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## U.P. churches will plant 12,000 trees

CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

Catholic parishes across northern Michigan planned to participate in an inter-faith project sponsored by the Upper Peninsula EarthKeepers to plant 12,000 native trees across the state in honor of Earth Day 2009.

On April 22, Bishop Alexander Sample and leaders of other local faith communities blessed the first of thousands of white spruce and red pine trees. The trees were to be planted

at numerous locations, including the grounds of churches and temples, across 400 miles of northern Michigan.

Snowy April weather delayed the planting of the rest of the trees until May 3.

All humans "are called to be stewards of God's creation, and no matter what faith tradition we come from that responsibility lies with us human creatures," Bishop Sample said during the blessing.

"As those created in God's image and likeness, with intelligence and free will, human beings bear a special responsibility for the earth which God has entrusted to our care," he added.

The EarthKeepers organization, founded in 2004, involves 10 faith traditions with more than 150 participating churches and temples.

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PLANTING FOR THE FUTURE -- U.P. leaders of religions, including Bishop Alexander Sample, shown at right, applauded as a young boy scoops dirt on the base of a white spruce tree planted at Presque Isle Park in Marquette April 22. (Joseph Zyble photo)