



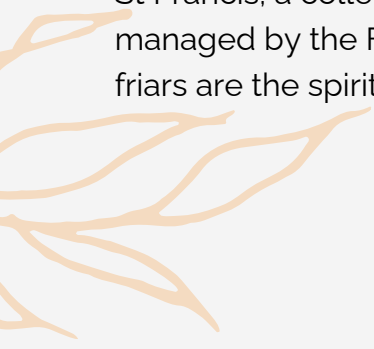
Assisi and the Chapel of St Francis

A new global meeting place in the spiritual hub of the Patron Saint of Ecology

The Global Foundation is helping to further elevate the international standing of the Italian town of Assisi, renowned as the birthplace of St Francis, as a global hub for sustainability and for activities which promote the Foundation's central theme of 'cooperative globalisation'. The centrepiece of the project involves the construction of a small chapel in the woods of the Hermitage of St Francis, which will serve as an icon for a whole program of artistic, cultural and policy-shaping activities in Assisi and its surrounds, also digitally, to make the spirit of St Francis more universally available. The Chapel in the Woods of Assisi will be a meeting place, a spiritual destination and a centre of activities, *witnessing* to the beauty of creation, *promoting* the quest for global peace and *supporting* pathways of sustainability to care for our common home.

The story of Assisi and the Chapel in the Woods of St Francis of Assisi

The setting is the Italian hill-town of Assisi, located in the region of Umbria, approximately two and a half hours from Rome. A place of beauty, spiritual power and a rich cultural history, Assisi is known for being the birthplace of Saint Francis of Assisi, the Patron Saint of Italy and Patron Saint of Ecology. St Francis, who lived from 1181-1226, was an extraordinary man, remembered for his deep humility, devotion to nature, and tireless advocacy of peace. He frequently retreated to pray and reflect in the woods and caves in the hills surrounding Assisi, which are today the location of the Hermitage of St Francis, a collection of modest stone buildings and outdoor chapels managed by the Franciscan friars, the order founded by St Francis. The friars are the spiritual custodians of Assisi and its surrounds.



2026 will mark the 800th anniversary of St Francis' death, an occasion for high profile activities and commemorations of national and international significance. It serves as the target date for the full launch of the Assisi project, including the official opening of the chapel in the woods.



St Francis, Patron Saint of Ecology

The Global Foundation and Assisi

For the past five years, the Global Foundation has enjoyed a special connection with Assisi, a city which shares many of the values and aspirations of the Foundation.

The connection began at one of the Foundation's global roundtable meetings, convened in Rome since 2014, including on occasions at the Vatican.

In Rome and through its networks, the Foundation was introduced to Professor Dr Stefania Proietti, the Mayor of Assisi. Professor Proietti encouraged the Global Foundation to consider using Assisi as a global meeting place as an alternative to major world capitals where global meetings would normally be convened. The intention of the mayor was to elevate Assisi to an even higher standard of international recognition as a special place where meetings of high purpose could occur, influenced by the spirit of St Francis.



Dr Stefania Proietti signs the Assisi Accord, 2022

Dr Mark Cutifani CBE, Chair of the Foundation's Global Advisory Council, Assisi Town Hall, 2022

The Foundation accepted the mayor's invitation and began convening meetings in Assisi, the most prominent of which took place in May 2022, when 50 invited participants from across the world, coming from diverse professional, social, political and religious backgrounds, met and forged the Assisi Accord, an ongoing agreement to harness global finance to incentivise investment in climate change action.



The Assisi Accord, 2022

Then, in early 2023, the mayor of Assisi introduced the Franciscan friars of Assisi to the Foundation, with a simple, yet momentous proposal: to help the friars to build a new chapel in the woods of the Hermitage that could be used year-round for religious and wider purposes. The idea dovetailed neatly with the existing and proposed plans for Assisi, such that the chapel would become central to a whole array of broader activities of arts, culture, and policy-shaping in Assisi and its

surrounding region, and also digitally, to fulfill the mayor's aspiration of elevating Assisi to become a go-to centre for global sustainability and cooperative globalisation.

Why Assisi?

It is the conviction of the Global Foundation that place matters, as does the involvement of talented and committed people from many diverse backgrounds, in considering solutions to some of the most pressing issues facing our planet. The values, culture and history of a place affect the mood of meetings and other activities that are held there. Today, Assisi is already a renowned global destination for visitors from many faith and other backgrounds, certainly for those who share the Franciscan message of peace and care for nature. The city also has a rich history of art and architecture and is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

As a city that places peace and sustainability at the centre of its values, Assisi is an ideal hub for the intimate, high-level global discussions convened by the Global Foundation. Convening discussions in Assisi influences the outcomes of those discussions in ways that would not happen in major capital cities. Put simply, Assisi changes people.

The new chapel and other local venues in Assisi are now imagined as meeting places that will elevate Assisi as a global hub for sustainability and ecology.



Secretary General, Steve Howard and Franciscan Friars in Assisi, 2023

Details

Fundraising committee

The Australian fundraising committee, appointed by the Board of the Global Foundation, comprises distinguished Australians:



Mr Anthony Shepherd AO
Chairman, Fundraising Committee



Ms Louise Watson
Chairman of the Board, the Global Foundation



Ms Christine Christian AO
President, State Library of Victoria



Sister Adele Howard RSM OAM
Advisor, Eco-Theology and Communications

Additionally, the Foundation is establishing a cultural advisory committee for the project, comprising Italian and international supporters, who are providing further artistic and cultural guidance on the development of the project.



Chapel location, 2023

Location of the Chapel

The Hermitage of St Francis, or Eremo delle Carceri in Italian, is located in an enclave in the woods four kilometres outside of Assisi.



St Francis and St Clare with birds and animals, painting by Giotto di Bondone

Home to the sacred caves where St Francis retreated to pray, it is a place of beauty and spiritual power. It contains several outdoor chapels spread throughout the woods where St Francis talked to the birds and animals, and studied the stars. The Hermitage is now visitable by Franciscan friars [see here].

However, the Hermitage site, nestled in a national park, is ecologically fragile, and, although current visitation is open and free, as the friars prefer it, there are practical limits to the number of visitors who would be able to visit the site as it becomes more popular.

A very important practical consideration for the friars and for the city will be to manage access to the Hermitage in the future, taking into account the constraints of the site.

Project activities

The centrepiece of the Foundation's project is the construction of a modest chapel in the woods of the Hermitage of St Francis of Assisi, which will accommodate 70 people for religious and wider purposes.

Additional ideas for the Assisi project, which are being developed in collaboration with artistic and cultural experts and local stakeholders, include:

- collaborating with other existing heritage venues in Assisi, for high-level global meetings, as well as artistic and cultural events
- spiritual retreats in the area, extending beyond the current patterns
- a digital map of the sites of Assisi connected to the history of St Francis and to other spiritual places of global significance
- the possibility of organising larger, recurring cultural events with international appeal, utilising various sites and venues in Assisi, along with the chapel on special occasions.

The spirituality and symbolic ideals of St Francis are imagined as the thread connecting each of these activities.

Design of the chapel

The vision of the friars is to build a simple chapel in harmony with the natural surroundings, in honour of the tradition St Francis and his deep respect for the Earth. A beautiful design has been prepared by distinguished architects from the University of Florence using



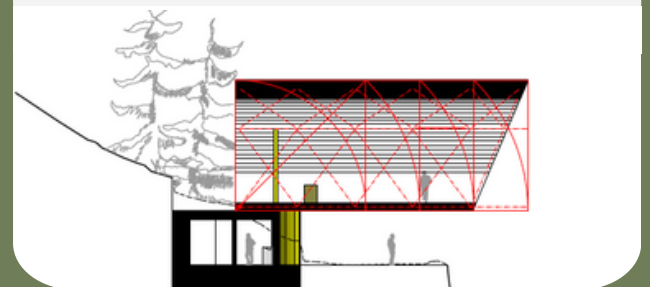
The Hermitage of St Francis, Assisi (Eremo delle Carceri)

sustainable materials and design principles. In the words of the architects, it is a design that defies gravity and uplifts the soul, a shelter among the branches. The chapel will accommodate only 70 people in various, flexible configurations.

A detailed overview of the location, cultural significance, and artistic design of the project can be found in [this video](#).



Architects design of the chapel



Why donate?

This is a unique opportunity to contribute to the development of Assisi as a global hub of sustainability and peace in the spirit of St Francis, with celebrations of spirituality, art, history and architecture, and also to support high-level global meetings that will encourage notable agreements on climate, nature and cooperative globalisation.

Your donation will also contribute towards a wider project of positioning Assisi as a global hub of sustainability and cooperative globalisation, and digital efforts to bring the chapel and the message it symbolises to people around the world.

Donations in Australia are fully tax deductible. The Global Foundation enjoys the highest possible tax-deductible status (DGR) in Australia due to a special Act of Parliament. The funds will be overseen by the Board of the Global Foundation.

Donors will be acknowledged in Assisi and invited to visit Assisi and the chapel and given the opportunity to participate in future meetings and events held in Assisi, including those co-ordinated by the Global Foundation.

Who we are

Founded by eminent Australians in 1998, the Global Foundation is a not-for-profit and non-partisan international organisation whose primary purpose is to unite prominent citizens of the world to discuss the most pressing global issues, find alignment, and work together to shape the global common good.

The Global Foundation comprises some of the world's most prominent business, union, academic, faith and civil society leaders. The Governor General of Australia is its Patron in Chief. Its Secretary General, Steve Howard, is supported by a small secretariat based in Melbourne, Australia.

More information about the composition and work of the Global Foundation may be found [here](#). For more information contact: willow.osborne-rigby@globalfoundation.org.au

