



How's it growing? The Communion Forest, one year on

What is the Communion Forest?

The Communion Forest is an environmental initiative that celebrates and encourages Anglicans to develop new or existing activities in their communities. It is inspired by and builds on extensive creation care work that is already happening across the Communion. From tree growing and reforestation, ecosystem conservation, protection and restoration, the combined action of Anglicans is creating a 'virtual' forest around the world. The initiative aims to deepen care for creation within the life of the Church. It is a global act of hope in the face of environmental crisis.

Launching the Forest

The Communion Forest was launched a year ago at the Lambeth Conference – an international gathering of Anglican bishops, which meets once a decade. Meeting at Lambeth Palace for a day focused on the environment, bishops pledged their support for the Communion Forest through a tree planting and service of commitment on the palace lawns. The bishops also launched the Lambeth Call on the Environment and Sustainable Development, which shares ways in which Anglicans worldwide can work for the well-being of humanity and all creation.

Why it matters

The world is facing multiple connected crises: growing poverty and inequality are compounded by the triple environmental crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. It is an existential threat to people and planet. Worldwide, Anglicans share a deep concern for safeguarding the integrity of creation and sustaining and renewing the life of the earth – the Fifth Anglican Mark of Mission. This recognises humanity's deep interdependence with all creation, as expressed particularly by Indigenous peoples and youth. Communities suffering environmental devastation, in the Amazon, the Arctic, the Pacific and elsewhere, emphasise the vital importance of protecting existing, irreplaceable rainforests and other ecosystems, as well as protecting the forest defenders themselves.

The power of acting together

Anglicans can play an important part in the global response to the environmental crises and are invited to join in with growing the Communion Forest. Many provinces and dioceses, agencies and networks are already involved, with an inspiring and enthusiastic response. The initiative is facilitated by the Anglican Alliance and the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, guided by a global advisory group. Other bodies, such as CAPA, Green Anglicans, the Anglican Communion Youth Network and the Anglican Indigenous Network, are also actively engaged.

The benefits of acting together include:

- **Visibility and impact**

The Communion Forest is like raising a flag up a flagpole: it makes the inspiring activities across the Communion more visible, which can influence wider action in church and community life.

- **Vision and inspiration:** Celebrating and sharing news about projects widely across the Communion helps us learn from one another, pray together, and inspire one another to care for creation.
- **Voice and advocacy:** Gathering evidence about how Anglicans globally are affected by bio-diversity loss and demonstrating our collective action in the Communion Forest builds our credibility and strengthens our advocacy voice in global spaces, like the UN's environmental bodies.

Growing the Forest – How it works

Since its launch, the Communion Forest team, with its two excellent facilitators, has focused on connecting, equipping and inspiring church involvement across the Communion through:

- **Action:** Growing the collective Communion Forest, by developing or starting an activity.
- **Appreciation:** Expressing gratitude and concern for God's wonderful creation, weaving creation care into the spiritual life of the Church.
- **Advocacy:** Speaking out and campaigning for environmental justice, including protecting forests and other eco-systems.
- **Awareness:** Sharing inspiring stories and contributing to the growing Communion Forest community.

The Communion Forest team hosts regular technical webinars and informal online 'Connect, Share, Pray' meetings to bring people together for mutual inspiration and support. Stories and learning from across the Communion are shared through newsletters and the [Communion Forest website](#), highlighting new [resources](#) (all in four languages). The facilitators also respond to requests to give talks and support people as they roll out the initiative in their context.

One Year on from Planting the Communion Forest – How is it Growing?

The Communion Forest facilitators have been reaching out to provinces and dioceses, finding out what churches are already doing and what they would like to do. The tremendous interest has been incredibly uplifting, with responses including:

- **Kenya:** The Archbishop celebrates his birthday by planting the number of trees to match his years, while leading the Province as a whole in protecting and restoring wide areas of forest.
- **Zimbabwe:** A diocese has adopted and created their own Communion Forest, working towards the restoration and protection of a forest on deforested church land.
- **Episcopal Church in the USA:** There are plans to expand the prairie restoration work already happening in Kansas, to cover seven dioceses in the prairie belt.
- **Solomon Islands:** The Franciscan Brothers have taken the issue of forest logging to the United Nations' Human Rights Council.
- **Philippines:** Bishops and other church leaders support communities in planting mangroves in a church initiative restoring the coastal ecosystem.
- **Canada:** A bishop shared how participation in the Communion Forest has made the Anglican Communion feel more relevant and visible in his diocese.

- **Confirmation Trees:** In churches in Kenya, Canada, Ireland, England and elsewhere confirmation candidates are presented with saplings or certificates of trees planted to mark the occasion.
- **Globally:** There are many other imaginative, locally-appropriate ways churches are working out how to participate in their own context, with the Communion Forest movement as a catalyst.
- **Developing partnerships:** A pilot project is already underway with [Restor](#), a powerful online mapping facility, which will help to make the Communion Forest more visible. This will be rolled out later this year.
- A pilot project is about to begin with [Climate Stewards](#) to establish some new small-scale, high quality tree-growing projects in Anglican communities around the world. These will be funded by Anglicans seeking to offset their carbon emissions (those they cannot reduce). More partnerships are being sought to broker technical support and funding for local church projects.

Growing the Forest – Inviting you to get involved

- **Join the webinar programme:** This year will see a series of webinars on the Communion Forest and wider environmental action, including:
 - On 20th and 21st September, a webinar, hosted by The Lambeth Conference team, will share more about the Communion Forest and the Lambeth Call on Environment and Sustainable Development. Sign up to the webinar here: [Add your Voice to the Call: The Environment and Sustainable Development – The Lambeth Conference](#)
- **Share your story:** Contact the Communion Forest about projects you are running in your church or diocese that would form part of the Communion Forest. Projects that promote tree growing, reforestation, ecosystem protection, conservation or restoration, are all important seeds of hope, as the Forest grows. (Email us at Communion.Forest@aco.org)
- **Pray:** Continue to pray for God’s beautiful, awesome but suffering world. Pray for people and places severely impacted by the triple environmental crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Pray for all seeking solutions and working for change, often at great personal cost. Pray that Anglicans would live out the Fifth Mark of Mission, as together we strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.
- **Give:** To build capacity for the project, further funding is vital to support the rapidly increasing work. Please contact the Communion Forest team at the Anglican Alliance to donate or share funding ideas (email us at Communion.Forest@aco.org). Your support will help to resource the work of the international team of facilitators, share resources, build partnerships, and tell the story of the Communion Forest around the world.





A prayer for Creation Care

*Breath of Life, from whom all order was created,
the whole of creation bears witness to you.*

*Teach us to respect all creatures,
increase our gratitude for your loving providence.*

Forgive us for our insensitivity and carelessness with the environment.

Instigate us to fight for socio-environmental preservation and for the end of the climate crisis,

*taking care and working for the preservation of species and the maintenance of life on earth,
as living proof of our conversion to the way of Jesus Christ, our Lord,*

*who lives and reigns with you and with the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.*

Prayer shared by Archbishop Marinez Rosa dos Santos Bassotto, Amazon, Brazil. Inspired by the Collects for the Environmental Responsibility of the Common Prayer Book of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil.

