



Abraham Usher on his Confirmation-meets-God's creation initiative.

Diocese of Norwich

Here in the Diocese of Norwich, every Confirmation candidate receives a hazel tree sapling from one of our bishops to plant. We have all delighted in the smiles on Confirmation candidates' faces when they are given this gift.

There are deep roots beyond this gift. It symbolises that being a disciple of Jesus means that our faith grows over time, and that part of living Jesus' life is to be a steward of creation. The Kingdom of God includes ecological wholeness, and throughout the Biblical narrative we find people encountering God through trees.

Abraham entertained angels at the oaks of Mamre. Moses stood shoeless next to the burning bush. Nathaniel was called from under a fig tree to Jesus. Jesus was desperate to see Jesus pass by.



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Trees can provide so much for us – a place for communities to come together, a home for flora and fauna, provision of food and timber and, of course, they play a vital role in locking away carbon from the atmosphere.

At the heart of being an Anglican, included in the [Fifth Mark of Mission](#) is the call to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the face of the earth. God’s earth, God’s creation, God’s gift.

Why, then, a hazel tree? Norwich was home to Mother Julian, the celebrated fourteenth-century mystic. She held a hazel nut in the palm of her hand and three truths were revealed to her about all that God has made: ‘The first is that God made it, the second is that God loves it, the third is



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By giving out these hazel trees, we are building upon the legacy of Julian’s experience of God, and carrying out the task that Julian saw humanity being called to do: ‘Be a gardener, delve and dyke, toil and sweat, and turn the earth upside-down, and seek the deepness, and water the plants in time’. Her revelations, or shewings, showed a deep compassion for nature and emphasised Christ’s oneness with all creation.

Providing a hazel tree helps people to connect with our local spiritual heritage, to spiritually link the confirmation of someone’s faith to the newness of growth, to create a memorable legacy of that act of faith by physically planting a tree, and to enhance the environment and the local community with the planting of more trees.

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