

Memorial 2022-2 Calling for A Just Transition to 50% Reduction in US Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2030

1 WHEREAS, our faith commands us to love “your neighbors as yourselves” (see Luke 10:27); and
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3 WHEREAS, “made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the
4 earth”¹; and
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6 WHEREAS, we acknowledge that Indigenous Peoples, whose ancestors originally cared for the
7 land that feeds us, make up less than 5% of the global population and protect over 80% of the
8 biodiversity² that sustains us all; and
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10 WHEREAS, “the global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples.
11 The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust”³; and
12
13 WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to
14 avoid catastrophic consequences of climate change, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5
15 degrees; and
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17 WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degree since pre-industrial times, causing record-
18 smashing wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss⁴; and
19
20 WHEREAS, climate change is already leading to the destruction and displacement of people’s
21 homes, food sources, and well-being (leading to at least 30.7 million climate displaced persons
22 in 2020 according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC))⁵; and
23
24 WHEREAS, Indigenous, Black, People of Color and communities impacted by poverty have
25 contributed the least to climate change and are the most impacted by it⁶; and
26
27 WHEREAS, the United States has contributed more greenhouse gas to the atmosphere
28 historically than any other country⁷; and
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¹ 1993 ELCA Social Statement Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice

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

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>

30 WHEREAS, we have a realistic chance of meeting the goal of not exceeding 1.5 degrees of
31 warming if the United States reaches at least a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by
32 2030 and equitable net zero emissions by 2050⁸; and

33
34 WHEREAS, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030 the United States will
35 need a World War II sized mobilization that includes government investment, public-private
36 partnerships, binding emission reduction targets, and possibly a carbon fee and dividend; and

37
38 WHEREAS, a just transition from a fossil-fuel based economy will lead to better health⁹, family-
39 sustaining jobs¹⁰, clean air and water for communities historically left behind, and a safer, more
40 sustainable future for our children and future generations; therefore, be it,

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42 **RESOLVED**, that the Saint Paul Area Synod, in assembly, May 13-14, 2022, memorialize the 2022
43 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that the ELCA churchwide
44 continues to call upon the leadership of the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse
45 gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable
46 sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

47
48 **RESOLVED**, that ELCA churchwide will continue to equip and encourage congregations, synods,
49 and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse
50 gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable
51 sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

52
53 **RESOLVED**, that churchwide encourages congregations and synods to advocate, for a just
54 transition away from greenhouse gasses where at least 40% of the funding goes towards
55 projects that directly benefit Indigenous, Black, People of Color, and communities impacted by
56 poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it
57 further

58
59 **RESOLVED**, that the ELCA Churchwide will support these actions through investments in staff,
60 education, tools and resources that equip congregations and Synods to accomplish this goal
61 and leverage knowledge, skills and experience across the church

62
63 **RESOLVED**, that congregants, rostered leaders, and bishops be encouraged to further educate
64 themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the
65 local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

66
67 **RESOLVED**, that the Synod and ELCA churchwide will encourage and cooperate with Lutherans

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/>

68 Restoring Creation and other faith-based and secular organizations that share our commitment
69 to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.¹¹

Submitted by: North Central Conference of the Saint Paul Area Synod

Endorsed by the Saint Paul Area Synod Care of Creation work group, January 4, 2022

Officially endorsed by the Lutherans Restoring Creation Board on December 18, 2021.

Because this memorial is consistent with the governing documents of the ELCA and addresses an issue of general concern to the Saint Paul Area Synod, the Reference and Counsel Committee recommends adoption of this memorial.

¹¹ 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/>