

GREEN ELCSA REPORT

JULY—DECEMBER 2017

Climate
Change
Education

**The earth is the LORD's and the
fullness thereof,
The world and those who dwell
therein.**

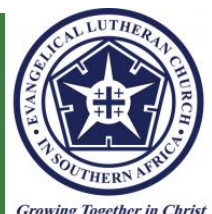
[Psalm 24:1]

Climate
Justice
Advocacy

Environmental
Care

“The mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa is to advocate for justice, peace and reconciliation for the people of God according to the constitution of the church. The wellbeing of the people of God depends on and is inseparable with the wellbeing of our mother earth and the whole creation, therefore we accept the calling to advocate for climate justice through which we sought to create a cleaner and healthier environment.”

Green ELCSA



- **The Central Text**

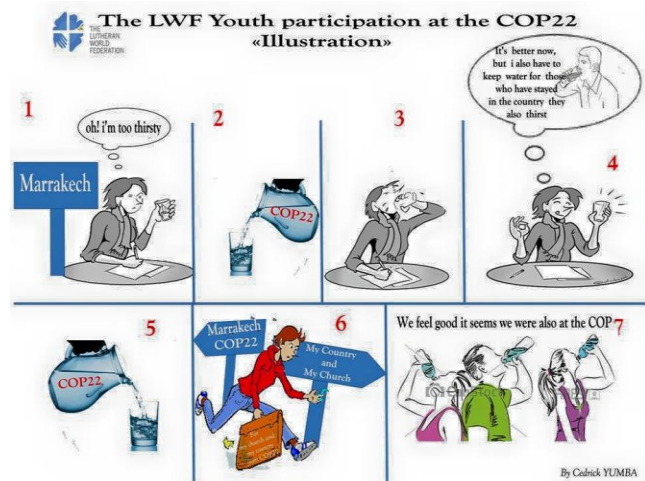
“The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1 NIV). The Psalmist affirms God’s sovereignty because God has created all things. Looking back at the creation of the world, the humankind was indeed entrusted with a responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of God’s creation. God declared each part of creation as inherently good but through human induced climate change, creation groans and cry under the overuse and misuse. It is a matter of time to acknowledge this fact and take urgent actions to combat climate change and its impacts.

- **Background and Overview of the Project**

The Green ELCSA initiative is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa’s project on climate change which is focused on three components; Climate Change Education, Environmental Care, & Advocacy for climate justice. This initiative is inspired by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Climate Network with an aim of enabling the church to undertake climate justice integrated actions as the church and as God’s children entrusted with the wellbeing of God’s creation.

A COP22 Outcome

In November 2016 the LWF decided to select Eight (8) delegates from the Africa region to represent the Communion of Churches at the 22nd Session of the Conference of Parties (COP22), from which these delegates were motivated to continue give back to their communities and churches the information and awareness about climate change. ELCSA was also represented in this delegation and as a result, there was a successful persuasion that ELCSA drives its own initiative within the church, hence Green ELCSA.



Cedrick Kitwa YUMBA, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo | LWF COP22 Delegate

The LWF COP22 Delegation were invited to the LWF Africa Pre-assembly which took place in February 2017 in Johannesburg to present the COP22 Report, and Green ELCSA ought to integrate the recommendations thereof which were adopted by member churches in that Pre-assembly. Those recommendations are:



- *To invest in renewable energies and divest from fossil fuels.*
- *To integrate a climate change curriculum in religious education.*
- *To establish climate justice projects with concrete actions, involving young people.*
- *To work with governments and other organizations in tackling climate change.*
- *To be active on the Fast for Climate Movement in solidarity with those affected by climate change.*

Following various meetings and consultations, from July 2017 the initiative was officially implemented.

- **Climate Change Education**

Climate Change Education is one of the three components of Green ELCSA which has an aim of teaching and raising awareness about climate change in order that everyone can play their roles to safeguard the earth's resources towards a just and sustainable future.

We had an opportunity to join other Christians around the globe in symbolic actions, prayer and care for creation through the annual **“Season of Creation”**, which took place between 01 September – 04 October 2017.

On the 6th of October 2017, a week preceded the Global Climate Change Week; Green ELCSA hosted a collaborative seminar with ELCSASO Durban University of Technology (DUT) and the South African Youth Climate Change Coalition (SAYCCC). The seminar was about the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 – “Climate Action”. The purpose of this seminar was basically to raise awareness about climate change in our community in order to enable essential roles in increasing adaptation and mitigation capacities. A well deserved appreciation goes to everyone who made this occasion a success and especially the organizations that partnered with us: the Women's Leadership and Training Program (WLTP), Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network (CAYN), Durban University of Technology Green Campus Initiative (DUT GCI), Radio-DUT and also the Ethekewini Municipality Energy Office.

The Ethekewini Municipality's energy office representative Ms Linda Somazembe presented the Durban Climate Change Strategy (DCCS). The DCCS was developed “as part of the Municipal Climate Protection Programme, with an aim of defining a city-wide approach to adapting to climate change and mitigating Durban's contribution to climate change” (DCCS; 2014: iii). In partnership with relevant stakeholders, Green ELCSA ought not to isolate herself from this course.

One of the significant outcomes of this seminar was the ambition to build up synergies between the Ethekewini Municipality's DCCS and all related stakeholders. It was a general view from the participants in the seminar that the DCCS is well contextualized and the only thing we need to do is strategic implementation.



- **Environmental Care**

Environmental Care is the second components of Green ELCSA and it is about the protection of the environment through actions like Reduce, Reuse & Recycle. One of the activities that we are pursuing is ‘One Home One Garden’ and that will be a demonstration of our care for creation.

- **Climate Justice Advocacy**

Climate Justice Advocacy is the core mission of the entire initiative: Advocacy is one of the elements that make a ‘holistic mission’ of the church. The mission of ELCSA is to advocate for justice, peace and reconciliation for the people of God according to the constitution of the church (ELCSA Constitution: 2011:1). The wellbeing of the people of God depends on and is inseparable with the wellbeing of our mother earth and the whole creation, therefore we accept the calling to advocate for climate justice through which we sought to create a cleaner and healthier environment for the people of God in the church and society.

Climate Justice Advocacy is also incorporated with the two other components of this initiative (Climate Change Education and Environmental Care). We seek to raise necessary ambitions for an equitable implementation of the Paris Agreement. We are concerned for the most vulnerable especially the poor and voiceless, and one of the significant things that we are encouraging is capacity-building in local communities in order to enable essential roles to mitigate climate change. Therefore, on that note we also believe that the SDGs are a necessary approach with which we will capacitate our poor communities.

COP23: 06 – 17 November 2017

COP23 was the biggest platform at which we participated in advocating for climate justice, and we had this opportunity because ELCSA is a member in the ACT Alliance which is a coalition of churches and church-related organizations. Some of the stunts that we conducted were based on Loss and Damage and the Adaptation Fund. All these actions were basically about lobbying the parties to act for climate justice.

We have launched a campaign as ACT Alliance and the Lutheran World Federation to stand in solidarity with the climate vulnerable people and we call on everyone to join the campaign in any corner of the world to act for climate justice by signing our call for action for global resilience and sustainability:

[<http://go.actalliance.org/climatecall>] #CallToAction | #ACT4Climate]

We will also continue to engage the EtheKwini Municipality to equitably implement the Durban Climate Change Strategy (DCCS).

- **A Message to the church**

Climate change knows no borders of any kind, and it has a negative impact to the life of the church as much as members of the church continue to experience negative effects of climate change. It is the church’s alternative mission to fight against all injustices and ultimately for climate justice.



Envisioning the Future

Green ELCSA is still at an initial stage and it acts as a pilot project because of limited resources. However, when it comes to advocacy it is not limited because of the privilege to participate in national and international platforms through the organizations in which ELCSA is a member. Subsequently, advocacy for climate justice could happen at every diocese, circuits and parishes, a simple principle in advocating for climate justice is standing Human Rights. Therefore this initiative can be as wide as our church is located, any member of the church or any church leader at any level can take such an action.

Finally, as a Lutheran church “we understand climate change as an issue of justice, peace, care for creation and protection for all peoples everywhere; we re-commit ourselves and encourage others to commit to a profound change in our lifestyles and in the broader system of production and consumption. We must live as responsible and accountable citizens of this planet” (LWF; GENEVA, 23 June 2015).

References:

- *NIV: The Holy Bible, “New International Version”, 1984 International Bible Society. By Biblica, Inc. R*
- *Durban Climate Change Strategy (DCCS); Final Draft for Council Approval: September 2014.*
- *ELCSA Constitution: DATE: 27 September 2011*
- *LWF; GENEVA, 23 June 2015: Speaking up and acting for climate justice as people of faith).*

Prepared by

Khulekani Sizwe Magwaza
Green ELCSA Focal Person
fahmagwaza@gmail.com
green.elcsa@gmail.com