



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

ELCA, Church of Sweden and The Episcopal Church issue climate commitment

CHICAGO (Oct. 1, 2019) – The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) joins the Church of Sweden and The Episcopal Church in a commitment to work together to advocate for national and international policies that address the urgency of the climate crisis and help create resilient communities while leaving no one behind. This statement is a renewal and update of the commitment made by the three church bodies in 2013.

The statement follows:

For several years, The Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Church of Sweden (Lutheran) have responded with increasing urgency to the damages being inflicted on Earth, our common home. The intensity of the challenges becomes ever more apparent, and the link of unprecedented climate change to human action rests now on insurmountable scientific evidence. In human societies, these climate changes compound social injustices, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable among us with insecurities of food, livelihood and living space. Yet the burdens are not borne by humans alone: acceleration in the disappearance of species of plants and animals underlines the intertwined struggles of all life on Earth, and the destructive exploitation of resources leaves a diminished planet for all time to come.

As we observe the Season of Creation, we renew the call for our churches to work together for the sake of Earth and to build collaborations wherever possible, both with other communities of faith and with diverse agents in our civil society. Now is the time for science, politics, business, culture and religion — everything that is an expression of human dignity — to address together this critical issue for our time.

We claim the deep resources of our Christian faith for this work. We worship a God who created all that exists, who rejoices in its flourishing and blesses its diversity. We follow Jesus Christ, himself one of us “earth creatures,” who in dying entered deeply into mortal suffering and who in rising gives hope for the renewal and restoration of all God has made. We are inspired by the divine Spirit, intimately present to all creation, who gives us strength, wisdom and perseverance to join in the “here and now” work of God in healing the brokenness of our hurting home.

We acknowledge that these central affirmations of our faith have not guided our churches as they should. We have been slow to recognize the urgency of this crisis, lulled by traditions of honoring human life at the expense of other life and slow fully to integrate creation care into the way of love for God and neighbor. We have turned away from our own roles in environmental degradation, clinging as we could to lifestyles of unsustainable waste and overuse even as others suffer from lack of necessities. Moreover, majority cultures have ignored the insights of Indigenous siblings among us who are too often deeply affected by climate change, even as they bear spiritual practices and wisdom that can help the people of God to walk a more sustainable — and more loving — course.

We affirm that, with God’s guidance, we can do better in meeting this critical issue of our time. We acknowledge the dire urgency of this moment not through the lenses of despair, but through lenses of hope and determination. It is central to our holy calling to treasure the Earth and to care for it as our common home. This commitment does not compete with but surrounds our work for social justice within human communities.

Specifically, we commit ourselves to work together to allow the common commitments and different contexts of our churches to challenge, inspire, complement and strengthen one another's witness.

1. We will advocate for national and international policies and regulations that enable transitions to carbon neutral resilient societies in ways attentive to the many dimensions of climate justice.
2. We will pursue education and advocacy efforts that attend to the most vulnerable, whose needs must be put ahead of the more privileged.
3. We will raise awareness in our churches by promoting the use of education, worship and action resources available locally, regionally, nationally and globally.
4. We will seek deeper understanding, through praying and listening to experiences in our own communities and with others, about ways overconsumption can be addressed and about the diverse impacts of climate change.
5. We will build multiple collaborations: through support and cooperation-with our international communions, through inter-religious dialogue and shared advocacy, through national and international organizations and with all others seeking to address climate change.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
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The Most Rev. Michael B Curry
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<https://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/8008>

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About the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

The ELCA is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with nearly 3.5 million members in more than 9,100 worshipping communities across the 50 states and in the Caribbean region. Known as the church of "God's work. Our hands.," the ELCA emphasizes the saving grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, unity among Christians and service in the world. The ELCA's roots are in the writings of the German church reformer Martin Luther.

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