

St Paul's Natural Cathedral Committee

St Paul's has been "greening" since 2003. Greening means renewing our commitment to Creation Care through education, reflection, and action. The Natural Cathedral Committee got its name from Psalm 19 that says the Lord speaks through two books: the written word of God and the masterpiece of creation – the Natural Cathedral.

St Paul's Natural Cathedral Committee formed to

- Inform St Paul's about the environmental movement within the Episcopal Church
- Bring Creation Care into church activities and education

In the beginning...

In 2002, Rev. Marcia Hunter, Rector of St Paul's, asked Parishioner Chuck Berry to help with a Rogation Day service. Chuck was a fish and wildlife professor at SDSU. He knew nothing about Rogation Day but didn't admit this to Mo. Marcia.

He learned that Rogation Day was a traditional celebration in the Spring when churches bless the fields and ask for God's mercy on all of Creation. He also found that modern ceremonies also remind us of our obligations to care for the Creation as well as our hope for abundant services from the Creation.

At about the same time, Dr. Ruth Alexander gave Chuck a pamphlet describing the Episcopal Church's Justice Ministries. Among the topics was Eco-Justice that brings together well-being of earth and the human community.

In 2004, The Natural Cathedral Committee submitted its first report to the Parish as part of the church's Annual Report. It announced that: The goals of the Natural Cathedral Committee are to tend the flame of environmental stewardship at St Paul's, and monitor the Episcopal Ecological Network and other religious groups concerned with the condition and maintenance of our Natural Cathedral.

Activities

The Natural Cathedral Committee brings the Creation Care Message to St Paul's by

- 1) publishing information articles in the church's newsletter, *The Messenger*,
- 2) organizing educational events and conservation activities, and
- 3) encouraging the inclusion of Creation Care in services.

Green theme events at St Paul's....

- Blessing of the Animals
- Mass in the Grass
- Gardening for Wildlife and Tulip Test Garden
- Beating the Bounds
- Wild Game Supper

Conservation actions at St Paul's....

- Energy efficiency: We received a “Cool Congregation Award” from Interfaith Power and Light in 2011 for an energy conserving relamping project and other energy saving changes.
- Gardening for wildlife: Parish Grounds are recognized by the National Wildlife Federation as Certified Habitat Number 186,764.

Creation Care services.....

A simple addition was made to the church bulletin in the Prayers of the People. We now include the phrase “for the earth, our island home.”

Since the Natural Cathedral Committee began, the Rectors have increasingly found a place in the Eucharistic Service for a sermon, prayer, collect, or hymn that was about God’s Garden. Parishioners hear a Creation Care Message on the following occasions: Earth Day Sunday, Rogation Day, Evolution Sunday, Advent and Palm Sunday.

Outreach...

The Natural Cathedral Committee of St Paul’s took our Creation Care ideas to other Parishes and Missions in the Diocese in 2014 as a grass roots effort. The grass is growing.

The Creation Care “mission” at St Paul’s is symbolized in three new stained glass windows installed in 2014. The window is a memorial to Dr. Ruth Alexander who championed Creation Care. The window sends the message of Faith, Hope and Love in a landscape featuring a bed of Pasque flowers (the South Dakota State Flower)

and butterflies (unique in that they are in relief or 3D).

