

*Unity Church of Portland's*

**GREEN TEAM**

PRESENTS

**A MOVING  
GUIDE  
to  
EARTH  
CARE**



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# **INTRODUCTION**

## ***IS YOUR CHURCH GREEN?***

Unity Church of Portland's "Green Team" presents a practical guide for making churches and worship groups more environmentally friendly. These ideas and practices, sprouted in Portland, Oregon, are intended to inspire, motivate and activate others to care for Mother Earth with reverence and intention.

Our planet is precious. How we treat it is important. Today we are making a choice. Do we allow global warming to seriously disrupt our ecosystems and life on Earth as we know it without working to be part of the solution? And do we sustain Earth's resources as best we can, saving them for future generations to reap and enjoy, or do we squander the plenty God has blessed us with?

The answers are easy, but the decisions we make can be difficult, not only as individual custodians of our planet, but as a church family as well.

The Green Team was formed in June 2001 for the purpose of decreasing global warming through increasing environmental awareness and environmental friendly practices in our homes, church and community. It was created to explore ways to not only be environmentally pro-active, but fiscally responsible as well, realizing our dual responsibilities to being good stewards of the earth and of the church's finances. The dedicated members of the Green Team have seriously examined, in depth, ways our church can be more environmentally responsible as well as help save church funds.

The accomplishments of this team and of the church as a whole in a relatively short period of time have been favorably noted by the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns (INEC). We have received recognition as a church that is aware of its duty to our fragile environment, and for the positive steps we have taken to fulfill that duty.

In this booklet we present simple lists and some examples of the areas we have worked on and continue to work on to be good stewards of the bounty God has given us. We offer this booklet in the hope and with our prayer that this will assist your church or group in becoming as "green" as possible.

### **Forming a Green Team**

You may find it valuable to discuss the importance of a sustainable environment and our responsibility as co-creators on the living earth with your Board to gain support for a Green Team at your church, center, or group.

Identify and recruit an interested responsible person(s) to set up a team. If available, send this person to a workshop on green issues.

Develop a general purpose statement to attract those interested to your team. This statement can be expanded when the team meets and further defines the issues.

Publicize the team and its purpose in the church bulletin with information on how to sign up.

Set up the first meeting with all interested parties invited. Use the first meeting to get acquainted, identify areas of interest, define your general direction, and to set up a regular meeting time. (We meet after church once a month.) Leave future meetings open to new people.

Let this be fun and educational and move at the pace appropriate for your group. It is important to remember that every little action taken to save energy and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions has an effect on making our planet more sustainable.

### **Setting Goals**

Set clear goals early on to provide direction. For example, at Unity Church of Portland we seek to reduce global warming by:

- Self education which is naturally shared with friends, neighbors, and family;
- Education of church members and visitors;
- Making the church facilities greener while saving money in energy costs; and
- Taking political action on green issues.

### **Educating the Congregation**

- Include a Weekly green tip in the Sunday church bulletin.
- Write a green column for the church newsletter.
- Publicize local green events and speakers on environmental issues.
- Before Christmas include a church bulletin insert with ideas for a green Christmas.
- Bring green issues to the youth teachers for inclusion in their lessons.
- Encourage congregants to have energy and lighting audits.

Remember that this is as much a self education / exploration experience as it is a process to inform others. This is a good opportunity to learn more about your community and to share your abilities and consciousness with others. It is like a seed that is nourished until it blooms as a beautiful flower in all its glory showing forth the potential that lay hidden beneath the visible realm. Enjoy the process!

## **SUGGESTED CHURCH PROJECTS**

- ❖ Recycle newspapers and magazines and sell them to create an income flow. Unity Church of Portland has a large bin in their parking lot for collecting paper.
- ❖ Recycle church paper, glass, metal, and plastic if possible in your area. Also, compost organic materials including coffee grounds.
- ❖ If you live in an area with beverage container deposits, have a receptacle available for empty pop cans and bottles. This is an excellent fundraiser for the youth group.
- ❖ Recycle books by selling used books in the bookstore.
- ❖ Have a yearly rummage sale to reuse items, make money, and save energy.
- ❖ Have a free abundance table for magazines or produce.
- ❖ Sign an Energy Pledge. The Green Team signed the Energy Pledge created by Oregon Interfaith Power and Light (OIPL). The pledge provided direction and formalized our commitment to energy conservation. Pledge forms are available from several organizations (see Resources for contact information).
- ❖ If available, encourage the church and its members to buy clean renewable energy from their utility companies. The Green Team set up a table during coffee hour following the worship service. Members approached people to share information about alternative energy and to encourage them to sign up. A total of 19 households signed up. People appreciated receiving the information from someone they knew.
- ❖ Contact your local utility company and request an electrical survey of your church facility. This will identify areas where your church can save both energy and money by being more efficient. This survey is often a free service. The Green Team arranged for a free energy audit of Unity Church of Portland's facility, which showed that we could realize substantial savings in our utility bills.
- ❖ Replace fixtures and lights in your church facility with energy efficient ones where possible. This may entail initial up front costs, but the saving in lower utility bills will more than pay for them. Based on the energy audit, the Board of Trustees approved replacing all of the lights in the Portland church with more energy-efficient fixtures, compact fluorescent bulbs, and battery-powered LED lights over exits. We realized a complete return on our investment in the first three years!
- ❖ Research rebates, grants and programs in your state, such as Oregon's Business Energy Tax Credit Pass-Through program, which can help to pay for heating and energy refits of your church facility. Half of the cost of Unity Church of Portland's lighting refits were covered by such partners.
- ❖ See the **Green Tips for Sunday Bulletins** (next section) for more suggestions.

## **GREEN TIPS FOR SUNDAY BULLETINS**

### **RECYCLING**

- ❖ Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle: these terms mean to reduce what you buy by making sure that it can be reused several times and/or recycled. Otherwise, do not buy it.
- ❖ Avoid buying disposable items whenever possible.
- ❖ Donate items you no longer use to a non-profit group or thrift store, or have a sale.
- ❖ Consider buying used items.
- ❖ Buy recycled materials. Look for the "made with recycled materials" on the products you buy in the store. Buying recycled products completes the loop so very little ends up in the landfill.
- ❖ Recycle newspapers, aluminum, paper, glass, metal, and plastic whenever possible.
- ❖ Coffee drinkers: buy gold coffee filters. They are reusable and do not need to be disposed of continually. Otherwise buy unbleached coffee filters which compost better than bleached ones.
- ❖ Cancel unused and unwanted mail order catalogs.
- ❖ Research green ideas in your local library.

### **LIGHTING / ELECTRICITY**

- ❖ Replace light fixtures with more energy efficient ones where possible. This may entail initial up front costs, but the savings in lower utility bills will more than pay for them.
- ❖ Use longer life, energy efficient light bulbs that save money by reducing replacement costs.
- ❖ Clean lighting fixtures on a regular basis as this will provide brighter lighting.
- ❖ For outdoor lighting use motion detectors and timers to save on costs. And replace spotlights with halogen lights.
- ❖ Use energy efficient office machines, preferably ones with automatic shutoff switches.
- ❖ When replacing kitchen appliances buy the most energy efficient models available.
- ❖ When available, invest in electricity that comes from renewable resources like solar and wind. Many utility companies have these options available, and they are becoming more reasonably priced as demand increases.
- ❖ Use common sense by turning off lights and equipment when not in use.
- ❖ Compact fluorescent lights must be on for three or more hours to conserve the life of the bulbs and maximize energy conservation.

## **HEATING / COOLING**

- ❖ Weatherize doors and windows, and insulate when possible.
- ❖ Use curtains and blinds to help keep heat in or out depending on the desired result.
- ❖ Set thermostats no higher than 68 degrees when building is in use and 60 degrees when not in use. And remember to take into consideration the fact that a room full of people requires a lower setting.
- ❖ Replace outmoded, wasteful heating and air conditioning units with efficient models that will save more in the long run.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

- ❖ Keep your car in tune. Having it checked on a regular basis ensures that it is running as efficiently as possible and using as little gas as possible, as well as prolonging the life of your vehicle.
- ❖ When you need to wash your car, take it to a car wash facility. The water is recycled and the soap used does not go into the drainage system that drains into the nearest river.

## **GARDENS / WATER**

- ❖ When composting: Compost only kitchen scraps that do not include meat, fat, bone, or dairy products. Egg shells are okay but they should be rinsed and crushed before composting.
- ❖ When watering your lawn or garden, water only in the early morning or in the late evening. This allows for more even watering and less evaporation from the hot sun.
- ❖ When gardening find alternatives to harmful pesticides and herbicides. These chemicals run straight from your yard into a nearby drain and then to a river.
- ❖ When killing slugs, try using beer. The slugs are drawn to the beer. They get drunk and die.
- ❖ Placing crushed egg shells around plants will deter the movement of slugs.
- ❖ When planting trees and shrubs, try planting native ones. They are drought resistant and will grow better in their native origin.
- ❖ All household batteries, car batteries, pesticides, garden weed killers, and paint are considered hazardous waste. They must be kept out of the waste stream in order to keep contaminants out of the landfill. Send them to a hazardous waste facility.

## **GREEN CHRISTMAS IDEAS**

### Trees & Decorations

- ❖ Buy a live tree and plant it.
- ❖ Buy an artificial tree. (if small enough leave it trimmed, wrapped in plastic and ready for next year)
- ❖ Buy a cut tree and compost or recycle it.
- ❖ Or just don't have a tree, or decorate an outdoor tree, or create an indoor tree using your imagination.
- ❖ Use homemade decorations.
- ❖ For example: Use frozen juice lids for ornaments. With a nail and hammer pound out a simple design and hang them with a ribbon.
- ❖ Use energy efficient lights and leave them on only for set prime time periods.
- ❖ Make outdoor decorations like stringed popcorn for birds.

### Gifts

- ❖ Give a gift to your planet by buying a block of renewable energy or using only renewable energy.
- ❖ Make and give homemade items.
- ❖ Give a gift of time or a gift certificate.
- ❖ Take someone to the zoo, a play, or a concert.
- ❖ Sign someone up for lessons in music, a foreign language, or a sport.
- ❖ Buy items with little or no packaging or with packaging that is recyclable.
- ❖ Buy items that will be used up like food, perfume, and soap.
- ❖ Use catalogs (to be recycled) or the Internet to buy gifts and save time and energy.
- ❖ With toys that require batteries, buy rechargeable batteries.
- ❖ Agree with relatives not to exchange gifts but to donate money to worthy causes.
- ❖ Buy from second-hand stores and garage sales.

### Cards

- ❖ Create cards with your favorite quotes and make your own envelopes.
- ❖ Buy cards that are produced from a high percentage of recycled materials.
- ❖ Avoid cards with foil as it is not recyclable. But if you receive foil cards find a creative use for them like in a collage.
- ❖ Use fronts of old cards as postcards, bookmarks, tags for gifts, scrap paper for notes

and finally recycle them.

### Wrapping

- ❖ Wrap gifts with decorated brown paper bags, old maps, newspaper funny paper, or recycled paper.
- ❖ See how many years you can use the same piece of wrapping paper while keeping it attractive.
- ❖ Reuse ribbons, bows, boxes, packing materials, and paper.
- ❖ Cut strips of newspaper, curl it with scissors, and fasten strips together with tape for a bow.

### Miscellaneous

- ❖ Buy Christmas items on sale at the end of the season and keep more green in your wallet.
- ❖ When shopping eliminate the experience of driving and parking by taking mass transit. If each family reduced holiday gas consumption by one gallon (about 20 miles) we'd reduce greenhouse gas emissions by one million tons!
- ❖ Store and donate unwanted gifts to your church rummage sale along with items no longer beneficial to your path.

## NEWSLETTER EXCERPTS

A New Year's resolution or affirmation:

*I will increase my understanding of my life's impact on Mother Earth and use this awareness to treat her more kindly.*

Practicing this affirmation is a matter of doing the little things like turning off the lights when leaving a room; buying a block of renewable energy; reducing your highway driving speed; praying for the earth; walking instead of driving to a local store, meeting, or mailbox; applying the weekly church bulletin green tips; reducing water use when brushing teeth; and turning down the thermostat.

Each day we perform many routine tasks that affect the earth. As we expand our awareness of our inter-relatedness we can make more informed, more loving, more conscious choices that save energy and money as well as increase the health of our planet.

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With the approach of springtime one of the things our attention turns to is spring cleaning (not everyone's favorite topic). And spring cleaning provides a good opportunity to re-evaluate whether there are some things we are ready to release from our outer as well as from our inner life. We know that it is easier and quicker to clean when there are fewer knickknacks and books to dust. I'm not suggesting that you part with meaningful possessions. But those things that are just clutter or excess or unused (items like unworn clothing) or broken (items never to be fixed) could find a home elsewhere. These items can be recycled through garage sales or donated to charitable organizations or end up at recycling centers. Of course you might want to label and set aside a couple of items that would be appropriate as white elephant gifts. And another benefit of cleaning out closets, drawers and other areas is that the process can strengthen the letting go pattern in consciousness.

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In beautiful Oregon, which is a leader in green issues, it is hard not to be reminded of the effect we have on our environment. Our spiritual understanding is constantly being exposed to and challenged by a growing environmental awareness. It is important to consider green options whenever we upgrade our appliances, renovate our homes, or just put on another coat of paint. Green building decisions can be as simple as making a project simpler. In some cases it may cost a little more up front but will save us money in the long term as well as make our environment healthier. Once a project is completed it is vital to remember that simple things like turning off the lights when leaving the room or shutting off the heat or air conditioning when it is no longer needed are just as important as some of our larger projects or decisions. And once we become aware that certain actions and products are harmful to us and to our environment we must decide how we will act based on this new awareness.

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The terms “Reduce”, “Reuse” and “Recycle” are familiar to us as they are like a mantra reflecting some part of the environmental movement. Lately, I have seen the word “Restore” appropriately added as a 4th R to complete this sequence. These 4 words can also be applied to our spiritual journey.

**Reduce:** Using less creates less stress on the earth--for example, if the demand for gas dropped so too would pollution as well as the price--buying in bulk with less packaging and using a cloth bag also are ways to reduce our impact on the environment. By reducing our reliance on the outer and our ego and focusing on the inner for our guidance we have a greater positive impact on our world.

**Reuse:** We don't need to have the latest style or upgrade or model--we don't need to replace something until it has lived out its life in as many ways as possible--old worn clothes become work clothes and rags--sort of like affirmations that are used over and over again. We reuse our truth principles until they become second nature--we don't need the latest book or tape but rely on basic principles to move us forward.

**Recycle:** Purchasing those things that when finished can be more easily recycled and thus enter the production stream again in a different form without requiring new raw materials. We let go and release all thoughts, feelings, and energy back into the Silence where they can touch infinite good and return altered for the highest good of all.

**Restore:** Return to original or better condition--planting and/or nurturing new growth and species which blesses future generations. By spending time in inner work we come into greater alignment with our true self, our original energy of wholeness and bring forth blessings for everyone.

Maybe as we work to bring our selves back into harmony with our natural environment (our divinity) and treat the environment with the respect and love it deserves we will at the same time bring ourselves into greater harmony with and realization of our inner perfect being.

Remember: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Restore!

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Christmas is coming soon so this is a good time to begin thinking about how we might make this Christmas season one where the earth is considered in every one of our decisions. Here are a few suggestions for a greener holiday. It would be good to shop at fairs where they sell holiday gifts made from recycled materials, and gifts that are made by following environmentally friendly guidelines. Higher quality, longer lasting gifts are usually easier on the environment. Gifts that can be used up like food items and soap, instead of dust-catching knick knacks that only add more clutter, are certainly more desirable for a sustainable lifestyle. Gifts of time for a particular service may be more appreciated than a thing gift. Taking someone to a particular event or providing them with a ticket to the zoo or a concert or some such activity geared to their specific interests may be in order. A magazine subscription might be a reminder of your caring concern throughout the year. And a gift certificate to the bookstore is always good for readers. You and your family may want to donate to charity instead of exchanging gifts. You may want to shop online and save on gas as well as the hassle of crowds. Use your imagination to find ways to be creative while still respecting the environment.

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## RESOURCES

This guide is intended only as a start. Check out the following for additional information and supporting materials.

- *A Moving Guide to Earth Care* – for more information contact:  
Unity Church of Portland  
4525 SE Stark Street  
Portland, OR 97215  
(503) 234-7441  
e-mail: [unityportland@qwest.net](mailto:unityportland@qwest.net)  
website: [www.unityportland.org](http://www.unityportland.org)
- *Unity Earth Care Northwest* – sample activities, success stories, and BLOG:  
Northwest Region Association of Unity Churches  
webpage: [www.unitynwregion.org/Programs/EarthCare](http://www.unitynwregion.org/Programs/EarthCare)
- *Energy Stewardship Covenant* – PDF form:  
Oregon Interfaith Power and Light  
website: [www.emoregon.org/pdfs/EnergyStewardshipCovenant2005rev2.pdf](http://www.emoregon.org/pdfs/EnergyStewardshipCovenant2005rev2.pdf)
- *1-2-3 Response to Global Warming* – program materials:  
Unitarian-Universalist Ministry for Earth  
website: [uuministryforearth.org/res\\_warming.htm](http://uuministryforearth.org/res_warming.htm)
- *Energy Star Congregations* – program materials:  
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency  
website: [www.energystar.gov/congregations](http://www.energystar.gov/congregations)
- Other Internet websites
- Recycling businesses
- Community bulletin boards
- Local colleges
- Utility companies
- Libraries
- Environmental groups



*The Earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof;  
the world and they that dwell therein.*

Psalm 24.1

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