

Environmental Group Plants New Tree at Union Lake

23 July 2020



The Rev. Gilford Bisjak holds an ax at a Wednesday, July 15, tree-planting ceremony at City Lake in Union. The ax was part of a message to only use an ax to trim the forest, not cut it down.

Some eyebrows were raised when a local minister showed up to a tree-planting ceremony holding an axe.

But the axe, and the “chopping” motion he made toward the pin oak, turned out to be part of the sermon the Rev. Gilford Bisjak was delivering.

“I cannot tell a lie, I did not chop down this tree,” the pastor at Zion United Church of Christ said at the Wednesday, July 15, planting along the banks of City Lake in Union.

Bisjak told the dozen people gathered around the tree that there’s a place for an ax, such as in the overgrown forests in California, where the abundance of trees became a fire hazard.

“So there’s a place for an ax, but there’s a place to plant and grow trees,” he said. “These should only be used, not to devastate forests, but to trim them. These should be used to improve and enhance the environment, because when a fire grows through an overgrown forest, total devastation, at least in areas that are dry like the West. So my hope and my prayer is that we will care for all of God’s environment, including this tree.”

The oak was planted to replace a maple tree church volunteers planted in 1996. That tree died a few years ago.

“I was so sad when I drove by here and saw that the maple was dead,” said Norma Klemme, chair of Zion’s Green Team. “It was a big tree.”

So this time, the Green Team, which works on environmentally friendly projects, decided to plant a larger tree. The 20-foot-tall oak was more expensive, \$300, but its larger size at its planting gives it a better chance at a long life.

The ceremony was originally planned for Earth Day week in April but had to be pushed back because of the coronavirus pandemic. It kept its original Earth Day theme, “Make love visible by planting trees.”

The ceremony included the reading of the “Faith Climate Voter” pledge, which seeks to “put love into action for every living creature for every vulnerable community suffering the impacts of our changing climate.”

It is one of several trees the Green Team has planted in the area. Klemme said the team replaced trees that were dedicated to Union High School and Central Elementary students who had died after earlier trees were excavated to build modular buildings.

“We have gotten a lot of trees from the Missouri Department of Conservation and distributed them to anyone in the congregation who wanted them,” Klemme said.

Union Parks and Recreation employees planted the tree at the lake for the church. Parks Director Chad Pohlmann and Program Coordinator Angie Breeden were on hand for the ceremony.

Previous Green Team projects include installing LED lights at Zion.

Source: https://www.emissourian.com/local_news/environmental-group-plants-new-tree-at-union-lake/article_1bbe2b0a-cb7f-11ea-87f3-a7ba2ace8c38.html