



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

April 2020

*Sin and captivity, manifest in threats to the environment, are not the last word. God addresses our predicament with gifts of 'forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation' (Luther, Small Catechism). By the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God frees us from our sin and captivity, and empowers us to be loving servants to creation.*

—ELCA social statement *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice*, p. 5

As I work from home at our dining room table, I look out the front window and see the wildlife at my husband's feeders. God created such beautiful creatures. As Christians we are guided by the promise expressed in our social statement that we are empowered "to be loving servants to creation." It is our duty to care for God's earth.

Established in 1970, Earth Day launched the modern environmental movement, spurring development of landmark policies for a creation in crisis and defining a path toward a more sustainable planet. In this 50th anniversary year, under the theme "Climate Action," the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is joining the [Earth Day Network](#) as a featured faith partner. This partnership expresses our deep love for God's creation and a Lutheran understanding of our profound responsibility for it. The social statement describes our commitment this way:

Humans, in service to God, have special roles on behalf of the whole of creation. Made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth. God's command to have dominion and subdue the earth is not a license to dominate and exploit. ... [It] should reflect God's way of ruling as a shepherd king who takes the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7), wearing a crown of thorns (*Caring for Creation*, pp. 2-3).

We accept that caring for and protecting creation is central to our holy calling, yet we acknowledge our shortcomings in this regard. Our action and inaction are exposed by the despoiling and degrading of the environment. Affected by human activity, our changing climate has brought more severe weather patterns and ensuing destruction. Our waters, land and air are being polluted, and we are alarmed by the devastation. Ecological systems are strained to the point where some species cannot adapt, and face extinction.

Globally, we are dealing with two interconnected crises, the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing climate change. Both demonstrate the profound consequences of our disrupted, broken relationship with the natural world. According to scientists, species disruption caused by global warming has combined with human encroachment on the natural world to drive wildlife into greater and deadlier contact with people. The COVID-19 outbreak is an urgent warning that our behavior opens the door to transmission of new diseases, with devastating consequences.

Our distorted relationship with the earth is borne most heavily by the most vulnerable and marginalized among us, who are ill-equipped to withstand the impact of climate change or implement remedies. COVID-19 and the climate crisis heighten existing racial inequity, economic disparity and social injustices. Our call to care for creation is also a call to right these wrongs.

As Earth Day partners and stewards of creation, we have many ways to lovingly serve the earth:

- Explore and use ELCA [Care for Creation](#) resources, including video, study and action guides with information about the Creation Care Ambassadors initiative.
- Read the Lutherans Restoring Creation story “[5 Ways to Celebrate Earth Day as Church Together but Apart.](#)”
- Learn about the [Creation Care Ambassadors](#) program that equips Lutherans to be leaders in settings across the church and in our communities.
- Accept the ELCA Young Adults [No Plastics for Lent](#) challenge this Easter season.
- Participate in a local clean-up (with appropriate distancing) if permitted by local authorities, or participate in the [Earth Challenge](#) 2020 citizen scientist initiative, focused on plastic pollution and clean air.
- On April 21, take part in the Parliament of World Religions’ [50th Earth Day Observance With Global Religious and Indigenous Leaders.](#)
- Join with the ELCA’s ecumenical partner [Creation Justice Ministries](#) in advocacy, education and prayer.

Looking past this anniversary, we gladly accept the monumental assignment of refocusing, renewing and raising our efforts as we embrace our role as stewards of creation and look with hope and promise toward years to come.

A [Prayer](#) From Lutheran Disaster Response:

Prepare us, Lord, for what lies ahead. Give us the strength and dedication that we will need in order to serve others unselfishly. Give us the energy we will need to follow through with the task. Give us strength to face our assignment, and put before us people who will support us. Open our ears and eyes and heart, so that we can sustain others and [help creation to recover from this crisis]. Bless those who are suffering and give them hope, in Jesus’ name. Amen.



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