2016 Resolution on Eco-Reformation in the Context of Climate Change

WHEREAS, 2017 will mark observances of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, which addressed fundamental threats to human well-being and all of God's creation in theological, social, and political ways; 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

WHEREAS, in 1993 with *Caring for Creation* we realized the urgency was already "widespread and serious, according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide of dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide" from the burning of fossil fuels, and that "action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children's children. Time is very short"; and

WHEREAS, in the 1999 ELCA Social Statement *Economic Life: Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All,* this church declares that "Too often the earth has been treated as a waste receptacle and a limitless storehouse of raw materials *to* be used up for the sake of economic growth, rather than as a finite, fragile ecological system upon which human and all other life depends"; and

WHEREAS, the Statement of Vision and Expectations for Ordained Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) stipulates that "the people of God are called to the care and redemption of all that God has made. This includes the need to speak on behalf of this earth, its environment and natural resources and its inhabitants. This church expects that its ordained ministers will be exemplary stewards of the earth's resources, and that they will lead this church in the stewardship of God's creation"; and

WHEREAS, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton wrote in a pastoral letter on September 19, 2014: "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 ... 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"; and

WHEREAS, the Lutheran World Federation has already, with its three-fold theme "Salvation: Not for sale. Human beings: Not for sale. Creation: Not for sale." signaled its intention to include creation at the center of global 2017 anniversary commemorations; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod, recognizing the need for ongoing reformation of the ELCA, memorialize the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA to make climate change and ecological justice major themes in ELCA planning and activities leading up to and following the observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod will find ways to enact the 2013 Churchwide Assembly action to "support and encourage synods, congregations, members, the Churchwide organization, and agencies and institutions of this church to adopt and advocate for policies that reduce energy use, and with it our dependence on fossil fuels, as an expression of this church's commitment to address climate change and to care for God's creation" and "to re-examine lifestyles and environmental footprints as they relate to the climate crisis and to improve their stewardship of energy resources and promote care for God's creation"; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Southwest California Synod commits itself to participate with the ELCA in becoming even more faithfully a denomination that embraces creation care throughout its life and mission.