

EARTH DAY 2015 Statement by Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Anglican Church of Canada, and National Bishop Susan Johnson, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Earth Day—observed annually on April 22nd—falls this year in the midst of the Festival of Easter in which we celebrate the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created.... He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.* (Colossians 1:15–17)

As we rejoice in the splendour of God’s creation, we encourage you to make time this week to reflect on the complex challenges of climate justice and responsible resource extraction.

At the 2013 Joint Assembly, Anglicans and Lutherans made a commitment to address these issues and to discern ways we might be healers of the Earth. We call on all members and congregations across the country to take action together for the love of the world.

Let us remember our first calling as human beings is caring for the Earth. So sacred is this calling that as Lutherans worldwide mark the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 2017 with an overall theme “Liberated by God’s Grace,” one of the subthemes is “Creation—not for sale.” So sacred is this calling to Anglicans worldwide that they hold among their Marks of Mission a commitment “to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth.” This mark of mission is now reflected in the vows made in baptism.

On Earth Day we confess our sin in wreaking havoc upon the Earth. In our quest for its resources we have destroyed ecosystems. Human greed and overconsumption have driven our reckless behaviour. The world’s rich minority has come to enjoy levels of comfort and luxury at the horrible expense of creation and at a terrible price for the poor, those most affected by climate change. The number of environmental refugees increases. Many nations are calling upon political, economic, social, and religious leaders to address climate change as “the most urgent moral issue of our day.”

At home and abroad, Canadian companies are major players in resource extraction, energy, 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. Many of our global church partners, and members of our own churches, have called on us to address these issues as Canadian churches.

Let us ensure that those most affected by environmental degradation and resource extraction are heard. Let us stand with Indigenous Peoples in their struggles and honour the principles of free, prior and informed consent as resource extraction and transportation impact their traditional lands and ways of life.

On this Earth Day let us speak a word of urgency into global gatherings for climate talks in the lead up to the United Nations Conference of Parties (COP) in December in Paris. Church leaders meeting in South Africa in February urged Canadian and world leaders to work with haste towards “fair, ambitious, accountable and binding climate change agreements at national and international levels...(and)...to develop policies that genuinely assist climate refugees and promote mechanisms of entire governmental co-operation that ensures their human rights, safety and resettlement.”

Let us embrace the challenge to be healers of the Earth, ensuring its wellbeing is an integral part of the Christian witness. Let us not just speak a word of hope into the ecological crisis of our time but let us be that word of hope through our attitude toward the Earth and our actions—personal, ecclesial and political—in the interests of its healing and sustainability for our children and their children.

We recognize that these are long-term challenges that require time, patience, persistence, and commitment on our part. Our prayers help us to sustain each other and ground us in the truth of our reliance on God for all that we are and all that we do. Together, for the love of the world, let us continue to learn, raise awareness, act, advocate and pray.

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

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fred Hiltz".

The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz
Primate, Anglican Church of Canada

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan C. Johnson".

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada