

## The Communion Forest

### The Anglican Church

#### Background Information

The Anglican Communion is one of the world's largest Christian communities, with tens of millions of members in more than 165 countries around the globe. **Launched** in August 2022 at the Lambeth Conference – an international gathering of Anglican bishops, which meets once a decade, the [Communion Forest](#) (CF) is a global initiative of the Anglican Church, comprising local activities of forest protection, tree growing and ecosystem restoration undertaken by provinces, dioceses and individual churches across the Anglican Communion to safeguard creation. The initiative is facilitated by the [Anglican Alliance](#) (AA) and the [Anglican Communion Environmental Network](#) (ACEN), with the support of an advisory group drawn from across the Communion. At the same conference, 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.

#### Beacon of Hope

The initiative has emerged as a beacon of hope for environmental conservation and ecosystem restoration. In collaboration with the [Green Anglicans Movement](#), the CF initiative is showcasing the transformative impact of tree-growing, weaving together faith, sustainability, and community engagement. The two initiatives, both under the umbrella of the Anglican community, share a common vision of environmental stewardship grounded in faith. This collaboration harnesses the collective power of Anglican communities across the world to address pressing ecological challenges. By integrating environmental awareness into their faith practices, they are sowing the seeds of change for a greener, more sustainable future.

The Communion Forest initiative 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; aiming 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. To achieve this, the initiative uses a multifaceted approach to ecosystem restoration - planting of indigenous tree species that are well-suited to the local environment, promotion of sustainable land management practices such as agroforestry, and community engagement to ensure the long-term health of the ecosystems.

Among other things, the initiative also strives to challenge individuals and local churches within the communion to take practical action to conserve and protect the earth, weave creation care further into the spiritual life of the Church, and speak against environmental injustice. It promotes and supports a wide range of creation care activities, determined locally (by provinces, dioceses and individual parishes) – which ensure they are geographically, culturally and environmentally appropriate. These generally include:

1. **Conservation** – helping to look after and preserve a local ecosystem – such as a wetland, forest or grassland.

2. **Protection** – advocating and taking action to stop deforestation or prevent the destruction of other habitats.
3. **Restoration** – restoring a piece of waste land or other degraded environment – such as a deforested mountain.
4. **Tree Growing** – starting a forest initiative on church land or in (and with) the wider community. This includes the planting and caring for the right kind of trees in the right place and for the right purpose, to ensure they survive and thrive.
5. **Mobilization and multiplication** – helping others get involved in creation care activities – for instance, churches or dioceses can be ‘multipliers’ by reaching out and growing partnerships with other stakeholders.

### **The Crisis is not just physical, it is spiritual too**

The vision for the CF is for the initiative to be woven into the spiritual and liturgical life of the Anglican church; to deepen care for creation within the Church and its members - because the environmental emergency of pollution, biodiversity loss and climate is not just a physical crisis, it is also a spiritual one.

In this regard, CF encourages activities that demonstrate stewardship for nature, such as: tree growing to celebrate special occasions such as confirmations, marriages, baptisms, birthdays etc, holding outdoor services, delivering sermons on creation care: [Preaching for God’s World](#), and celebrating the [Season of Creation](#). Several [resources](#) have also been developed for access and use to grow this vision among the Anglican community and beyond. These include;

- a) The Communion Forest: an introduction for newcomers,
- b) A Visual Guide to Biodiversity;
- c) Tree Planting Liturgy and Prayers; and
- d) The Communion Forest Brochure.

### **Achievements**

Since inception, the CF has made tremendous contribution to ecosystem restoration, by undertaking different projects and activities across the world – shared as [stories](#). This includes [restoring the degraded mangrove forest](#) near Inhambane Bay in Maxixe, Mozambique; the launch of the [Ecological Sanctuary – Communion Forest](#) in Brazil; as well as the [church collaborating with the government to care for creation](#) in Tanzania.

### **How to get involved**

At no cost, the initiative is open to participation to a wide range of stakeholders engaged in Christian-motivated creation care for landscapes (forests, grasslands, wetlands, peatlands etc), as long as the initiatives in question demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Are about ecosystem conservation, protection or restoration and/or tree growing.
- Have a strong on-going connection to an Anglican community - 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.

## Some Case Studies

### a) Kenya

In Kenya, the Communion Forest has collaborated with the Green Anglicans to set up tree nurseries to reduce overreliance on partners for supply of seedlings (which also reduces cost of growing trees). The clergy and laity are at the forefront in creation care initiatives, helping to mobilize members and communities for tree growing activities – with a target of growing 15 million trees across the country by 2026.

In partnership with the Kenya Forest Service (KFS), they have [grown at least 5,000 in Ngong Forest](#). The trees have been cared for through weeding, watering and pruning from time to time over the last 3 years.

At the same time, the Green Anglicans are partnering with [Mwangaza Light](#) to promote cooking stoves in Church institutions – thus enabling transition from charcoal and firewood. They are also encouraging individuals within the Anglican communion to reduce their carbon footprints through lifestyle change. Other partners include the Equity bank (which supports with tree seedlings) and A-Rocha (supports training in ecosystem restoration), and the National Environment Trust Fund (NETFUND), which has supported with donation of seedlings and other resources.



*Members of the Green Anglican Movement gather to plant trees in Ngong Forest*

## b) Rwanda

In [Rwanda](#) the CF is collaborating with the Green Anglicans to promote several initiatives, such as soil erosion control measures on farms, tree growing, especially fruit trees by families on farmlands, tree growing in church compounds and school grounds, advocacy on issues of creation care, energy saving stoves and water heaters, creating awareness on creation care among the general public and capacity building of clergy in ecosystem restoration.

Some activities have already been undertaken: at least 400 priests and 13 bishops were trained on creation care in 2022, established 24 environmental clubs in Anglican and government schools. Future goals include growing at least 130,000 fruit trees through agroforestry on faith land and farm lands owned by Anglican households, and facilitating a workshop of 25 top leaders to discuss strategy and implementation of environmental protection across the country.

## c) Brazil - Pictorial

In June 2023, Christ the Redeemer Parish Santa Catarina, Brazil, celebrated World Environment Day with the inauguration and blessing of the Ecological Sanctuary Communion Forest, in the place where the Church was born, and which is now an environmental reserve. A book - **Integral Ecology: Justice and Peace with Creation**, written by Pilato Pereira – was also launched. Participants in the celebration were privileged to consume fruits picked directly from the fruit trees that are grown on the site!



*Some Communion Forest activities in Brazil*



*Some members of Anglican Communion in Brazil at the launch and blessing of the Ecological Sanctuary*

### **Developing Global Partnerships**

CF is currently developing global and local partnerships with different organisations having relevant expertise. Two such organizations are Restor and Climate Stewards. [Restor](#) is an online tool for mapping tree growing and ecosystem conservation and restoration activities. It provides users with information about the biodiversity and species in their mapped area and provides a way of connecting with others for advice and funding. [Climate Stewards](#) is a UK-based charity which is passionate about helping people measure and reduce their carbon footprint and offset what they can't reduce.

### **Contact the Communion Forest**

For further information, the Communion Forest can be [contacted directly](#) .