



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

For Immediate Release: COP25 in Madrid

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At the United Nations Conference of Parties 25 (COP25) in Madrid, Spain, the message about climate change is urgent. “Don’t call it climate change. Call it a climate emergency.” The word, “ambition” is being used at almost every session. How can we move from climate procrastination to raising our ambition to save the planet?

COP meets annually to address the problem of climate change. 197 countries are represented in voting, and several non-governmental bodies are present with observer status. The director of the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin and five additional members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are in attendance as observers during the first week of COP25. Six other ELCA members will attend the second week of the two-week conference.

At one of the first plenary sessions opened to observers, it was striking how some developing countries were vying to be recognized as the most vulnerable to climate change. Others said that in order to move ahead, everyone had to work together without trying to single out any countries to focus on, to not change the Paris agreement (COP21 in 2015).

There are disagreements over the topics of loss and damages and human rights, especially when discussing tracking and taking responsibility. Equity in relationship to loss and damages is not only about getting everyone affected by climate change at the table. It includes evaluating how those countries that have historically created the most greenhouse gas emissions (and have benefited the most economically as a result) will respond to those that have been least responsible for those emissions but are most impacted.

What everyone seems in agreement on is that we are experiencing the impacts of climate change right now. The longer we take to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement to hold the global average temperature to “well below 2 degrees C above preindustrial levels and pursuing efforts to 1.5 degrees C” the less likely we will be to avoid catastrophic results, or pause long enough for the needed technology to be developed.

In my denomination, we are hopeful in what we can do to care for God’s creation. Hope includes telling the truth. The truth is that we are in a climate emergency.