

Strengthen the Church - Vitality Program Grants

The Church Development Committee of the Pacific Northwest Conference (CDC PNC) is committed to supporting the “Vision of Vitality” of doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God, from Micah 6:8. In order to support local churches, and church related programs in their pursuit of vitality, the Church Development Committee offers two grant programs.

Vitality Program Grants

This is an updated version of the previous “Local Church Vitality and Renewal Grant.” The update includes a new application process, with more focus on relationships, collaboration, and impact. Awards will be for specifically designed projects to renew and increase vitality within our conference. More information on the application process can be found below.

Strengthen the Church

This is a new pilot program designed to provide a wholistic program of accompaniment, collaboration, and investment (of time, talent, and treasure) in local churches so as to inspire greater vitality across the Pacific Northwest Conference. Trainings, curriculum, retreats/events, one-on-one consulting, and funding are all included. This grant program is much more of a *process of support* than one might expect from a traditional grant; grant awardees will be invited into relationship of 12 months or more with the Church Development Committee and the Pacific Northwest Conference Minister for Church Vitality Ministry. This program is currently in its pilot stage and will not be accepting new participants till the first year is complete and has been evaluated. Contact Rev. Courtney Stange-Tregear for more information.

How are these grants funded?

Funding is provided through the United Church of Christ Strengthen the Church special offering, proceeds from the Conference Endowment, designated funds and the general budget.

Strengthen the Church is one of the five special offerings of the United Church of Christ which is dedicated to the growth of the UCC by:

- Funding new church starts and invigorating existing congregations
- Nurturing lay and pastoral leadership
- Building youth and young adult ministries
- Supporting the God is Still Speaking Ministry and its extravagant welcome for all within the United Church of Christ.

50% of all Strengthen the Church contributions go to support the National UCC ministries. The remaining 50% is kept within the Pacific Northwest Conference to support activities and programs within our region through the Church Development Committee Grant Programs.

Process

Having studied best practices in church, judicatory and denominational granting, the Church Development Committee is launching a new process for receiving a Vitality Program Grant.

Relationship

More and more we are coming to realize that everything starts with relationship. Fundraising, stewardship, and justice work all start with relationship. This is true with granting as well.

Relationship can help develop ideas, troubleshoot problems, and level the playing field so that the best projects get funded, rather than the best grant writers.

For this reason, the Church Development Committee encourages all applicants to start with a phone or in person conversation with a committee member. These conversations will be an opportunity for applicants to explain the program they are proposing, what problem it is addressing, and why they need grant funding. Applicants will share the genesis of the proposal, information about community impacts, and what partnerships have been pursued. A CDC member will ask questions intended to help clarify and develop the proposal. This is not an interview; it is a collaborative conversation.

Application Form

Once the initial conversation(s) have taken place, applicants will be encouraged to fill out a Vitality Program Grant Application. This form can be found on the Pacific Northwest Conference Website at PNCUCC.org.

Funding Decision

Funding decisions are made twice a year, and can be in amounts up to \$12,000, though more commonly grants are awarded between \$500 and \$3000.

Follow-up

Receiving a Vitality Program Grant is a result of collaboration, deepening relationship, and a focus on congregational vitality. Grant funding is not seen as the end of the conversation, but rather one part in an ongoing dialogue. The Church Development Committee hopes that grant recipients will share the story of their vitality program with the Pacific Northwest Conference and the wider church, as well as consider increasing their OCWM and Strengthen the Church offerings as a visible sign of increased vitality.