

Memorial Calling for A Just Transition to 50% Reduction in US Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2030

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to love “your neighbors as yourselves” (see Luke 10:27); and

WHEREAS, “made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth”¹; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge that Indigenous Peoples, whose ancestors originally cared for the land that feeds us, make up less than 5% of the global population and protect over 80% of the biodiversity² that sustains us all; 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”³; 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, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degree since pre-industrial times, causing record-smashing wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss⁴; and

WHEREAS, climate change is already leading to the destruction and displacement of people’s homes, food sources, and well-being (leading to at least 30.7 million climate displaced persons in 2020 according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC))⁵; 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 it⁶; and

WHEREAS, the United States has contributed more greenhouse gas to the atmosphere historically than any other country⁷; and

¹ 1993 ELCA Social Statement Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice

² <https://www.wri.org/insights/numbers-indigenous-and-community-land-rights>

³ Earth Charter (adopted at the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly), full text which was endorsed can be found at: <https://earthcharter.org/>

⁴ 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.

⁵ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2021/>

⁶ <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/>

⁷ <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-which-countries-are-historically-responsible-for-climate-change>

WHEREAS, we have a realistic chance of meeting the goal of not exceeding 1.5 degrees of warming if the United States reaches at least a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and equitable net zero emissions by 2050⁸; and

WHEREAS, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030 the United States will need a World War II sized mobilization that includes government investment, public-private partnerships, binding emission reduction targets, and possibly a carbon fee and dividend; and

WHEREAS, a just transition from a fossil-fuel based economy will lead to better health⁹, family-sustaining jobs¹⁰, clean air and water for communities historically left behind, and a safer, more sustainable future for our children and future generations; therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, that the Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that the ELCA churchwide continues to call the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that ELCA churchwide will continue to equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that churchwide encourages congregations and synods to advocate, for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses where at least 40% of the funding goes towards projects that directly benefit Indigenous, Black, People of Color, and communities impacted by poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregants, rostered leaders, and bishops be encouraged to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that rostered leaders and bishops will be encouraged to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching at least once a month; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA will encourage the work of organizations that share these values like the Ethnic Specific Ministry Associations, Lutherans Restoring Creation, ecoAmerica's

⁸<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/cut-global-emissions-76-percent-every-year-next-decade-meet-15degc>

⁹ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/cop24-special-report-health-climate-change>

¹⁰ <https://newclimateeconomy.report/>

Blessed Tomorrow, ACT Alliance, GreenFaith, The Sunrise Movement, Hip Hop Caucus, 350.org, Dream Corps, Green the Church, Poor People's Campaign, America is All In, US Climate Action Network, NAACP, Citizens Climate Lobby, Third Act, World Resources Institute; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the ELCA churchwide will support these actions through investments in education, tools and resources that equip congregations and Synods to accomplish this goal and leverage knowledge, skills and experience across the church.

Endorsements:

Grace Lutheran Church (Kenosha) 10/31/21

South Conference of the Greater Milwaukee Synod, 2-17-22