

The following Memorial to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly was considered by the Erie Conference at their Spring Meeting and adopted. The Memorial was sent to the NWPAC Committee on Reference and Counsel for determination. The Committee reviewed and edited the Memorial and brings the Memorial to the NWPAC Synod Assembly for consideration.

### **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”<sup>1</sup>; 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 biodiversity<sup>2</sup> 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”<sup>3</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, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degree 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 (leading to at least 30.7 million climate displaced persons in 2020 according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC))<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,

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

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wri.org/insights/numbers-indigenous-and-community-land-rights> and <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/biodiversitys-greatest-protectors-need-protection/>

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

<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 [Masson-Delmotte, 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.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2021/>

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

WHEREAS, the United States has contributed more greenhouse gas to the atmosphere historically than any other country<sup>7</sup>; and,

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 2050<sup>8</sup>; 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 health<sup>9</sup>, family-sustaining jobs<sup>10</sup>, 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 Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that the appropriate ELCA churchwide offices and units continue 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 appropriate ELCA churchwide offices and units 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 appropriate ELCA churchwide offices and units encourage 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 the appropriate ELCA churchwide offices and units will support these actions through 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

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

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

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

<sup>10</sup> <https://newclimateeconomy.report/>

**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 Synods~~ and the appropriate ELCA churchwide offices and units 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.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 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/>