

|| FOREST ADVOCACY MINISTRY ON THE NSW NORTH COAST

BACKGROUND

The trees and creatures of the forests in NSW are in crisis, following the 2019/20 bushfires, and due to logging and the escalation of climate change. This proposal, initially led by the Uniting Church, is to stand in solidarity with the forests and all who depend upon them, by working in partnership with others to increase the involvement of Christians in the struggle for forest protection.

VISION AND GOALS

The vision is to develop a forest advocacy ministry, starting on the Mid North Coast and expanding to the Queensland border in the north and the Hunter River in the south. The goals are to:

- Work with others to achieve a rapid end to industrial native forest logging in NSW.
- Increase the involvement of Christians in efforts for forest protection.
- Offer pastoral care and support to forest defenders.
- Acknowledge, encourage and support spiritual connection with the earth/Earth.

Note: We are focussed on encouraging Christians to become involved in forest protection, not on “converting” forest protectors to Christianity.

ACTIVITIES

Activities depend on resourcing and may include:

- Take time to listen to First Nations peoples, local residents living adjacent to state forests, forest protection groups, the forests themselves and all who depend on them.
- Equip and organise Christians to advocate for and defend the forests, especially on the NSW north coast (e.g. through writing to politicians, citizen science etc).
- Stand in solidarity with and offer care and support to forest defenders, including those involved in “friends” groups.
- Explore restarting the outdoor “ecofaith”/“forest church” initiative, initially based in Gleniffer.
- Provide special occasional outdoor events for the whole community for spiritual connection to, and celebration with, the forests.
- Provide field education placement opportunities for ministry students.

RESOURCING

At present we have a group of 9 Christians, mostly from the Uniting Church, under the oversight of the Mid North Coast Presbytery, working on developing and implementing this ministry. Most of us have an environmental advocacy background. We hope to amplify our efforts and attract resources to pay a person, possibly in a Uniting Church ministry placement, who would have a leading role in the ministry. We have started crowd funding and fundraising within the churches and are looking at possibilities for grants.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR INPUT

We are in the early stages of developing this ministry and would like your feedback on our ideas. We are strongly committed to working in partnership with others and value your input to help shape the project, for the benefit of the forests and all who depend on them.

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