



July 28 – August 2
PHOENIX, ARIZONA



Greenhouse Gas Reduction Report

Greenhouse Gas Reduction

Churchwide Assembly Action [CA22.04.27]

To receive with gratitude the memorials from the Oregon Synod, Southwest California Synod, Northeastern Minnesota Synod, Minneapolis Area 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 concerning greenhouse gas reduction;

To reaffirm the commitment of this church to engage in creation care and advocacy based on the principles of sufficiency, sustainability, participation, and solidarity;

To reaffirm the commitment of this church to advocacy and action in support of 50% reduction from 2005 levels in United States economy-wide net greenhouse gas pollution by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050;

To direct the ELCA churchwide organization to set the goal of reducing its net greenhouse gas pollution 50% by 2030, and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050;

To urge the churchwide organization to continue its network ministry through the Creation Care Network to inform and guide this church in its efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;

To encourage congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops to commit themselves to education about the urgency of the climate emergency, the global opportunities of a just transition, and to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency through their preaching;

To affirm the Mission Investment Fund's "Green Building" initiative and resources, and to encourage continued commitment to supporting ministries in caring for creation and addressing climate change;

To refer to the Service and Justice home area, Office of the Treasurer, Office of the Secretary, and Office of the Presiding Bishop, for implementation consistent with the memorials; and

To request that the churchwide organization provide a report to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly assessing the progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions across all three expressions and sharing lessons learned to help meet reduction goals.

The response of the churchwide organization to this memorial has been ongoing as various ministry representatives continually participate in visioning and implementation of sustainability efforts. The energy usage of the churchwide organization has been in a season of reduction as staff travel has been half as frequent since 2019. The Lutheran Center in Chicago remains in good standing with a 91% Energy Star rating as a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-certified building. An institution-wide effort to consider human inclusivity and planetary health is expressed in a living reference document titled "Sustainable Event Guidelines" for use by all churchwide organization personnel when planning gatherings.

Lutherans Restoring Creation interviewed synod leaders, reviewed reports from hundreds of congregations and a professional survey of over 593 ELCA members, and identified numerous lessons learned in response to the call to action in this 2022 memorial (See <https://lutheransrestoringcreation.org/climate-change-in-the-pews/>). While data shows that 74% of ELCA members want their church to do more for climate justice, many people are still unaware of available educational and worship resources. Very few churches or synods have been able to measure their greenhouse gas emissions rates, even though free and affordable tools are available. Lack of time, expertise, and consistent recordkeeping are commonly referenced hindrances. Suggested resources and networking support are offered by energy auditing organizations, but rather than hyper-focus on *output*, our faith-based work has been re-directed to consistently imploring a reduction of waste and sharing theological groundings for drastically reducing our collective input of energy pollution.

The World Hunger Education and Networking team has prioritized creation care and greenhouse gas reduction through two multi-year grants. One went to the Center for Climate Justice and Faith in support of their certificate programs for faith leaders (both rostered and lay-leaders) from around the world as they work to better understand how climate change disproportionately impacts communities that already are vulnerable to hunger, and that contributed to and benefitted the least from the greenhouse gas emissions that created the climate crisis. The second

grant was awarded to Lutherans Restoring Creation, a social ministry organization of the ELCA, to support their stewardship as they host, manage, and report on the work of the ELCA's Creation Care Network.

Continued advocacy for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is encouraged and amplified by Ms. Christine Moffett, the full-time program director for environment and energy policy in the Service and Justice unit, and colleagues throughout state public policy offices. This work and related resources are continually updated on the website hub: www.elca.org/our-work/publicly-engaged-church/creationcarenetwork. The ELCA Witness in Society team has taken numerous actions to support advocacy around creation care and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as well as special events across this church to educate and equip congregants and rostered leaders to speak and act on the climate emergency. ELCA climate advocacy works across various levels of government and institutions to call for change. Specifically, ELCA Witness in Society team members work at the state level, across 16 states, on policies that address climate change. Federal policy staff in the ELCA's Washington, D.C., office work directly with members of Congress, across all 50 states and four territories, to advocate for policy to prevent climate change and promote climate justice. Additionally, the ELCA Witness in Society team addresses climate change by advocating at the global level through United Nations events, including the UN General Assembly, the UN Water Conference, the UN High Level Political Forum, and the Annual United Nations Framework on Climate Change Conference of Parties. Each of these events reach all 193 member states of the United Nations.

Over the course of the last five years, ELCA Advocacy offices in Washington, D.C., New York City, and in three states have dedicated substantial time and capacity toward advocating for policy change to mitigate climate change (reducing greenhouse gas emissions). Examples of legislation or executive actions on which ELCA advocacy staff have worked that have made significant political headway include:

1. *Federal/International*: The Inflation Reduction Act, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Power Plant Regulations 2024, Vehicle Emissions Standards Rule, Methane Rule 2024, United States Updated Greenhouse Gas Reduction Commitment (NDC) 2025.
2. *States* (California, Colorado, Wisconsin): 19 pieces of legislation to mitigate climate change.

Witness in Society federal staff have provided training on advocacy at various ELCA events including the Global Mission Summer Missionary Orientation, World Hunger Leaders Gathering, ELCA Youth Gathering, Lutheran Disaster Response Community of Practice Gathering, and the Youth Leadership Summit, reaching over 1,500 people across these events. Additionally, ELCA Witness in Society, collaborating with ELCA Young Adults, has organized an advocacy immersion trip as an annual gathering of young adults to discuss climate justice and engage in direct advocacy. This program has engaged more than 35 young adults over the last two years. Finally, ELCA Witness in Society reaches people through state public policy offices and their events on climate, including annual lobby days that gather hundreds of Lutherans and interfaith advocates to meet with state lawmakers about climate legislation.

The ELCA's Creation Care Network facilitates communication across all three expressions of the ELCA and ensures that a spectrum of churchwide organization members and representatives from synods, congregations, and ecumenical organizations regularly assess emerging programs, event planning and procurement, and communications to consider long-term environmental impacts and opportunities for leveraging assets. Lutherans Restoring Creation (LRC) maintains an abundance of resources and data as they connect with congregations and constituents across the nation. They offer creation care coaching and training services, along with an [online searchable database of local and regional actions that ELCA members and congregations have taken nationwide](#). LRC also supports and amplifies theologically grounded courses, training, and resources for both rostered ministers and lay leaders on the just use and sharing of Earth's resources.

This work is increasingly collaborative with our international and interfaith colleagues as climate change is a threat multiplier. From disaster relief to migrant support, our call to love the neighbor does not stay within the confines of staff portfolio obligations. This summer the World Hunger Education and Network team set up experiential learning opportunities at the Youth Gathering and included elements of climate-induced disaster that participants navigated, as this disaster has exacerbated hunger and poverty both domestically and internationally. The team also sponsored Lutherans Restoring Creation in providing a reflective education space at the conclusion of the World Hunger learning journey, in which youth were exposed to composting, were invited to envision the future through art, and had an opportunity to make a climate commitment.

Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) has provided technical and financial support to congregations working to transform their physical spaces into climate resiliency hubs. LDR also integrates climate awareness and consideration of ways to mitigate and prepare for the increasing frequency and intensity of storms as standard discussion points in all disaster trainings. LDR financially supported and participated in workshops and conferences regarding disaster

response to climate-induced storms, including the 2024 Mid-Atlantic Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster conference with the theme, “Impacts and Implications of a Warming World.”

To support ELCA congregations and ministries in their transition to clean energy, the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA (MIF) and the ELCA Federal Credit Union, its partner organization, continue to provide financing and other resources to advance solar energy and other efficiency upgrades for church buildings and properties. First enacted in 2022, the Inflation Reduction Act expanded in 2024 to include a unique opportunity for houses of worship and other nonprofit organizations to access direct rebates (instead of tax credits) through a new direct-pay program. Also in 2024, MIF launched a new webpage (mif.elca.org/solar) and a series of communications to customers and congregations to encourage taking advantage of effective energy and resiliency improvements while realizing energy cost savings in the long term.

In spring 2024, the ELCA released a study guide called “[Our Kairos Moment](#)” to dive more deeply into the climate care social message, “[Earth’s Climate Crisis](#).” This is a four-session study guide for small groups and is available to inspire learning and action. It uses videos, storytelling, Bible studies, and interactive activities to help your groups explore the effects of climate change on communities in the United States and around the world and inspire one another to effective action.

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