

EarthCare Connections



Fostering awareness of our spiritual oneness with the earth and promoting active care of creation.

<https://www.unityuwm.org/earthcare>
earthcare@unity.org

By empowering Unity congregations, EarthCare envisions Unity Worldwide Ministries as a powerful force and global leader in addressing the climate change emergency and moving society towards environmental justice in order to create a world that works for all. In so doing, it will vitalize and expand our Unity movement.



In This Issue:

- Finally, Some Good Eco-News
- The Power of Wisdom
- EarthCare News
- It's Always Darkest Before the Light



On the trail to the summit of Longs Peak, CO (14,259'), Mike McCord, 1999.

Finally, Some Good Eco-News!

I hope you took advantage of the holiday season to reflect on the year that is passing and plan future objectives, goals & activities. Now it's time to get to work! But before we do so, let's celebrate a few environmental success stories in 2024:



Montana's Supreme Court has upheld a landmark ruling affirming young people's constitutional right to a "clean and healthful environment," striking down state laws that limited the review of greenhouse gas emissions and cementing the state's climate protections. The case was a landmark youth-led climate change lawsuit that argued that the state's support of fossil fuels violated the state's constitution.



In 2024, “legal personhood” was granted to ecosystems like Ecuador's rivers, New Zealand's mountains Brazilian ocean waves to enhance environmental protection. Called the “rights-of-nature movement,” it allows people to take legal action to protect natural ecosystems. Breakthroughs such as this offer a roadmap for sustaining ecosystems and reducing fossil fuel reliance worldwide.



The ancient mountains of the Andes are home to the critically important and endangered “cloud trees” that grow up to 5,000 meters above sea level. They are the highest-altitude trees in the world and are known to absorb and retain water from clouds and the Andes’ melting glaciers. Slowly, they release this water through spongy moss that covers the trees, feeding the mountain streams and, eventually, the headwaters of the Amazon River.

But today, after hundreds of years of deforestation and development, just 500,000 hectares remain, thought to be between 1% and 10% of the original forest. As a result, ecosystems have degraded and the forests no longer provide a natural barrier to flooding or erosion. The water security of the millions of people who live in the foothills of the Andes is also at risk.

Enter Constantino Auca Chutas, a Peruvian biologist whose grandparents were farmers from the indigenous Quechua community. In 2018, he co-founded Acción Andina, a joint initiative between US nonprofit Global Forest Generation and Peruvian nonprofit Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos, dedicated to restoring the highland forest and protecting the local communities that depend on it.

Work began in Peru, but has since spread across Ecuador, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Colombia, with the ultimate goal of protecting and restoring one million hectares of native Andean forest by 2045.

To date, Auca Chutas says the initiative has planted more than 10 million trees across the region, with the help of thousands of indigenous families. The trees are protecting his ancestral lands and the people who live on them.



“I’m proud of being an Inca descendant,” he tells CNN. “When I was a child, I grew up near rivers, enjoying seeing the creatures and all this magnificent nature. I thought to myself, it would be fantastic if we can pass this to the new generations.”

Courtesy of CNN World News: <https://www.cnn.com/world/americas/andes-cloud-forests-polylepis-c2e-spc/index.html#:~:text=To%20date%2C%20Aucca%20Chutas%20says,of%20thousands%20of%20indigenous%20families.>

In all of these stories, we are reminded of what is possible when a few activated citizens come up with an idea, unite and take action to create a better world. It proves that you too can make a positive change in our world through faith, belief and action.

The Power of Wisdom From 12 Powers for the Planet

Our natural world may at times feel out of control -- not just the actions of humans which impact us personally, but the seasons, the weather, and the weeds that continue to grow in our gardens. The *Unity spiritual power of Wisdom* helps us reconnect with Earth's rhythms, bounty, and intelligence. In this module, we focus on the spiritual Power of Wisdom and how it relates to and is enhanced by nature and EarthCare.

Each year we experience the wisdom of nature in the turning of the seasons and the incredible life forces of all of Earth's species. Through our divine faculty of Wisdom, we can learn to hear the holy scripture of nature, enhancing our spiritual growth and development.

By the end of this module, learners will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of Wisdom as a spiritual principle.
- Identify Wisdom expressed in the living components of our world - vegetation and wildlife.
- Identify links between Wisdom as a spiritual principle and the human interaction with nature and the whole of creation.
- Use the Wisdom expressed by nature to reveal lessons that will enrich our lives.
- Integrate the spiritual principle of Wisdom as related to Earth/Creation care into Unity services and teachings

To read the entire module, go to: <https://www.unityuwm.org/earthcare-curriculum>

EarthCare News

The year 2024 was a productive one for your EarthCare Team. Here are some highlights:

Angela Tetrault joined the Core Team and Amanda Sue Briggs became an advisor. Both bring youth, fresh ideas and important skills to aid in UET's success.

The complete team is as follows: Mike McCord, Leader, Kansas City, Beth Remmes, Co-Leader, First Unity Church of Atlanta, Mary Gerken, **Midtown Unity**, St Petersburg, FL, Rev. Cylvia Hayes, Unity Community of Central Oregon, Rev. Kathy Harwood Long, Friends of Unity,

Plymouth, MI, Martha Powers, Unity of Cape Cod, Rev. Elisa Sabogal, Unity SE in Kansas City, Angela Tetrault, Renaissance Unity in Royal Oak Michigan and Rev. Helen Wright, Edinburgh, Scotland.

A major initiative entitled, “12 Powers for the Planet” was launched in April. For each of the Powers, there is an affirmation, a prayer, an article/blog, a youth curriculum, self-directed lesson and resources. Each unit provides Unity leaders with hands-on education materials and concrete actions that can be taken to become better stewards of creation.

EarthCare’s website has been upgraded and revised.

Mary Gerken’s Collaboration/Mentoring program is an ever-growing success. A different topic is discussed at each monthly zoom call, along with a lively exchange of ideas and suggestions.

Our quarterly newsletter, *EarthCare Connections*, is consistently rated as one of the ministry’s post popular means of communication.

Another popular program is the Green Star Award. This year, a **record** 14 congregations completed a minimum of three significant environmental activities during the prior calendar year.

A new award, the *Green Star Constellation*, was created. The award recognizes the collective efforts of faith-based communities to work together to cultivate awareness, advocacy and care for all creation. At least three faith-based organizations must have agreed to work with one another to share information and support its individual congregation’s projects as well as hosting at least three joint activities. The program is groundbreaking in that non-Unity congregations are eligible. We feel this is an important milestone in spreading EarthCare’s vision beyond Unity.

Sixty five (65) congregations are certified EarthCare Congregations.

Your congregation can also become a Certified EarthCare congregation. There are three levels of achievement, each of which requires a greater degree of commitment. They are:

Level A: EarthCare Covenant: Completing this level fulfills the **Pray and Vision steps** by creating a covenant, vision and/or mission statement to the care of the earth.

Level B: EarthCare Commitment: Level B provides guidance for church communities to further their commitment to EarthCare. It requires completion of **four steps and three actions of the Act Step**.

Level C: EarthCare Fulfillment: Completion of Level C means the congregation has cultivated a comprehensive earth oriented spirituality that touches the entire ministry, both spiritually and in practical actions. This level requires completion of all seven Steps of the Path and six of eight actions of the Act Step.

Upon completion of each level, you will receive a Certificate of Achievement to proudly show your congregation’s commitment to protecting and preserving our environment.

In addition, the ministry will be recognized on the UWM website, at the annual Unity People’s Conference and in other publications.

For a complete description of the program and an application, download a copy at EarthCare’s website: <https://www.unityuwm.org/earthcare>.

It's Always Darkest before the Light

If you were like me, the results of the last election left you stunned and dismayed. Could all the hard work we've put in with regard to climate change since 2008 be reversed or put on hold? Since then, I have shut out most news to give me time to reflect on the consequences of America's political choice and figure out where we go from here. It didn't help that I was in the hospital at the time recovering from a heart operation.

I felt (and feel) betrayed and incensed at the choice enough Americans had made to return our country to danger with regard to the environment and possibly even democracy itself. We thought we were on the road to overcoming, but now many of the gains are in jeopardy, including environmental justice, by negative forces that are stronger than ever.

So what do we do now? Even more-so, what can we do that will even make a difference? As author and fellow EarthCare teammate Cylvia Hayes writes in her blog, Transcend:

“One thing we cannot do is allow chaos to reign within ourselves. When it feels like chaos out in the world one form of action is not allowing chaos to reign within ourselves. Growing our own inner light is a powerful tool for clearing away darkness. I've been intentionally reminding myself to “vibrate up,” to notice the good all around me, and to choose joy. It has been a tremendous gift to myself. Growing our own inner light is a powerful tool for clearing away darkness. I've been intentionally reminding myself to “vibrate up,” to notice the good all around me, and to choose joy. It has been a tremendous gift to myself.”

Doing this inner work will also allow spirit to come through and guide what is yours to do. Here are a few possibilities that may come to mind:

- Monitor Executive and Legislative actions then call or write letters to newspapers, social media and legislators.
- Join groups of like-minded individuals that are action oriented.
- Participate in marches and demonstrations.
- Get involved with organizations that are leading the resistance.

In this regard, there are a number of organizations you can get involved with, including:

Interfaith Power and Light (IPL): <https://interfaithpowerandlight.org/>

The Sierra Club: <https://www.sierraclub.org/>

The Climate Reality Project: <https://www.climate realityproject.org/>

Citizen's Climate Lobby: <https://citizensclimatelobby.org/>

The Resilient Activist: <https://www.theresilientactivist.org/>

Move to Amend: movetoamend.org

Natural Resources Defense Council: <https://www.nrdc.org/>

In addition, these individuals have informative and inspirational programs and blogs:

TRANSCEND with Cylvia Hayes: <https://www.cylviahayes.net/transcend/>

Katharine Hayhoe: talkingclimatenewsletter@172836257.mailchimpapp.com

The Thom Hartman Report: <https://www.thomhartmann.com/hartmann-report-podcast>

Maryann Williamson: <https://marianne.com/>

Unity's EarthCare Team also plans to become more pro-active in 2025 in terms of advocating for pro-environmental legislation and activities. If you would like to be added to our mailing list to keep abreast of these, email Mike McCord at michael_mccord@sbcglobal.net.

In deciding what to do, remember the words of Harold Thurman Whitman, **“Don't ask yourself what the world needs, ask yourself what makes you come alive, and then go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”** Margaret Mead added, **“Never doubt that a small band of committed people can change the world. Indeed, nothing else ever has.”**

Oftentimes, just when things seem at their worst, change for the better is on the horizon. The darkest part of the night means that a dawn of renewed hope is just a few moments away. This may be one of those times.

So please get involved. You will be joining thousands and thousands of people that have made a similar commitment and are experiencing the momentum, the meaning for something this big.



Mike McCord, Editor