

**Touchstones Faith in Action**

**In-Reach / Out-Reach / Justice-Making**

**Creation**

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**Materials**

**1.0: Introduction**

Two trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, figured prominently in the story of the Garden of Eden, and thus were associated with creation. Trees, generally, and the Tree of Life, specifically, figure prominently in religions and in ancient cultures and mythologies. Notable among these was *Yggdrasil*, the World Ash of Norse mythology and the Bodhi Tree (*Ficus religiosa*) of Bodh Gaya under which the Buddha attained enlightenment.

The first trees to appear on earth were quite small. This occurred sometime from 470 million years to 350 million years BCE. Trees became more prolific in the Carboniferous period (359 to 299 million years BCE). The Carboniferous rainforest collapse occurred at the end of the period due to climate change.

Currently, there are some 60,000 species of trees. It is estimated that there are now about 3 trillion trees on earth, with almost half of them living in tropical or subtropical forests. This number is estimated to be ½ of the number of trees that existed before the impact of human activity on the planet. It is estimated that some 10 billion more trees are cut down each year than are planted.

While consensus does not exist about how beneficial planting trees is on the climate, there is no question that there is significant benefit. “Sassan Saatchi, a senior scientist at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, believes [that while] …there’s potential for using reforestation as a climate mitigation tool, he cautions …that planting trees will never be a substitute for decreasing fossil fuel emissions.”

In the United States, forests occupy approximately 740 million acres, about one third of the country's total land area. In Canada, forests occupy about 857 million acres, which is 35% of Canada’s total land area.

While trees can be planted at different times, the best time, generally, to plant trees in the northern hemisphere is from late August through late October. This is true despite the fact that national Arbor Day in the US is observed on the last Friday in April. National Tree Day in Canada will be held on September 23, 2020 as part of the observance of National Forest Week. Growth of trees happen in three stages: most of the foliage growth happens in the spring, followed by trunk growth in the summer, and root growth in the fall and winter. Planting in the fall fosters root growth, which is essential for the health of a new tree.

The Green Belt Movement under the leadership of Wangari Maathai began planting trees in Kenya in 1977. By the dawn of the new millennium, 30 million trees were planted. (That number has now grown to 51 million trees.) This success led to the Billion Tree campaign that was launched by the United Nation in 2006. The billionth tree, an African Olive, was planted in Ethiopia in November 2007. Then, the UN designated 2011 as the International Year of the UN. This, in turn, led to the launch of the Trillion Tree Campaign in January 2020 as part of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2020-2030). (A map that shows the number of hectares of trees that were planted between 1990 and 2015 can be accessed at <https://www.carbonbrief.org/mapped-where-afforestation-is-taking-place-around-the-world>.)

A fitting way of putting Faith in Action around the theme of creation is to focus on trees: learning about them, celebrating them, and planting them.

**2.0: Resources and Activities**

**2.1: Benefits of Trees**

**2.1.1:** *Reasons Living Trees Are Valuable* by Steve Nix

Link: <https://www.thoughtco.com/reasons-living-trees-are-valuable-1343514>

**2.2: Literature Regarding Trees**

**2.2.1:** *Trees* by Herman Hesse at <http://www.naturalthinker.net/trl/texts/Hesse,Hermann/trees.html>

**2.2.2:** *Video of Trees* read by Natascha McElhone at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zkQ-6LvbwdI> (5:10)

**2.3: Tree Planting Organizations**

**2.3.1:** *Green Belt Movement* at <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/>

**2.3.2:** *Tree Canada* at <https://treecanada.ca/>

**2.3.3:** *One Tree Planted Canada* at <https://onetreeplanted.org/collections/canada>

(One Tree Planted also plants trees in other regions of the world at <https://onetreeplanted.org/>)

**2.3.4:** *Forests Ontario* at <https://www.forestsontario.ca/planting/programs/50-million-tree-program/>

**2.3.5:** *Arbor Day Foundation* at <https://www.arborday.org/>

**2.3.6:** *The Nature Conservancy: Plant a Billion Trees* at <https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/plant-a-billion/>

**2.3.7:** *National Forest Foundation: Campaign to plant 50 million Trees* at <https://www.nationalforests.org/get-involved/tree-planting-programs>

**2.3.8:** *Planting a Tree in Memory or in Honor of Someone* at <https://www.alivingtribute.org/>

**2.4: Tree Celebrations**

**2.4.1:** *Tree Celebrations! - Planting and Celebrating Trees with Ceremonies, Stories & Activities* by Ilan Shami (87 pages) $16.95 + shipping. Purchase at <https://www.yourtruenature.com/products/tree-celebrations-planting-and-celebrating-trees>

**2.4.2:** *In Celebration of Trees* website by Philip Stielstra at <http://incelebrationoftrees.com/>

Shares information about eight inspirational campaigns to plant trees.

**2.5: Identifying Trees**

**2.5.1:** *Tree Identification Guide* by Tree Musketeers at <https://www.treemusketeers.net/tree-identification/>

**2.5.2:** *What Tree Is That?* Pocket Field Guides sold by Arbor Day Foundation at <https://www.arborday.org/trees/whattree/book-detail.cfm>

**2.5.3:** *Leafsnap: An Electronic Field Guide to Leafs* at <http://leafsnap.com/>

**2.6: Videos**

**2.6.1:** *Learning About Trees* | Adventures in Learning | PBS KIDS for Parents (5:11)

Fall is a great time of year for going on a nature hike to learn about trees. In this episode, trail guide Teresa D'Anna offers parents tips and tricks for teaching kids about trees while out on the trail.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abVvZLyZAIg>

**2.6.2:** *How Do Trees Grow?* by Socratica Kids (8:33)

How do trees get so tall? Do you know? Trees sprout from seeds, just like flowers, but then they grow MUCH MUCH taller. In this video, we’ll talk about HOW trees do it! They don’t grow bigger all over, like you do. They only grow in very special areas. We’ll learn about a special kind of tissue in trees called MERISTEM. We’ll also play a game - can you guess the tree, if you see its seed?

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWPqQxz-7gg>

**2.6.3:** *Wangari Maathai & The Green Belt Movement* (8:51)

Wangari Maathai is a Kenyan environmentalist and political activist. In the 1970s, Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement, an environmental NGO focused on environmental conservation and women's rights. In 2004, she became the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for her contributions to sustainable development, democracy, and peace.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQU7JOxkGvo>

**2.6.4:** *The Man Who Planted Trees* by Black Crow Ogala (30:08)

The Man Who Planted Trees (French title L'homme qui plantait des arbres), also known as The Story of Elzéard Bouffier, The Most Extraordinary Character I Ever Met, and The Man Who Planted Hope and Reaped Happiness, is an allegorical tale by French author Jean Giono, published in 1953. It tells the story of one shepherd's long and successful singlehanded effort to re-forest a desolate valley in the foothills of the Alps near Provence throughout the first half of the 20th century. The tale is quite short—only about 4000 words long.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYlsIZXCQa4>

**2.6.5:** *The Importance of Trees* by wordsmith001 (5:33)

A piece reminding us all how valuable trees are to this world.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-OoHjjh5fM>

**2.6.6:** *Forest Man* by William D. McMaster (16:34)

Since the 1970's, Majuli islander Jadav Payeng has been planting trees in order to save his island. To date he has single handedly planted a forest larger than Central Park NYC. His forest has transformed what was once a barren wasteland, into a lush oasis.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkZDSqyE1do>

**2.6.7:** *The man who planted trees - pay it forward to the year 4012* by David Milarch (18:54)

David Milarch is the co-founder of Archangel Ancient Tree Archive and a pioneer in the cloning of ancient trees. He has dedicated his life to replanting the genetics of the world's ancient forests. He has led efforts to propagate more than 90 species including the world's oldest redwoods.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGMJT9H3Aok>

**2.6.8:** *Power of trees* by Jim Robbins (13:57)

Talking about the work of David Milarch. Robbins wrote *The Man Who Planted Trees: A Story of Lost Groves, the Science of Trees, and a Plan to Save the Planet*. It is a book about the work by Milarch.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHwMV35yjoE>

**2.6.9:** *Much more than shade and fresh air* by Jim Robbins (16:42)

They say that everyone must have a child, write a book and plant a tree before they die. But for the writer and freelance journalist of the New York Times, Jim Robbins, if we just do the last part, we'd already be off to a great start. The author of "The man who planted trees" tells how he became a rooted defender when he observed the devastation of the old growth pine trees on his property in Montana because of climate change. For him, science still hasn't studied deep enough about these beings that filer air, stop floods, recover desert areas, purify water, block UV rays and are the basis of medicines as well as decorate the view. Much beyond shade and fresh water.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYdEQPNwXAc>

**2.6.10:** *Why I love street trees* by Victor Dover (27:05)

In this talk, urban planner Victor Dover outlines the importance of "street trees". Dover encourages the lining of streets with greenery as a way of brightening the environment and providing economic benefits.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-VANKtbLko>

**2.6.11:** *Trees: The superheroes we’ve been waiting for* by Andy Lipkis (18:59)

When is the last time you stopped and really looked at a tree? Sometimes the things we see every day lose their profound importance as they seem so commonplace, ordinary, already understood. Andy Lipkis has dedicated his life to trees, and talks about the extraordinary, and untapped power of the tree.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzt69QnKMFs>

**2.6.12:** *The Value of a Single Tree* by Peter Nosko (24:05)

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4knu7oqxbk>

**2.6.13:** *How Trees Bend the Laws of Physics* by Veritasium (7:22)

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BickMFHAZR0>