

God's work never stops. Churchwide office staff are still hard at work – from our homes. Hours and lines of communication remain the same.



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

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# Lutheran, Anglican, Episcopal leaders offer pastoral message on climate change

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CHICAGO (ELCA) – The national leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Anglican Church of Canada and The Episcopal Church offered on Sept. 19 a pastoral message on climate change. A PDF version of the letter is available on the ELCA website at <http://www.elca.org/Resources/Presiding-Bishop-Messages> (<http://www.elca.org/Resources/Presiding-Bishop-Messages>).

Signers of the letter are the Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the ELCA; the Rev. Susan Johnson, national bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada; the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, presiding bishop and primate, The Episcopal Church; and the Most Rev. Fred Hiltz, primate, Anglican Church of Canada.

*The full text of the letter follows:*

We are united as Christian leaders in our concern for the well-being of our neighbors and of God's good creation that provides life and livelihood for all God's creatures. Daily we see and hear the evidence of a rapidly changing climate. Glaciers are disappearing, the polar ice cap is melting, and sea levels are rising. Incidents of pollution-created dead zones in seas and the ocean and toxic algae growth in water supplies are occurring with greater frequency. Most disturbingly, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising at an unprecedented rate. At the same time we also witness in too many instances how the earth's natural beauty, a sign of God's wonderful creativity, has been defiled by pollutants and waste.

Many have reacted to these changes with grief and anger. In their outrage some have

understandably focused on the neglect and carelessness, both in private industry and in government regulation, that have contributed to these changes. However, an honest accounting requires a recognition that we all participate both as consumers and investors in economies that make intensive and insistent demands for energy. In addition, as citizens we have chosen to support or acquiesce in policies that shift the burdens of climate change to communities that are most vulnerable to its effects. People who are already challenged by poverty and by dislocation resulting from civil war or famine have limited resources for adapting to climate change's effects.

While an accounting of climate change that has credibility and integrity must include our own repentance, we find our hope in the promise of God's own faithfulness to the creation and humankind and in the liberation that comes from God's promise.

God, who made the creation and made it good, has not abandoned it. Daily the Spirit continues to renew the face of the earth. All who care for the earth and work for the restoration of its vitality can be confident that they are not pursuing a lost cause. We serve in concert with God's own creative and renewing power.

Moreover, we need not surrender to political ideologies and other modern mythologies that would divide us into partisan factions — deserving and undeserving, powerless victims and godless oppressors. In Christ we have the promise of a life where God has reconciled the human community. In Christ God sets us free from the captivity of blaming and shaming. God liberates us for shared endeavors where we find each other at our best.

While the challenge may seem daunting, the Spirit's abundant gifts for service empower us to find common cause with people who exercise countless insights and skills, embodied in hundreds of occupations and trades. We have good reason to hope in all the ways God's grace is at work among us. We can commend ourselves to the work before us with confidence in God's mercy.

Opportunities to act imaginatively and courageously abound in all our individual callings. The Holy Spirit's work in us leads us as faithful consumers and investors in a global economy to make responsible choices to reduce energy use, carbon emissions, and the wasteful consumption of water and other natural resources. As citizens, we have voices to use in educating children about the climate and in shaping public and corporate policies that affect the environment. The Spirit has also given us our voices to contribute our witness to public discussion of just and responsible use of natural resources.

We also have the resources and responsibility to act together for the common good, especially for those most vulnerable to the effect of climate change in the spirit of the seventh Millennium Development Goal, "to ensure environmental stability". World leaders will meet this month in New York for a Climate Summit, and in December in Lima, Peru, to discuss global cooperation on climate change. Working under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), participants in the UNFCCC's negotiations hope for an agreement in 2015 that will move toward reduction of carbon emissions, development of low carbon technologies, and assistance to populations most vulnerable to the effects of a changing climate.

We encourage you to take the initiative to engage decision-makers in this godly work in all arenas of public life — in government and business, in schools and civic organizations, in social media and also in our church life. We are not powerless to act and we are not alone. "We have the power of the

Holy Spirit and the indwelling Spirit of Christ to give us hope and courage."

The present moment is a critical one, filled with both challenge and opportunity to act as faithful individuals and churches in solidarity with God's good creation.

The ELCA's social statement "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice" is available at <http://www.elca.org/en/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Caring-for-Creation> (<http://www.elca.org/en/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Caring-for-Creation>).

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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 about 4 million members in nearly 10,000 congregations 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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