

Dear President Obama,

Protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a moral issue. As people of faith, we not only have a commitment to care for creation, but our faith also tells us to protect God's sacred spaces. Our commitment to the preservation of wilderness and human rights drives our call to protect the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge.

As we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Arctic Refuge this year, we are writing to urge you to work toward formal Wilderness designation for this sacred place. During this 50<sup>th</sup> year, we ask you to take executive action to give the Arctic Refuge the strongest protections available.

As people of faith, we are called to care for all of God's children. The Arctic Refuge's 1.5-million-acre Coastal Plain is home to polar bears, muskoxen, wolves, and millions of migratory birds that have lived in balance since time immemorial. It is a birthing place for polar bears, 88 species of birds that migrate through all 50 states, and the 100,000-member Porcupine Caribou herd travels hundreds of miles to the Coastal Plain to bear their calves.

The Gwich'in people, a majority of whom are members of The Episcopal Church, depend upon the caribou for food, clothing, cultural identity, and call the Coastal Plain "the sacred place where life begins." Drilling the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge would destroy this caribou birthing place, and with it, the traditional culture of the Gwich'in. Thus, respect for all of God's children enjoins us to protect this place that has provided for the Gwich'in people for millennia.

Protecting places like the Arctic Refuge is vital and in line with the fundamental values many faiths have in common. We come from diverse religions traditions, but we stand on common ground. Our traditions converge around the concept that we have a solemn obligation to care for creation and ensure long-term protection for a place like the Arctic Refuge as well as a culture that has endured for thousands of years.

Most of the world's religious texts teach us that the gifts of God's creation are to be conserved over time for God's children. For example, "This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations" (Gen 9:12).

By doing everything you can to protect the Arctic Refuge, we believe you will demonstrate your commitment to protect all of God's creation, support diverse cultures and traditions, and ensure that future generations can know the beauty of God's Creation. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge must be forever protected as a sacred place for the Gwich'in, a haven for wildlife, and a cathedral for the human spirit to glory in God's handiwork. We urge you to provide permanent protection for the Refuge, for the Caribou, and for the Gwich'in.

Sincerely,

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**Cameron Campus Ministry**  
Montie and Galeda Jones, United Methodist  
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