

## Northwestern Minnesota Synod 2023 Resolution on Care for Creation

WHEREAS care for creation is deeply rooted in the biblical witness—humanity created in God’s loving image (see Gen. 1:27) and given essential responsibility to serve and preserve the earth and all that dwells therein (see Gen. 2:15; 9:8ff); and

WHEREAS we are called in faith as Jesus’ disciples and as the church to love “your neighbor as yourself” (see Lk. 10:27; Jn. 13:34) as did Christ who gave himself for us (see Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:1-2; Titus 2:14) and for the sake of the world (see Jn. 3:16-17; Rom. 8:19-21; Col. 1:20); and

WHEREAS, the 1993 ELCA Social Statement Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice affirms that "we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;" and recognizes that "action to counter [earth’s] degradation....is essential to the future of our children and our children's children;" and declares that "each congregation should see itself as a center for exploring scriptural and theological foundations for caring for creation;" and that "as congregations and other expressions of this church, we will seek to incorporate the principles of sufficiency and sustainability in our life"; and

WHEREAS, the 1999 ELCA Social Statement Economic Life: Sufficient Sustainable Livelihood for All recognizes that "the growth of economic activity during the twentieth century, and the industrialization and consumerism that fueled it, radically changed the relationship between humans and the earth. Too often the earth has been treated as a waste receptacle and a limitless storehouse of raw materials to be used up for the sake of economic growth, rather than as a finite, fragile ecological system upon which human and all other life depends"; and

WHEREAS the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), meeting in Churchwide Assembly 2022, reaffirmed “the commitment of this church to engage in creation care and advocacy based on the principles of sufficiency, sustainability, participation, and solidarity,” and encouraged “congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops to commit themselves to education about the urgency of the climate emergency,<sup>1</sup> the global opportunities of a just transition [away from greenhouse gasses],<sup>2</sup> and to lift up loving our neighbor in response to

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC, 2021: Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) [MassonDelmotte, V., et al (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press. See also the AR6 Synthesis Report of the IPCC, publ. March 19, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> “Just transition” is the transition to a net-zero carbon sustainable, resilient world without leaving stranded individuals or communities...Knowing that climate change impacts marginalized and vulnerable people the most, we must commit to actions that leave no one

the climate emergency in their preaching [teaching, and Christian witness]”; and

WHEREAS as individuals, congregations, and as a synod of the ELCA, we have the shared calling and opportunity to model the kind of care for creation we would like to see in the world; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Northwestern Minnesota Synod in assembly strongly encourage all congregations of the synod to accept their responsibility to be stewards of the earth, and pledge to grow faithfully and intentionally in this responsibility as individuals and as anticipatory communities<sup>3</sup> within the synod by:

- Worshiping in ways that celebrate and foster care for creation,
- Educating adults and children about biblical and theological foundations for creation care, about ecological issues and community practices,
- Improving energy conservation efforts in church buildings and on their grounds,
- Promoting earth-friendly practices of members at home and work,
- Demonstrating care for creation in their local communities, and
- Advocating for energy policies at the state and national levels that will foster cleaner, renewable, and more efficient energy use in all sectors of society; and be it further

RESOLVED that the synod council appoint a Creation Care Task Force to provide leadership and oversight of this pledge and to work with partnering groups (e.g., Arbor Day Foundation, Blessed Tomorrow, Center for Climate Justice and Faith, Citizens’ Climate Lobby, ecoAmerica, EcoFaith Network of Minnesota Synods, Honor the Earth, Land Stewardship Project, Lutheran Advocacy-Minnesota, Lutherans Restoring Creation, Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, The Nature Conservancy, University of Minnesota Extension, and others) for its fulfillment.

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behind. In our efforts to protect God’s good creation, we will not exclude voices, because doing so would only mirror and deepen existing racial, gender and economic inequalities. (from the ELCA Advocacy document “Just Transition to a Sustainable Future” March 2021, pp. 1, 7)

<sup>3</sup> “Anticipatory communities” may be defined as “home places [e.g., families, neighborhoods, schools, churches, etc.] where it is possible to reimagine worlds, and reorder possibilities, places where new or renewed practices give focus to an ecological and [adaptively sustainable] way of life. Such communities have the qualities of a haven, a set-apart and safe place yet a place open to creative risk. Here basic moral formation happens by conscious choice and not by default... Here eco-social virtues are consciously cultivated and embodied in community practices.” (from *Earth-honoring Faith: Religious Ethics in a New Key* by Larry L. Rasmussen, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 227, 224, 124).