

Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, Justice

The ELCA Statement on environment

Summary

- **Major Theme:**

Human beings are called to care for the creation because we are full participants in the creation itself. The way we are to participate should imitate the way God cares for the creation--as a servant king. Rooted in the vision of God's care for creation while troubled by signs of sin and yet empowered by the hope of creation's fulfillment, the statement calls people of faith to carry out a calling to care for creation guided by principles of justice. This involves:

- honoring the integrity of creation
- striving for fairness within the human community

- **The title *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice* summarizes the statement:**

- *Caring* implies keeping, loving the creation, living wisely
- *Creation* here designates all that exists but with particular attention to the earth and entire, complex and interdependent ecology.
- *Vision* refers to the biblical vision of a flourishing creation
- *Hope* refers to the confidence people of faith have that God will bring the whole creation to fulfillment, as God has promised
- *Justice* suggests the principles by which people of faith should be guided in their actions today toward the environment.

- **Statement is based in our witness to God as shared in ecumenical creeds and scripture:**

- **God the creator** blesses the world, sees it as 'very good,' continues to bless it and to be involved in it;
- **God the Son**—the Word made flesh through whom all things were made reconciles the world to God through the Cross. Christ comes to us in water, bread and wine and frees us from sin and empowers us to serve all creation. We do this both by modeling God's care for creation, and by heralding the new creation;
- **God the Holy Spirit**—'the Lord, the giver of life' (Nicene creed) is the source of life and renews the face of the earth, sustains us in the promise of a redemption that includes all creation;
- **Response of faith**—a basic trust and hope in God, and a basic trust in the fundamental sufficiency of creation for all its creatures that is expressed in living out the responsibility we have been granted to care for creation.

- **The most fundamental threats to creation** result primarily from human activity and injustices:

- Excessive consumption by the relatively well-off
- High population growth and the pressure it puts on creation. Contributing conditions to excessive population growth include such things as lack of access to family planning and health care, good education, lack of employment at adequate wages, and unequal rights.

- **We model God’s justice by striving to embody 4 four principles in the face of the intricate complexity of creation and of the human community:**
 - **Participation**—All human beings are entitled to a voice and to have their interests considered when decisions are made affecting the creation and its resources. Human beings should be advocates for the non-human parts of creation;
 - **Solidarity**—We acknowledge our interdependence with other creatures, and act both locally and globally on behalf of all creation, especially those parts that are most vulnerable and at greatest risk;
 - **Sufficiency**—We are to place priority on meeting the basic needs of all humanity and all creatures and since the earth’s resources are finite, this has implications for human acquisition and consumption patterns;
 - **Sustainability**—We should act so as to provide “an acceptable quality of life for present generations without compromising that of future generations.”

- **Task for the Church:**
 - Creation-awareness and education;
 - Imitate God’s care for creation in our life and activity as a church;
 - Be a community of moral deliberation, and a venue for civic deliberation about caring for creation;
 - Provide for and foster public policy advocacy;
 - Foster and support corporate social responsibility.

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