The Presbyterian Tree Fund – Making a Difference in 2024

Creation was given remarkable processes that allow for healing and restoration to occur, and climate change has made it obvious that our planet needs to be restored. To deter further damage, efforts must include reducing human-generated greenhouse gas emissions and removing such gases from the air.

Trees are more adept at extracting carbon dioxide from the air than human-designed methods, and they release life-sustaining oxygen. Recognizing this value and the need to address climate change, the 225th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) called for the development of a carbon offset program to support reforestation and greenhouse gas sequestration.

The Presbyterian Tree Fund is an avenue for those who would like to lower your carbon footprints and support this work. In 2024, the fund is supporting the work of four partners:

Soul Fire Farm

Soul Fire Farm, in Petersburg, New York, is committed to healing the soil after centuries of devastation from plowing and tillage. They've planted perennial polyculture beds to create a self-maintaining ecosystem that attracts pollinators and increases biodiversity, all while capturing carbon in the soil.

Silvopasture – deliberate integration of trees and grazing livestock operations on the same land – can trap 42 tons of carbon per acre per year. Soul Fire Farm's silvopasture of apple, peach, and cherry trees intercropped with elderberry and currant plants and native wildflowers, is also home to laying hens and Nubian goats, which fertilize and graze the pasture alleys between fruit trees. In addition to maintaining their perennial beds and silvopasture, plans for 2024 include planting additional shrubs and native flowers and increasing organic matter in the farm's garden beds. *Photo courtesy of Soul Fire Farm*

Filomena Tomaira Pacsi Association Peru

Filomena Tomaira Pacsi Association Peru will work with the Conservation Committee of Villa El Sol and the Network of Youth Environmentalists. Students belonging to six educational institutions in the area will plant more than 700 trees and will learn about biodiversity and the importance of caring for the ecological zone where the trees will be planted.

Reforestation of the ecological zone is expected to increase carbon fixation, provide soil protection, help conserve biodiversity, create habitats for fauna, and protect houses in the lower area nearby from landslides.

Photo: More than 20 years ago, the volunteers of the Committee of Villa El Sol began planting trees to restore life to the toxic soil and air which were contaminated by heavy metal processing in La Oroya, Peru. In this photo, the elders of La Oroya who helped plant nearly 20,000 trees over the decades take a well-deserved rest as they appreciate the beauty of the life they have tended.
Photo by Jed Koball

Ekvn-Yefolecv

Ekvn Yefolecv is in Weogufka, Alabama, in a region that was inhabited by Maskoke people before they were scattered to other parts of North America. The land is surrounded by timber companies that practice clearcutting forestry. Ekvn-Yefolev has sought to rescue land that has been clearcut in order to allow for natural regeneration and to plant trees that are culturally significant to Maskoke people.

To sequester carbon, they will plant approximately 15,000 longleaf pine trees, which will also restore a vital habitat for the endangered Red Cockaded Woodpecker, a sacred bird to Maskoke people. They will also plant fruit and nut trees as part of their commitment to create vast silvopasture, with trees, animals and forage all coexisting on the same land. *Photo courtesy of Ekvn-Yefolecv*

Farm and Forest Growers Cooperative

The Farm and Forest Growers Cooperative in Two Harbors, Minnesota, is using Forest Assisted Migration to help maintain the forest canopy of the Northwoods. The coniferous forests are being affected by climate change, and ecological research projects that within 50 years, the landscape in northeastern Minnesota could become mostly open grasslands. Loss of the forests would mean a loss of their ability to sequester carbon.

The small farms and nurseries that make up the cooperative collect climate-adaptive seeds in southern and central Minnesota and grow them into seedlings, thus preparing them to sell for reforestation efforts further north. The genetically distinct and diverse seed sources have proven to be resilient, fast growing and healthy in the coniferous forests of northern Minnesota, but some are difficult to produce, and there are not yet enough conservation-grade seedlings. The cooperative plans to expand training, further develop production systems, and increase membership – resulting in more climate forward seedlings available for planting and monitoring by their partners.
Photo courtesy of Farm and Forest Growers Cooperative

You can do something!

- Give to the Presbyterian Tree fund via the Presbyterian Hunger Program's *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice account – E865715. www.pcusa.org/trees*
- Plant trees! Trees help reduce the carbon dioxide load in the atmosphere.
- Discover your household's carbon footprint. *www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/*
- Take the PHP Climate Care Challenge to reduce your carbon footprint. *pcusa.org/ccc*
- Learn more and give to E865715 to support reforestation and carbon offset efforts. *www.pcusa.org/trees*
- Contact your elected officials about climate change action. *votervoice.net/PCUSA/home*
- Learn how your congregation can be a refuge by helping plan for the impacts of climate change. *blessedtomorrow.org/moving-forward-guide/*
- Help others learn about the issue. The Woodland Trust offers a 2-minute video, "How trees capture and store carbon." *youtube.com/watch?v=vJY3DTaE0sI*

www.pcusa.org/environment
www.pcusa.org/trees