

1 **Resolution Two: Resolution on Care for Creation 2023**

2 **Author: Conference Eight**

3 **Recommended Action: No Recommendation**

4
5 WHEREAS care for creation is deeply rooted in the biblical witness—humanity created in
6 God’s loving image (see Gen. 1:27) and given essential responsibility to serve and
7 preserve the earth and all that dwells therein (see Gen. 2:15; 9:8ff); and

8
9 WHEREAS we are called in faith as Jesus’ disciples and as the church to love “your neighbor
10 as yourself” (see Lk. 10:27; Jn. 13:34) as did Christ who gave himself for us (see Gal.
11 2:20; Eph. 5:1-2; Titus 2:14) and for the sake of the world (see Jn. 3:16-17); and

12
13 WHEREAS, the 1993 ELCA Social Statement Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice
14 affirms that "we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;" and
15 recognizes that "action to counter [earth’s] degradation....is essential to the future of
16 our children and our children’s children;" and declares that "each congregation should
17 see itself as a center for exploring scriptural and theological foundations for caring for
18 creation;" and that "as congregations and other expressions of this church, we will seek
19 to incorporate the principles of sufficiency and sustainability in our life"; and

20
21 WHEREAS, the 1999 ELCA Social Statement Economic Life: Sufficient Sustainable Livelihood
22 for All recognizes that "the growth of economic activity during the twentieth century,
23 and the industrialization and consumerism that fueled it, radically changed the
24 relationship between humans and the earth. Too often the earth has been treated as a
25 waste receptacle and a limitless storehouse of raw materials to be used up for the sake
26 of economic growth, rather than as a finite, fragile ecological system upon which human
27 and all other life depends"; and

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29 WHEREAS the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), meeting in Churchwide
30 Assembly 2022, reaffirmed “the commitment of this church to engage in creation care
31 and advocacy based on the principles of sufficiency, sustainability, participation, and
32 solidarity,” and encouraged “congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops to commit
33 themselves to education about the urgency of the climate emergency,¹ the global
34 opportunities of a just transition [away from greenhouse gasses],² and to lift up loving
35 our neighbor in response to
36 the climate emergency in their preaching [teaching, and Christian witness]”; and

¹ 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 (IPCC) [MassonDelmotte, V., et al (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press. See also the AR6 Synthesis Report of the IPCC, publ. March 19, 2023.

² “Just transition” is the transition to a net-zero carbon sustainable, resilient world without leaving stranded individuals or communities...Knowing that climate change impacts marginalized and vulnerable people the most, we must commit to actions that leave no one behind. In our efforts to protect God’s good creation, we will not exclude voices, because doing so would only mirror and deepen existing racial, gender and economic inequalities. (from the ELCA Advocacy document “Just Transition to a Sustainable Future” March 2021, pp. 1, 7)

37 WHEREAS as individuals, congregations, and as a synod of the ELCA, we have the shared
38 calling and opportunity to model the kind of care for creation we would like to see in the
39 world; therefore, be it

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41 RESOLVED that the Northwestern Minnesota Synod in assembly strongly encourage all
42 congregations of the synod to accept their responsibility to be stewards of the earth,
43 and pledge to grow faithfully and intentionally in this responsibility as individuals and as
44 anticipatory communities³ within the synod by:

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46 • Worshiping in ways that celebrate and foster care for creation,
47 • Educating adults and children about biblical and theological foundations for creation care,
48 ecological issues, and community practices,
49 • Improving energy conservation efforts in church buildings and on their grounds,
50 • Promoting earth-friendly practices of members at home and work,
51 • Demonstrating care for creation in their local communities, and
52 • Advocating for energy policies at the state and national levels that will foster cleaner,
53 renewable, and more efficient energy use in all sectors of society; and be it further
54

55 RESOLVED that the synod council appoint a Creation Care Task Force to provide leadership
56 and oversight of this pledge and to work with partner groups (e.g., Arbor Day
57 Foundation, Blessed Tomorrow, Center for Climate Justice and Faith, Citizens' Climate
58 Lobby, EcoFaith Network of Minnesota Synods, Honor the Earth, Land Stewardship
59 Project, Lutheran Advocacy-Minnesota, Lutherans Restoring Creation, Minnesota
60 Interfaith Power and Light, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, National Sustainable
61 Agriculture Coalition, The Nature Conservancy, University of Minnesota Extension, and
62 others) for its fulfillment.

³ “Anticipatory communities” may be defined as “home places [e.g., families, neighborhoods, schools, churches, etc.] where it is possible to reimagine worlds, and reorder possibilities, places where new or renewed practices give focus to an ecological and [adaptively sustainable] way of life. Such communities have the qualities of a haven, a set-apart and safe place yet a place open to creative risk. Here basic moral formation happens by conscious choice and not by default... Here eco-social virtues are consciously cultivated and embodied in community practices.” (from *Earth-honoring Faith: Religious Ethics in a New Key* by Larry L. Rasmussen, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 227, 224, 124).