

Statements in Support of Recommendations, to wit:

Approval of Memorial #1

*“Memorial Calling for a Just Transition to 50% Reduction in
US Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2030”*

1. The authors compiled significant citations in overwhelming support for action to be taken by this assembly. The Reference and Counsel Committee recommends Synod Assembly approval forwarding this memorial to Churchwide Assembly in August.
2. This memorial requests increased advocacy through all three expressions of the church: Churchwide, Synods and Congregations. Although there is no specific expenditure identified, staffing changes to facilitate increased advocacy could place demands on current positions. However, with the seriousness of accelerated climate change, the challenge of reassigning priorities to existing staff seems to be a worthy trade-off.
3. This memorial moves forward the 1993 ELCA Social Statement Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice by identifying measurable goals and defined timeline. Note: This document, 29 years ago, recognized the “crisis” of accelerated climate change. It is regrettable that we did not stimulate dynamic action.
4. The Challenge of the timeline: If we had a choice, the timeline reflected in this memorial would not be our timeline. We are sure this is not the timeline the authors of this memorial wanted either. It is incredibly challenging. However, as the citations clearly show, this is the *required* timeline.

Approval of Memorial #2

*“Memorial Calling the ELCA To Reduce Its Greenhouse Gas
Emissions by 50% by 2030”*

1. This memorial is heavily cited with compelling evidence for a call to action by all three expressions of the Church: Churchwide, Synods, and Congregations. The Reference and Counsel Committee recommends Synod Assembly approval of forwarding this memorial to Churchwide Assembly in August.
2. This memorial requires “walking the walk,” serving as an example to other entities; to our communities throughout the country. We are called to care for creation. It’s part of our mission.
3. The timeline: This is a challenging timeline. It will challenge the Church at every expression: Churchwide, Synods, and Congregations. It is *not* the timeline we would like. But it is the timeline that is required for all of us in abating accelerated climate change. Let us take on this challenging timeline.
4. The financial impact: No doubt, for all three expressions of the Church, to reduce our carbon footprint by 50% will require expenditures of time, talent, and financial resources. This memorial requests the establishment of an Energy Stewardship Loan Fund as well as creating an Energy Stewardship Grant Fund to congregations in communities that have “borne the brunt” of pollution and congregations serving communities impacted by poverty. In addition, there will need to be staff significantly focused on responding to the challenges of reaching this goal in a timely way. But every expression of the Church can offset initiatives requiring capital expenditures (ex: installing solar panels) with initiatives

that reduce consumption (ex: expand use of on-line activities that reduce vehicle travel). Many energy reducing initiatives have a financial reward on the backside (ex: lower utility costs). But do we really have an option? The cost of preventative medicine can be very expensive (ex: lab work). But if it prevents the treatment of developed disease, which is incredibly expensive, wouldn't we eagerly invest in prevention?

MEMORIAL 1

2022 SOUTHWESTERN TEXAS SYNOD ASSEMBLY

“Memorial Calling for a Just Transition to 50% Reduction in US Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2030”

Submitted by: Rev. Harold Vanicek (St. Peter’s Lutheran, Marble Falls) Rev. Danielle Moore Casey (Triumphant Love Lutheran, Austin) Carl Teinert (Triumphant Love Lutheran, Austin) Rev. Candice Combs (New Life Lutheran, Dripping Springs) New Life Lutheran, Dripping Springs

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to love “your neighbors as yourselves” (see Luke 10:27); and

WHEREAS, “made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth” [1]; and

WHEREAS, the protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust”[3] ; and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences due to damage to the climate, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degree Fahrenheit); and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times, causing record-breaking wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss[4]; and

WHEREAS, damage to the climate is already harmfully impacting people’s homes, food sources, and well-being (leading to at least 40.5 million climate displaced persons in 2020 according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC))[5]; and

WHEREAS, the United States has contributed more greenhouse gas to the atmosphere historically than any other country[6]; and

WHEREAS, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030 the United States [7] [8] [9] will need a unified and collected mobilization that includes government investment, public-private partnerships, binding emission reduction targets, and possibly a carbon fee and dividend; and

WHEREAS, a just transition from a fossil-fuel based economy will lead to better health[9], family-sustaining jobs[10], clean air and water for communities historically left behind, and a safer, more sustainable future for our children and future generations; therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to continue to call upon the leadership of the United States of America to reduce its greenhouse

gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to continue to equip and encourage congregations, synods, and associated ministries to advocate that the United States of America reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2030, generate 100% of its power from clean renewable sources by 2035, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to encourage congregations and synods to advocate for a just transition away from greenhouse gasses where at least 40% of public funding goes towards projects that directly benefit Indigenous, Black, People of Color, and communities impacted by poverty that bear a disproportionate cost of pollution and climate change already; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to support these actions through continuing its investments in staff, education, tools and resources that equip congregations and Synods to accomplish this goal and leverage knowledge, skills and experience across the church, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage congregants, rostered leaders, and bishops to further educate themselves to the urgency of the climate emergency both locally and globally as well as to the local and global opportunities a just transition will create; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage rostered leaders and bishops to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to encourage and cooperate with Lutherans Restoring Creation and other faith-based and secular organizations that share our commitment to the protection and restoration of the natural world while doing justice for all.[11]

[1] 1993 ELCA Social Statement Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice

[2]<https://www.wri.org/insights/numbers-indigenous-and-community-land-rights> and <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/biodiversitys-greatest-protectors-need-protection/>

[3] Earth Charter (adopted at the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly), full text which was endorsed can be found at:<https://earthcharter.org/>

[4] IPCC, 2021: Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [MassonDelmotte, V., P. Zhai, A. Pirani, S.L. Connors, C. Péan, S. Berger, N. Caud, Y. Chen, L. Goldfarb, M.I. Gomis, M. Huang, K. Leitzell, E. Lonnoy, J.B.R. Matthews, T.K. Maycock, T. Waterfield, O. Yelekçi, R. Yu, and B. Zhou (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press. In Press.

[5] <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2021/>

[6] <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/>

[7] <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-which-countries-are-historically-responsible-for-climate-change>

[8] <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/cut-global-emissions-76-percent-every-year-next-decade-meet-15degc>

[9] <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/cop24-special-report-health-climate-change>

[10] <https://newclimateeconomy.report/>

[11] For suggested organizations to connect with in doing this work please visit: <https://lutheransrestoringcreation.org/actions-for-a-just-transition-to-a-healthier-climate-for-all/>

IMPLICATIONS

This memorial goes onward to Churchwide Assembly this summer. It affirms that our denomination's value of caring for creation aligns with the IPCC recommendations and US climate goals, and encourages our church to advocate and support restorative responses to damaging climate change.

What is the financial impact of this resolution on our synod budget? If expenditures are required, what are the sources of income anticipated to accomplish the purpose of the resolution?

no expenditures asked for. Expenditures would be determined by churchwide on how to broaden and deepen our denominational advocacy / action for this urgent need.

What are the personnel implications within our synod - or churchwide? Who will be responsible for implementation of the resolution?

From my understanding of church polity, memorials offer guidance for how we live out being church. If approved at Churchwide Assembly, it would move to the ELCA Church Council to take the guidance and determine next steps / and an action plan.

How does this resolution enhance and forward the mission of the church and our synod?

There is clear consensus that there is great urgency in needing to respond in big ways to damaging climate change. Care of creation is a core value for the ELCA, and a changing climate is a threat multiplier, impacting other core ministries and mission of our church, from hunger, to poverty, to resettling refugees, to responding to natural disasters. To take action through this memorial is one way to address the foundation of so many other ministries and mission central to being the church.

MEMORIAL 2

2022 SOUTHWESTERN TEXAS SYNOD ASSEMBLY

“Memorial Calling the ELCA To Reduce Its Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 50% by 2030”

Submitted by: Rev. Harold Vanicek (St. Peter’s Lutheran, Marble Falls) Rev. Danielle Moore Casey (Triumphant Love Lutheran, Austin) Carl Teinert (Triumphant Love Lutheran, Austin) Rev. Candice Combs (New Life Lutheran, Dripping Springs) New Life Lutheran, Dripping Springs

WHEREAS, our faith commands us to “take care of [creation]” (Genesis 2:15); and

WHEREAS, Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice, calls us, “as congregations and other expressions of this church...to incorporate the principles of sufficiency and sustainability in our life” and that “we will, in our budgeting and investment of church funds, demonstrate our care for creation”[1]; and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to avoid catastrophic consequences due to damage to the climate, global warming needs to be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit); and

WHEREAS, to have a realistic chance of meeting the goal of not exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 F) of warming, the world needs at least a 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and equitable net zero emissions by 2050[3]; and

WHEREAS, the planet has already warmed 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit) (since pre-industrial times, causing record-breaking wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, droughts, ocean acidification, and species loss[4]; and

WHEREAS, current damage to the climate has been recognized as a “threat multiplier” by scientists, the US military, and the United Nations Security Council[7], where damage to the climate is supersizing many of our weather events, making them stronger, longer, and more destructive, which leads to increased poverty [8], hunger, human displacement and migration, and loss of ecosystems, and

WHEREAS, our changing climate impacts every aspect of mission and ministry in being church together, impacting the very DNA of what it looks like to be church; and

WHEREAS, Christian climate scientist Katherine Hayhoe says our collective responsibility on climate action is to, “add your hand to that boulder, get it rolling just a little bit faster down the hill and the faster it goes, the more we look around and we see other people beside us pushing in the same direction, the more that gives us hope. Taking that first little step is so important”[9]; and

WHEREAS, reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the ELCA will save financial resources in the long term that can be redirected for mission; therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to encourage the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, across all three expressions, to set the goal of reducing its 2020 greenhouse gas emissions 50% by 2030 and 100% by 2050; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization, in partnership with ELCA colleges and universities, to create a tool to calculate the total greenhouse gas emissions from both ELCA Churchwide headquarters as well as the rest of the ELCA; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to reduce its greenhouse gasses by 50% by 2030, or sooner, by making the necessary energy efficiency improvements to buildings and travel, sourcing electricity from renewable sources, incentivizing remote participation and collaboration when possible, and working on partnerships to offset emissions generated from flights and vehicles; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to incentivize congregations and synods in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by creating an Energy Stewardship Loan Fund that will provide very low interest loans to congregations and synods to invest in energy efficiency improvements, electrifying gas-powered equipment, and installing solar panels; and be it further

RESOLVED, the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to support congregations in communities of color, communities impacted by poverty, and communities that have historically borne the brunt of pollution and climate change by creating an Energy Stewardship Grant Fund that will provide grants to these congregations so they can reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by making energy efficiency improvements, electrifying gas-powered equipment, and installing solar panels; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to implement a DNA level assessment, investment, and transition in staffing and other resources to assist congregations and synods on how to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Texas Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to direct the churchwide organization to provide a report to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly and subsequent assemblies, assessing the progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions across all three expressions, and apply lessons learned to help meet reduction goals.

[1] 1993 ELCA Social Statement Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice

[2] Earth Charter (adopted at the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly), full text which was endorsed can be found at: <https://earthcharter.org/>

[3]<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/cut-global-emissions-76-percent-every-year-next-decade-meet-15degc>

[4] IPCC, 2021: Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [MassonDelmotte, V., P. Zhai, A. Pirani, S.L. Connors, C. Péan, S. Berger, N. Caud, Y. Chen, L. Goldfarb, M.I. Gomis, M. Huang, K. Leitzell, E. Lonnoy, J.B.R. Matthews, T.K. Maycock, T. Waterfield, O. Yelekçi, R. Yu, and B. Zhou (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press. In Press.

[5] <https://www.bread.org/climate-change>

[6] <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/>

[7]<https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/fr/news/climate-change-recognized-‘threat-multiplier’-un-security-council-debates-its-impact-peace>

[8] <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/22787>

[9] <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/stories/every-action-matters-a-qa-with-climate-scientist-katharine-hayhoe/>

IMPLICATIONS

Responding to damaging climate change would become one of the core pieces of our national church body. While the other memorial is more about advocacy, this memorial specifically calls us as a national church to walk the walk, not just talk the talk, and make changes and investments necessary to justly reduce greenhouse gasses across our three expressions.

What is the financial impact of this resolution on our synod budget? If expenditures are required, what are the sources of income anticipated to accomplish the purpose of the resolution?

There is no change in synod or national budget being specifically asked for, yet the memorial invites Churchwide Council and leadership to reevaluate how our budget is utilized with the urgency of a quickly changing climate in mind. So, ultimately this may impact synod budget across the country. For example, I could envision every synod including some form of care of creation staff person, sort of like the DEM model where churchwide helps support the role.

What are the personnel implications within our synod - or churchwide? Who will be responsible for implementation of the resolution?

Implications would be as foundational as the urgency of the climate crisis. It would impact churchwide staffing, needing to develop assessment models, communication, working with lending partners such as MIF, Thrivent, and the ELCA FCU. The memorial is intentionally descriptive, not prescriptive. If passed at Churchwide Assembly, I imagine Churchwide Council would be tasked with creating an action plan that would be evaluated at the 2025 churchwide assembly.

How does this resolution enhance and forward the mission of the church and our synod?

There is clear consensus that there is great urgency in needing to respond in big ways to damaging climate change. Care of creation is a core value for the ELCA, and a changing climate is a threat

multiplier, impacting other core ministries and mission of our church, from hunger, to poverty, to resettling refugees, to responding to natural disasters. This memorial puts into action what we believe and proclaim as a church body. Responding to the damage to our climate is a wholistic God's Work, Our Hands approach to being the church.