and recyclables.

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Unity of The Blue Ridge

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- **Awakening the Dreamer Symposium.** More than 50 congregants have attended these symposiums over the past four years, with six having signed up for our most recent offering.
- **Affiliation with the First Conservation Burial Ground in North Carolina.** Unity of The Blue Ridge placed a conservation easement through Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy on 11 acres of our land, which ensures that the land can never be developed. We sold that land to [Carolina Memorial Sanctuary](#), the first conservation burial ground in North Carolina, and Unity is holding the conservation easement on the property. The land is under a program of eliminating invasives and is being restored using all native species. The project is financed through natural burials utilizing only biodegradable caskets or shrouds, no embalming, no steel or concrete and all graves are hand-dug. The Sanctuary is open to the public and will offer environmental education.





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Unity in Lynnwood, Washington

Dr Richard Loren Held, Spiritual Director

- **Recycling Program Refined:** Replaced regular garbage cans with recycle bins and compost bins in the kitchen and fellowship hall. All items (coffee cups, plates and napkins) used on Sundays for fellowship after services are compostable and three bins are available for easy disposal. Plates and napkins are tree-free, made of sugar cane and bamboo. No plastic utensils are used during fellowship after services.
- **Minimized waste in what we purchase and consume:** Most purchases are made or approved by our EarthCare representative. The bulletin is put out monthly instead of weekly to cut down on paper. We use double-sided printing whenever possible for printed materials to cut down on the number of pages used. Paper products purchased are made out of recycled material whenever possible. No bags are used in the compost bins. Garbage bags are made of recycled materials. Overhead floodlights in bookstore gift shop are being replaced with LED bulbs as they burn out. Reduced the size of our compostable hot/cold cups from 10 oz to 8 oz. All cleaning supplies inside and outside are eco-friendly.
- **Grounds:** We continue our commitment to taking care of the land surrounding the building. Landscaping is completely indigenous. Rainwater is diverted to the wetland nature preserve and the salmon stream. Watering of plants close to the building is done by hand and the rest of the shrubbery surrounding the building is watered by dripline on a timer during the late summer. Certified organic landscaping mulch produced locally is spread in spring to cover the driplines to minimize evaporation and protect the driplines from exposure to the sun. In December 2016, we obtained ownership of the 5.5 acres of beautiful, semi-restricted land adjacent to our property.
- **Environmental Audit:** We had an environmental/energy audit conducted by Todd Olehausen, Director, Facilities Engineering. We may be due for a new energy audit in 2017.
- **Achieved Level B EarthCare certification!**

Unity of Fairfax

Oakton, Virginia

Rev Russell Heiland, Jr., Senior Minister

- The Board of Trustees adopted in principle a Paris Climate Change Pledge. In an effort toward meeting the Paris Pledge, EarthCare Ministry Team led the project to replace all fluorescent and incandescent lighting with state-of-the-art LED lights throughout our two church buildings and parking lot.

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Unity of Fairfax

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- The Unity of Fairfax Board of Trustees approved a loan of approximately \$48,000 for this energy efficiency lighting project. Monthly electricity savings from this lighting retrofit will be used to pay off the loan in less than five years. No operating church funds were used for this project. **In the first seven months after installation of the LED lights, the church has saved \$2,960 in costs and reduced our greenhouse gas emissions by 37,415 pounds of CO₂.**
- Hosted the 3rd Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (FACS) and Interfaith Power and Light (IPL) (MD, DC, NoVA) symposium. Unity of Fairfax has hosted this FACS/IPL symposium for two years. FACS, a multi-faith nonprofit coalition of 50 churches in Northern Virginia, provides a forum for climate change solutions among our churches, and advocates for energy efficiency and alternative energy measures by the governments of Fairfax County, Va., and the Commonwealth of Virginia. IPL, a multi-faith nonprofit environmental coalition, provides forums for the development of "Green Teams" within MD, DC and Northern Virginia churches, and educates church members on citizen activism for alternative clean energy as faith-based stewards of planet Earth. The Unity of Fairfax and its EarthCare Ministry Team, key players in the founding of FACS four years ago, also contribute financially to both FACS and IPL (MD, DC, NoVA).
- The EarthCare Team supported a weekly farmers market from 9 a.m. until noon in the church parking lot. This is a joint church and environmental community service with the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax (UUCF).
- **Special Events:** Conducted the annual Earth Day and Winter Solstice events, offered once a month locally-grown and organic refreshments after Sunday church services.
- **Education Projects:** Renewed annually our sacred Unity EarthCare Covenant with the congregation; provided Earth curriculum in Sunday school, provided education to the community on Best Practices (BPs) in storm water management through tours and seminars including Earth Science classes from Northern Virginia Community College. Fairfax County has designated Unity of Fairfax as a demonstration site for storm water management.
- **Earth-Friendly Purchases:** New recycle bins for use in the church atrium and kitchen, new compost bins for food scraps and coffee grounds. Installed native plants and trees including nine new dogwoods along Hunter Mill Road.
- **Work on Our Campus:** Sponsored our continuing Adopt-A-Spot program to maintain the church gardens, sponsored the spring and fall Beautification Days, maintained our grounds with organic materials and are eliminating chemicals, supervised the trimming and removal of dying trees on the five acres of the church.



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MIKE MCCORD, EDITOR

Unity of Fairfax

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- **Outreach:** Produced the Unity of Fairfax monthly *Green Insert* to provide environmental news, local and church activities on such topics as energy, recycling, spirituality and environmental justice, landscaping and local green products. Developed a pamphlet containing all 12 of the monthly *Green Inserts* to inform visitors and new members of the church as to what we do as an EarthCare Ministry Team. Conducted team monthly meetings where all are welcome to come and share their ideas and energy about our five sacred acres. Provided EarthCare representatives to the church labyrinth core planning team.
- Unity of Fairfax is one of the first five churches of Unity Worldwide Ministries to achieve the designation as an EarthCare Certified Congregation. We proudly continue to demonstrate the worthiness of this designation monthly. It is an honor to do so for the preservation of God's Earth, people, animals and plants.

Mentoring Program

Join David Cordova for mentoring on the second Saturday of the month, 12 p.m. noon, Eastern, to learn how to form a Green Team or expand your existing EarthCare Program. What a perfect opportunity to share inspiration and provide an inspiring cross-pollination of ideas and encouragement from across the continent! For more information, contact David Cordova at davecordova@msn.com or by calling 210.825.8422.



“You can cut all the flowers but you cannot keep Spring from coming.”

—Pablo Neruda