



Sherwood Episcopal Church

Since 1830

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Sherwood Episcopal Church Awarded \$1.7 Million Grant for Stormwater Management Project

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Sherwood Episcopal Church recently received a \$1.7 million grant from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Sherwood's grant is from a total of \$22.9 million awarded from the DNR's Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund to 24 ecological restoration projects throughout the state. According to the DNR, the projects selected will improve water quality and habitat in the Chesapeake Bay watershed while building local resilience to climate impacts.

The grant will be utilized to construct Sherwood's Clean Water Project, an initiative designed to combat the effects of storm water runoff flowing down Sherwood Hill through the church's campus, causing extensive erosion on the property, flooding and hazardous conditions for motorists and business owners along York Road, and pollutant contamination of the local drinking water supply.

During heavy rain events, stormwater flows from higher-elevation, asphalted housing developments on Sherwood Hill above the Sherwood campus to a gully behind the church. As a result, the campus is flooded with pollutants, debris, and sediment which move over the church

and neighboring properties, then further downhill to heavily trafficked York Road. The polluted stormwater continues to Beaverdam Run, a tributary of Loch Raven Reservoir, and into the greater Baltimore drinking water supply.

The Clean Water Project is a joint effort between church members serving on Sherwood's Property Imperative Team, neighbors, and consultants. Suzanne Merryman, lifelong Sherwood parishioner and Property Imperative Team member, said, "For many years, Sherwood members tried to come up with a solution for the flooding issues without much success. In 2019, we formed the Property Initiative Team, and then during the pandemic, we had the time to really focus on the church property and consider ways to better support our community."

In early 2021, the Property Initiative Team met with representatives of Gunpowder Valley Conservancy, the Maryland DNR, and Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, with leadership from the groups suggesting a visit to the Restoration of Nature project at St. Luke's Church, Annapolis.

The Annapolis project proved to be the inspiration the team was seeking. The Reverend Nancy H. Hennessey, Rector of Sherwood, said, "We saw that we had a choice: we could let the flooding continue downhill or we could live into our call to care for all of God's creation. After much research and prayer, we then decided to create the Clean Water Project."

Sherwood's Property Imperative team requested project bids, and chose Underwood & Associates, Inc., the developer of St. Luke's stormwater solution, as a partner to manage the project and to assist with grant writing.

Heather Johnson, Underwood & Associates Operations Manager, said, “This grant is unusual in its size for a faith-based organization. We feel that the state truly saw the value the project will bring to the community in helping keep the water supply clean.”

Four objectives will be accomplished with the state DNR funding: management and treatment of stormwater via a 13.3-acre drainage area, protection of existing infrastructure from storm events, creation of a habitat for native flora and fauna with pathways for the public, and establishment of projects to educate the community and other faith-based organizations about the benefits of natural solutions to storm water issues.

The project will center around a comprehensive, nature-based solution developed by Underwood & Associates: Regenerative Stormwater Conveyance (RSC). RSC utilizes a nature-based remedy to slow the floodwater as it moves through gravel, stone, and earthen ponds and streams to filter out the pollutants before reaching the drinking water supply.

Underwood & Associates, Inc. has finished the design portion of the project and will also provide construction services for its completion. The Annapolis-based environmental restoration firm is directly tied to Chesapeake Bay clean-up efforts.

At Sherwood, more than 100 trees will be planted, and a riparian and wetland habitat will be established, strengthening the resiliency and ability of the community to handle similar flooding. Walking trails and educational signage will help convert the property into an environmental education campus that will be open to the public for recreational use as well.

“Creation Care is an important pillar of the entire Episcopal Church’s mission,” said Rev. Hennessey. “We hope to serve as a beacon for faith-based organizations as well as the community as a whole and beyond.”

In 2022, Sherwood received a \$60K grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust to fund the project’s design. The state DNR grant will be used for the project’s construction. Additional funding is being sought for the development of educational signage and recreational pathways as well as long-term maintenance of the infrastructure.

The Clean Water Project began in the summer of 2023 with the demolition of Sherwood’s parish office, a 50+ year-old modular structure in the path of the RSC. Construction of the RSC will start in mid-2024.

About Sherwood Episcopal Church

Founded in 1826, Sherwood Episcopal Church is a small but mighty parish and a Baltimore County landmark. It is home to one of the few green spaces along York Road from Hunt Valley to Baltimore City. Sherwood’s mission is: “God commands us to enthusiastically cast open our doors to embrace all, impacting lives through bold service, no exceptions.” For more information, contact Parish Administrator Carey Mednick at 410-666-2180 or sherwoodparish@gmail.com. Visit their website at sherwoodcockeyville.org.