STATEMENT OF THE REVEREND MARK S. HANSON
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Living in God's amazing grace

On behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), a church of more than 4.9 million members and 10,000 congregations nationwide, I thank the members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee for considering the views of people of faith as the committee works to address the critical issue of global warming.

God's exhortation to us to till and keep the earth (Genesis 2:15) urges us to action 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 our children and all living things. Recent reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 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), people living in poverty, who 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 1993, the ELCA recognized that "the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide" threatens our planet.[*] "Caring for Creation," our church's social policy on the care of God's Earth, recognizes that the use of fossil fuels for our homes, our churches, our cars, and our places of business is a substantial part of the problem. In the United States, we produce one-quarter of the world's carbon emissions, even though we represent only five percent of the planet's human population.

[*] *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1993).* The Caring for Creation Social Statement was adopted by a more than two thirds majority vote by the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA on August 28, 1993.

Recognizing our role as steward of God's creation, we must act to reverse this disparity and to take responsibility for our actions. We must follow the recommendations of leading scientists in order to protect all of God's creation from present and future harm. Therefore, we urge that the committee, when writing legislation to address global warming emissions, include comprehensive, mandatory, and aggressive emission reductions that aim to limit the increase in Earth's temperature to 2 degrees Celsius or less. In the short term, global warming legislation should focus on reducing U.S. carbon emissions by 15 to 20 percent by 2020. In the long term, global warming legislation should focus on reducing U.S. carbon emissions to 80 percent of 2000 levels by the year 2050.

The IPCC, in its recent reports, recognized that "the least of these"— those living in poverty in our own nation and around the globe — will be most affected by rising sea levels, increased drought, and other impacts of global warming. As a matter of justice, we urge that any legislation considered by the committee work to mitigate the impacts on poor and vulnerable populations around the globe who are least likely to have contributed to global warming and most likely to suffer from its effects. Specifically, we urge that the committee pass legislation ensuring a fair and equitable distribution of total benefits and costs among people, communities, and nations. We also urge that any legislation passed by the committee recognize the disproportionate impact that low-income communities have experienced, and will continue to experience, as the climate changes. And we urge that legislation include mechanisms to help poor communities around the globe adapt to changes in climate that will continue to occur even if we are able to slow changes in the planet's climate.

Our church supports the principle of sustainability and policies that provide "an acceptable quality of life for present generations without compromising that of future generations." In addressing global warming, we must make investments that ensure a good quality of life for humanity while ensuring that health and well-being of creation and the quality of life for future generations are not compromised by our actions. To reach our goal of sustainability, we urge the committee to adopt legislation to encourage

research and investment in clean, renewable energy sources that will both benefit current generations and our environment and ensure that future generations enjoy the same benefits.

"Caring for Creation" states that "in a world of finite resources, for all to have enough means that those with more than enough will have to change their patterns of acquisition and consumption." We cannot achieve significant reductions in global warming emissions unless we make changes in our lifestyles, and particularly in our energy consumption. To support the goal of sufficiency, we urge the committee to pass legislation that encourages energy conservation in our homes, our communities, and our places of worship. We also urge the adoption of legislation that encourages energy conservation in national transportation and distribution systems and commercial enterprises, and pushes the federal government to lead through research and example in the practice and implementation of energy conservation.