Daily forecasts tell only a portion of our weather story. Weather patterns are affected by multiple meteorological factors, including climate change.

Human activity has been linked to the greater release of greenhouse gases (GHGs) into the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution. These GHGs, in turn, have a significant impact on weather patterns, according to the U.S. Geological Survey of the U.S. Department of the Interior. GHGs act as a blanket around the earth, trapping heat radiation from the sun and increasing surface temperatures. GHGs alter climate by scattering and absorbing solar and infrared radiation. They may change the microphysical and chemical properties of clouds. Additionally, deforestation and other changes in land use have altered the amount of sunlight reflected back into space. The world’s rising surface temperature may increase water evaporation and cause more droughts. As more moisture evaporates, it fuels more powerful storms. More heat in the atmosphere and warmer ocean surfaces can accelerate wind speeds in tropical storms. Weather patterns become more extreme.

We see the effects of climate change all around us: severe heat waves, heavier precipitation, and greater incidence of hurricanes, floods, droughts, and wildfires. The permafrost is thawing, sea ice is melting, and rising sea levels are eroding our coastlines. These conditions destabilize the environment, contributing to migration, food insecurity, hunger and poverty, national security issues, ecosystem losses, and health problems.

**Faith reflections and policy decisions**

A reflection on why Lutherans care for creation reads, “With the assurance of God’s presence in all things and a force of love behind all things, we are freed to see the world as it is without seeking to romanticize it or be blind to the evil and tragedy in life. We also welcome all that we can learn about our world through our strong reception of science, with openness to ecological realities and biological evolution. Science is so fundamental to...
understanding the environmental crisis and so significant as part of our human efforts to address it. We do not fear the truth about ourselves and our world. Indeed, it is part of God’s relation to the world.” (“Why Lutherans Care for Creation: Building on Our Foundations” at elca.org/resources/advocacy#environment)

In a statement for Earth Day 2018, the Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the ELCA, wrote, “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.” (See elca.org/News-and-Events/7922)

Vital support
Alert to the marginalized and vulnerable
Full funding urged

Because the marginalized and vulnerable are most affected by environmental degradation, our failure to protect God’s creation ultimately mirrors and deepens existing racial, gender and economic inequalities. Caring for creation means respecting environmental limits while pursuing economic growth that provides sufficient and sustainable lifestyles for all people.

Climate finance includes financial support for adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change, including capacity building, research and development, and wider efforts to shift the economy toward low-carbon, climate-resilient development. Several federal agencies sponsor programs that protect the environment. During the appropriations process, we seek full funding of such programs within the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of the Interior, Department of Energy, Department of Agriculture, and Department of State.

Further reading

Map graphic from https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/global/201613

Selected Significant Climate Anomalies and Events in 2016

PRAYER FOR STEWARDSHIP OF NATURAL RESOURCES

“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.”

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, page 80