Alliance of Religions and Conservation

Helping 11 of the world’s major faiths develop environmental plans to protect the living planet
About ARC

• Founded in 1995 by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh as a secular NGO
• We help faiths develop environmental programmes based on their own core beliefs, practices and teachings.
• We also help secular organisations link with religions to work together.
• We are not funded by any faith.
Why should religious people care about the environment?

- The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it – Psalm 24:1

- The creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of mankind, yet most people do not know – Quran 40:57
All the major faiths regard the natural world as a gift of the divine

- The whole earth has been created a place of worship, pure and clean – Hadith

- Everything that breathes comes from the Dao And the Virtue feeds and takes care of it. – Dao de Jing
Why work with religions?

The faiths reach 85% of the world’s people. There are:

- 2.1 billion Christians  
- 1.34 billion Muslims  
- 950 million Hindus  
- 50-70 million Daoists  
- 24 million Sikhs  
- 13 million Jews
• The faiths own 7-8% of the habitable land surface of the planet
• They own 5% of forests worldwide and have influence over 15% that are considered sacred.
• They are involved in half of all schools worldwide.
• They produce more newspapers than all of the European Union.
• They are among the largest investment blocks on the global stock market.
• They are trusted as a source of wisdom and information – often where governments and politicians are not.
The faiths are the oldest and therefore the most sustainable human communities on the planet. They work not in short-term thinking but in generations.

So the question is not:
‘Why would you work with the faiths?’ but: ‘Why not?’
Launch of long-term plans

- 31 faith groups launched faith commitments for a living planet at ARC’s Windsor Celebration, November 2009, with Prince Philip & UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon
The plans look at seven key areas

- Faith-consistent use of assets (land, buildings, etc)
- Education
- Wisdom
- Lifestyles
- Media & advocacy
- Partnerships
- Celebration
Examples of faith action

• Plans to plant 8.5 million trees in Tanzania;
• All Daoist temples in China to be solar powered;
• Greening of all types of religious buildings;
• Protection of sacred forests;
• Printing of sacred books on environmentally-friendly paper);
• Extensive environmental education programmes through the faiths’ formal and informal role in schools
Long-term plans in Africa

• In March 2010, 27 Christian, Muslim & Hindu faith groups met in Nairobi to discuss developing long-term plans.
• 90% of Africans say they are Christian or Muslim
Christian, Muslim & Hindu groups

- ARC is working with faith groups in Ghana, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe
• The plans have a focus on sustainable land and water management, with a particular emphasis on education, women’s led projects and tree planting.
Faiths have massive reach

- For example: the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has 43 million followers
  - 500,000 clergy in 70,000 parishes
  - 6.5 million young people in Sunday schools
• In Assisi in November 2011, ARC launched the Green Pilgrimage Network to help the world’s holy sites become environmentally sustainable.

• Around 150 million people a year become pilgrims, whether for a few hours, days or weeks
• Its members include Louguan City, which will become the biggest area of pilgrimage in northwest China, in a unique partnership between Daoism and the Chinese government.
• Also launched at Assisi was the first Green Guide for Hajj, aimed at the two million-plus Muslim pilgrims who visit Mecca each year, and Islam and Water, aimed at women and families
Sikh Environment Day

• In 2011, ARC helped launch March 14 as a global day of eco action for Sikhs.
• More than 1,000 gurdwaras, businesses and schools took part in 2012.
Developing a forestry standard

- ARC is working with faith groups to develop a religious forestry standard to manage their forests sustainably.
- It is also working with Oxford University’s Biodiversity Institute to map religious forests to show why faiths should be recognised as playing a key role in forest conservation.
To find out more, visit: www.arcworld.org