

A photograph of a sunset over a field. A large, leafless tree stands in the foreground on the left. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow. The sky is filled with dark, dramatic clouds. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

**Bringing Religions & Spiritual
Traditions & Conservation together
for common cause:
Adaptation & Environment**

**Different sectors need to work
better together**

Edmund Barrow

- Arguably one of most important books of our time
- Instruction to 1.2+ billion Catholics
- Yet speaks to a much wider global audience
- As well as equity and climate change – also speaks to caring for Mother Earth

Pope Francis

Encyclical on Climate Change & Inequality

On Care for Our Common Home

“An urgent call to action.”

—The New York Times

Introduction by Naomi Oreskes



“We no longer walk the earth with wonder. Instead of being guests of the earth, we are now crowded passengers on the runaway train of progress and productivity We desperately need to retrieve our capacity for reverence.”

- Sacred nature can help us solve some key challenges,
- Bridge gap between global & national aspirations & local reality
- Locally owned action can help solve national & global problems & reporting

Sacred trees, groves

- Local spirituality & formal religion
- Predates religion & conservation
- Under recognized/respected important conservation assets
- World population 7.6 bill, of whom 6.2 bill are part of some Faith
- In Africa 1.22 bill, 0.77 bill part of some Faith.
- Untapped opportunity for joint work
- sacred nature as glue
- Sacred groves are CCA's – but very few registered, really known



Where sacred trees & groves are found

- Wherever there are trees, there are sacred trees, & (usually) sacred groves
- Found everywhere, & every country in Africa
- Sacred trees & groves transcend race, colour & creed yet not “known”
- Survived long time – islands of biodiversity, provide services, help in risk & resilience

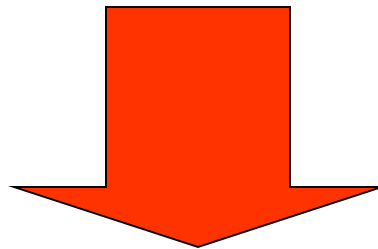


Trees & woodlands provide us

- Sense of peace, of silence, of place
- Increased understanding - we are all imbued with the spiritual – all humankind, all nature, & Earth
- Not separate from our natural world but part of it
- Resilience, risk management – part of local land use – islands of nature in a sea of humanity
- Many sacred trees/groves old – and seen drought, floods, winds many time before
- Combines intangible with tangible
- Have to act locally – village, community – planning, action – livelihoods, adaptation

Scale – Sacred groves

- Ghana 2,000+
- S.W. China 400+
- Nepal 100's
- Kenya (Kayas) 10's
- Tanzania (Pare) 600+
- Karnataka (India) 600+
- India 100,000+



- Size from less than 1Ha to 400+

Truth - we really have little idea of number & area of sacred groves in countries, world – but way in excess of formal PA's, & cover 2+ mill HA

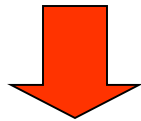
There are 236,200 "formal" PA's in the world - yet where is the recognition of sacred ones???

Why are We Loosing our “Connection” with Nature??

- Growth, materialism & science
 - Losing links with natural world, urbanization
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- Separation contributes to environmental crisis
 - Not just ecological, but spiritual & cultural loss
 - Lack of respect & recognition of sacred trees and groves - yet an undervalued asset
 - And opportunity for joint work – Conservation, Climate Change, Religions, Spiritual groups – & forces us to act locally

Our Cultural & Spiritual Values Under-valued

- Emphasis on goods that nature provides, & direct \$\$ value
- Emphasis on simplifying to what “science” can understand – tyranny of the silver bullet

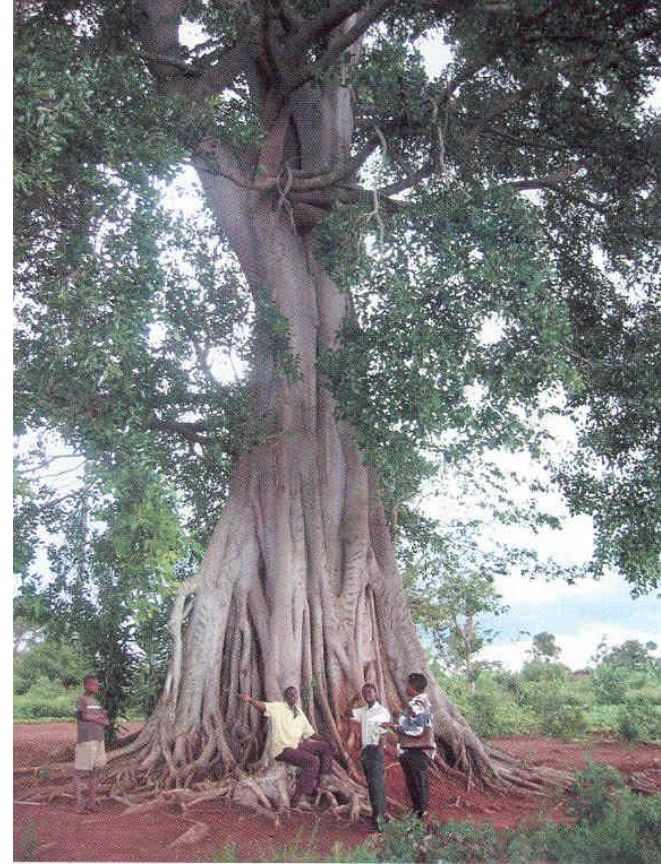


- Cultural & Spiritual values not fit - ignored, & down played etc.
- Yet values survive/thrive – & transcend Nation, Race, & Creed, & time
- Important biodiversity, local institutions for management, connectivity in landscape



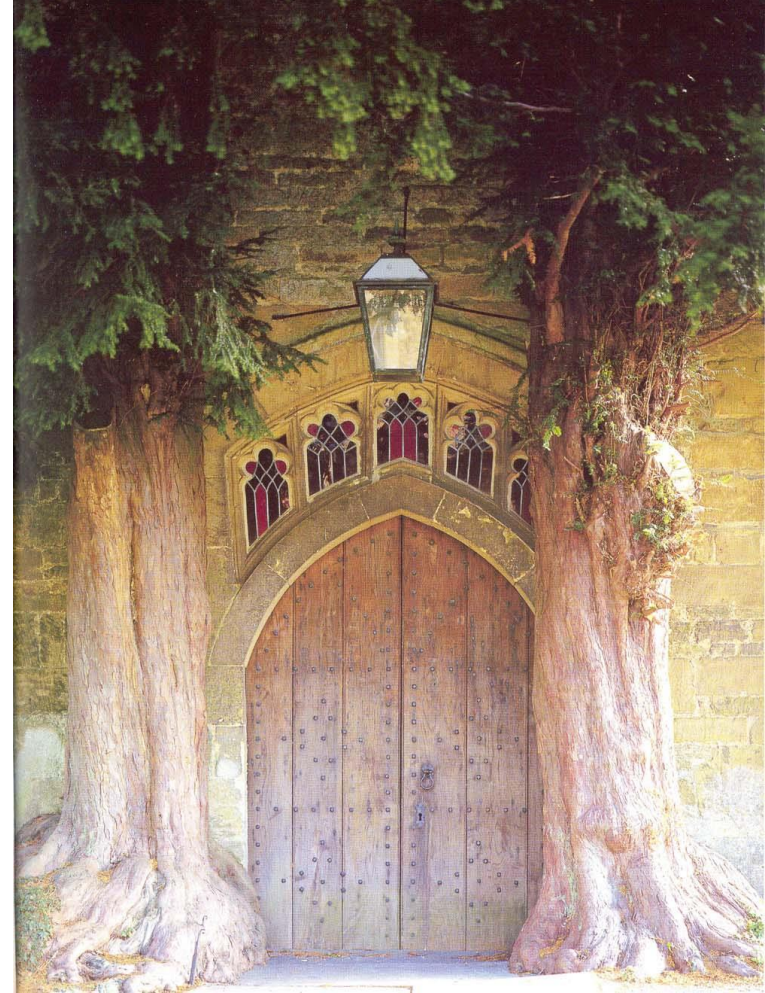
Sacred Trees & Groves


- Within & outside “formal” religion
- Conserve biodiversity that may be locally extinct
- Protected by local custom - ICCA's
- Sheer numbers – connectivity & restoration
- Livelihoods, conservation, resilience & risk (and so adaptation)
- Importance under-valued by conservation
- Understand from perspective of Religions, & Spiritual traditions
- Respect values to people
- Help redefine ways we can spiritually connect with our environment



Some Lessons

- Improve conservation, resilience & adaptation
- Important environmental & biodiversity assets
- Understand scale, numbers & reasons
- Respect sacrality, & management institutions
- Engage spiritual groups for improved conservation
- Recognize & respect
- Integrate in conservation and CC work (training, practice, awareness)





*“There is enough for
everyone’s need, but not for
everyone’s greed”*

“Earth will take care of herself.

Pray for Humanity”