



## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), we share a deep love for all of God's creation and a profound responsibility for it. Made in the image of God, we are called to continue what God is already doing for the earth (Psalm 104), enabling it to flourish. God assigns humans to care for the earth as God does, in loving servanthood. (Philippians 2:7, Genesis 2:15).<sup>1</sup>

Daily we witness the evidence of a rapidly changing climate. At the same time, we also witness in too many instances how the earth's natural beauty, a sign of God's wonderful creativity, is defiled by pollutants and waste, resulting in ecological crisis. As a member church of The Lutheran World Federation, we affirm "that the global ecological crisis, including climate change is, human-induced. This is a spiritual matter. As people of faith, we are called to live in right relationship with creation and to not exhaust it."<sup>2</sup>

The effects of the warming climate are felt in nearly every corner of the globe. These include increased migration, food insecurity due to changing agricultural landscapes, national security issues and health problems. As bad as it is for all creation, the most vulnerable people around the world are suffering the most. Yet they have contributed the least and, as noted in the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,<sup>3</sup> are ill equipped to adapt to or mitigate the effects of a changing climate to build resilient communities.

An honest and credible look at the increasing environmental degradation and climate change names the neglect, carelessness and wrongs of industry, civil society and global governmental leadership. It also recognizes how human beings individually and collectively worsen the attacks on God's creation. As a church, we must confess our frequent lack of urgency in addressing environmental degradation and slow action to address a changing climate. We also must pledge to acknowledge the intersections of racial and environmental injustices and strive to involve the voices of those most affected in the process.

In grateful response to God's grace in Jesus Christ, this church carries out its responsibility for the well-being of society and the environment. Our "concern for the environment is shaped by the Word of God spoken in creation, the Love of God hanging on a cross, the Breath of God daily renewing the face of the earth."<sup>4</sup> Our concern is, then, propelled by hope and guided by principles of justice.<sup>5</sup> We find our hope in the promise of God's own faithfulness to everything God has made. We seek justice for all of creation in concert with God's creative and renewing power. We do so understanding that we have the ability and responsibility to act together for the common good, especially for those who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

As presiding bishop, I give thanks for all the ways this church embraces our common responsibility to care for all of God's creation. I call on us as individuals and congregations to

continue efforts through stewardship, education and advocacy. I am reminded of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly resolution “Towards a Responsible Energy Future,” among others, that urges members of the ELCA and its related institutions to exemplify personal and institutional responsibility. Such efforts could include practicing energy conservation, congregational energy audits, purchasing more energy efficient appliances and vehicles, and investing in renewable energy systems. These resolutions also urge advocating at all levels of government for public policies that support clean, renewable energy sources.

The present moment is a critical and urgent one, filled with both challenge and opportunity to act as individuals, citizens, leaders and communities of faith in solidarity with God’s good creation and in hope for our shared future. We claim God’s promise in Revelation 21 for “a new heaven and a new earth” as we pray together:

“Almighty God, in giving us dominion over things on earth, you made us coworkers in your creation. Give us wisdom and reverence to use the resources of nature so that no one may suffer from our abuse of them, and that generations yet to come may continue to praise you for your bounty; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”<sup>6</sup>

In Christ,



The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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<sup>1</sup> See ELCA social statement “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice” (1993), 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Lutheran World Federation Twelfth Assembly resolution.

<sup>3</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

<sup>4</sup> ELCA social statement, “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice.”

<sup>5</sup> ELCA social statements identify these normative principles as participation, solidarity, sufficiency and sustainability. See “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice” and “Genetics: Faith, and Responsibility” (2011).

<sup>6</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 80

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### **About the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:**

The ELCA is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with more than 3.5 million members in more than 9,400 worshipping communities across the 50 states and in the Caribbean region. Known as the church of "God's work. Our hands," the ELCA emphasizes the

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saving grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, unity among Christians and service in the world. The ELCA's roots are in the writings of the German church reformer Martin Luther.

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