Honoring the Dignity of People & Planet

GOAL:

Get election candidates to commit to language and leadership that does not dehumanize people or treat the planet as disposable.

Campaign "Ask":

In your letters, and in your own words, **ask candidates for office to honor the dignity of every beloved child of God and promote care for God's good creation** through

- the language they use on the campaign trail
- campaign ads by their campaigns & PACs acting on their behalf
- decisions and policies as they move forward

Themes to guide your letters on why candidates, leaders, and all of us should care

1. **Who we are** – We are all created in the image of God, and are beloved children of God, meaning every person deserves dignity.
2. **How we speak** – We avoid reducing people and creation to disposable categories or even displaying contempt for others with differing viewpoints.
3. **How we use power** – We refuse to treat people as tools, obstacles, and objects to use (or abuse) for personal gain or the benefit of a few.
4. **How we live** – We receive and use resources responsibly and treat people with dignity.
5. **How concerns for people and planet intersect** – We recognize that harm to creation becomes harms to neighbors, especially those who are most vulnerable. We also recognize the exploitation of people also impacts creation negatively.

Possible Talking Points (choose 2 or 3, or write your own)



- When we objectify, we stop seeing neighbors as beloved children of God and creation as God's good gift.
- We are called to use God's gifts wisely. Even though we use and depend upon earth's resources, we are entrusted to be good stewards and not exploit or destroy what God has made.
- We can meet human needs & build a strong economy without treating people or creation as disposable.
- Both short-term and long-term economic gain must always consider what is sustainable and that someone or something's worth is more than a momentary monetary value.
- Care for creation is interconnected to care for our neighbor and those who inherit the world after us.
- Decisions should consider who bears the costs and should prevent harm from being shifted onto vulnerable people, communities, or the environment.
- We can disagree about policy without objectifying the planet or dehumanizing one another.
- People should never be reduced to a single story, label, or the worst thing we assume about them.
- Words are powerful and can either encourage respect and understanding or normalize contempt, division, and even abuse.
- Strong convictions do not excuse contempt for those who hold different views.

Finding Your Candidates

For these letters,

1. **Go to mnvotes.gov** and click on WHAT'S ON MY BALLOT (lower right corner), then "Sample Ballot"
2. **Put your address into the box**, and a copy of what is on your ballot will appear.
3. **Choose who you will write to** (U.S. Senate candidates, U.S. House candidates, MN Senate candidates, MN House candidates, Governor, or another state office). You'll notice that **there are candidates for several parties.** You can write to all of them in a particular race, or just the candidates from the major parties.
4. **Click on the candidate's name** to go to their campaign website. Most **campaign office addresses** are at the bottom of the website. (A few candidates don't have websites – that will take more research).
5. **Write your letter(s), pray that God will work through them, & mail them to the candidate(s).**

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Questions? Email: tammy.walhof@elca.org **OR** Call/Text: 651-238-6506

What is Needed for a Good Advocacy Letter?

As you try to get the attention of your candidates, you'll want to **use your own words** and **personalize** your letter as much as possible. They want to know what YOU think. **Notecards** or **stationery** can make the letter feel even more personal. A simple personalized letter, note, or email is usually worth more than hundreds of form letters.

A good letter will also include the following elements:

1) **Your Name & Address on Envelope & Letter:** Those running for office want to know that you are a voter and will be their constituent if they win. Also, letters & envelopes often get separated.
2) **Who You Are:** Mention something about yourself, like what church you are from, and if you have first-hand experience with the issue.
3) **Ask for Specific Action:** "Please support…"
4) **Give a Reason or Say Something About Why You Care:** Speak from your heart, elaborate from the talking points, or tell a story.
5) **Consider Your Audience:** Are they Christian or people of faith? If not, some language might be confusing for them. "Creation" should then be replaced by "environment" or something else. However, just because they aren't a person of faith doesn't mean that you can't tell them what you believe ("As a Christian, I believe that people are created in the image of God, and that each and every person must be treated with the dignity that requires"). However, for some legislators that might backfire. Always consider how the recipient will receive the letter.



Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for loving the world so very deeply. Help us to see the brokenness that now mars what you created as perfect, and the struggles of people you created in your image. Help us to reflect your love by loving and serving our neighbors and our vulnerable planet. Please help us be your advocacy ambassadors, bravely lifting our voices with, and for, those whose wellbeing is threatened. Give us the right words to share with our election candidates and leaders, so that they, too, may see and hear and understand the brokenness, as well as how you are calling them to respond. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.