

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, “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”²; 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 Celsius degrees; and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 Celsius degree since pre-industrial times, causing record-smashing wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss³; 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))⁴; 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 it⁵; and

WHEREAS, the United States has contributed more greenhouse gas to the atmosphere historically than any other country⁶; and

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

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

³ 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.

⁴ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2021/>

⁵ <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/>

⁶ <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-which-countries-are-historically-responsible-for-climate-change>

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 health⁷, family- sustaining jobs⁸, 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 Oregon Synod memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that The Churchwide Organization continues to call upon the leadership of 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 The Churchwide Organization 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 The Churchwide Organization encourages congregations and synods to advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses where at least 40% of public 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 The Churchwide Organization will support these actions through continuing its investments in staff, education, tools and resources that equip congregations and Synods to accomplish this goal and leverage knowledge, skills and experience across the church; 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 and teaching; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Synod and The Churchwide Organization will encourage and cooperate with Lutherans Restoring Creation and other faith-based and secular organizations that share our commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.⁹

⁷ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/cop24-special-report-health-climate-change>

⁸ <https://newclimateeconomy.report/>

⁹ For suggested organizations to connect with in doing this work please visit:

<https://lutheransrestoringcreation.org/actions-for-a-just-transition-to-a-healthier-climate-for-all/>

The Memorial is Submitted to the Oregon Synod for consideration at its May 13- 15, 2022, Assembly. It is placed on the agenda by the following Oregon Synod congregations, committees and rostered leaders:

Central Lutheran Church Council; Central Lutheran Church Social Justice Committee; Deacon Bonnie Beadles-Bohling and Rev. Dr. Amanda Zentz-Alo; Portland Oregon.

Spirit of Grace and Rev. Robyn Hartwig; Beaverton, Oregon.

St. Andrew Lutheran Church Earth Care Team; Beaverton, Oregon.

Rev. Dave Brauer-Rieke and Sarah Kruger, Lutheran Disaster Response Region 1 Program Managers.