

St. Paul's to Receive a Congregational Development Grant from the Diocese of Olympia!

In 2015 St. Paul's will receive a Congregational Development Grant for 2015 from the Diocese of Olympia for a new, youth-led ministry called "Water & Soul." Out of our unique maritime home, this grant will help young leaders to heed the call to care for, and deepen their bonds with, God's good creation – all the while, helping their peers and the broader community to do so as well. Although this is a very practical adventure, it is founded in and guided by a Christ-centered identity emerging from the waters of baptism.

Last spring, we had an opportunity to apply for this grant and very little time in which to do so. Prayerfully, Tanya and Dianne discerned and drafted a vision for "Water & Soul." This vision has been blessed by the Diocese in the awarding of a \$12,500 grant for 2015 that will be used for increased staff hours dedicated to "Water & Soul" as well as for travel and other start-up expenses.

Now we need to nurture the seeds of inspiration and vision – and, in faith seek, as a larger community, to engage with one another so that together we can grow a relevant ministry for youth, and eventually for all ages, focused on the love and care of God's precious creation with which we have been entrusted. We are delighted to share some of the details of this new ministry and we invite your questions. Please be in prayer as we begin to birth and nurture it. It is grand work ahead for us, but we trust that God goes with us and will guide us every step of the way. Thanks be to God!

What might "Water & Soul" look like?

With support from the Diocese's grant, we will seek to:

- ...Establish a creation-care ministry at St. Paul's that will focus initially on developing youth leaders/mentors. For example, in early 2015, a small group of youth will travel to Pacific Grove, CA to experience "Blue Theology" (one of the inspirations behind our program proposal <http://www.pacificgrovechurch.org/Blue%20Theology/Blue%20Theology%20Page.htm>) and come home to begin designing a peer-based ministry most fitting for our own region.
- ...Provide a new avenue for exploring, understanding, and deepening the meaning of our faith as it relates to our unique place on Earth – a place in which our living God may be seen/felt/heard in very specific and life-changing ways. We will invite our broader community (youth and their families) and Diocese to share in this as offerings begin to take place in the summer of 2015. Ongoing action/learning experiences will grow from these initial offerings – experiences that the larger congregation will help to design, implement, and enjoy.

- ...Invite people of faith and “no faith” to: come see, be transformed, and go forth to care and serve. Participants will experience the richness of life in Christ in a new way.
- ...Grow this ministry such that St. Paul’s is readily identified as a faith community that lives out the call to care for, and deepen our bonds with God’s good creation.

Excerpts from the Grant Proposal

INTENT OF PROJECT:

To create and grow a ‘Water & Soul’ ministry with youth that:

1. helps youth explore and claim their *baptismal* identity (dying to false, life-threatening identities that abound in our culture; being created new in Christ; and becoming agents of transformation in Resurrection life) within this unique, maritime context;
2. welcomes youth from the broader community and Diocese into a safe space in which to explore connections between their spirituality and God’s magnificent natural world in this place on Earth; and
3. equips participating youth with tools (e.g., engaging in an Episcopal-based rite of passage related to this “Water & Soul” theme; ecological awareness from wide array of community partners; practical, stewardship skills) to help lead their peers and younger children (in the church and broader community) in discerning and living out their own faith through and caring for creation.

A GRANT FROM THE DIOCESE WILL:

1. allow St. Pauls’ Director of Ministries with Children, Youth, and Families, along with other staff, to build, facilitate, and recruit for this program;
2. provide seed money to help up to 5 youth (ages 12-16) develop leadership skills by participating in an immersion program consisting of: (a) a “grounding” retreat with “Blue Theology Learning & Serving Groups” in Pacific Grove, CA www.pacificgrovechurch.org/Blue%20Theology/Blue%20Theology%20Page.htm and (b) a 3-year youth-formation program – modeled after “Journey to Adulthood” – centered around the “Water & Soul” theme;
3. with the guidance of peer/youth leaders and their mentors, establish a 5-year program for helping other children and youth (in broader community and Diocese) to connect their faith with creation care;
4. (in 2015) help to host a “Water & Soul” summer program for the broader community and Diocese;
5. (beyond 2015) help to host “Water & Soul” intergenerational classes, retreats, projects, etc. for the broader community and Diocese; and
6. (beyond 2015) based on experiences in #4 and #5, help to develop, publish, and distribute a “Water & Soul” written resource (i.e., theological reflections, practical resources, etc.) for congregations throughout the Diocese to personalize for their respective contexts.

HISTORY OF THE GRANT PROPOSAL:

Back in April 2014, our Diocese invited all congregations to apply for funding through its Congregational Development Grants program – a program that assists “congregations in the Diocese as they develop, with God’s help, into healthier, more faithful, and more effective communities of faith.” Their invitation (<http://www.ecww.org/resources/grants-congregations>) stated that they would give “special priority” to “any grant that enables a congregation to develop in the three Diocesan priority areas of:

- “Congregational development – to develop and implement a clear strategy and ethos of congregational development and health in our diocese in all our congregations no matter what the size or place.
- “Concentrating on those 35 and under – to engage with, listen to, and commit resources toward all those who are 35 years of age and under.
- “Stewardship of all our resources – to be stewards of all of our resources – human, financial, material and spiritual.”

With this invitation on our plates (and a rapidly approaching grant deadline of May 1, 2014), Dianne and Tanya grabbed St. Paul’s “Mutual Ministry Goals”* and put their heads together over this great opportunity for our church. Not knowing quite where to begin, they started with Goal #3. They wondered: could we propose a grant-worthy program that would help us to “develop our intergenerational Ministry of Creation Care in service to God’s broader world, in ways that reflect our unique, Episcopal identity and our context on Earth”? *And*, if so, could this program be an opportunity for St. Paul’s to welcome and engage younger people from our broader community? Through lots of conversation and prayer they got to work trying to answer these questions and created a grant proposal for this new adventure called “Water & Soul.” Throughout this process, they kept our Vestry informed.

When considering our unique “context on Earth,” our hearts/minds went immediately to that which encompasses, nourishes, sustains, and sometimes inundates life on the Olympic Peninsula: God’s gift of water. Not only does water define so much of our ecological life here, but also it characterizes our lives as people *baptized* into community with, for, and through Christ. Water literally marks us and sets us apart to be Christ’s people. Water is one of the most powerful symbols of our faith.

In the summer of 2015, the Diocesan Congregational Development Grants Committee interviewed us and sent their recommendation to Diocesan Council. The approved funds will be dispersed to St. Paul’s in January and June 2015. We have applied for multi-year funding and will learn soon what this may mean for 2016 and beyond.

Footnote

*St. Paul’s Episcopal Church Mutual Ministry Goals – created and approved by Vestry in 2013:

1. Identify/create a fluid, welcome and incorporation process for those new to St. Paul’s Episcopal church, to the Episcopal Church, and to the Christian expression of faith.
2. Make available faith formation for all ages.
3. Continue to develop our intergenerational Ministry of Creation Care in service to God’s broader world, in ways that reflect our unique, Episcopal identity and context on Earth.