

Sacred Land

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Buddhists Shanghai

a) **Increasing the “green” elements in the monastery** to beautify the environment. Unlike the more famous “mountain area” monasteries, almost all the monasteries in Shanghai are built on flat land. Furthermore, land resources in Shanghai are extremely tight, and in most monasteries there is no spare ground that can be specifically devoted to tree vegetation. For this reason, Shanghai monasteries must develop local, achievable Green Strategies. For instance, such Green Strategies might involve increasing the numbers of flowers and potted plants inside the monastery grounds, to beautify the temple environment but also to freshen the air.

In the longer term, the Shanghai Jade Buddha Monastery could be used as a base to set up a “Buddhism and environmental education centre” specifically to provide training programmes for other urban Buddhist monasteries in China.

2. GREEN PLANNING: Shanghai Buddhists have started to pay great attention to the monasteries’ environmental improvement and landscaping. Regardless of its size, a monastery should have plenty of green trees and potted plants. The whole monastery should also be clean and hygienically maintained.

Christian

Australian Catholics

- Celebrate the beauty of creation that is reflected in the local Church grounds and cultivate the grounds with native endemic species so that people enjoy nature where they worship.

Antioch and All the East

2. Sustainable Agriculture and Forests

- Sustainable agricultural techniques will be introduced where farming is taking place on Church land.
- Plans will be developed to introduce proper management of forested lands and sustainable agriculture with pilot activities on selected Church lands.
- Training will be held for clergy and local communities on proper management of forested lands and sustainable agriculture.

Armenian

Several churches and monasteries are located amidst abundant land that is rich with natural reserves so, considering the growing tourist attraction in these areas, the church can promote environmentally friendly development as well as responsible behaviour in these holy areas.

Adaptation to Climate Change

Since trees symbolise life, their careful maintenance can be viewed as a very special duty for every Christian, and an act pleasing to God. The tree-planting mission, then, can be one of the main involvements of the Church in overcoming the acute deforestation problem and negative consequences of both land erosion and water retention in Armenia. The planting of trees around monasteries and churches is traditional in Armenia. The former is of utmost importance because more than 10 per cent of the forest was cut down or thinned during the energy crisis of the early 1990s in Armenia. As a result there is an urgent need for the advocacy of responsible stewardship and for strengthening the communal management of forests.

The theoretical studies on green theology were followed by practical work of the future clergy in the framework of the “Tree of Life” project of Armavir Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The tree planting activity was organised in the garden of St. Lazarus Church in the town of Metsamor. The project in Metsamor represents the example of practical lessons in environmental education in a town that does not yet have established community traditions or linkages with the church. The garden, located in an arid region with very small green areas, will hopefully serve as an example for the neighbouring farms and communities.

Thanks to this project the Church of St. Lazarus is now surrounded by five hectares of the newly planted fruit garden. Having ensured uninterrupted water supply by the WCC-ART, the main problem of irrigation was successfully resolved.

The project demonstrated the successful cooperation of the Church, NGOs, the community, and ecumenical organisations, thus setting an example for others. The trees were provided by the Armenia Tree Project NGO, which also designed several dendrological plans for churches, including but not limited to St. Anna in Malishka, Mughni Church, Amenaprkich in Musaler, Asdvadsatsin in Yeghegnadzor, St. Trdat in Vaik and others, as well as 680 trees, shrubs and evergreens at the Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin, etc.

Next Steps

1) Creating green surroundings for the Churches: In 2009 this program kicked off on the territory of St Gregory the Illuminator Mother Church in Yerevan. It is the largest church in Armenia by size and was consecrated in 2001 during the 1700th anniversary of proclamation of Christianity as the state religion in Armenia. The Mother Church is located in the centre of the capital, surrounded by a number of public attractions and universities. The green area around the construction site had to be removed and, as a result, the territory has become ecologically spoilt.

Although the area surrounding the church is not managed by church itself, it was viewed as a poor policy and an anti-environmental urban planning example. Alternatively, the church

parish members and visitors could rest under the shadows of the trees on the green mound whilst being shielded from dust and traffic pollution. Furthermore, this could be a place where the university students could enjoyably spend their free time and have spiritual food and ecological self-education. Last but not least, the neighbourhood will also benefit from this project, as public park areas are very limited in the capital as well as around the country in general.

The Mother Church has around 4.9 hectares of land plot, two hectares of which ought to be green. On the 1st of May 2009, a tree planting session was carried out. This notwithstanding, so much still needs to be done to implement the comprehensive green-design of the plot. The negotiations for securing finance have been initiated, looking to begin the project in the spring of 2010.

The most costly parts of the project are the preparation of the land plot (as the area is covered with construction waste and stones) and, owing to the dry climate in that region, that irrigation system must be installed. The preparatory works will be followed by tree and bush planting by volunteer students from surrounding Universities. The students from the Theology faculty will then take care of the area for the first three years so that the newly planted trees may become deeply rooted and sufficiently strong to survive. The success of this project will enable the group to ensure its expansion, and to include other Churches around the country.

2) Restoration of sacred green spaces: During the days of the Catholics of All Armenians Nerses the 5th, there used to be a historic forest and a small lake close to the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. Since the city was in the centre of a very dry region with particularly hot summers, it was the only green area in the neighbourhood. Waters from the Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin, which once had more than 80 wells in its vicinity, irrigated the forest. Furthermore, in the early 20th Century, the forest became a graveyard for the thousands of orphan refugees from Western Armenia who were rescued from genocide, and continued to exist until the early 1990s. Unfortunately, however, most of the trees were cut down during the afore-mentioned energy crisis. The territory was no longer under the management of the church and no replanting activities were put in place by the regional administration.

Recently, the Church has acquired the administration of this plot, covering close to 8.5 hectares. A small part of the forest was used to construct a playground for children. There is also a plan to replant the forest in the spring of 2010 and erect a monument dedicated to the child victims of the Armenian Genocide. The green area will serve as a restful, relaxation spot for the Echmiadzin citizens and Holy Church visitors. A steering committee was established to prepare the project and the budget. The current plan is to have approvals in place for the completed project by the end of the year, so as to allow planting works to commence in the spring of 2010. This will be part of a bigger plan to plant 1.5 million trees in different regions in Armenia in the memory of the 1.5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide.

CBC EW

Pilgrimages

Pilgrimages to sacred sites form an important part of Catholic tradition. We would encourage all pilgrims to make their journeys as environmentally sensitive as possible

through their choice of transport and food. New pilgrimage routes could be determined that bring to light our traditional concern for the earth.

7. Assets

The buildings and land holdings associated with the Catholic Church of England and Wales could helpfully be the subject of environmental audits and sensitive rebuilding/renovation that takes concern for the natural world into account; for example, by implementing standards that require us to care about energy use, water, recycled materials, sustainable wood and other raw materials, and Catholic places of worship or administration should be beacons of good practice that inspire the local communities.

Assets

- Encourage environmental audits and track their progress.
- Manage land associated with all Catholic buildings in an environmentally sensitive way.

Many of our church grounds could be enhanced by planting wildlife friendly plants, shrubs and trees; each place of worship could become a haven for all of life and inspire the local community to follow our example.

CAFOD's liturgical and worship materials can be seen in the following link:

<http://www.cafod.org.uk/worship/environment>

Prophets and Saints

The Catholic Church has 2000 years of wisdom on the environment woven through its teaching, liturgy and the examples given by the lives of saints. Sometimes we can forget our own rich inheritance and so be deprived of riches that can engage our imagination and enable us to draw out the wisdom of ages in a modern context. Very often local saints, holy wells, churches, places of pilgrimage, local stories can help embed a community in its own environmental home. Concern for the earth is also about learning from the past and gaining much needed experience and wisdom from those who have faced challenges before and seen, through the eyes of faith, a way to make the world a better place. This Plan will encourage all Catholics to revisit the rich heritage of the past and see ancient wisdom as relevant to today's world.

Celebration

- Celebrate the beauty of creation through liturgy and music and recognise a Creation Time in the year.
- Make church grounds a manifestation of care for the earth so that they form part of, and celebrate, our understanding of our role in nature.

Catholic Coalition on Climate Change

1. **Assets:** what are we doing to lower the carbon footprint of our facilities, protect church-owned land?

Facilities: The Coalition will partner with the U.S. government's Environmental Protection Agency and their "ENERGY STAR" program. This program offers a variety of tools and techniques for individuals and institutions to reduce their energy use. In particular, we will seek their assistance to encourage our thousands of parishes, schools, hospitals, and other facilities to become certified as "ENERGY STAR" congregations or buildings.

Several dioceses are already beginning this process through the diocesan facilities managers.

With nearly 18,000 Catholic churches, 8,000 elementary and secondary schools, countless buildings housing charitable organizations and hospitals and health care facilities, the Catholic community can have a tremendous impact on the amount of energy we can save and reduce our carbon footprint.

- Lands and forests: Religious communities of men and women in the United States have made care of creation a top priority on the land and in the facilities they own. For many, this priority has helped them become models for the local communities that surround them.

For example, the primary meeting and meals facility at the retreat center of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary near San Jose, California, is a LEED-certified (Leadership in Environmental and Educational Design) building. The Coalition will promote such efforts and work with facilities managers to ensure that these best practices are seen as models to be replicated.

Church of England

Exeter: 'Roots of the Cathedral' This DVD project, based on a concept by Christopher Southgate, brings together the work of Robert Harris (Architect), Peter Kyrke-Smith (Composer) and Andrew Millington with singing by the Cathedral Choir.

In sound and image, the project highlights the ecological link between humanity and the natural world, the connectedness between natural beauty and human endeavour, a spiritual perspective of God's total creation.

The project looks in particular at the influence of trees on the life and history of Exeter Cathedral. Woodland and trees provided raw materials for all ancient buildings and the tools required in their construction; they stimulated architects and masons in roof design, pillars, vaulting and bosses; the canopy of the forest is reflected in the vaulting and arches.

The disc will be used with the Cathedral's education work. This is seen as the first step of an initiative to be developed further in the years ahead.

- Pursuant to the commitment to achieve „One Planet“ status by 2050, by 2016 StF should develop a *Sustainable Land Use Strategy*, covering energy, climate mitigation/adaptation, farming, food, biodiversity, churchyards and community access to property.

Shrinking the Footprint will encourage tree-planting and other actions to enhance biodiversity on church land.

In addition, the range of very high quality guidance and resources which exist on the protection and management of churchyard trees needs to be better integrated and disseminated, through national and diocesan websites. This includes guidance on trees by diocesan chancellors under the *Care of Churches etc Measure, 1991*.

The *UK Yew Guardianship Project* encourages the protection and care of Britain’s ancient yews. With the Ancient Yew Group (AYG) the Conservation Foundation has printed a Code of Care for parishes, land owners and local authorities. In 2005 the Foundation contributed towards the Ancient Yew Group’s (AYG) *Ancient Yew Gazetteer* website, which will continue updating the distribution of ancient yews throughout the UK.

South-West Network of Dioceses for Environmental Action This network has been set up by the dioceses of South- Western England – Truro, Exeter, Bath and Wells, Bristol, Gloucester and Salisbury. A non-Church partner is the Devon Renewable Energy Association. The aim of the network is to explore the scope for joint action and to establish collaborative projects that will cut the carbon footprint of the Church, raise awareness and lobby for change, open up potential for regional initiatives for ambitious investments (for example, renewable energy schemes on suitable church land) and sustainable procurement, and share leading practice.

14.Green churchyards, dioceses, communities • ‘Yews for the Millennium’ Over half the Church of England’s parishes and several cathedrals took part in *Yews for the Millennium*, a project created by the Conservation Foundation. This helped many in the Church to appreciate the links between the environment and faith. 8,500 Millennium Yews were given away for planting, and the project is still receiving requests for more, 9 years later! This very successful project also laid the foundations for the network of Diocesan Environment Officers (DEOs) and led to a six years programme, from 2002–2008, of *Parish Pump* Workshops held in all dioceses. This was also organised by the Conservation Foundation in association with the Church of England, and was part-funded by DEFRA, the government’s environment department. Each workshop, hosted by a diocesan bishop, enabled lay members and clergy to meet environmental experts and encouraged the development and adoption of diocesan environmental policies.

Caring for God’s Acre This very active private charity in Herefordshire aims to inspire and support local communities to care for churchyards and burial grounds in a way which benefits both people and wildlife. It is supported by the Conservation Foundation’s *Parish Pump* programme and hopes to extend its work nationwide.

Church of South India

Dornakal Diocese is located in 5 revenue districts in Andhra Pradesh, one in Orissa and one in Madhya Pradesh. It is covered with thick forests, mountains, rivers and fields. Bishop Thandrigaru has instructed educational institutions to plant trees at their institutions and also at Church premises. Now our Churches are green. For example at Cathedral and Kothagudem it has grown a beautiful garden in front of the Church. We are planning to have gardens in all the Churches. There are two Hospitals in our Diocese covered with gardens and trees. We are thankful to our Bishop for encouraging the Diocese to be a green Diocese, for educating people to avoid the use of plastics and to use paper bags, and for educating the people to use the VermiComposite in agricultural fields and not to waste water. A rainwater harvesting project has been proposed and is planned before the 2010 monsoon. Three Diocesan Compassion hostels were furnished with solar panels in 2009. There are a total of 20 such hostels in the Diocese, and each is now offering the slogan “each one plant one tree” – along with the degree college, the Junior college and six schools.

1. Plant Trees and Manage Communal Land: The members of Church of South India will plant as many trees as they can to improve the green cover. Forests are one of the most effective carbon sinks and critical for preserving the ecological balance. Besides other plants, emphasis will be given in promoting the planting of Vetiver, Jatropha and Mangroves. These three plants are all ecologically significant, especially in the context of Global warming and the shortage of groundwater. The proposal to promote their planting in all lands touched by CSI has been accepted and if any Dioceses would like to plant the above the plants in a massive scale, funding will be given. In addition the Director of BDM has agreed to provide necessary assistance to the dioceses to prepare a project report and simultaneously will also explore possibilities of providing financial assistance from different agencies for other planting programmes. In June 2009, the CSI Synod urged all its 4 million members to plant at least one tree during the month of June 2009. This was linked to the UN Environment Programme’s tree-planting initiative. It also urged individual parishes to manage their churchyards to benefit wildlife eg through planning a Nature Trail pointing out different trees, plants, wildlife, and stone used in the building and gravestones.

4. Green Water Charging: We will promote the digging of mud pits in all the lands of our churches and on the land of our congregations in order to harvest rain water which will recharge the ground water.

Jesuits

In a number of countries around the world, Jesuits work with indigenous populations, helping them to protect their ancestral land and to pass on their lifestyles. For example, in India, Fr Lancelot D. Cruz SJ of St Xavier’s College, Ahmedabad, has developed in the Dediapada forests of South Gujarat, ““People Forest-Laboratory-Industry Linkages”. This is an organization for socioeconomic development and the preservation of knowledge about

traditional medicine, a project which involved the setting up of an interactive network of medicine men.

In the Philippines, the Jesuit-run organisation “Environmental Science for Social Change” (ESSC), works with local populations, mostly indigenous, in adapting to climate change¹⁶. Their work includes mapping, networking and telling the stories of the people affected.

In Colombia, PDPMM (Peace and Development Programme for the Magdalena River) and SUYUSAMA (Sustainable Development Programme for Nariño and Putumayo departments) work with the local populations in order to establish peace as well as communion with nature.

New Psalmist Baptist Church

The Catering ministry and adult students from our Life Empowerment classes explored creating gardens on the campus of the church this year. The ministries grew bell and banana peppers, cherry and tomatoes, zucchini, as well as a number of herbs, including dill, cilantro, tarragon, and parsley. Members of these ministries are seeking to create a larger garden at the new edifice. Additionally, these ministries are planning to teach members of the church and community the advantages to growing their own food as a means of returning to a simpler lifestyle and becoming more self sufficient. NPBC’s new edifice will showcase a café that will provide services to families throughout the community. It is our intent to provide a wide range of products that are made with organic and free range products.

Polish Orthodox

5. Sacred Hill of Grabarka and Sts Mary and Martha Convent there, Suprasl, Krynoczk/Bialoweza, Piatienka are a kind of local mini-eco-systems. Orthodox churchyards and courtyards (*pogost*) have always been considered sacred area/ground and Orthodox churches have usually been surrounded by several large trees providing shelter for birds. In recent years a number of large trees have been cleared off several churchyards in Eastern Poland due to their age and bad condition. Replacement of the trees should occur ASAP.

6. Pilgrims to Grabarka Sts. Mary and Martha Convent and to other pilgrimage centres in Poland will be asked/reminded to leave no trash upon their departure.

5. Already in 1980. the Fellowship Orthodox Youth in Poland restored tradition of walking pilgrimages to holy places of the Orthodox Church in Poland - Grabarka, Jableczna, Kostomloty, Piatienka, Saki, Suprasl, Turkowice, Zwierki. Initially there was only one pilgrimage to Grabarka organised by the Fellowship (number of its participants was over 2000). Nowadays numerous parish communities (over 20) organise their own walking pilgrimages in various directions - especially to Grabarka and to other monasteries. Broader

information on the pilgrimages in the Orthodox mass media should help to increase their number and numbers of their participants.

- a) Introduction of stricter energy conservation at Suprasl Academy and Holy Annunciation Monastery through installation of geothermal heating systems in 2010-11;

VII. Celebration:

The World Day of Prayer for Creation initiated by Ecumenical Patriarch should become an occasion for deeper concentration on the natural environment. Its celebration should be accompanied by meetings, seminars, symposia as well as practical conservation oriented actions – i.e. planting trees and/or shrubs around newly constructed churches, on churchyards, parish grounds and elsewhere.

3. More intense reflection on elements of *ecothology* in worship of the Orthodox Church may be supported by ceremonies of:

- traditional seasonal blessing of farmlands,
- blessing of water,
- blessing of bread, wine, rain of wheat and oil (*gr. artoklasia*) and
- Eucharist as liturgical manifestation of human care for natural environment entrusted to people by God.

We will attempt to cause revival of traditional spring/autumn farmlands blessing in all countryside parishes and more often blessing of water and *artoklasia* in all parishes.

Quakers

The historic Quaker owned conference centre, Swarthmoor Hall, in Cumbria plans to come 'off grid' in the next two to three years through on-site, small-scale energy production. Swarthmoor Hall is also seriously investigating the possibility of using the surrounding farmland it owns for one or two commercial wind turbines, to be owned co-operatively by British Quakers.

Daoist

In the Qinling Declaration, published in 2006 at the first Daoist ecology and education workshop on the sacred mountain of Taibaishan in Shaanxi Province, there was a goal to construct environmentally friendly Daoist temples. The China Daoist Association will help Daoist temples to form an Alliance of Ecology Temples, and combine this with an Alliance of

Daoist Healthcare to promote the new ideas of the connection between an ecologically friendly and a healthy lifestyle.

a. Land and Building

Traditional Daoist temples have always paid strong attention to the harmonious relationship between buildings and their surroundings. This is to reflect the Daoist thinking about following Nature and returning to lives of simplicity and truth. In doing so, the result has been that the beautiful natural surroundings of Daoist places are protected and also that the purity and sacredness of the temples have been highlighted. This is the foundation of good *feng shui*, the traditional Chinese geomancy, which gives people a sense that Daoist temples are born from both heaven and earth.

Based on these ideas, we will restore and repair religious and environment-related facilities on land that is owned and used by Daoist temples so as not to destroy the existing surroundings. From 2010 to 2012 we will draw up an overall action plan and from 2013 to 2017 we will promote the experiences we have learned all across the country. The environmental facilities include: ritual facilities, education facilities, living facilities, recycling facilities and environment-related media facilities.

In future, any newly registered and opened Daoist temples should follow this overall environmental construction plan.

e. Sacred land

We will actively cooperate with forest and tourist organisations to hold activities that will help protect our Daoist sacred mountains.

From ancient times, Chinese Daoism has always put a great emphasis on Dao following nature. It pays a great attention to the harmony and balance of heaven, earth and humanity, and the balance between Yin and Yang. Humanity should obey nature's rules, maintain the balance of our ecological system and protect the species that live beside us. In the past, Daoist monks have left many examples of wisdom and of moving stories of their encounters and experiences with nature. And today, Daoists monks and nuns should continue to expound and propagate such ecological wisdom in order to raise the awareness of environment issues in the wider community. At the same time, the Daoist community, Daoist organisations, and Daoist temples should all carry on such great ecological traditions and should make positive contributions towards the construction of Daoist Ecology Temples, in both spiritual and practical ways.

c. Pilgrimage and travel

We call for a healthier and more environmentally friendly style of pilgrimage and travel. The reforms and improvements of pilgrimage styles have already started in Daoist temples and on Daoist mountains. These mainly focus on the "three stick incense burning" – in which

temples strongly promote a new tradition of burning just three sticks of incense instead of the previous many sticks in order to reduce pollution caused by burning incense, candles, papers and fireworks on Daoist premises. We also recommend that people give offerings of flowers and fruits. All religious articles must be environment friendly. From 2010 to 2012 we will carry out pilot projects (selecting one to two temples from seven of the major regions of China) and from 2013 to 2017 we will promote and pass on the experiences we learned from these projects to temples across the country.

We will call for pilgrims to walk within the land used by the temples in order that these people should have a better understanding of ecology and Daoism during their outdoor times of relaxation, entertainment and exercise (see b. above)

Temples with restaurants and lodging places should manage these places in ways that are kind to the environment, saving water and energy, and reducing the use of disposable tableware.

Hindu

Green pilgrimage

Most Hindu pilgrimage sites are in India. As the Hindu diaspora and Indian middle class have grown, such sites are seeing a growth in their number of pilgrims. To reduce the environmental impact of the pilgrimages, we wish to develop and promote a set of guidelines that will encourage devotees to see all aspects of the pilgrimage as sacred.

This includes the means of transport, accommodation, and use of resources at holy sites.

By the end of 2010 we will have selected a pilgrimage site in India which will serve as our pilot project for this campaign. Following selection, we will research local amenities, temples, and resources with the aim of creating an example of good practice.

Working in partnership with trustees, priests and other custodians of pilgrimage sites we hope to develop standards that minimise environmental impact.

Temple Garden and Green Pooja scheme

We aim to promote the development of temple gardens. Such gardens will use organic gardening principles and include the care of sacred plants. They will also be used to grow produce for use in daily offerings in the temples.

We will work with local and national gardening organisations and experts to learn best practice and increase organic and sustainable standards.

Having clear temple standards will create a positive change in the habits of devotees. To foster this, we will encourage devotees to develop their own gardens at home and grow their own food.

Closely linked with the development of temple gardens is the green pooja scheme. Poojas,

yajnas, and other ceremonies are a daily occurrence in Hindu temples and homes. each of these make use of a variety of natural products and foodstuffs. for example, poojas and yajnas include the offering of rice, fruits, vegetables, and ghee into a sacrificial fire, an aarti ceremony includes the offering of flowers, incense, and water to the deities.

the cumulative amount of products the Hindu community uses worldwide in these ceremonies is substantial. We wish to promote and create an attitude of local and organic procurement for such items. Where it is not current practice or possible to grow these items in the temple garden we will advocate that they be sourced within a 30-mile radius, where possible. doing so will not only support local organic farmers and reduce the carbon footprint of the items, but bring about a change in consciousness regarding what is deemed a suitable devotional offering for such ceremonies.

For the first year of the Temple Garden Scheme we will assess resources and current practice in temples. We will also develop, based on the Scriptural Research project, a Hindu perspective on gardening. the second year will see this work published in a handbook for temples and partnering with key organisations. By the third year we hope to create a network of temples that promote good practice and to hold a national temple Garden Awareness Week.

In years four–six, devotees will be encouraged to develop their gardens at home and grow their own produce. By year nine we wish to display a temple garden at garden shows, such as the chelsea flower show. the green pooja scheme will work on a similar timeline, with many aspects of the two projects intertwining.

Jewish

Jerusalem, in particular, presents an extraordinary opportunity. As a city that is holy to three major world religions with more than 3 billion adherents, the symbolic significance of Jerusalem is huge. Establishing Jerusalem as a model green city is a feasible goal that could have a huge impact on sustainable urban planning world wide.

The Holy Land Declaration

This is a project of JCI aimed at bringing together Jewish Christian and Muslim religious leaders and communities in the Holy Land around a commitment to take action on climate change.

In Jerusalem:

1. Jerusalem will be recognized as a world-leading green city by 2015.
2. Jerusalem's Jewish, Christian and Muslim residents will work together to develop the next stage of the city's green development program.

Shinto

Shinto long-term plan

Introduction

This indigenous Japanese faith has approximately 90 million members with 81,000 Shinto shrines throughout the country. These shrines are built largely of wood and form the heart of the villages and local communities of Japan. Often the only extensive areas where trees and greenery flourish in Japanese cities and towns are around holy shrines.

Shintos see themselves as protected by creation. It is the forests and not the buildings that mark the true shrines of Shintoism. The deities are invited to these forests, where they and their environment are protected by the local community, which in turn is protected by the deities. The Shinto plan reflects this theology.

The Shinto plan focuses on forestry and comes out of a commitment to pioneer the drawing up of a new Religious Forestry Standard for religiously owned and managed forests by 2013. The plan is for Religious Forests to be managed in ways which are religiously compatible, environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable:

Religiously compatible - based on the faith values, beliefs, heritage and traditions.

Environmentally appropriate - ensures that the harvest of timber and non-timber products, as well as care of sacred areas, maintains the forest's biodiversity, productivity and ecological processes. Also, that those who manage the forest pay attention to environmental concerns, including recycling and non-use of pollutants.

Socially beneficial - helps both local people and society at large to enjoy long-term benefits and also provides strong incentives to local people to sustain the forest resources and adhere to long-term management plans.

Economically viable - means that forest operations are structured and managed so as to be sufficiently profitable, without generating financial profit at the expense of the forest resources, the ecosystem or affected communities. The tension between the need to generate adequate financial returns and the principles of responsible forest operations can be reduced through efforts to market forest products for their best value.

A meeting held in Visby, Gotland in Sweden, in August 2007 and attended by leading representatives of eight different faith traditions with major forestry assets and by leading forestry specialists from the United Nations, World Bank, WWF, Conservation International and various other secular agencies such as FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) agreed on the need to create Religious Forestry Standards (RFS). A key task set for each forest-owning faith was to draw up their own theology of land and forestry.

Timetable of action to achieve this between 2010 and 2014

a. Between Windsor in November 2009 and Ise in May 2014 when the programme ends, a series of RFSs will be developed which are rooted in the specific theologies of each major tradition but which agree on certain key environmental, social and economic frameworks for the protection of forests, of whatever kind, over which faiths have some degree of control.

To reach that goal, an Executive Group will meet every six months over the next four and a half years to ensure that this target is met and to manage the overall programme.

b. The first meeting of the Executive Group will be at Windsor in November 2009. The next meeting will be in Japan in the spring of 2010. In the autumn of 2010, there will be a meeting of theologians who have developed the Theologies of Land and Forests. This will be held in China at the sacred mountain of Hua Shan, near Xian. From this meeting, the core theological framework of each RFS will be agreed and finalised.

In 2014, the Executive Group will meet in Japan for the Ise Event where an agreed International Religious Forestry Standard will be launched at the most sacred event in Japanese religious and social life: the rebuilding of the Grand Shrines at Ise. The Jinja Honcho will host all the major forest owning religions at the grand ceremony for the rebuilding of the Great Shrines of Ise.

The Ise Grand Shrines are unique because, in addition to some 5,500 hectares of sacred forest, they are also surrounded by a vast area of forest covering the nearby mountains. These were created to meet the needs of the shrines for timber – with most shrines being replaced every 20-25 years – and a farm to provide food to feed staff and provide offerings to the *kami*.

Together, they comprise a total ecosystem, linking the forests with the river-system, all the way to the sea. It therefore represents the most explicit and advanced example of the Shinto approach to Nature in general, and forest management in particular.