

STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION

Lutherans Proclaim their Commitment to God's Creation

Amid a breathtaking backdrop of national forests, lakes and streams, Lutherans and people of nine other faith groups in Michigan's Upper Peninsula collaborate for one mutual cause: to care for God's creation.



On Earth Day 2009, in partnership with the Earth Keeper Tree project, hundreds of Lutherans planted 12,000 white spruce and red pine seedlings in 15 counties.

Their participation in this work is shaped, in part, by a social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice*. Its words are a call to deepened responsibility: "When we act interdependently and in solidarity with creation, we do justice. We serve and keep the earth, trusting its bounty can be sufficient and sustainable."

Since 2004, the Earth Keeper Initiative has conducted annual Earth Day "clean sweeps" of hazardous and electronic waste, energy conservation programs and other environmental hands-on projects through more than 150 churches and temples. Volunteers have collected almost 370 tons of waste, including pesticides, oil-based paint, pharmaceuticals, computers and televisions.

The interfaith initiative provides an opportunity to meet on common ground, says the Rev. Jon Magnuson, co-founder of Earth Keeper, ELCA campus pastor at Northern Michigan University and executive director of the Cedar Tree Institute. "We connect, meet and work along other faith traditions. It's an interesting way that God works."

A coalition of ELCA parishes in the U.P. and Lutheran Campus Ministry helps support the initiative.

"Even though we don't have creedal connections, we do have connections to the earth," said the Rev. Thomas A. Skrenes, bishop of the ELCA Northern Great Lakes Synod. "It's a model for what can happen around the country when we focus on what we have in common."

For more *Stories of Faith in Action*, visit www.elca.org/stories.
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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

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