

## Resolutions/Memorials

### Model ELCA Congregation Resolution to Synod Assembly on World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action

WHEREAS, God created heaven and earth, and everything therein, and proclaimed it good (Gen 1:1ff); and God has entrusted humankind with the care of the earth (Gen 2:15); and

WHEREAS, in 1993, our ELCA social statement, *Caring for Creation*, expressed concern about “climate change;” acknowledged that, “according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide” we face “dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide;” and emphasized 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;”<sup>1</sup> and

WHEREAS, in 2022 the ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted 672-45, “to receive with gratitude the memorials from 17 synods<sup>2</sup> concerning greenhouse gas emissions;” “to reaffirm the commitment of this church to engage in creation care and advocacy . . . ;” and “to encourage congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops to commit themselves to education about the urgency of the climate emergency . . . ;”<sup>3</sup> and

WHEREAS, on Earth Day 2023, the ELCA Church Council unanimously adopted a social message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, stating that, “[f]rom a standpoint of faith, it is reasonable to conclude that the climate crisis is, indeed, a *kairos* moment”<sup>4</sup> and challenged all expressions of the ELCA to “[j]oin with ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners working to address the climate crisis;”<sup>5</sup> and

WHEREAS, ELCA social teachings have emphasized the ethical priority for the most vulnerable and marginalized, who have contributed least to the climate crisis and bear a disproportionate weight of its effects; and the ELCA calls on organizations to support strategies that enable adaptation to climate change, including protecting the land rights of Indigenous peoples, in whose care land, resources, and biodiversity are more likely to be protected; and

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<sup>1</sup> ELCA Social Statement, *Caring for Creation, Vision, Hope, and Justice*, 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Oregon Synod, Southwest California Synod, Northeastern Minnesota Synod, Minneapolis Synod, Saint Paul Area Synod, Southwestern Texas Synod, Northern Illinois Synod, Northeastern Iowa Synod, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Greater Milwaukee Synod, North/West Lower Michigan Synod, New England Synod, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod, Central States Synod, and Delaware-Maryland Synod.

<sup>3</sup> ELCA, Report of the Memorials Committee, 2022 Churchwide Assembly, July 15, 2022, pp. 13-28.

<sup>4</sup> ELCA Social Message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, approved on Earth Day, April 20, 2023.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* p. 17.

WHEREAS, ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry, in his 2025 “Message on the Tenth Anniversary of the Paris Climate Accords,” affirmed the 2015 United Nations agreement that committed all nations, including the U.S., to limit global warming to well below 2°Celsius (C) while also pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C,<sup>6</sup> and emphasized:

It is not too late to protect our climate. With God, it is never too late. *Kairos* means that this is an opportune and urgent time to address Earth’s climate crisis. I am calling this church to be more connected and sustainable. This includes stewarding God’s creation as an expression of faith and seeking sustainability rooted in ways of living that honor everything God has called ‘good,’ including learning from and following the leadership of Indigenous communities. I commend to you the social message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*;<sup>7</sup> and

WHEREAS, on June 21, 2025, the World Council of Churches (WCC) began an Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action, which is “a prophetic pilgrimage of repentance, transformation, and hope” that calls “churches to ecological *metanoia* and systemic change rooted in justice, peace, and the integrity of creation;”<sup>8</sup> and

WHEREAS, in Belem, Brazil, WCC Vice President Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker-Smith introduced the Decade of Climate Justice Action to faith groups attending the 30th U.N. Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, stating that “We (WCC) have had Decades in solidarity with women, against violence, against racism, and now we say climate justice brings all of those together.”<sup>9</sup>

WHEREAS, the ELCA is a leader in resourcing churchwide staff positions dedicated to programming for racial justice and gender justice; and the ELCA seeks to lead comparably in the work of climate justice, especially in light of its 2023 Social Message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, which calls us to see the climate crisis as a *kairos* moment, a moment when we recognize “God’s urgent call for decisive action in history; and the ELCA’s leadership in the call to decisive action will require bold resourcing of additional churchwide staff member(s) solely dedicated to climate justice.”<sup>10</sup>

THEREFORE, be it

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations Climate Change, *The Paris Agreement*, accessed 20 December 2025.

<sup>7</sup> ELCA, *A Message on the Tenth Anniversary of the Paris Climate Accords*, December 9, 2025.

<sup>8</sup> World Council of Churches, “Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action: Moving Together in Ecological *Metanoia* for Transformation.”

<sup>9</sup> World Council of Churches, “*Tapiri closing service brings climate justice decade to COP30*,” November 18, 2025.

<sup>10</sup> The ELCA has a full-time Director for Racial Justice (Jennifer DeLeon) and a full-time Director for Gender Justice and Women’s Empowerment (Mary Streufert).

RESOLVED, that Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church urges every congregation, synod, ELCA-related educational institution, affiliated ministry, separately incorporated ministry, individual member, and the churchwide office of the ELCA to commit to active participation in the WCC's

Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action, since the ELCA is a member communion of the World Council of Churches;<sup>11</sup> and be it further

RESOLVED, the various expressions of the ELCA in our synod be guided over the next decade by "the convictions to guide discernment and actions toward the challenges posed by the climate *kairos*" adopted in the ELCA's 2023 social message, *Earth's Climate Crisis*,<sup>12</sup> which include the following:

- "Reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the rate scientists project will keep global warming below 2.0 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) and as close as possible to 1.5 degrees Celsius;
  - Support an interim U.S. target of 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from 2005 levels by 2030;
- "Support mitigation strategies to achieve these goals;
- "Promote scientific literacy and instruction about global warming and climate change in all our educational institutions;
- "Engage in legislative advocacy at all levels of government, individually and collectively;
- "Join with ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners working to address the climate crisis; and be it further

RESOLVED, the congregations in our synod be guided over the next decade by "the convictions to guide discernment and actions toward the challenges posed by the climate *kairos*" adopted in the ELCA's 2023 social message, *Earth's Climate Crisis*,<sup>13</sup> which include the following:

- "Promote creation care through preaching, worship, and educational programming;
- "Consider adopting congregational commitments to creation care, for example, by becoming a Creation Care Covenant Congregation via Lutherans Restoring Creation;
- "Provide pastoral care to those struggling with "climate anxiety" and other related mental health concerns, especially our youngest people;
- "Witness publicly to the climate crisis and "walk the talk" by:

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<sup>11</sup> *World Council of Churches, "Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action: Moving Together in Ecological Metanoia for Transformation."*

<sup>12</sup> *ELCA Social Message, Earth's Climate Crisis, pp. 13-17.*

<sup>13</sup> *ELCA Social Message, Earth's Climate Crisis, pp. 13-17.*

- Achieving the same levels of greenhouse gas reduction that the ELCA urges the U.S. government to pursue
- Investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy systems
- Reviewing how ELCA landholdings can be used to sequester carbon, promote biodiversity, and/or encourage other life-giving relationships with creation
- Becoming “anticipatory communities” that model climate resiliency (e.g., emergency shelters, cooling spaces, community gardens);
- “Engage in acts of community organizing to build stronger relationships and more resilient communities that can take action to create meaningful climate solutions and help people understand that they have the power to make lasting change; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod urges the ELCA Churchwide Organization to devote additional funds and staffing to lead us in this *kairos* moment when decisive action is required, and to help all expressions of the ELCA participate actively in the WCC’s Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action; and be it further

RESOLVED, the ELCA shall launch a fund-raising campaign “Climate Justice Action for the Life of the World,” (in concert with the appropriate ELCA churchwide offices), as a means to strengthen awareness, commitment, and advocacy across all congregations, synods, and ELCA churchwide; and to raise at least \$1 million for concrete programs dedicated to greenhouse gas reduction and other efforts to address Earth’s climate crisis in response to *God’s urgent call for decisive action* in this *kairos* moment.

RESOLVED, that Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Assembly instructs (name of Synod) Council to request that the ELCA Church Council and Conference of Bishops implement the previous Resolveds.

Implications of Resolution/Memorial (If adopted):

**1. In what way is this resolution helping congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ?**

This resolution empowers and supports congregations and their members to act as stewards of God’s good creation, and to spread the good news of the gospel to all creation, in alignment with the social statements/messages of the ELCA.

**2. What are the personnel implications within our synod (or churchwide)? Who will be responsible for implementations of the resolution?**

There are no direct personnel implications for the synod. Support to carry out the resolution at the synod level is expected to come largely from the Lutherans Restoring Creation Tam at the synod, a volunteer group. The resolution does ask the

synod council to make certain requests of the ELCA, including asking the ELCA to provide personnel/funding to support this effort churchwide.

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

Financial impact to the synod budget is expected to be minimal to none. The resolution does ask the ELCA to conduct a campaign to raise funds for this effort churchwide.

**Name of Person Submitting Resolution:** John Frey

**Name of Pastor or Congregational President:** Pastor David Hansen

**Congregation name:** Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church, The Woodlands