



# Tree Equity

---

All Aboard Matthew 25



How these

**1930s MAPS**

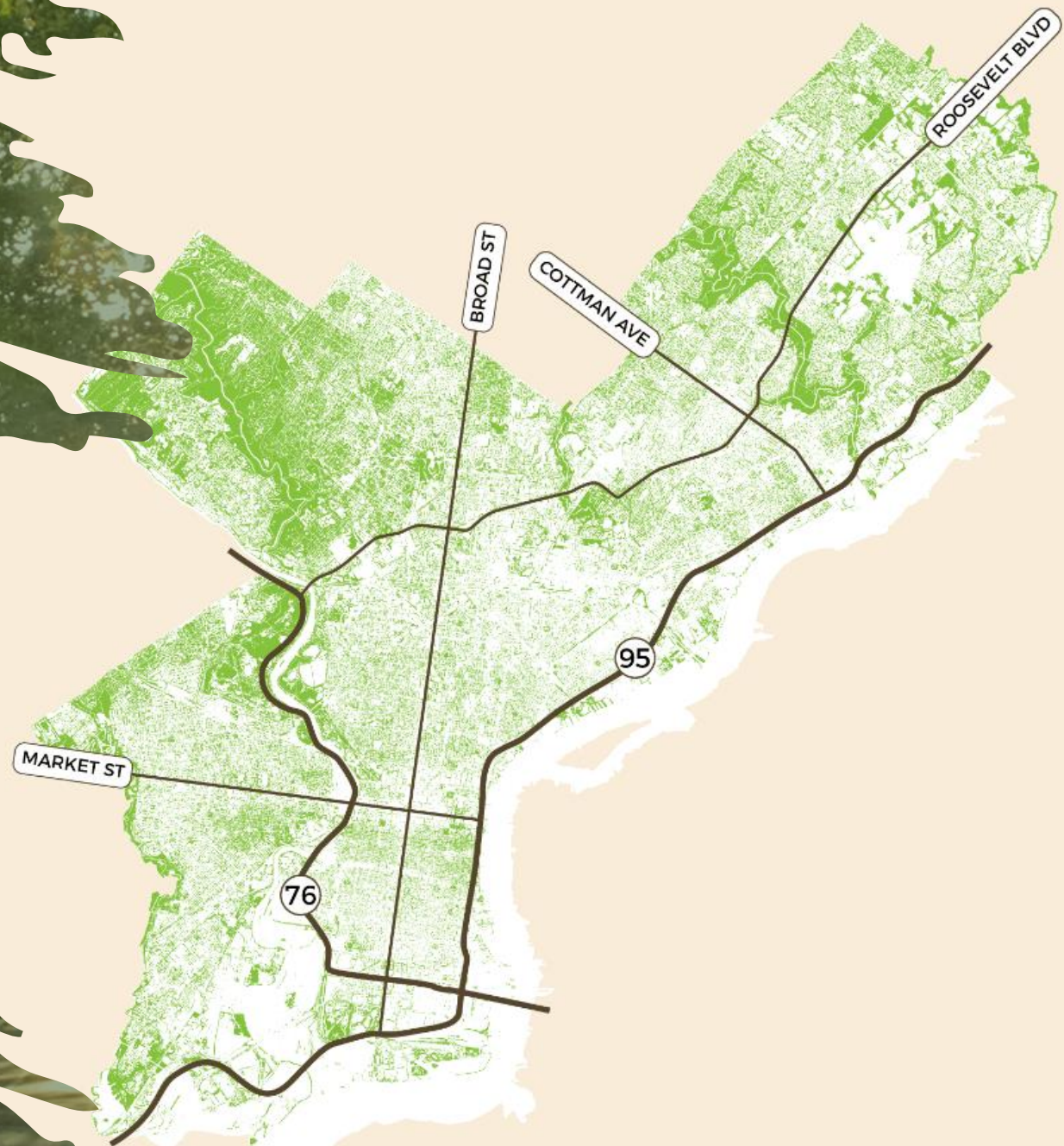
left neighborhoods with

**FEWER TREES**

NAT GEO  
**EXPLORES**

# Philly's Tree Canopy is Uneven

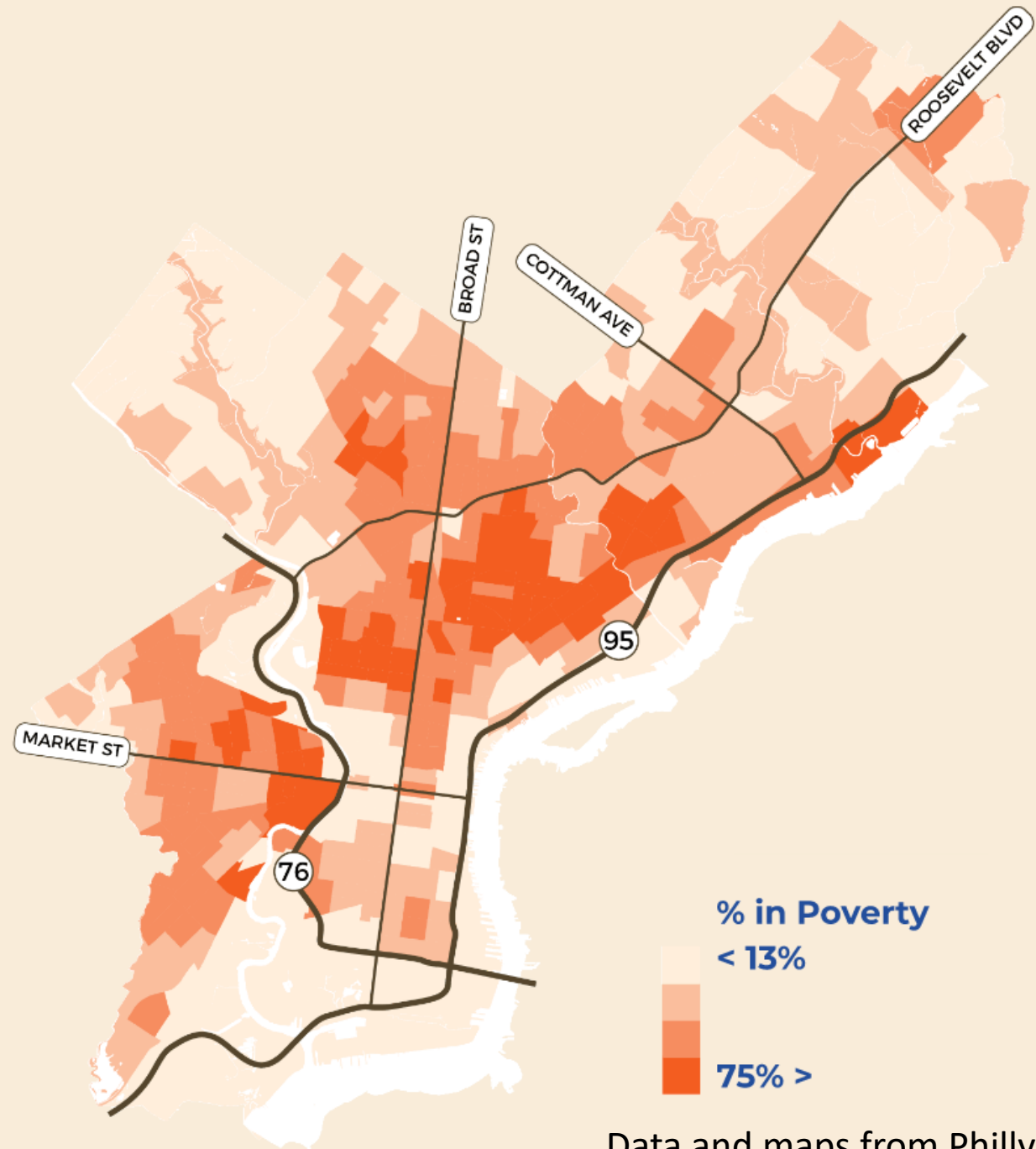
But how so? And why?



Data and maps from Philly Tree Plan

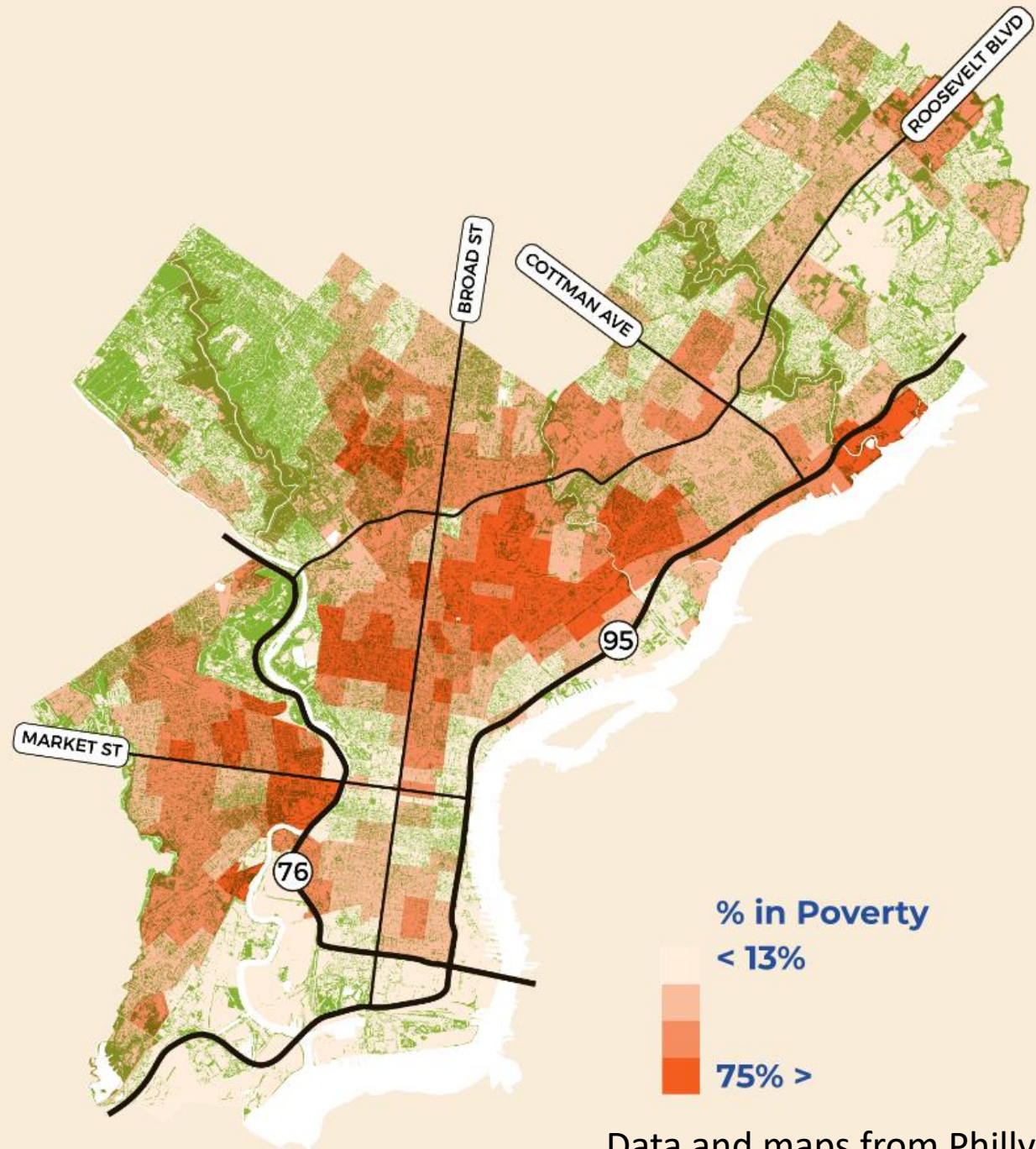
# The Patterns

**There are fewer trees where there is more poverty**



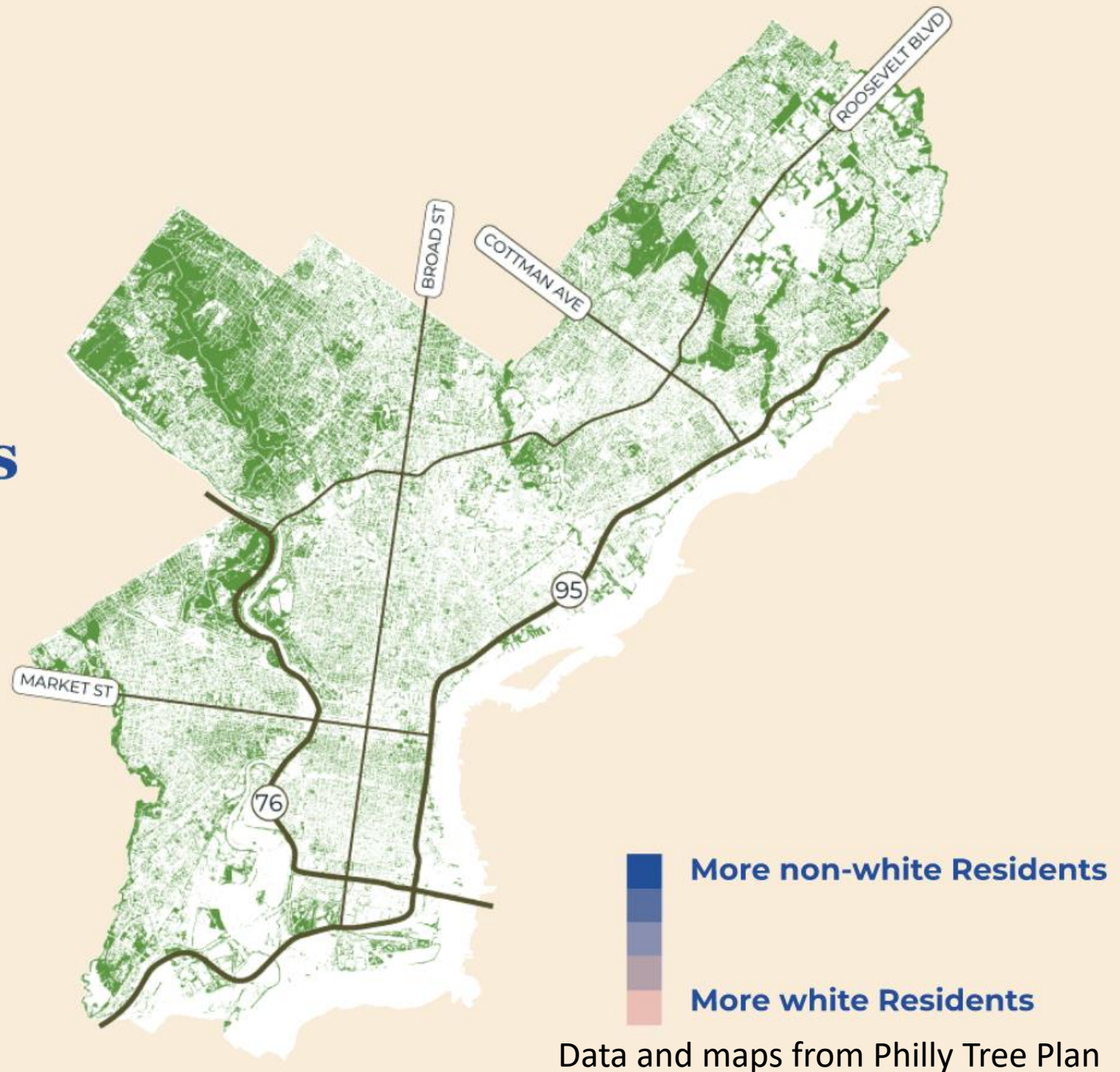
# The Patterns

**There are fewer trees where there is more poverty**



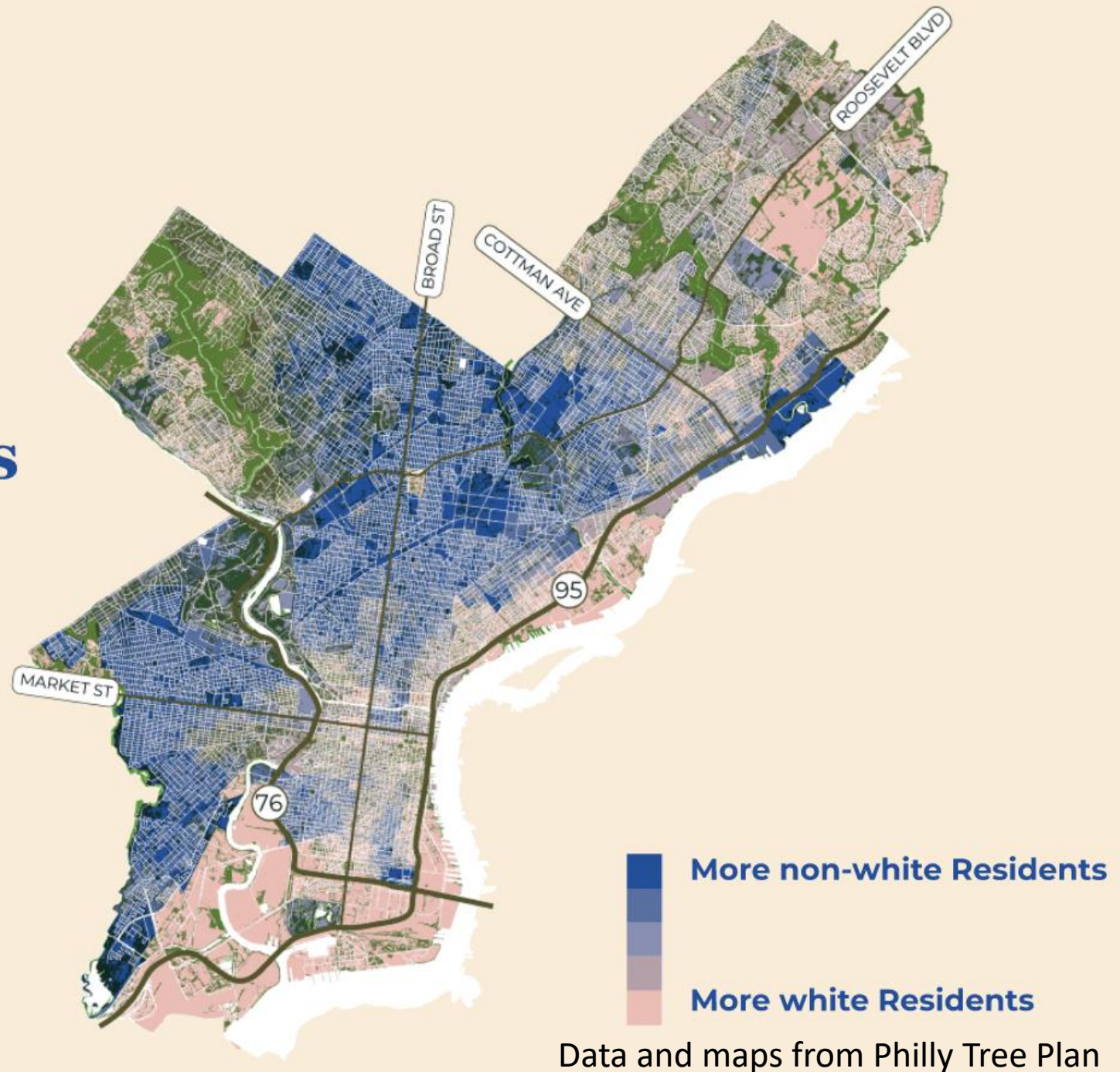
# The Patterns

**There are fewer trees in Black and Brown neighborhoods**



# The Patterns

**There are fewer trees in Black and Brown neighborhoods**



# What are some of the reasons for these patterns?

- Development Patterns
- Barriers for Renters
- Budget and Service Cuts
- Redlining



# Development Patterns

- Neighborhoods planned around industry were planned for population density, not trees

# Barriers for Renters

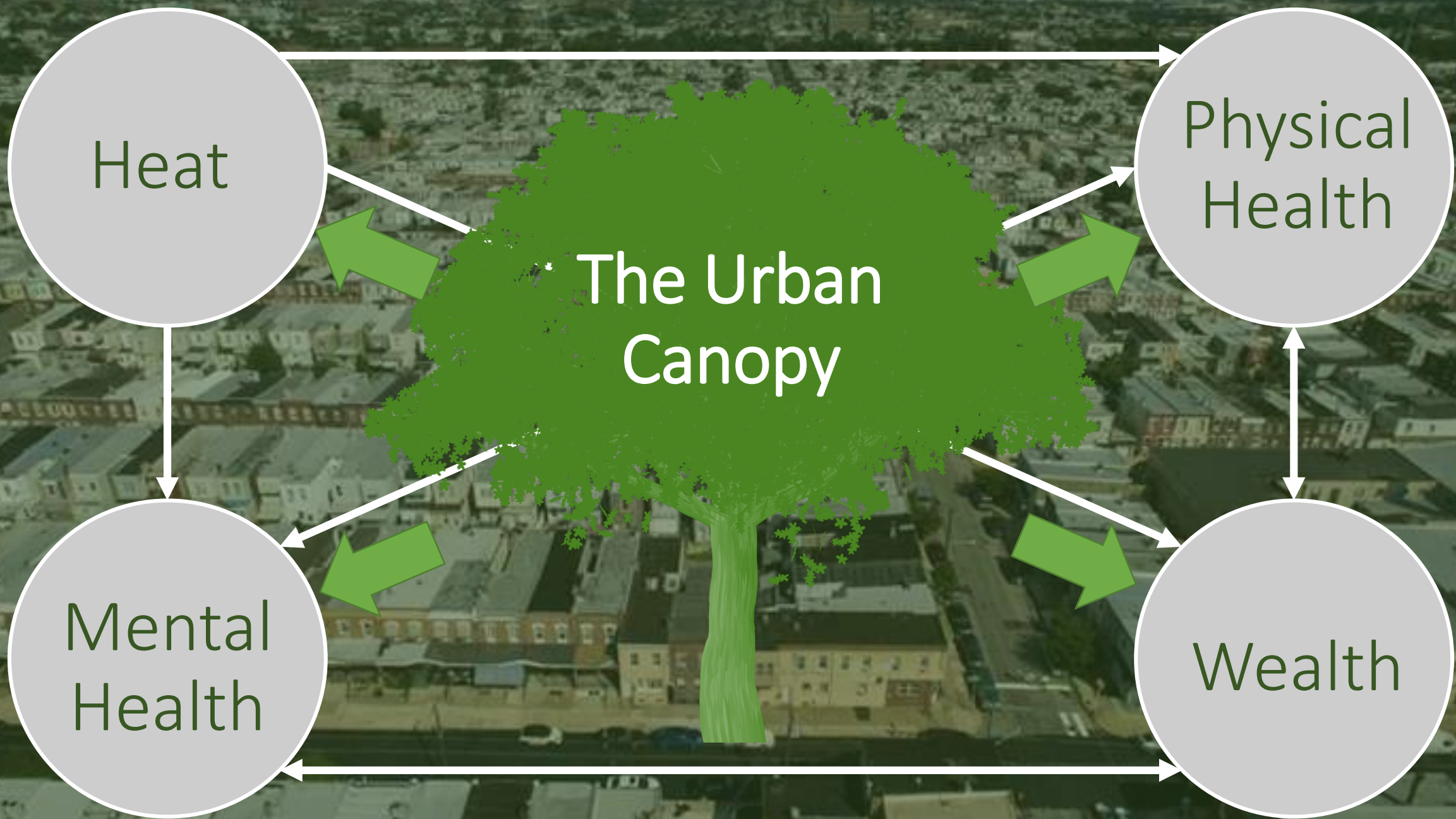
- Only property owners can request trees in Philadelphia
- Tree maintenance responsibilities fall on homeowners
  - Private contractors
  - Volunteer organizations
- Renters are disproportionately people of color

# Redlining (1933-1968) and it's legacy

- Racialized planning practices intensify segregation of housing and prevented families of color and immigrant families from building wealth
  - Making this a race-class issue, not just a class issue
- Impacts across generations

# Budget and Service Cuts

- White Flight (1950s-80s)
- Budget cuts in Black and Brown communities resulted in poor maintenance of parks and vacant land and low planting rates for new trees



A photograph of a city street lined with brick buildings and mature trees. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking down the street. The trees are lush and green, creating a canopy over the road. Several cars are parked along the right side of the street, and a few people are visible on the sidewalk on the left. The overall atmosphere is bright and sunny, with dappled light on the pavement. A semi-transparent green box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text "30% Tree Canopy" in white.

30% Tree Canopy

A photograph of a church with a prominent steeple, partially obscured by large, leafy trees. In the foreground, a cemetery with numerous gravestones is visible on a grassy area. The scene is captured in bright daylight with clear shadows.

# Our Calling

---

As a Matthew 25 Church

As Christians

As Neighbors

# Our Commitment as a Matthew 25 Church

To fight structural racism and its intersection with poverty.

- Structural racism = generations of policies and practices that teach racist ideas and/or enable people in positions of power to discriminate based on race
- Poverty = not having enough material possessions or income for a person's basic needs
- The intersection = people of color are twice as likely to experience poverty



# Our Commitment as a Matthew 25 Church

Our environment and our ability to meet our needs are inextricably linked.

People with the power to decide how we shape our environment have discriminated against people of color by not planning for trees in every neighborhood. This is environmental racism, a type of structural racism.

Trees are a Matthew 25 issue.

# Christ as our model for action

- “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’” – Matthew 25: 43-36

# What is Advocacy?

Advocacy: the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal

Advocacy comes in many different forms and no act of advocacy is too small



# Educate yourself!

Congrats you've already started this process!

- Information station has helpful handouts with more about tree equity, environmental racism, and PCUSA's work in this area
- Seek out programming
- Read PCUSA's Ecumenical Study Guide on Environmental Racism

# Volunteer!

- Become a member of the Tree Tenders Program through the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society



# Donate!

- Support advocacy groups locally, in Pennsylvania and nationally



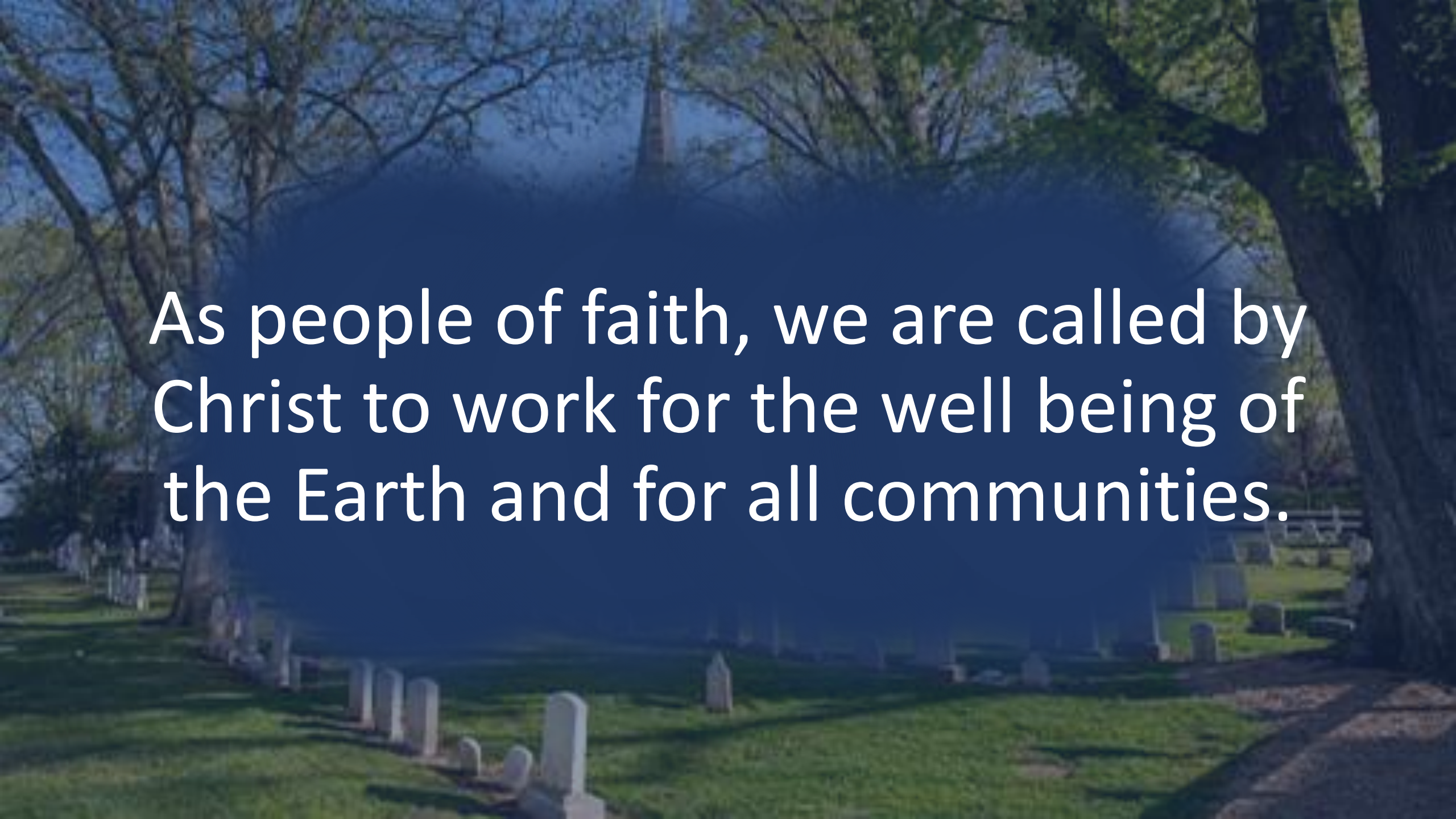
# Take it to your lawmakers!

- Think local: find your legislators, send emails, call, write letters or make an appointment at their office
- Educate yourself about legislation that is pending:
  - \$50 billion dollars set aside in the current infrastructure and budget reconciliation bills to save existing forests and bring back degraded or destroyed forests, including the urban forests

# Connect with other faith-based organizations to work collaboratively for change!

- Seek out opportunities through PCUSA
- Connect to other Matthew 25 churches around tree equity and other environmental justice issues
- Partner with congregations in neighborhoods with low tree equity scores



A photograph of a cemetery with various gravestones in the foreground and a church steeple visible in the background. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue rectangle. Centered within this rectangle is white text.

As people of faith, we are called by  
Christ to work for the well being of  
the Earth and for all communities.

A photograph of a cemetery with various gravestones and large trees. A large, semi-transparent blue rectangle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text "Questions?".

Questions?