

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## *Faith Formation*

### 4. Connect to the Land

“Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul.”

—John Muir, *The Yosemite*

**Recommendation:** We urge the Diocese and individual congregations to explicitly link their activities to the natural world, on church properties and throughout western Washington.

**Background:** The Episcopal Church in Western Washington is blessed with beautiful terrain: Its boundaries stretch east to west from the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific Ocean and north to south from Canada to Oregon. Its area is home to three national parks and dozens of state parks, with Episcopal Churches found at sea level on the

islands of the Puget Sound and the Salish Sea but also in the mountains at 10,000 feet. The splendor of God's Creation is all around us, and with this gift of proximity it makes sense for the church to be a catalyst for connection with the outdoors whenever possible.

**Taking Action:** So many of the Episcopal Churches in Western Washington have been trailblazers in these areas; there are many great models throughout the Diocese to emulate both "being" and "doing" in natural environments:

- Outdoor services
- Beekeeping
- Community gardens and outdoor labyrinths/playgrounds on church property
- Native landscaping on church properties; tree-planting and reforestation; lawn reduction and removal
- Trail building and maintenance on and near church property
- Community service projects to restore local wildlife areas
- Creation Spirit Talking Circles - the Rev. Rachel Taber Hamilton has very capably led a small group through a book study and discussion which seeks to re-introduce indigeneity with Nature.

These recent activities serve as models and can be fully customized to the local level and for different levels of abilities:

- [Holy Hikes](#) The ultimate goal of this ministry is to help individuals be renewed in their love-relationship with the earth, the universal church, and their Creator. Holy Hikes bring people together to foster an encounter with the Sacred.
- [Sunday Stairway Walks](#) In this program, young adults explore and learn about different neighborhoods and Episcopal parishes within Seattle.
- [Young Adult Wilderness Pilgrimage](#) The pilgrimage is a backpacking trek into the Northern Cascades with an intentional spiritual focus.

- [Good News Gardens](#) The goal of these gardening projects is "transformational agrarian ministry that feeds body, mind, and spirit."
- The Creation Spirit Talking Circle. This is a pilot project to restore our personal relations with nature. It is challenging and intensive and can create profound personal transformation. Ideally, it will be made available to all who are interested.

These Diocese of Olympia retreat centers offer a way for local churches to meet in a natural setting without great expense:

- [Saint Andrew's House](#)
- [Camp Huston](#)

**Results:** As we connect with the land, we reconnect with Creation. We find ourselves becoming able to retrieve relations with Creation held by our ancestors long past. Having outdoor services allows us to prayerfully give communion to a tree or other place of nature that calls to us. Together, we can renew long-lost relations.