

The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

Simple Acts Grants:

A Creation Care Initiative

2016



Young Parishioner from Grace Church, Vineyard Haven, visits a local farm

The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

138 Tremont Street

Boston, MA 02111

www.diomass.org/creation-care-initiative

617-482-5800

O LORD, how manifold are your works!
in wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

Yonder is the great and wide sea
with its living things too many to number,
creatures both small and great.

There move the ships,
and there is that Leviathan,
which you have made for the sport of it.

All of them look to you
to give them their food in due season.

You give it to them; they gather it;
you open your hand, and they are filled with good things.

You hide your face, and they are terrified;
you take away their breath,
and they die and return to their dust.

You send forth your Spirit, and they are created;
and so you renew the face of the earth.

Psalm 104:25–31

Book of Common Prayer, 1979

Creation Care: Green Grants Overview

The Creation Care Initiative of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts exists to encourage, challenge, and support all the congregations of the diocese as they carry out their responsibility to care for God's creation. Within this initiative, there are three separate programs: (1) Simple Acts Grants, of up to \$1,000, which support activities and programs that focus on the environment and conservation and are built on appreciation of and gratitude for blessings; (2) Green Improvement Grants, in amounts up to \$10,000, which assist congregations in funding their purchase of energy-saving equipment and supplies; and (3) Green Loans, a program structured similarly to Diocesan (Stokes) Loans that will provide lower-interest loans to enable congregations to make energy-efficient changes to their buildings. These three programs are supported by individual donations, congregational donations, and the Together Now comprehensive campaign fundraising. *This is the final year for Simple Acts and Green Improvement Grants*; Green Loans will continue to be available.

Simple Acts of Stewardship

All congregations can participate in Simple Acts. Simple Acts is a stewardship program focusing on the environment and conservation and is built on appreciation of and gratitude for God's blessings. Simple Acts seek to support locally-based projects that build a positive connection with the natural world. Simple Acts of Stewardship are those activities or programs that celebrate God's creation, conserve natural resources, teach environmentally responsible practices, and plant a life-long commitment to the environment. The goal of the Simple Acts program is awareness of the balance of nature and of the role that each of us can play in preserving or destroying that balance in our everyday decisions.

Projects ranging from adult formation to church gardens are eligible for funding with a Simple Acts grant. Of particular interest to the Simple Acts program are those ideas that church members can also implement at home, at work, and at school. Advocacy of local, state, and federal environmentally responsible legislation is a desired outcome of the Simple Acts program as well. Some congregations' Simple Acts may require financial support, while others cost nothing. Some projects save congregational operating expenses, and still others raise funds. For examples of projects suggested by some of the congregations of the diocese, see the Simple Acts FAQ on page 2.

- Simple Acts involve sharing stories and ideas. All congregations can participate in the Simple Acts of Stewardship by sharing their stories of their green projects and by serving as resources for other congregations. Congregations are encouraged to share the successes of existing programs and to consider new projects for environmental stewardship. Stories, data, and, of course, pictures are most welcome.
- With gratitude comes action and sharing. Congregations that raise or save money through their Simple Acts are encouraged to contribute to Creation Care: Green Grants both with their creative ideas and with some of the proceeds or savings from their projects.

Requirements and Process: Completed applications are due at the diocesan office (emailed to greengrants@diomass.org or sent in the mail) **on a rolling basis** and are reviewed monthly (as needed) by the Creation Care Task Force leadership team. There is a total of \$10,000 available for the calendar year 2016, with half available from February-June and half available from July-December. Grant awards will be announced following the application review, and funds will be available following a diocesan compliance check.

The diocesan staff administers the program and welcomes the opportunity to work with potential applicants at all stages of the process. Please address questions and comments to Lauren Zook, Grants Administrator, at greengrants@diomass.org or by phone at 617-482-4826, ext. 306.

Simple Acts FAQ

What is the goal of the Simple Acts of Stewardship?

The goal of this aspect of the Creation Care Initiative is to leverage big changes through the simple acts of our congregations, that is, to influence the choices of the wider community through the practice of environmental stewardship by our congregations. Simple Acts is a stewardship program focusing on the environment and conservation. It is built on gratitude for and appreciation of blessings. Gratitude and appreciation are the results of knowledge and experience. The Simple Acts of Stewardship seek to provide opportunities for that knowledge and experience.

Environmental stewardship practices focus on the choices we make in the way we do things. Church members who participate in the program in their congregations take those simple practices to their homes and neighborhoods, to school and work, to the public forum, and to the voting booth.

What programs qualify as Simple Acts?

- Hosting programs on the connections between faith, energy, and climate change; guest speakers/preachers, film screenings, and discussions on environmental topics
- Recycling paper and batteries, books and newspaper, printer ink cartridges, or cans and bottles; turning down thermostats; publishing e-newsletters
- Joining with other congregations or throughout a deanery to make bulk purchases of green paper products and similar supplies
- Planting a tree; planning a low-maintenance meditation garden
- Running a Vacation Bible School, Vacation Garden School, Christian education, or adult formation program focusing on themes of the environment in order to present a theological and ethical framework for choices and behaviors, such as a Lenten “Carbon Fast”
- Choosing field trips such as apple picking or nature hikes to give children first-hand experience of the wonders of nature
- Combining outreach programs with the Simple Acts program through projects such as community vegetable gardens; some congregations volunteer hours of planting, tending, and harvesting at gardens that raise fruits and vegetables for soup kitchens and food pantries
- Obtaining energy audits and providing information on available rebates and loans, and supplying and/or installing items such as LED bulbs and fixtures or adding insulation through a “Work Party”

Our Simple Acts result in no additional costs to the congregation. How can we participate in this program?

If your project does not require funding, or if your project raises funds for your church, please share your story. Submit a one-page story of your project that can be shared with others via the Web. Please include pictures. If your project saves energy costs or raises funds, please consider sharing some of these funds with your fellow congregations through the Creation Care Initiatives.

May a congregation apply for both kinds of Creation Care grants?

Congregations may apply for either a Simple Acts Grant or a Green Improvement Grant, or for both. However, a congregation may apply for funds only once for each type of grant in a given granting cycle.

What is expected from a funded congregation?

- Undertake the program described in its application or submit modifications for the grant committee’s review and approval.
- Submit six-month reports for the duration of the program, and a final report upon completion.
- Provide information and reasonable assistance to fellow congregations undertaking similar programs.

Application Format

Application packet, emailed to greengrants@diomass.org as Adobe Reader-compatible or MSWord-compatible attachment, or by post on standard 8½" x 11" paper. The document must include:

- A. **Cover Page:** A single page with identification and contact information, in addition to a brief description of the project. Please include all of the following information on the cover page of your application:
 1. The name of the program for which you seek funding. Please identify as Application for Simple Acts Grant.
 2. The name of the congregation sponsoring the program. If two or more congregations are collaborating on the project, please identify which congregation will administer the grant funds.
 3. The Creation Care Contact for the congregation. (Please include mailing and e-mail addresses, plus daytime and evening phone numbers.)
 4. The clergy, senior or junior wardens, and Creation Care Team members. (Please include e-mail addresses and phone numbers.)
 5. The amount requested for the current grant cycle, as well as the total project cost.
 6. A one- or two-paragraph summary of the program.
 7. Either dated signatures of the clergy and lay leader *or* e-mails from each acknowledging congregational participation in the proposed project.

- B. **Two-Page Program Overview:** The application must include a two-page narrative of the program that addresses the following:
 1. **Goals:** Describe how the goals of the program relate to the Creation Care Initiative's mission. What specific needs will the program address?
 2. **Description:**
 - a. Describe the specific ways you hope the program will fill the stated needs, transform participants, and serve your community.
 - b. Describe the specific activities involved in the program. Include who will implement them and how they will be funded.
 - c. Estimate the number of members of the congregation who will participate in the program.
 - d. State the duration of the program.
 3. **Evaluation:** Describe the key features that will be used to evaluate the success of the program. How will information be collected?
 4. **Support:**
 - a. Describe the non-financial assistance necessary to conduct the program for one year.
 - b. Describe how your program will be affected if your request is only partially funded.

- C. **Program Budget:** Applications must include a description of your program's financial story in the context of your congregation's budget. Please follow the format of the Program Budget template (page 4). For the budget of your program, include all other grants, gifts, or contributions to be applied to the proposed program. List all other income and expenses related to the proposed program. Identify all in-kind services available for the program.

- D. **Checklists:** Applications must include both checklists – Checklist A (page 5) and Checklist B (page 6) – for each congregation that will participate in the proposed program. *Please note that projects involving children and youth require congregations to be current on their Safe Church requirements.*

- E. **Supporting Documents:** Copies of the following information must be included with the application:
 1. Creation Care/Green Committee report from most recent Annual Report OR brief description of committee (planned activities/goals).
 2. Income and expense reports for 2014 and 2015, including operating and non-operating accounts.
 3. The congregation's balance sheet for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2015.
 4. The congregation's 2016 budget.

Sample Program Budget

(also available as an Excel document from www.diomass.org/grants-loans/creation-care-initiative)

Income	Diocesan grants	
	Other secured grants*	
	Other pending grants*	
	Fee for service	
	Fundraising	
	Congregation's contribution from annual budget	
	Congregation's contribution from bequests	
	Other income for program	
	In-kind contributions	
	TOTAL PROGRAM INCOME	
Expenses	Personnel	
	Telephone & utilities	
	Training	
	Insurance	
	Printing/duplicating	
	Supplies	
	Materials	
	Transportation	
	Rent	
	Other expenses	
	TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES	

*Please identify each grantor, amount, and restrictions on secured grants. In the case of pending grants, please identify the potential grantor, amount requested, and approximate granting date. Please use additional pages if necessary.

Checklist A

Required for all applicants

Please indicate which of these your congregation has done during the past year or 18 months. These 20 practices often contribute to long-term congregational vitality. (Note: It is not necessary to complete all of these to receive funding.)

	√	Name of Congregation:	Location:
1		Conducted a Mutual Ministry Review of/by vestry and clergy	
2		Conducted vestry goal-setting	
3		Conducted vestry review of progress on goals previously set	
4		Created or revised a parish mission or vision statement	
5		Created or updated a long-range parish plan	
6		Obtained or studied a demographic profile of your ministry area (such as a Percept profile)	
7		Obtained an independent audit of your books	
8		Graphed and tracked your average Sunday attendance over at least the last 10 years	
9		Created or revised a comprehensive parish profile (the kind produced in a clergy search or a major strategic planning process)	
10		Undertook a building audit (the kind offered by the Diocesan Property Committee)	
11		Undertook an energy audit (the kind offered by a local energy company or by Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light)	
12		Conducted a face-to-face stewardship canvass of your parish households	
13		Developed a planned giving program	
14		Held a special vestry day or weekend retreat focused on team-building, planning, or spiritual growth	
15		Sent staff or parishioners for Anti-Racism training	
16		Staff and applicable parishioners have taken Safe Church Training (<i>required for programs involving children and youth</i>)	
17		Completed a Safe Church policy (<i>required for programs involving children and youth</i>)	
18		Participated in an intentional partner relationship with another congregation	
19		Used a consultant (diocesan consultant or other) to help you address an opportunity or challenge	
20		Applied for a grant (from diocesan funds or elsewhere) to help your congregation start or expand a ministry	

Checklist B

Required for all applicants

Complete applications must contain satisfactory explanations of circumstances related to all questions answered in the negative.

Please note: No funds will be distributed to congregations that are delinquent in Parochial Report filing, Clergy Compensation Worksheet filing, Diocesan Loan payments, Annual Audit, or Assessment payment (or Assessment Payment Plan compliance).

	Yes / No	Name of Congregation:	Location:
1		Is the congregation current with its filing of the Annual Parochial Report? (The 2015 Parochial Report is due in March 2016.) <i>Required to obtain grant funds.</i>	
2		Did the congregation fill out the Annual Clergy Compensation Survey? <i>Required to obtain grant funds.</i>	
3		Is the congregation current with its filing of the Annual Audit? (Congregations must submit completed audits to the Office of the Treasurer by September of the following year. Applicants filing for grant funds after 9/1/15 must have their congregation's 2014 audit <u>accepted and on record with the Treasurer's Office</u> to receive funds.) <i>Required to obtain grant funds.</i>	
4		Is the congregation current with its Annual Assessment or Assessment Payment Plan? <i>Required to obtain grant funds.</i>	
5		Are all clergy compensated at or above the diocesan minimum? <i>Encouraged.</i>	
6		If applicant is awarded a grant, does the congregation commit to providing mid-year and year-end reports for the duration of the funded program? <i>Required to obtain grant funds.</i>	
7		If applicant is awarded a grant, does the congregation commit to providing a final report at the end of the funded program? <i>Required to obtain grant funds.</i>	