

# eco-palms: a healthier harvest



*The crowd heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.  
So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him,  
shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes  
in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!”  
- John 12:12-13*

Today in celebration of Palm Sunday, our congregation has partnered with Enough for Everyone of the Presbyterian Church (USA) to use *eco-palms*—a branch truly worthy of celebration.

## communities at risk

More than 300 million palm fronds are harvested each year for US consumption alone—most of them for Palm Sunday. Yet for the communities who harvest these plants year after year, palm fronds rarely represent jubilation. Although US palm purchases may reach as high as \$4.5 million each year, the palm harvesters themselves earn very little. Indigenous families and communities, who rely heavily on palm harvesting for income, represent the poorer segments of the rural populations in the palm-producing areas of Mexico and Guatemala.

## environment at risk

Typically, palm harvesting is done by community members hired by local contractors, who then sell palms to large floral export firms. Payment is based on volume, so harvesters are motivated to gather a large quantity of palms without regard for quality.

As a result, up to half the palms harvested are usually discarded due to poor quality. Many palm producing areas are important biosphere reserves, and the harsh harvesting techniques rapidly deplete the forest’s rich biodiversity.

## good news: a healthier harvest

The PC(USA) has partnered with Lutheran World Relief, Catholic Relief Services and the University of Minnesota to help build support in the US for eco-palms by introducing congregations to this social and environmental justice project.

Eco-palms are harvested in a more sustainable way—harvesters are paid on the quality of their palms rather than the quantity. These communities are also committed to using harvesting practices that minimize the impact on the natural forest.

Eco-palm harvesters and community members sort and package the palms themselves and sell their palms directly rather than relying on middlemen. In this way, eco-palms improve local communities’ standard of living and ensure that the money paid for the palms benefit those who labor.

As we raise our branches in celebration today, we play an important role in protecting forests, local jobs, and sustainable livelihoods in harvesting communities.

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[www.pcusa.org/palms](http://www.pcusa.org/palms)



Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Enough for Everyone  
100 Witherspoon Street  
Louisville, KY 40202-1396  
[www.pcusa.org/enough](http://www.pcusa.org/enough)  
(888) 728-7228 x5626