

Pastor Uses Olives to Bless Israel

An Oklahoma-based pastor and Bible teacher hopes to bolster Christian support for Israel by planting 1 million olive trees.

Curt Landry, founder of House of David Ministries in Fairland, Okla., launched My Olive Tree ([www.myolivetree.com](#)) in Israel to provide jobs for local residents while benefiting the Israeli economy. This fall, Landry will plant and dedicate some 2,000 olive trees in Israel, many in the region of ancient Gilgal.

Christians can give a “gift that keeps on giving-olive trees live for thousands of years,” Landry said.

The trees, which are sponsored for \$299 each, are cared for by an Israeli business, thus employing local business managers and professional olive-tree caretakers. The trees are expected to produce fruit for eating as well as for producing olive oil and even anointing oil, thereby reinvesting the donated trees back into the economy.

And, Landry notes, the program fulfills biblical prophecy. He said much of his ministry’s work in Israel-investing in individual communities-has been a way to “rebuild the ruined cities” so that people can lead decent lives here. But the olive tree program, he says, is essentially reaffirming Israel’s biblical claim to the land.

“It is a physical act that says, ‘We have faith and believe that you [Israel] have a right to exist, according to the Scriptures,’” Landry said. “In [Amos 9:15], it says the Jewish people have a right to live in the land. [Planting these trees] is an evangelical statement of solidarity with Israel.”

Landry is no stranger to the needs of Israel. For decades, he

has led tours to the Holy Land, and has supported a dental clinic and a special-needs school in Beit She'an in the Jordan Valley, as well as a community center in Sderot, the southern city daily bombarded by rockets from the Gaza Strip.

The decision to pursue an olive tree-planting program came after Landry consulted with Israel's agriculture department and assessed the benefit such a project would have on the nation.

Landry, an apple broker in Washington state for eight years, is vigilant about ensuring the quality of the trees. My Olive Tree provides intense irrigation and agricultural support for the first seven years, the most critical in the trees' growth, to help guarantee prosperous harvests.

"I'm concerned with leaving a witness in the land," Landry said. "I want to know they are planting trees with a high survival and productivity rate."

Landry's goal is to have planted 1 million trees by 2015, but the program couldn't be starting at a worse time. The downturn in the U.S. economy could threaten donations, and a severe drought in Israel jeopardizes proper irrigation of the crops. Landry said the ministry had to account in its budget for an increase in water taxes and prices in Israel.

"It is the worst time and best time-worst because of the economy and the weather, but the best time to bless Israel," Landry said. "This is a long-term project, and I hope to bless Israel until the Lord returns."

Nicole Schiavi in Israel