

**Memorial Calling for A Just Transition to 50% Reduction
in US Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2030
(from EcoFaith Network, supported by Heartland Conference)**

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to love “(our) neighbors as (our)selves” [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 Northeastern Minnesota Synod has in its 2008 assembly established a synod creation care task force (now called EcoFaith Network) and “pledged to grow ... as individuals and congregations within the synod by:

- Worshiping in ways that celebrate and foster care for creation,
- Educating adults and children about ecological issues and energy conservation,
- Improving energy conservation efforts in church buildings and on their grounds,
- Promoting earth-friendly practices of members at home and work,
- Demonstrating the care of creation in their communities, and
- Advocating for energy policies at the state and national levels that will foster cleaner, renewable, and more efficient energy use in all sectors of society,” [Synod Assembly Resolution 08-01]; and

WHEREAS, the Northeastern Minnesota Synod in its 2009 assembly strongly urged “all of its member congregations to actively engage in reducing their carbon footprints,” conduct energy audits “for all church owned properties,” and form congregation creation care teams, [Synod Assembly Resolution 09-08]; and

WHEREAS, the Northeastern Minnesota Synod in its 2014 assembly recognized “Creation Care as integral to each faith practice, lived out in worship, service, study, and witness as a vital component of the church’s identity and vocation today,” [Synod Assembly Resolution 14-2]; 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> 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/>

WHEREAS, the Northeastern Minnesota Synod in its 2017 assembly established Together Here Ministries and committed itself to “intercultural resources, educational opportunities, and strategic initiatives so that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod might join in the work to bridge cultural divides between Native and non-Native residents in our congregations and communities,” [Synod Assembly Resolution 17-1]; 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 [centigrade]; and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degree [centigrade] 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

WHEREAS, we have a realistic chance of meeting the goal of not exceeding 1.5 degrees [centigrade] 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

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>

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>

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, meeting in assembly, memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that the ELCA churchwide 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 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 the ELCA Churchwide 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 ELCA Churchwide 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

RESOLVED, that congregants, synod authorized ministers, rostered ministers, 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 synod authorized ministers, rostered ministers, 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 ELCA Churchwide 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.¹¹

¹⁰ <https://newclimateeconomy.report/>

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/>