

Saving Energy and Money

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In 2001 Unity Church of Portland (UCP), OR, became one of the first Unity ministries to represent a formally adopted work of the Northwest Region of the Association of Unity Churches: Unity Earth Care Northwest. They established a Green Team for “the purpose of decreasing global warming through increasing environmental awareness and environmentally friendly practices in our homes, church and community.”

During 2002 Jenny Holmes of Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns (INEC, see www.emoregon.org/INEC.htm) worked with Rev. Dick Everts at Unity Church of Portland (UCP) to assist the church in obtaining a free energy audit of their facility. Holmes assisted by talking with representatives from different programs that made some funding possible for the conservation measures to be implemented. UCP agreed to participate in a Lighting Efficiency Retrofit Project and spent about \$4000 for:

- upgrading their electrical wiring,
- installing new ballasts,
- CFU lighting,
- LED lights throughout the church.

An additional \$4000 of the funds for the renovations came from businesses participating in The Business Energy Tax Credit Pass Through program and a pilot project with companies such as Norm Thompson who pay non-profit organizations to offset their carbon emissions.

UCP realized a three-year return on their investment! Their annual electric bill prior to the completion of the work for the 8,000 sq. foot

facility was \$7318. Their electric bills decreased \$1000 the first year and \$1600/year over the next two consecutive years. Recently UCP’s energy provider began billing them at a different rate due to their continued decrease of energy usage, another savings of \$15/month.

Translation: by caring for the earth and taking advantage of unique programs for non-profits, Unity Church of Portland has more money for ministry! Unity ministers and leaders that care for the earth, want to realize energy cost savings, and attract a dedicated volunteer base to pursue facility and grounds care, will want to investigate the following resources:

- Unity Church of Portland’s “A Moving Guide to Earth Care,” unityportland@qwest.net.
- Unity Earth Care Northwest website for excellent guidance in establishing a consciousness for earth care in ministries: www.unitynwregion.org (under Programs/Earth Care).
- Interfaith Power and Light—find out what is available in your state by going to: www.theregenerationproject.org.
- Energystar Congregations, offering free guidebook, technical support, info and awards eligibility, and more: www.energystar.gov/congregations.
- Your local/state energy provider: ask about energy audits, The Business Energy Tax Credit Pass Through program, and other programs unique to your state.
- Unity Earth Care International: Rev. Kathy Harwood Long links people with resources and mentoring ministries: long.kathy@sbcglobal.net.

This is a great example of how we can make a difference for our world as well as make sense for our ministries. We wish you a prosperous new year of caring for people and the earth!