



Unity EarthCare Team  
**EarthCare Program**  
*The Path to EarthCare*

[www.unity.org/earthcare](http://www.unity.org/earthcare)

[earthcare@unity.org](mailto:earthcare@unity.org)

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### Overview

The Unity EarthCare Team (UET) is a ministry team of Unity Worldwide Ministries (UWM). Its mission is to foster awareness of our spiritual oneness with the Earth and to promote active care of all creation. To help achieve its Mission, UET created the *EarthCare Program*, which is designed after a seven-step process called the *Path to EarthCare*.\*

The purpose of the program is to assist church communities in integrating an earth-oriented spirituality into their ministry. *EarthCare* helps each congregation discover what Spirit calls them to do to care for our Earth home. It guides the ways by which the *Path* is achieved. The *Path to EarthCare* includes the following seven steps:

Pray   Vision   Act   Inspire   Learn   Share   Renew

### PART I: EARTH-CARE PROGRAM

There are three levels to completing the *Path to EarthCare*:

**Level A: EarthCare Covenant**

**Level B: EarthCare Commitment**

**Level C: EarthCare Congregation**

\*The Path to EarthCare was originally developed by the NW Region of UWM.

Each level is designed with increasing levels of commitment and activities that guide church communities further along the **Path**. Ministries have a great deal of flexibility to determine the level of involvement with **EarthCare** at which they feel most comfortable whether or not they own their own facility. In addition, ministries that initially choose Levels A or B can commit to and complete Levels B or C at a later date. Regardless of the option chosen, it is important that the ministry leadership be included in discerning **EarthCare** actions that are appropriate for the ministry.

Church communities that complete any of the three Levels on the **Path to EarthCare** will be honored by receiving a certificate of recognition. They also will be recognized on both the UWM and UET websites as well as in various publications. Equally important will be the powerful message that the ministry sends to its congregation and to the world: that it is committed to honoring, protecting and preserving our earth home and the living things that inhabit it. Through leading by example, the congregation will show others ways to live their lives in more spiritual harmony with the environment.

### Level A: EarthCare Covenant

An EarthCare covenant is a sacred trust between the church community and Spirit. A covenant expresses a conscious awareness of our oneness with creation and a commitment to care for the Earth as a significant component of the ministry.

Church communities may adopt the provided covenant below or create their own. Several other samples are available for viewing at [unity.org/earthcare](http://unity.org/earthcare). Writing a covenant can be extremely meaningful as it helps develop a vision for the work. We suggest the covenant be presented and signed at a ceremony involving the entire community, and posted in the ministry as a declaration of their sacred trust.

*Our consciousness reveals that all of creation is connected as one. The story of creation reveals that we are to be good caregivers of the creation. As a people of faith, we commit to a renewed reverence for life and respect for the interdependent web of all existence. We honor our spiritual commitment to the care, support and defense of the balance between our individual needs and those of nature. We envision a world in which everything has intrinsic value and where all beings are assured a secure and meaningful life that is ecologically responsible and sustainable. We agree to transform our individual and congregational lives into acts of moral witness, discarding harmful habits for new behaviors that demonstrate our respect for this harmony and interconnectedness.*

*We declare our covenant with God to walk upon the Earth for the greatest good of all creation.*

Adopted this, the \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Governing body

\_\_\_\_\_  
Church/Congregation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson, Governing Body

\_\_\_\_\_  
Senior Minister/Spiritual Leader

Adopting a covenant in accordance with Level A achieves the **Pray** and **Vision** steps of the **Path**. Congregations are encouraged to follow the intent of the **Renew** step of the Path by annually reviewing and re-focusing its commitment to the covenant.

### Level B: EarthCare Commitment

Level B provides guidance for church communities to demonstrate their commitment to realizing its EarthCare vision by completing four steps on *The Path to EarthCare*. Two of the steps must be **Pray** and **Vision**. In addition, three actions of the **Act** Step (as outlined on Form 3, “Action Checklist”) must be completed.

## Level C: EarthCare Congregation

Becoming certified as an **EarthCare Congregation** entails completion of all seven steps on *The Path to EarthCare*, as outlined in the **Action Checklist**. It is a comprehensive approach to an earth-oriented spirituality that touches the entire life of the ministry. The program is centered on cultivating a consciousness for **EarthCare** that includes both spiritual and practical actions. It is our experience that by completing this Level a sustainable vision of **EarthCare** will be integrated into the life of the ministry.

## Program Flexibility

For both Levels B and C, one alternative step or activity that is appropriate for the ministry, and that meets the intent of the EarthCare program, may be substituted. Churches that don’t own their own facility aren’t required to conduct an energy audit as part of the **Act** step. Prior approval of alternative steps or actions is suggested.

## How to Participate in EarthCare

Submit Form 1, “Notice of Initiation” to UET. The “Notice of Initiation” serves as the church community’s intention to pursue one of the three Levels on the *Path to EarthCare*. Once the requirements of the Level have been completed, submit Form 2, “Notice of Completion” along with any appropriate support documentation. Please note that for Levels B and C you also must submit Form 3, the “Action Checklist.”

Congregations that have completed Levels A or B may pursue a higher Level by submitting a new “Notice of Initiation.”

## PART II: PATH TO EARTHCARE

*The Path to EarthCare*, along with examples of possible activities, is described in more detail below. In addition, the EarthCare Team and others are available and anxious to assist through one-on-one counseling or monthly group mentoring calls. Finally, there are a number of additional resources and possible activities on the EarthCare website ([www.unity.org/earthcare](http://www.unity.org/earthcare)).

## Pray

Our consciousness of God opens the way for ideas, inspiration, and guidance. To begin **EarthCare** in a ministry, first create a consciousness for the work through prayer. Prayer guides the ministry to its own unique expressions of caring for creation.

### TRY:

- ▶ Holding a special service for Earth Day Sunday.
- ▶ Including prayers for creation in each Sunday service.
- ▶ Building a Labyrinth for reflecting on our connection with all creation.

## Vision

Once a ministry discerns, through prayer, a call to adopt **EarthCare**, it should create a vision for the work with the ministry leadership. This may take the form of a vision statement, a mission statement or covenant to care for creation.

- ◆ A covenant is a sacred trust. It expresses the ministry’s vision for care of creation and an intention to take actions that express the vision. It should be considered a pact between the congregation and Spirit.
- ◆ A vision statement is an affirmation that concentrates on the future is a source of inspiration and provides clear decision making criteria. A vision statement sets the direction for future planning.
- ◆ A mission statement defines the purpose, critical processes and goals of the **EarthCare Program**.

When developing a vision for **EarthCare**, the congregation may hold a prayerful dialogue by asking questions such as: “How do we perceive God?” “What is our relationship to God’s creation?” “How can we be good stewards of Earth?”

We also encourage ministries to create an **Action Plan**. The action plan outlines the ways the leadership and congregation intend to express an earth care consciousness in the life of the ministry.

## Take Action

To express loving care for the earth requires a commitment of time, energy, and money. The specific actions taken will depend on the needs and vision of the community. The activities may be simple or complex, contained solely within the ministry or reach out into the broader community.

We encourage **EarthCare** congregations to express their vision and creativity by creating an action plan that seeks to transform attitudes and commitments by embracing concrete actions that reduce human ecological impact on the earth and contribute to justice for people affected by environmental degradation. The actions of the ministry can be a model and encourage individuals to make changes in their personal lives as well.

## Energy/Environmental Audit

An environmental/energy audit assesses all aspects of a congregation’s environmental practices, from both a real estate as well as a business/operational standpoint, and recommends ways in which the ministry can reduce energy consumption, minimize waste, recycle and become a better caregiver of the environment through environmental conservation.

While the scope of work differs for each audit, a comprehensive audit typically encompasses the following categories:

- I. Building
- II. Grounds
- III. Lighting
- IV. Water Use and Water Heating
- V. Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning (HVAC)
- VI. Operations and Maintenance
- VII. Business Operations

While some of these categories are primarily applicable to congregations that own their own building and grounds others apply equally to all congregations regardless of whether they own, rent, or use their facility. The scope of work can be tailored to meet the needs of each congregation.

Statistics show that faith organizations that adopt energy efficient practices save an average of 33% on their operational costs. Through an audit, congregation members are encouraged to learn how personal lifestyle choices affect the environment and what alternative choices are available to minimize that impact. Ministry programs can expand to include **EarthCare** issues that members see as important to their faith, and demonstrate ways to live their lives in spiritual harmony with the environment. Members are proud to belong to a ministry that cares about our Earth and is committed to protecting the environment.

Some municipalities or utilities offer these energy audits for free. Check in your area or go to [www.theregenerationproject.org](http://www.theregenerationproject.org). In addition, UET has developed as an option an environmental audit master guide and property inspection form that cover all the areas found in a formal audit. Go to [www.unity.org/earthcare](http://www.unity.org/earthcare), and click on **Green Facility Assessment**, or contact UET. These forms are especially useful for congregations that have sufficient internal technical expertise but who don't wish to spend the money for a formal audit by a professional environmental site assessment company.

For congregations that don't own their own facility, there are a number of things the congregation can do as an alternative:

**TRY:**

- ▶ Using UET's environmental audit master guide and property inspection form assess non-realty areas such as lighting, water use/water heating, operations and maintenance, and business operations in order to reduce energy usage and operational costs.
- ▶ Encouraging your landlord or host facility owner to adopt responsible environmental policies and practices. Consider making this a condition of lease approval/renewal.
- ▶ Initiating an ongoing campaign to reduce the congregation's annual "energy footprint" (i.e., number of pounds of carbon dioxide greenhouse gasses emitted into the environment annually) by 20% or more.
- ▶ Committing the congregation to an ongoing policy of reduce, reuse & recycle.
- ▶ Networking with other smaller congregations, within your community or beyond, to promote environmental sustainability and social justice.

### **Energy Conservation**

Perhaps the single greatest human activity affecting global climate change is the production of carbon dioxide through the extensive use of fossil fuels. Reducing our rate of use of these traditional energy sources will conserve these resources, lower utility bills, and help preserve ecological systems as well as human cultures.

**TRY:**

- ▶ Implementing recommendations of energy audits to reduce heat and electric bills.
- ▶ Selling LED light bulbs.
- ▶ Promoting car-pooling, walking/bicycling or using public transit.

### **Recycling**

A recycling program or connecting with existing programs is an easy way for congregations to take meaningful environmental action on a limited budget.

**TRY:**

- ▶ Recycling office paper, cans, bottles, newspaper, cardboard, magazines and junk mail.
- ▶ Preparing a recycling guide for the congregation.
- ▶ Partnering with non-profit organizations to utilize a portion of your parking lot as a community recycling collection point for used clothing & small household items.

### **Waste Minimization**

Over-consumption contributes to pollution and to our landfills. What we purchase and consume are votes for those goods and services. Decisions to "reduce" and "reuse" are powerful spiritual statements of environmental responsibility, both for ourselves and the larger community.

**TRY:**

- ▶ Using washable cups, plates, and utensils for Sunday hospitality.
- ▶ Installing low-flow toilets and/or a timer for the hot water heater.
- ▶ Making thermostat adjustments.
- ▶ Replacing incandescent light bulbs with LEDs.
- ▶ Minimizing waste by using washable dinnerware for hospitality.

### *Water Conservation and Landscaping*

Water pollution is one of the leading consumption-related environmental problems facing the world today.

#### **TRY**

- ▶ Adopting a water budget.
- ▶ Selecting new plantings that are native or other low water plants.
- ▶ Practicing "Grass Recycling."
- ▶ Limiting the use of gas-powered mowers. Lawn maintenance contractors should be required to mow early in the morning or late in the afternoon. Set lawnmower blade one notch higher as longer grass means less evaporation.
- ▶ Making sure sprinklers do not water non-green areas; place a layer of mulch around plants and trees to reduce evaporation; water early in the morning or late in the day. More than half the water applied to lawns and gardens can be lost through evaporation or run-off because of over watering.
- ▶ Using organic or natural lawn, shrub, and tree fertilizers.
- ▶ Harvesting rainwater from drainpipes and install underground distribution lines to lawn areas.

### *Stewardship of Natural Resources*

One of the greatest satisfactions of life is to explore, enjoy, and care for natural spaces, both in our backyards and globally. Through these activities we promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources.

#### **TRY:**

- ▶ Adopting and maintaining a park, stream, neighborhood, street, highway, cemetery, beach, or Trail, either as an individual congregation or in partnership with another organization.
- ▶ Attending hikes and conservation work projects, (i.e., tree planting, stream cleanup, and trail maintenance) sponsored by conservation organizations.

### *Promote Awareness of the Interdependence of Creation*

We are called to a renewed reverence for life and respect for the interdependent web of creation. Through an expansion and re-centering of our awareness to include the whole planetary ecosystem, we come into deeper alignment with the oneness of everything in the universe and guide the use of our collective culture for the common good.

#### **TRY:**

- ▶ Promoting sustainable living practices that bring our behavior into alignment with our environmental values. For example, adopt basic sustainable business practices for the congregation's building and grounds, promote food cooperatives and locally or organically grown food products.
- ▶ Advocating or actively participating in causes that promote environmental social justice. (e.g., Some would say that in a socially just world all people would have a voice and everyone would have equal access to the resources and opportunities of society. It would be a world free from discrimination and oppression based on race or religion, on class, gender, age, physical ability, or sexual orientation.)
- ▶ Periodically hosting movies, symposiums, workshops and presentations that promote a better understanding of our interconnectedness with one another, all living things and the entire web of creation.
- ▶ Committing to maintain a balance between our personal health and vitality with the care, support and defense of nature. Examples include advocating policies and practices that discard practices that are detrimental to the earth's climate, its natural resources and ecosystems in favor of new behaviors that demonstrate respect for the harmony and interconnectedness of creation.

## Inspire

With inspiration, our prayers and vision begin to move into outer expression. Ministries can inspire care of the earth by including an earth focus in their activities, such as Sunday services, prayers, songs, and special ceremonies. The Truth that God is everywhere present in Creation then becomes alive in people's minds and hearts, and translates into daily action.

## Learn

It is important to gather information and resources to educate ourselves in preparation for future action. Further, sponsoring educational activities in our ministries opens a space for individuals and the community to explore, pray and discern greater understanding about complex environmental topics. Such experiences may bring into ministries the challenging issues of life on earth and create spiritual connection with them. Educating people to pray first and act upon guidance fosters unity and God-centered action. Obvious avenues for communication include the ministry newsletter, Sunday bulletin, and displays.

### TRY:

- ▶ Involving the children and youth group in activities that promote care for the Earth and one another.
- ▶ Show a documentary film on an EarthCare topic.
- ▶ Hold a study group on sustainable living or voluntary simplicity.
- ▶ Developing an ongoing environmental educational program that outreaches beyond your individual congregation.

## Share

Sharing our ideas and successes, through word-of-mouth, presentations, and news media, is important for fostering the work within our congregations and the larger community. Networking with other groups and programs reminds us that we are not alone in the task of caring for creation. Unity ministries may network with local conservation groups, interfaith creation care centers, and spiritual centers of other denominations with creation care programs. As we become aware of the work within Unity and elsewhere, our common ground—Earth—becomes a sacred home for unity. By raising awareness of our common cause, we can unite our actions to care for humanity and the planet that sustains us.

### TRY:

- ▶ Hosting or participating in an activity that networks with other interested churches and/or groups.
- ▶ Developing an email network with other Unity congregations and religious denominations in your area that are interested in environmental issues.
- ▶ Promoting the ideals of your congregation's EarthCare program through a variety of mass media outlets.

## Renew

Every work has its seasons. There are ebbs and flows in **EarthCare** work. However, even during a "winter" season of low energy for projects, we can maintain sacred space for creation through Sunday services and special ceremonies. Prayer and visioning anew, perhaps annually, allows the ministry to re-assess where to focus its efforts.

### TRY:

- ▶ Sponsoring an annual retreat to review and renew the principles upon which your EarthCare team is committed.

- ▶ Holding an annual meeting to review the Congregation's **EarthCare** accomplishments and to vision future objectives, goals and activities.

### Other

Congregations may replace one of the above steps with one that meets the intent of the **EarthCare Program** and is appropriate for their ministry. While not required, prior approval by the **EarthCare Team** is recommended.



## ***Part III: Forms***

***Form 1 Notice of Initiation***

***Form 2 Notice of Completion***

***Form 3 Action Checklist***

# Form 1



## Notice of Initiation

This notice signifies that on \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_,  
*Month Day Year*

\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_  
*The governing body Church/ Spiritual Center*

of \_\_\_\_\_  
*City State*

determined to pursue:

- adopting a **Covenant of EarthCare** (Level A); **OR**
- making the **Commitment to EarthCare** (Level B); **OR**
- becoming an **Certified EarthCare Congregation** (Level C).

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Senior Minister/Spiritual Leader*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Chairperson, Governing Body*

The **EarthCare** contact person for our Congregation is:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Name*

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
*Address City*

\_\_\_\_\_, ( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
*State Zip Code Telephone No. Fax No.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*E-mail Address*



The Senior Minister of the Congregation is:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Address*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*City*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*State*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Zip Code*

(\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Telephone No.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Fax No.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Email Address*

(Submit this form to the Unity EarthCare Team at [earthcare@unity.org](mailto:earthcare@unity.org), or to Michael L. McCord, EarthCare Program Coordinator, 1209 N Leevue Drive, Olathe, KS 66061 or to [michael\\_mccord@sbcglobal.net](mailto:michael_mccord@sbcglobal.net).)

# Form 2



## Notice of Completion

This notice signifies that on \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_,  
*Month Day Year*

\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_  
*Governing body Church/Spiritual Center*

completed the following Levels of the **EarthCare Program**.

- \_\_\_ **Level A: EarthCare Covenant**
- \_\_\_ **\*Level B: EarthCare Commitment**
- \_\_\_ **\*Level C: Earthcare Congregation**

\*Form 3, **Action Checklist** is attached, with appropriate documentation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Senior Minister/Spiritual Leader*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Chairperson, Governing Body*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Email address*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Email address*

**Address:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Street*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*City*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*State*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Zip Code*

The **EarthCare** contact person for our Congregation is:

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*Name*

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*Address*

*City*

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*State*

*Zip Code*

*( )*

*Telephone No.*

*Fax No.*

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*Email Address*

(Submit this form to the Unity EarthCare Team at [earthcare@unity.org](mailto:earthcare@unity.org), or to Michael L. McCord, EarthCare Program Coordinator, 1209 N Leevue Drive, Olathe, KS 66061 or to michael\_mccord@sbcglobal.net.)

# Form 3



## Action Checklist

(Applicable for Levels B and C only)

### Application Requirements:

- Describe the history, current status and future goals/plans of your environmental program.
- Provide details and appropriate support documentation for each step checked below.

### Please Note:

- Level B requires completion of four steps on **The Path to EarthCare**, two of which must be the **Pray** and **Vision** steps and three actions under the Act step.
- Level C requires completion of all steps on **The Path to EarthCare**.
- The “Other” step or activity, if selected, must meet the intent of **The EarthCare Program**. While not required, prior approval by the **EarthCare** Core Team is recommended.
- Any activity(ies) that was/were implemented as a recommendation of an environmental/energy audit need not be repeated.
- Ministries requesting re-certification under a different Level must submit a new Notice of Initiation (Form 1), Notice of Completion (Form 2) and Action Checklist (Form 3).

*The ministry has completed the following Steps of **The Path to EarthCare**:*

- Pray:** We have created a consciousness for **EarthCare** work through prayer.
- Vision:** We have formulated our vision through a covenant, vision statement or mission statement.
- Inspire:** We have maintained a sacred space for creation through Sunday services and special ceremonies.
- Learn:** We have sponsored educational activities within the church and within the community.

**Act:**

- Level B:** We have completed the following three actions according to the attached explanations.
- OR**
- Level C:** We have completed all nine of the activities below according to the attached explanations.
  - 1. Created an action plan that seeks to transform attitudes and commitments by embracing concrete actions that reduce human ecological impact on the earth and contribute to justice for people affected by environmental degradation.
  - 2. Conducted and substantially implemented the recommendations of an energy/environmental audit.
  - 3. Practiced energy conservation.
  - 4. Established a recycling program.
  - 5. Minimized waste in what we purchase and consume.
  - 6. Practiced water conservation.
  - 7. Accepted stewardship of a natural resource.
  - 8. Promoted awareness of the interdependence of creation.
  - 9. Other. This activity may be used to replace one of the above actions. Please describe in detail.  

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- Share:** We have shared **EarthCare** within our local community.
- Renew:** We have periodically renewed, re-assessed, and celebrated our vision.
- Other:** Use this to replace one of the steps with one that meets the intent of the **EarthCare Program**. Please provide supporting documentation that explains this new activity and why you chose not to complete one of the other steps.  

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Special circumstances/reasons making it impossible to implement the following item(s) on the checklist (please describe):

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**Congregations are encouraged to submit any additional documentation that they feel is relevant.**