

# THE JOINT ASSEMBLY DECLARATION

**Endorsed by the Joint Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada, July 2013, Ottawa.**

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*In the beginning...God created the heavens and the earth...* —Genesis 1:1

As Anglicans and Lutherans, gathered *together for the love of the world*, we stand in awe and wonder at God's great creation, at the diversity of beings, and at the intricate balance of relationships that sustains life. We recognize that everything in this world is an integral part of the web of life.

We recognize the need and basic human right for each person to have a place to which to belong. Responsible and sustainable relationships to water, land, home, and each other are part of realizing our full humanity.

From our history we know that in using earth's resources we have the potential to achieve great good or to cause tremendous harm. As people of faith we recognize that we are called to be wise stewards of these precious resources for the life of the world.

*Together, for the love of the world, we seek*

- to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation
- to respond to human need by loving service
- to seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation, and
- to be in mission for others.

In this Joint Assembly we have focused our attention on:

- Homelessness and Affordable Housing
- Responsible Resource Extraction

As Churches in Full Communion we hereby agree that in our shared work concerning these issues we undertake to learn more and to raise greater public awareness, to discern where and how we can make a difference, to act where we can, and to advocate for equitable and innovative approaches to the challenges that we share, and to pray for all affected by these issues and those who bear responsibility in addressing them.

# Homelessness and Affordable Housing

*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.*  
—Luke 9.58

As we look across Canada, we are disturbed by the reality that around 400,000 people<sup>1</sup> are without a healthy place to live and that homelessness has continued to increase despite years of unprecedented economic growth and prosperity in our country. The costs in terms of human suffering are staggering, as are the additional burdens for health care and social services. Many in our society, notably the working poor, are unable to find affordable housing while others who are amongst the most vulnerable in our society lack a place called “home”. Similarly, the number of forcibly displaced persons worldwide has grown to close to 43 million<sup>2</sup>, more than the population of our own country.

Our local churches are amongst those who are providing a broad range of services and support for these individuals and families. While our efforts help them day by day we firmly believe that a comprehensive, collaborative, and coordinated initiative among all levels of government and stakeholders is required to address the underlying causes of homelessness and the alarming statistics concerning substandard housing; and that an effective and accountable implementation process is required to meet our obligation “to respect, protect and fulfill the right to adequate housing”, a motion that passed unanimously in our Parliament.

Therefore, we commit

- to **learn** about the issues that contribute to poverty, homelessness, and substandard housing and to **raise awareness** within our communities of the challenges and the potential engagement in supporting initiatives to address these challenges
- to **act** by nurturing and supporting our own networks of agencies and programs with and for the homeless, the under housed, and refugees
- to **act** by exploring new models and working with partners, on innovative approaches to address poverty and homelessness
- to **advocate** for renewed Federal funding, an integrated national collaborative strategy, and greater accountability on the part of provinces and municipalities in addressing underlying causes of homelessness and in providing opportunities for affordable housing
- to **pray** for safe, affordable and adequate housing for all.

<sup>1</sup> “Defining and Enumerating Homelessness in Canada,” Library of Parliament Research Publications.  
<http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/LOP/ResearchPublications/prb0830-e.htm> February 17, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> UN High Commissioner for Refugees, “2011 in Review,” <http://www.unhcr.org/4fd6f87f9.html> February 17, 2013.

## Responsible Resource Extraction

*I brought you into a plentiful land...but you defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination. —Jeremiah 2.7*

At home and abroad, Canadian companies are major players in mining, various forms of resource extraction, and energy production and related development projects. They generate wealth for our societies but they also give rise to serious and complex environmental, socio-economic, and human rights issues.

We are concerned that recent Canadian legislation [NB: bills C-38 and C-45] has made changes to environmental legislation and assessment processes that potentially threaten the ecological integrity of areas under proposed development.

In Canada and elsewhere, resource extraction and development projects often cross the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples without their Free, Prior and Informed Consent, a right enshrined in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to which Canada is a signatory nation.

Many of our global church partners, and members of our own churches, have called on us to address these issues as Canadian churches. We bear a moral responsibility to address these issues and concerns in partnership with others.

We commit

- to **learn** about issues of resource extraction and the effects on environment, health, Indigenous peoples, communities, and economies and to **raise awareness** within our communities and with policy shapers and decision makers
- to **act** in support of our partners in defining their own development goals, including supporting Indigenous communities in Canada and elsewhere in exercising their right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent; and to act to embed enforceable legal obligations based on FPIC in Canadian policies and practices with respect to resource extraction
- to **advocate** for responsible and ethical investment and actions by individuals, faith communities, corporations, and governments both in Canada and around the world
- to **pray** for the humility and discipline to use Earth's resources wisely and responsibly.

## Conclusion

We recognize that these are long-term challenges that will require time, patience, persistence, and commitment on our part.

The General Synod Office and the National Office of ELCIC will develop an agreed road map with specific shared activities and a timetable and will report to the Council of General Synod and to the ELCIC National Church Council.

We will challenge each other to show love for the world, and we ask God to help, guide and transform us.

*Do not be conformed to this world,  
but be transformed by the renewing of your minds,  
so that you may discern what is the will of God—  
what is good and acceptable and perfect.*  
—Romans 12:2

*The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it,  
the world, and those who live in it;*  
—Psalms 24:1