

Northeastern Minnesota Synod 2008 Resolution on the Care of Creation

Resolution on the Care of Creation (submitted by Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Duluth) passed as amended by the 2008 NE MN Synod Assembly

WHEREAS, the care of creation is deeply rooted in the biblical witness, as are themes of the celebration, stewardship, and redemption of all God has made, and

WHEREAS, social statements of the ELCA (e.g., *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice*, 1993), Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson (message to the ELCA, April 22, 2007), and Bishop Peter Strommen (“Global Warming Solutions,” public remarks October 28, 2007), express concern for the environment and urge the church’s advocacy and action on behalf of all living things, and

WHEREAS, a broad scientific consensus warns that humankind’s historic and increasing use of fossil fuels is contributing to and accelerating global warming, which is expected to cause severe and disruptive changes to all of creation, through more frequent extreme weather events, rising sea levels, increasing extinction of species, spread of tropical disease, disruptions in food supplies, and displacement of human communities, with these impacts most likely being felt disproportionately by those living in poverty, and

WHEREAS taking whatever actions we can now to reduce our use of fossil fuels, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, conserve resources, and work toward sustainability can help to mitigate and lessen the severity of the effects of global warming and provide a more hopeful future for “the least of these” and the generations which follow us, and

WHEREAS as a synod, we have the calling and opportunity to model the kind of care for creation we would like to see in the world, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the congregations of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod accept their responsibility to be stewards of the earth, and pledge to grow faithfully and intentionally in this responsibility 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, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the synod council appoint a Green/Creation Care Task Force to provide leadership and oversight of this pledge and to work with the Lutheran Coalition for Public Policy in Minnesota (LCPPM) and the ELCA Washington Office along with partnering groups for its fulfillment.

Northeastern Minnesota Synod 2009 Resolution Creation Care in Congregations

Resolution 09-8 - Creation Care in Congregations (passed 2009 Synod Assembly)

WHEREAS, our God calls us, both as individuals and as members of communities, to care for the natural world (Genesis 1-2, Revelation 22, and many others), and

WHEREAS, our world is facing significant impact from the effect of carbon emissions, petrol chemical use, shrinking ice caps, rising ocean levels, and wasteful practices, and

WHEREAS, the Northeastern Minnesota Synod voted at its 2008 Synod Assembly to establish a Creation Care task force to aid its member congregations in dealing with these serious problems, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the 2009 Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly strongly urge all of its member congregations to actively engage in reducing their carbon footprints, through the following suggested ways--

First three steps toward Congregational Creation Care:

- Have an energy audit for all church owned properties
- Form a creation care task force within each congregation
- Begin by implementing changes suggested by the audit and the task force; and be it further

RESOLVED, that congregations who have already conducted an energy audit be congratulated for their work and be encouraged to continue that work to reduce their consumption of vital resources and to lessen their carbon footprint.

Northeastern Minnesota Synod 2010 Resolution Creation Care in Congregations

(Passed 2010 Synod Assembly)

Whereas our Creator God calls us, as individuals, communities, and congregations, to care for the natural world, (Genesis 1-2, Revelation 22, and many others) and

Whereas we, as individuals, communities, and congregations are facing serious challenges due to environmental changes, and

Whereas the Northeastern Minnesota Synod voted at it 2008 Synod Assembly to establish a Creation Care task force to aid its member congregations in dealing with these serious challenges, therefore, be it

Resolved that the 2010 Northeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly strongly urge all its member congregations to continue their work towards a "greener" church, particularly through education of members, especially its children. (We recommend congregations consider the new Vacation Bible School material "Re-New- the Green VBS" available from Augsburg Fortress.)

Be it further,

Resolved that congregations encourage their members to teach and learn "heritage" practices, such as quilting, gardening, canning, fishing, hunting, wood working, knitting, and other activities that promote sustainability. And be it further resolved that congregations of the NE Minnesota Synod become aware of the habitat on their church properties and utilize those properties to nurture trees and gardens, as well as insects and animals. (We recommend establishing Monarch Way-stations, as described on www.MonarchWatch.org/waystations). And be it further resolved that congregations who are already working on these measures lend their assistance to neighboring congregations, so that their expertise can be utilized. (We recommend the N E Minnesota Synod Creation Care blog www.nemncreationcare.blogspot.com for updates on what others in our synod are doing, and suggestions of what your congregation can do.)

Northeastern Minnesota Synod 2011 Resolution on Energy Stewardship

(Approved by 2011 Synod Assembly)

WHEREAS, we are called to cherish and tend God's creation as a part of our loving and serving God and neighbor, and

WHEREAS, we in the industrialized world are consuming energy and Earth's resources in a way that is both unsustainable in the future and unfair to those in the developing world; and we hear scientific reports of environmental degradation, global climate change, record rates of species extinction, and a depletion of non-renewable resources that should give us pause, and

WHEREAS, human activity, especially the over-consumption of energy and natural resources, appears to be a critical driver in these changes in climate and environmental distress, causing harm to God's creation and exacerbating the already difficult situations for millions living with poverty and hunger, particularly as weather extremes such as flood and drought increase, and WHEREAS, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, recognizing the gravity of these threats, has long been committed to addressing environmental issues as part of our call to justice, sustainability, and solidarity with affected communities and, along with our partners in the Lutheran World Federation and Lutheran World Relief, committed to working to alleviate hunger, poverty, and unsustainable living conditions globally, and

WHEREAS, the 2009 NE MN Synod Assembly voted to "strongly urge all its member congregations to actively engage in reducing their carbon footprints through the following suggested ways: (1) have an energy audit for all church owned properties, (2) form a creation care task force within each congregation, (3) begin implementing changes suggested by the audit and the task force," therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the congregations, administrative offices, and other ministry facilities related to the NE MN Synod be encouraged to initiate or renew their commitment to energy stewardship by: (1) doing an assessment of energy use in their facilities if they haven't already done so; (2) taking steps to reduce energy use; (3) encouraging their members to save energy in their homes; and (4) sharing information on the steps taken with the synod's Creation Care Team or other appropriate entity as a way to encourage others to similar actions, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the NE MN Synod memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at its 2011 Church wide Assembly to challenge all expressions of the ELCA to reduce their energy-related carbon emissions by at least 5 percent per year, with an ultimate goal of reducing our overall emissions by 25-40 percent by 2020*, and to share this commitment and steps taken to achieve it in a public way in official publications and communication channels of this church.[*See Addendum]

Addendum

This resolution builds upon a history of past statements and actions in this synod and across the ELCA, calling us to cherish and tend God's creation as part of our loving and serving God and neighbor. Recognizing our call to eco-justice, to addressing hunger and poverty, to faithful stewardship of creation and our finances, this resolution offers a bold witness and a plan for action. It is hoped that a number of synods across the ELCA will adopt this resolution this year, as a way to encourage and challenge one another to reduce our energy use and lessen our carbon footprint. This adds to the voices of 10 other ELCA synods, which took similar action in 2010.

The goal of a 25 – 40 % reduction in carbon emissions by 2020 is in line with what the ELCA has been advocating for at the Federal level, through the ELCA's Washington Office. Setting this goal is a way for us to practice what we preach, as well as to save money on energy expenses for use in other areas of mission and ministry.

Implementing this resolution: Our synod's Creation Care Team, with the help of Lutherans Restoring Creation, stands ready to offer assistance and guidance on the implementation of this resolution and in the sharing of your congregation's results with others. Our synod Team will be in contact with LRC and others that are joining in this effort in a collaborative, coordinated initiative across the ELCA. Synod Creation Care Team contact: Pastor Chris Manisto, 763-389-2671; pastormanisto@izoom.net for tools to assess and reduce your energy consumption, see: Interfaith Power and Light's "Cool Congregations" calculator at <http://coolcongregations.com/>; or the EPA Energy Star Portfolio Manager energy conservation tool at <https://www.energystar.gov/istar/pmpam/>.

Northeastern Minnesota Synod 2014 Resolution on Creation Care and Faith Practices

(approved by 2014 Synod Assembly)

WHEREAS we read in Scripture that "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it" (Psalm 24:1), that God put humanity in the Garden of Eden "to till it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15), and that the Risen Jesus said to his disciples, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15), and

WHEREAS for over 20 years the ELCA has expressed concern for the environment and has urged the church's advocacy and action for the well-being of all God's creatures (e.g., *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice*, 1993), and

WHEREAS the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, meeting in assembly in 2008, pledged to grow faithfully and intentionally in this responsibility 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, and

WHEREAS congregations of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod are living out these commitments to Creation Care in a variety of inspiring ways through forming congregational creation care teams, hosting community events, promoting energy conservation, and increasing awareness of earthkeeping practices, and

WHEREAS the synod's "Practice Discipleship Challenge" continues to emphasize that members and congregations in our synod seek to grow in faith practices, to "Give, Invite, Serve, Study, Worship, Pray, and Encourage," and

WHEREAS reports in 2014 from the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the American Association for the Advancement of Science confirm the consensus of 97% of climate scientists that global emissions of greenhouse gases have risen to unprecedented levels due to human activities, and that the current low-level societal response to reducing these emissions risks "abrupt, unpredictable, and potentially irreversible climate changes with highly damaging impacts," therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Northeastern MN Synod, meeting in assembly, reaffirm our calling and responsibility to be stewards of the earth, and be it further

RESOLVED that the Northeastern MN Synod, meeting in assembly, recognize 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, and be it further

RESOLVED that the Northeastern MN Synod, meeting in assembly, renew its commitment to earth stewardship by encouraging congregations to engage this calling to Creation Care boldly and creatively in their local communities, trusting and participating in God's creative, redemptive, and sustaining love for the world.

N.E. MN Synod 2015 Memorial on Eco-Reformation in the Context of Climate Change

(approved by 2015 Synod Assembly)

WHEREAS, 2017 will mark observances of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, which addressed fundamental threats to human well-being and all of God's creation in theological, social, and political ways; and

WHEREAS, the 1993 ELCA Social Statement *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice* affirms that, "we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;" and

WHEREAS, in 1993 with *Caring for Creation* we realized the urgency was already "widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide [of] dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide" from the burning of fossil fuels, and that "action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children's children. Time is very short;" and

WHEREAS, in the 1999 ELCA Social Statement *Economic Life: Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All*, this church declares that “Too often the earth has been treated as a waste receptacle and a limitless storehouse of raw materials to be used up for the sake of economic growth, rather than as a finite, fragile ecological system upon which human and all other life depends;” and

WHEREAS, the ELCA’s *Vision and Expectations for Ordained Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* stipulates that “the people of God are called to the care and redemption of all that God has made. This includes the need to speak on behalf of this earth, its environment and natural resources and its inhabitants. This church expects that its ordained ministers will be exemplary stewards of the earth’s resources, and that they will lead this church in the stewardship of God’s creation;” and

WHEREAS, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton wrote in a pastoral letter on September 19, 2014: “Daily we see and hear the evidence of a rapidly changing climate. Glaciers are disappearing, the polar ice cap is melting, and sea levels are rising. Incidents of pollution-created dead zones in seas and the ocean and toxic algae growth in water supplies are occurring with greater frequency. Most disturbingly, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising at an unprecedented rate. At the same time we also witness in too many instances how the earth’s natural beauty, a sign of God’s wonderful creativity, has been defiled by pollutants and waste... The present moment is a critical one, filled with both challenge and opportunity to act as faithful individuals and churches in solidarity with God’s good creation”; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran World Federation has already, with its three-fold theme “Salvation: Not for sale. Human beings: Not for sale. Creation: Not for sale.”, signaled its intention to include creation at the center of global 2017 anniversary commemorations; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, meeting in assembly and recognizing the need for ongoing reformation of the ELCA in the context of climate change, memorialize the 2016 Church wide Assembly of the ELCA to make stewardship of the earth and ecological justice major themes in ELCA planning and activities leading up to and following the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.