



April 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

God's Easter promise of new life in Christ, made for all of humanity, also holds promise for God's creation: all the Earth and its creatures that God made and pronounced "good." In our celebration of the Good News of the Resurrection, we should remember that Jesus Christ is the embodiment of God's love and care for the world; that "things were created through him and for him" (Colossians 1:15-16); and that in caring for creation we honor Christ.

On Earth Day, April 22, I urge you also to remember God's exhortation to us to till and keep the earth (Genesis 2:15) in the face of a growing body of evidence from scientists around the world that global warming is threatening the future of creation and the health and well-being of all living things.

Recent reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a group of the world's preeminent scientists studying our planet's climate, make it clear that earth's climate is warming, largely due to humanity's use of fossil fuels. This phenomenon is likely to lead to disastrous consequences for all of creation, and particularly for "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40). The poor and hungry of the earth are most vulnerable to rising sea levels, the spread of infectious disease, extending areas of drought, and other impacts of rising temperatures, many of which are already occurring.

In the 1993 social statement, *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice*, the ELCA recognized that "the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide" threatens our planet. It urges us to accept responsibility for our sinful treatment of God's gift of the earth, and that a substantial part of the problem is our use of fossil fuels to run our homes, our churches, our cars, and our places of business. Those

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Living in God's amazing grace



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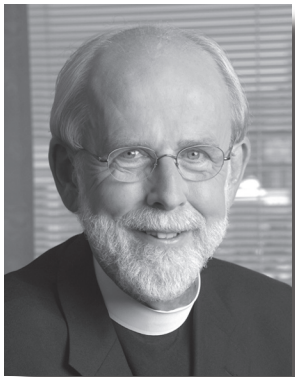
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Living in God's amazing grace

of us who live in the United States produce one-quarter of the world's carbon emissions, even though we are only five percent of the planet's human population. Although we are complicit in the evil that we see, we can repent of our own sinful misuse and abuse of the Earth, direct and indirect, when we confess our sins. We do this especially for the sake of the poor of the earth, working on their behalf even as we contend with entrenched political, economic, and social forces.

Caring for Creation also urges us to advocacy and action, both as individual Christians and as a church body. On this Earth Day, I urge each of you to take up the challenge presented to us as a people of hope and conviction by the threat of global warming. Consider contacting your elected officials to urge them to address this problem. Look for ways to reduce your use of fossil fuels. Walk when you can, use public transportation if it's available, and change your light bulbs to energy-efficient compact fluorescent light sources. Ideas for other actions you can take in your homes and in your congregations can be found at



<http://www.elca.org/advocacy> on the ELCA Web site.

“When we face today's crisis, we do not despair. We act.” (Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice)

Living in God's amazing grace,

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Learn more

Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice social statement:

www.elca.org/socialstatements/environment/

ELCA environmental ministries: www.elca.org/environment/

ELCA global warming tool kit:

www.elca.org/advocacy/environment/globalwarming.html

ELCA “Hunger Guide for Congregations” Earth Day resource:

www.elca.org/hunger/resources/hungerguide.html

ELCA “Awakening to God's Call to Earthkeeping” study guide:

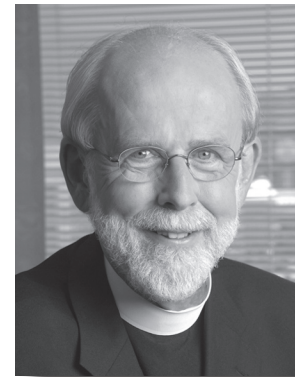
www.elca.org/stewardship/teaching/

National Council of Churches Earth Day Sunday resource:

www.elca.org/advocacy/environment/ourdailybread.pdf

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