



Report from Reference and Counsel

The Assembly Committee for Reference and Counsel received two resolutions for consideration at the 2024 Virginia Synod Assembly. They are included in the Bulletin of Reports, Section D.

[D- Reports from Committee of Reference and Counsel.pdf](#)

Virginia Synod 2024 Resolution on Care for Creation

(Bulletin of Reports pages D-1 through D-4)

1. The Committee has suggested editorial amendments to the resolution. (See below, pages S-8 and S-9)
2. The Committee recommends adoption of the amendments.
3. The Committee recommends adoption of the resolution, as amended.

Restitution of Privileged Associate Membership

(Bulletin of Reports pages D-6 through D-7)

1. The Committee shares this feedback regarding the resolution:
 - a. The first “Resolved” is not constitutionally permissible. Based on [Guidelines for Memorials and Resolutions](#), “Resolutions and memorials may not direct the churchwide organization to take action because of the principle of interdependence of the three expressions of this church (churchwide organization, synods, and congregations)”.
 - b. The second “Resolved” is not permissible based on Section 39:6 of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*: “Motions that conflict with the corporate charter, constitution, or bylaws of a society, or with procedural rules prescribed by national, state, or local laws, are not in order.”
 - i. This resolution conflicts with the established definition of Associate Membership, as stated in the ELCA Constitution and Bylaws, and is therefore not in order.
2. Given these procedural and constitutional concerns, the committee does not recommend adoption.



Virginia Synod 2024 Resolution on Care for Creation

- WHEREAS scripture clearly describes God declaring all of creation to be good; and
- WHEREAS care for creation is deeply rooted in scripture-humanity created in God's loving image and given stewardship responsibility to tend that creation ; and
- WHEREAS we are called in faith as Jesus' disciples and as the church to love "your neighbor as yourself" as did Christ who gave himself for us and for the sake of the world; and
- WHEREAS the 1993 ELCA Social Statement Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice affirms that "we are called to care for the earth as God cares for the earth;" and recognizes that "action to counter [~~E~~earth's] degradation....is essential to the future of our children and our children's children;" and declares that "each congregation should see itself as a center for exploring scriptural and theological foundations for caring for creation;" and that "as congregations and other expressions of this church, we will seek to incorporate the principles of sufficiency and sustainability in our life"; and
- WHEREAS ~~the 2022 ELCA the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), meeting in Churchwide Assembly 2022,~~ reaffirmed "the commitment of this church to engage in creation care and advocacy based on the principles of sufficiency, sustainability, participation, and solidarity," and encouraged "congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops to commit themselves to education about the urgency of the climate emergency,¹ the global opportunities of a just transition [away from greenhouse gasses],² and to lift up loving our neighbor in response to the climate emergency in their preaching [teaching, and Christian witness]"; and
- WHEREAS as individuals, ~~as~~ congregations, and as a synod of the ELCA, we share the calling to care for creation; therefore, be it
- RESOLVED that the Virginia Synod in assembly ~~encourages direct~~ all congregations of the synod to accept their responsibility to be stewards of the earth, and ~~to~~ adopt a covenant such as the one provided by Lutherans Restoring Creation (attached). ~~which will provide support and educational materials to grow faithfully and intentionally in this responsibility as individuals within the synod by:-~~
- ~~Worshiping in ways that celebrate and foster care for creation;~~
 - ~~Educating adults and children about biblical and theological foundations for creation care, ecological issues, and community practices;~~
 - ~~Improving energy conservation efforts in church buildings and grounds, and in means of practicing ministry;~~
 - ~~Promoting earth-friendly, creation-sustaining practices of members at home and work;~~
 - ~~Demonstrating care for creation in their local communities, and~~
- ~~Advocating for energy policies at the local, state, national, and international levels that will foster cleaner, renewable, and more efficient energy use in all sectors of society;-~~



and be it further

RESOLVED that the Virginia Synod Council at its earliest convenience be requested to:

1. adopt the “Synod Covenant with God’s Creation” provided by Lutherans Restoring Creation and attached to this Resolution to assist in guiding the Virginia Synod congregations in caring for God’s creation.~~provide leadership and oversight of this covenant by directing the Creation Justice thread of the Tapestry Team to work with partner groups (e.g., Arbor Day Foundation, Blessed Tomorrow, Center for Climate Justice and Faith, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Citizens’ Climate Lobby, Honor the Earth, Land Stewardship Project, Lutherans Restoring Creation, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, The Nature Conservancy, Virginia Interfaith Power and Light, and others) for its fulfillment;~~
2. provide leadership and oversight of this covenant by directing the Creation Justice thread of the Tapestry Team to work with partner groups (e.g., Arbor Day Foundation, Blessed Tomorrow, Center for Climate Justice and Faith, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Citizens’ Climate Lobby, Honor the Earth, Land Stewardship Project, Lutherans Restoring Creation, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, The Nature Conservancy, Virginia Interfaith Power and Light, and others) for its fulfillment;
~~adopt the “Synod Covenant with God’s Creation” provided by Lutherans Restoring Creation and attached to this Resolution to assist in guiding the Virginia Synod congregations in caring for God’s creation.~~

¹ Gen. 1:27; 2:15; 9:8

² Lk. 10:27, Jn. 13:34; Gal. 2:20, Eph. 5:1-2, Titus 2:14; Jn. 3:16-17, Rom. 8:19-21, Col. 1:20

³ 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) [Masson Delmotte, V., et al (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press. See also the AR6 Synthesis Report of the IPCC, publ. March 19, 2023.

⁴ “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)