

## **Memorial Calling the ELCA To Reduce Its Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 50% by 2030**

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to “take care of [creation]” (Genesis 2:15); and

WHEREAS, Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice, calls us, “as congregations and other expressions of this church...to incorporate the principles of sufficiency and sustainability in our life” and that “we will, in our budgeting and investment of church funds, demonstrate our care for creation”<sup>1</sup>; and

WHEREAS, “the global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust”<sup>2</sup> ; and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences of climate change, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees; and

WHEREAS, to have a realistic chance of meeting the goal of not exceeding 1.5 degrees of warming we need at least a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and equitable net zero emissions by 2050<sup>3</sup>; and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degrees celsius since pre-industrial times, causing record-smashing wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss<sup>4</sup>; and

WHEREAS, climate change is already leading to the destruction and displacement of people’s homes, food sources, and well-being (especially people already impacted by poverty). According to Bread for the World, “nearly 175 million people in developing countries have been displaced by climate-induced disasters since 2008”<sup>5</sup>; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous, Black, People of Color and communities impacted by poverty have contributed the least to climate change and are the most impacted by it<sup>6</sup>; and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has sought to respond to world hunger, poverty, and refugee resettlement through ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services; and

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<sup>1</sup> 1993 ELCA Social Statement Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice

<sup>2</sup> Earth Charter (adopted at the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly), full text which was endorsed can be found at: <https://earthcharter.org/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/cut-global-emissions-76-percent-every-year-next-decade-meet-15degc>

<sup>4</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 [MassonDelmotte, V., P. Zhai, A. Pirani, S.L. Connors, C. Péan, S. Berger, N. Caud, Y. Chen, L. Goldfarb, M.I. Gomis, M. Huang, K. Leitzell, E. Lonnoy, J.B.R. Matthews, T.K. Maycock, T. Waterfield, O. Yelekçi, R. Yu, and B. Zhou (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press. In Press.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bread.org/climate-change>

<sup>6</sup> <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/>

WHEREAS, Christian climate scientist Katherine Hayhoe says our collective responsibility on climate action is to, “add your hand to that boulder, get it rolling just a little bit faster down the hill and the faster it goes, the more we look around and we see other people beside us pushing in the same direction, the more that gives us hope. Taking that first little step is so important”<sup>7</sup>; and

WHEREAS, reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the ELCA will save financial resources in the long term that can be used instead for mission; therefore, be it,

**RESOLVED**, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, across all three expressions, set the goal of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030 and 100% by 2050; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that in partnership with ELCA colleges and universities churchwide will create a tool to calculate the total greenhouse gas emissions from both churchwide as well as the rest of the ELCA; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that ELCA Churchwide will reduce its greenhouse gasses by 2030, or sooner, by making the necessary energy efficiency improvements to their building, sourcing electricity from clean sources, incentivizing the electrification of the vehicles they reimburse mileage for, and working on partnerships to offset emissions generated from flights with providers of righteous offsets; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that ELCA Churchwide will support congregations and synods reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by creating a Energy Stewardship Loan Fund that will provide loans to congregations and synods as they reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by making energy efficiency improvements, electrifying gas powered equipment, and installing solar panels; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that ELCA Churchwide will support congregations in communities of color, communities impacted by poverty, and communities that have historically borne the brunt of pollution and climate change by creating an Energy Stewardship Grant Fund that will provide grants to these congregations so they can reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by making energy efficiency improvements, electrifying gas powered equipment, and installing solar panels; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that ELCA Churchwide will provide staffing and other resources to assist congregations and synods on how to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions; and be it further

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/stories/every-action-matters-a-qa-with-climate-scientist-katharine-hayhoe/>

**RESOLVED**, that ELCA Churchwide will provide a report to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly and subsequent assemblies, assessing the progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and evaluating if a more aggressive greenhouse gas reduction target should be set.