Portland Songlines
A Music-Based Community-Building Initiative Hosted by Trinity Church Portland and Led by Thew Elliott, Trinity’s Music Director

Purpose

The purpose of this initiative is to strengthen Trinity by increasing its engagement in broader community. Trinity’s presence in Portland and in its back cove neighborhood will be strengthened by providing—through shared music-making—opportunities for new and deeper connections with other Portland groups and individuals working to bring God’s kingdom closer through ministries of social justice. We will seek to engage especially with organizations, congregations, and individuals working in the areas of aging, hospitality to newcomers, addiction/recovery, and racial reconciliation. Our intention is to be in active and collaborative community with more of the people around us.

Scope of work 2016-2017:

- Expand existing community program of FunSingPortland with more explicit and pronounced invitation to community far beyond Trinity’s walls.
- Enhance the viability of our own building as a space for performance by reviewing sound needs in sanctuary; assessing Lincoln Hall and its stage and making adjustments in sound and lighting to accommodate a range of events and performances; Reviewing and assessing our own current practices of hospitality.
- Begin to design and implement programming with collaborators (e.g. Hope Gateway, All Saints, Greene Memorial, Day School…) which we will be able to continue and sustain well into the future.
- Increase programming and opportunities for middle- and high-schoolers.
- Continue and increase musical and community collaboration with All Saints
- Forge new connections (current explorations: Theater of Color Ensemble; Immigrant chorus Pihcintu)

What Type of Events Can We Expect?

Portland Songlines is not an initiative to provide music to Trinity’s existing community in a traditional model of set membership ensembles or concert performances. Portland Songlines is an organic commitment to create space and opportunity for disparate groups—musical and non-musical—to sing together and forge new bonds. Songlines events will be collaborative and informal, not traditional presentations but varied expressions of changing an growing community. These gatherings can help us map where we are right now as we work to make something new together in our neighborhood, in the city of Portland, and in the world.
How Will This Work Be Funded and Sustained?

Through March of 2017, this work is funded by a grant from the Diocese of Maine which includes support for increased hours and effort in Thew’s compensation; funds for equipment and technical consultations to begin helping us make improvements in the viability of Trinity’s spaces for performance and collaboration; and a bit of money for expenses related to communication about the initiative (e.g. fliers, banners, ads).

It is the hope and intention of the Diocese and of Trinity that this work will continue and will become sustainable for the long term as the community grows and programs become woven into the life of a broader community.

Events may feature free-will offerings, or be ticketed, or be free, depending on theme and audience. Trinity will provide event and performance and meeting space for the project, including utilities and space usage. Through March of 2017, this will be provided at no cost. During this year, we will create guidelines that may inform a future schedule of fees that will help us maintain viability.

How Did the Diocese Make the Decision to Award This Grant?

Thew Elliott (Trinity’s Music Director) and Larry Weeks (Trinity’s Rector) created a proposal based on Thew’s passion for music as a tool for building community. The proposal was guided by these criteria from the Diocese.

2. Collaborative, including sharing of personnel and resources.
3. Led by those who are experienced and passionate in their ministry.
4. Evaluable (with evaluative structures in place) and moving toward sustainability.
5. Creating models to be shared with others in Diocese (and designing means to do this).
6. Involving and benefiting a wide range and number of people within the Diocese and beyond.
7. Demonstrating values of transparency, equity, fairness and collaboration.

After the proposal was submitted, it was reviewed along with all other submissions, then a representative of the review committee held a phone interview with Thew, then that representative presented the proposal on our behalf. The committee was excited by what was proposed and awarded our full request.

How Can I Be More Involved in This Work?

Join the Songlines Commission, now forming! This work is intended to reflect values of community from start to finish, so the planning and organizing processes will benefit from your support and experience. In preparatory stages for events and gatherings, we will always need people to help organize and communicate; whenever events occur at Trinity, we will need volunteers and hosts. Let Thew know that you’re interested and ready!