

RESOLUTION 2022-1 Care for Creation and Carbon Neutrality

WHEREAS Creation Care is one of six arenas for ministry of Peace Lutheran Church, testifying to our community's answer to the call to care for the Earth as God cares for the Earth; and

WHEREAS the evidence shows how great a threat accelerating climate change poses to all of God's creation; and

WHEREAS the most effective and powerful way to genuinely care for God's creation is for all of us urgently to help remove carbon pollutants from air,

Therefore be it RESOLVED, that Peace Lutheran Church faithfully engage in a process in 2022 designed to create a common language and understanding and, ultimately, a consensus regarding the goal of making our facilities carbon neutral by 2030 through a multi-year action plan to be set before the congregation in January of 2023.

Submitted by the Creation Care Team: Marian Christjaener, John Fueger, Kathleen Fueger, Deb Hagen-Lukens, Barbara Hillier, Pastor Erik Kindem, Marcia Olson, Dana Rice, Michael Truog

BACKGROUND

The Creation Care Team presented the resolution, including the following background, to the Church Council at its December 2021. The Council approved bringing the resolution forward to present to the congregation at the annual meeting January 30, 2022.

Proposal from Creation Care Team to Peace Lutheran Church Council

Dec. 14, 2021

PLC's Sixth Arena of Ministry: CARING FOR CREATION

From the beginning God has entrusted the human community with tending and caring for Earth—our common home. In this time of unprecedented threats to the planetary systems that sustain life, we commit ourselves to the vocation of creation care. We recognize the interconnectivity and worth of all of God's glorious creation and commit ourselves to care for the land, the air, the water, and the fellow creatures with whom we share this home. In and through our worship life, policy decisions, education offerings, actions, and ecumenical relationships (e.g. Earth Ministry) we commit ourselves to sustaining Earth and seeking justice and compassion for all that God has made.

Proposal to the Church Council from the Creation Care Team

Over the past two years, particularly as we worshiped, met and collaborated remotely, the Creation Care Team at Peace discussed how best to breathe life into our sixth arena of ministry, adopted in January 2020, to care for God's creation. The team has engaged with Earth Ministry's Greening Congregations group and explored net zero pollution goals. We strongly support setting pollution reduction goals and crafting an action plan to get us there. To do that, we

recognize the need to become – and recruit – educating partners to help us all become more knowledgeable of what such action means for us as a congregation and as individual members.

For 2022, the Creation Care Team proposes a year-long collective exploration of what becoming a carbon neutral or net zero congregation would mean for Peace Lutheran and what our path might be to get there. Ideally, we'll tap the knowledge and creativity of the Peace community in ways that allow us to develop an action plan to present to the congregation at the Annual Congregation Meeting on January 29, 2023, one year from our upcoming Annual Meeting on January 30, 2022.

Peace's history of environmental progress

Creation Care has long been part of our calling. The ELCA's 1993 "Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice" Social Statement declares: "Humans, in service to God, have special roles on behalf of the whole of creation. Made in the image of God, we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth." The seeds of this statement fell on fertile soil at Peace Lutheran.

For more than a decade, the Peace Congregation has taken increasingly strong steps to shape our mission in ways that honor and reflect the values of Earth care, from the liturgy of our worship life to practical measures such as installing rain gardens and cisterns on our property through the City and County Rainwise program that help prevent sewage run-off into Puget Sound, and installing solar panels to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, converting us to an energy producing community.

What have we already accomplished?

- We have hosted workshops and teaching events focused on educating our membership and community at large about the science of climate breakdown.
- From 2010 onward we have hosted a series of annual Season of Creation Sunday worship experiences in which we have sought to connect the dots between our identity as followers of Jesus with our vocation as Earthkeepers.
- We have actively advocated for legislation that would lead to healthier and more sustainable practices at both the state and federal levels.
- Our Earth-aiding capital investments, in addition to our solar panels and rain gardens, include the following:
 - The installation of high-efficiency gas-fired boilers, replacing an antiquated oil burning system (2010)
 - The installation of energy-saving lighting systems (2007, 2019)
 - The installation of insulation and saving-energy narthex windows (2019)
 - In 2015, we began planting trees on our grounds, including one in 2016 as a celebration of Pope Francis' *Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home*. Recent years have included work with the City of Seattle's Trees For Neighborhoods Program <http://www.seattle.gov/trees/planting-and-care/trees-for-neighborhoods> The Peace Tree Planting program, now a model for other congregations, beautifies the church grounds, helps retain water and carbon in our soil and increasingly provides habitat for the smallest of God's creatures as the trees grow and flourish.

Minimizing our environmental impact

On behalf of our congregation, the Creation Care Team has engaged with other Greening Congregations through the Earth Ministry network. The multi-year action plans adopted by some of those congregations to help them reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030 have inspired our Creation Care Team to consider if we could adopt a plan striving toward a similar goal. Part of our 2022 journey would include determining what such a plan for the community of Peace Lutheran would entail.

You can hear a lot of different terms when folks start talking about reducing any organization's or individual's contributions to global warming. Companies tend to talk about "net zero," but you might also hear "net zero carbon," "carbon neutral," or "carbon free." Helping us all understand what these terms mean – and why they matter – will be a first step in our 2022 program.

How does the congregation benefit?

The benefits to the congregation are many.

1. First, implementing purposeful Earthcare strategies helps us to fulfill our God-given vocation as Earthkeepers.
2. Second, it helps us to become more faithful stewards of the gifts with which our Creator has endowed the Earth and advocates for practices that will sustain Earth for generations yet to be.
3. Third, it strengthens our overall mission by communicating to members, guests, neighbors, and other communities of faith that we are a people who care deeply about this place where we have been planted and that we can be trusted as partners to love God and neighbor, including the creatures, habitats, and watersheds that make up this place we call home.
4. Fourth, it creates new avenues for deepening connections with other communities of faith, ministries, and organizations that share our desire to build a planetary commons for future generations.
5. Fifth, implementing Earth friendly strategies can have a positive impact on our bottom line. For example, the annual budget for the old oil-fired boiler was roughly \$8,000 annually. After the installation of high efficiency gas boilers, costs for heating the building were reduced to \$2,000 annually, one quarter of the previous cost.

The Creation Care Team's 2022 proposal

The Creation Care Team proposes we together embark upon a yearlong journey designed to help us all learn and grow in our understanding of both the problem we face and the actions available to us to make a difference in protecting God's creation from the ravages of unfettered climate change and environmental degradation. Our objective is to build a common language and understanding and ultimately consensus for a multi-year plan working toward a specific goal such as being carbon neutral by 2030.

Built around the needs, interests and engagement of congregation members, this journey may encompass worship, education, community engagement and faithful advocacy. Through our survey this fall, congregation members expressed interest in learning more about why and how burning fossil fuels changes our climate; the impact of trees, food waste, and forest health on creation; and why climate change hits vulnerable populations hardest. They also expressed interest in classes and workshops. The programs created for 2022 could include adult and youth

education; communications campaigns; workshops, seminars or classes open to our broader community as well as Peace members; and opportunities to partner with other congregations or organizations in West Seattle.

Looking toward a 2023-2027 Action Plan

Pending Church Council and congregation support as we move through 2022, the Creation Care Team envisions developing a five-year action plan to progressively reduce Peace Lutheran's environmental impact. Such an action plan would help integrate creation care with all our arenas of ministry and outline clear steps we as a faith community intend to take to cut our greenhouse gas emissions, save money on energy, waste and water and strengthen our community bonds. An Action Plan might include further energy saving investments in our building, more trees and native plantings on our grounds, ideas and guidance for how members can help reduce Peace Lutheran's pollution footprint and then take those ideas home to their own family, and community engagement to help ignite collective action.