



Living out our call to advocacy

By Mary Minette
ELCA Director for Environmental Education and Advocacy

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"
Isaiah 6:8

In the past week, I have been privileged to witness two ELCA leaders heeding God's call to care for creation and their neighbors speaking out as advocates to government officials.

Chris Boerger, who serves as bishop for the Northwest Washington Synod, came to Washington, D.C., as part of a delegation of senior religious leaders to speak to members of Congress and to Obama administration officials about a proposed gold and copper mine, which threatens the world's largest wild salmon fishery in Bristol Bay, Alaska.

Why would a bishop from Seattle be concerned about fish in Alaska? As it turns out, many of the commercial fishing boats that fish for salmon in Bristol Bay each summer come from the Seattle area. Bishop Boerger shared with the officials that Lutheran pastors from [Ballard First Lutheran Church](#) in his synod bless the fishing fleet based in their community each year before

the boats leave for Alaska. The Bristol Bay salmon fishery supports thousands of commercial fishermen, as well as providing a key food source for Alaska Native communities around Bristol Bay.

Bishop Boerger was joined in his advocacy by an archbishop from the Orthodox Church in America, who spoke to the importance of the salmon fishery to the Alaska Native communities his church serves. Each summer for thousands of years, these communities have smoked the bay's salmon to sustain them during the long Alaskan winters. Without an abundant supply of fish, their communities, and their culture, will be irreparably harmed.

Learn more about the proposed Pebble Mine from [a study](#) released on May 18, 2012 by scientists from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Also this week, Mikka McCracken, program director for constituent engagement and interpretation for [ELCA World Hunger](#), testified at a public hearing in Chicago held by the EPA. The EPA is inviting public comment on a proposed rule that would, for the first time, require that all new power plants reduce their emissions of carbon dioxide, one of the main causes of global climate change.

Mikka spoke to the EPA not only on behalf of the ELCA but also for the National Council of Churches and its 35 member denominations, all of whom are concerned about the impact that climate change is already having on many of the communities where we live, and on our work as Christians to alleviate hunger and poverty. As Mikka noted in her testimony, "As climate change continues, our work to end hunger and extreme poverty will become ever more necessary – and more challenging." You can read about her reasons for testifying, and see a transcript of her remarks [here](#).

The actions of these ELCA leaders highlight the important relationship between advocacy and the hands-on work of our church in communities here in the U.S. and around the world. Our hands-on work speaks for itself -- Lutherans minister to fishermen in the Pacific Northwest and to refugees fleeing from hunger and thirst in the drought-stricken Horn of Africa. As Mikka noted in her testimony, "Lutherans care and Lutherans make a difference." Advocacy grows out of this true concern for our neighbor. Both Bishop Boerger and Mikka gave ELCA ministries a voice, connecting on-the-ground experience to the policies crafted by

government agencies and elected leaders that enable our church to help others and to care for God's creation.

As Lutherans, we take very seriously God's call to love and care for our neighbors, and sometimes this means speaking out as advocates in addition to, and out of, our direct service. This week we saw that sometimes God sends us to raise our voices in advocacy.

Act now

Would you like to join these leaders and lift your own voice in advocacy? [You can send your own comments to the EPA on the proposed carbon rule.](#) The EPA is on track to receive a record number of comments on this proposed rule -- and you can play a part! [Click here to write to the EPA now.](#)

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