



THE COMMUNION FOREST

TO PLANT IS TO HOPE
TO RESTORE IS TO HEAL
TO PROTECT IS TO LOVE



How to get started on a new Communion Forest initiative

Thank you for wanting to join in the Communion Forest and start a local initiative in your parish, diocese or province!

You probably have a lot of questions and may be wondering where to start. This short guide is designed to help answer some frequently asked questions and point you to some excellent resources, which will help you develop a great project for your context.

Introduction

The Communion Forest is an exciting new initiative of the Anglican Communion to significantly increase the number of Anglican tree growing and ecosystem conservation, protection and restoration activities around the world and to deepen care for creation within the life of the Church and its members. It is a practical, spiritual and symbolic response to the environmental crisis, and an act of Christian hope for the well-being of humanity and all God's creation.

The Communion Forest is a global initiative made up of local activities undertaken by parishes, dioceses and provinces across the world. The activities are determined locally, so that they are geographically and environmentally appropriate.

The Communion Forest could therefore become one of the most ecologically diverse and geographically widespread environmental initiatives in the world.

Please take time to read this short document, which covers the questions:

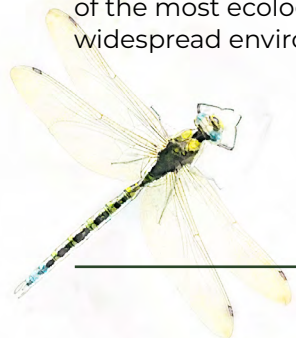
- ✦ What are the characteristics of a Communion Forest initiative?
- ✦ What kind of project do you want to do?
- ✦ How do you decide what to do and how to do it?
- ✦ Where?
- ✦ How many?
- ✦ Who with?
- ✦ What about the costs?
- ✦ What support is on offer?
- ✦ How do you share what you are doing?

Local expressions might be about planting a new forest, but could equally be about:

- ✦ Planting trees along boundaries, roads, on church land (eg churchyards)
- ✦ Restoring a piece of waste land in a town
- ✦ Creating a tiny city garden
- ✦ Making your churchyard a wildlife corridor
- ✦ Setting up a tree nursery
- ✦ Getting involved in a local conservation project
- ✦ Advocating to prevent the destruction of a habitat.

The Communion Forest is not just about trees! Other ecosystems that might be relevant in your context include:

- ✦ **Landscapes:** urban green spaces, grasslands, deserts
- ✦ **Coastal & marine:** coral reefs, mangrove forests, estuaries, seagrass
- ✦ **Freshwater:** rivers, lakes, wetlands, streams



What are the characteristics of a Communion Forest initiative?

With all this diversity, what do Communion Forest initiatives have in common?

Projects and activities that are part of the Communion Forest movement are living demonstrations of the Fifth Anglican Mark of Mission:

Strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Specifically, Communion Forest projects should demonstrate the following characteristics. They...

- Are about ecosystem conservation, protection or restoration and/or tree growing.
- Have a strong on-going connection to an Anglican community. This could be a church, diocese, province, school, college, church agency, recognised project or other institution.

- Articulate the Christian motivation for their action.
- Connect with other Marks of Mission, such as serving community food needs or peace building.
- Are brought into the spiritual and liturgical life of the church community (for example, services are held there; there is a connection with baptisms, weddings and/or confirmations).
- Help deepen and challenge people's theology of creation care away from harmful, extractive world views and theologies of domination towards mindsets and theologies of relationship, interdependence and care for the natural world.



What kind of project do you want to do?

Your first step is to decide what kind of initiative you want to do. Do you want to...

- Start a new **tree growing** initiative?
- Help **conserve** or **restore** an environment that has become degraded?
- Protect** an existing forest or other habitat?
- A mix of the above?

The possibilities are endless, so how do you decide what to do? A good starting point is to ask: what is the next thing God is calling you to do, where you are, with the unique assets (resources, skills, opportunities and experience) you have?

Some general considerations:

- Protection and restoration should be considered ahead of establishing something new because this is likely to have the most significant impact environmentally.
- Where something new is set up, the emphasis should be on growing, not just planting. It is about growing the right kind of tree in the right place.
- Be ambitious! But make sure you focus on quality as well as quantity.
- Think about sustainability and the long term.

"Good forest conservation and restoration work can deliver positive social and environmental impacts. If conducted improperly, they can have negative impacts."

"Given the growing global interest in tree planting, it's important to know that planting is just one type of forest restoration and is often used when more natural processes are not feasible."

"Overall, good forest restoration involves local people, uses the best methods for the location (not necessarily planting), helps address the drivers of forest loss and degradation, and monitors efforts to make sure the restored forest thrives. It's not only about having more trees in the ground, but a sustainable forest for the future."

"It's also important to remember that protecting existing forests is vital to solving these challenges – and as complex systems no amount of restoration can bring back what is lost forever."

Trillion Trees guide to investing in forest restoration.

How do you decide what to do and how to do it?

Making good decisions right from the start is key to your project's success, so don't rush! Take time to pray, think, research and consult before committing to any course of action.

Thankfully, there are many excellent step-by-step resources available from specialist organisations to help you make decisions and plan well. We recommend you look at the following resources, choose the one that is best for you and then use the tools it provides to guide your decision-making and planning.

Tree growing for conservation and ecosystem restoration: A guide for faith-based actors

Trillion Trees, World Wildlife Fund and the United Nations Environment Programme have jointly published the first-ever comprehensive guide to tree growing designed for use by faith groups.

The guide provides a straightforward and informative step-by-step approach to assist faith groups in planning and implementing tree-growing initiatives and engaging in restoring their local environment to benefit people, nature, and the climate.



The guide sets out six clear steps providing a practical framework for any faith-based organisation or group to adapt to its own community and context. Each step was developed in consultation with faith actors on the ground already planting millions of trees, using evidence-based and proven approaches to restore multiple benefits through successful tree growing.

The guide includes detailed guidance and a checklist for each step, ranging from agreeing the purpose and partnership for tree-growing, developing, and implementing the plan and finally, caring for trees as they grow and sharing knowledge with the global restoration community.

The Trillion Trees Project Assessment Tool

The Trillion Trees project assessment tool **will help you develop a good forest restoration project**. By a good forest restoration project they mean one which "tries to address the triple challenge of the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and social inequality, and follows the principles of Forest and Landscape Restoration and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration." **The tool provides a very helpful starting point for thinking about forest protection, restoration and tree planting.**

The tool provides clear, practical guidance on what makes for good forest restoration and allows you to assess your intended project against those measures. The tool asks participants to consider nine aspects of their project, scoring each area from 1 to 3, and then provides an indication of how likely the initiative is to deliver positive social, biodiversity and climate impacts. The tool is also intended to help investors decide whether the project is a good one in which to invest.

Principles for Successful Tree Planting

Principles for Successful Tree Planting is a short guide from the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). This provides a solid foundation for any initiative. It explains the basic mantra that should underpin any activity: **the right tree for the right place and the right purpose**. CIFOR has further and more detailed information on its website. Affiliated with CIFOR is the Global Landscapes Forum, the world's largest knowledge-led platform on sustainable landscapes.

See also...



🌿 **Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) and Faiths for Forests**. These are great places to start for information on the importance of protecting tropical rainforests – and the role of faith leaders in doing so. IRI has many useful resources, including **faith toolkits** and **resource guides**.

🌿 **IRI's primer for religious leaders and faith communities on forest restoration** for use during the **UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration**.

🌿 The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has produced a superb **Community Organizing Toolkit on Ecosystem Restoration** “to equip you, as change-makers, with the tools, knowledge, and resources necessary to restore your ecosystems back to productive, and healthy spaces”. It covers farmlands, forests, freshwaters, grasslands, shrublands and savannahs, mountains, oceans and coasts and urban areas.

Other frequently asked questions

Where?

Where you carry out your project will depend on your circumstances, land availability and other considerations. It could be on church land, but it could be in the wider community (perhaps, supporting a community initiative).

How many?

Be ambitious! What would ambition look like for you?

However, this initiative is not about numbers or a competition to see who can plant the most trees. It is about thoughtful engagement, commitment and care, nurturing what is created into the long term. So, whilst ambition is vital, it is important to ensure quality as well as quantity.

Who with?

We strongly recommend that activities are carried out in consultation and/or partnership with local or regional experts. Any project needs to be rigorous, well thought through and worthwhile.

Think about who you can partner with locally. Ask around and research whether local or national organisations, businesses or government departments are looking to partner with grass roots communities such as churches. Many are.

You might choose to undertake an initiative in partnership with your companion or link diocese, especially if circumstances in one make an initiative of the type envisaged here difficult – perhaps because of land availability/suitability or the geopolitical situation. But remember, partnership working is not about one diocese ‘giving’ to another; it is not about charity but about mutuality and joint endeavour.

🌿 **Restor** is an organisation focused on connecting people involved in local restoration activities with scientific data, supply chains, funding, and each other to increase the impact, scale, and sustainability of restoration efforts. The Restor website includes a powerful mapping tool, which allows you to define a location anywhere on earth and analyse it for biodiversity, ecosystems, tree cover and other factors. You can upload data about your site and find out what else is happening in your locality.

🌿 **Faith Plans** is a global movement of faith communities taking practical action for people and planet. They provide a **guide to creating a long-term faith-based plan of practical action** to protect the living planet, address climate change and promote sustainable development.

For further ideas and inspiration, take a look at the varied case studies from across the Anglican Communion.

What about the costs?

Local expressions of the Communion Forest will be most sustainable when they take an asset-based approach, using locally available resources, skills and expertise.

Think about local sponsorship and donations in kind. Look at some of the stories on the Communion Forest website to see how others have partnered with external organisations and government.

We are working towards the Communion Forest being able to broker funding for local projects and will share details when we have them. The resources linked above have sections on funding.

What support is on offer?

There are two part-time facilitators for the Communion Forest: Irene Sebastian for Africa (irene.sebastian@aco.org) and Nicholas Pande for the rest of the world (nicholas.pande@aco.org). Both are based in Nairobi, Kenya. They may be able to connect you with others who are already doing the kind of initiative you want to undertake.

We also offer support through our online Connect, Share and Pray sessions and through webinars addressing specific issues. Please sign up to our newsletter and follow the Communion Forest on social media to receive details.

How do we share what we are doing?

Please get in touch with the Communion Forest team to tell us about what you are doing so that we can share it across the Anglican Communion through the Communion Forest website, newsletters and social media.

We are currently working towards using a mapping tool, which will allow you to upload details of your initiative, enabling others to see what you are doing.

