



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Protestant and Orthodox Communities applaud Pope's Encyclical on the Environment**

Welcome Francis into a Long Line of Faith Leaders and Traditions Who Call for Stewardship of Creation

Washington, D.C. – Standing in solidarity with their Catholic brothers and sisters, the National Council of Churches and Creation Justice Ministries express excitement and hope for Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si*. Acknowledging that Francis is a holy figure to millions of Americans and over a billion people around the world, this church document has the ability to reframe the debate about environmental protections and climate change away from being political and toward a conversation about moral obligation and right relationship with the Creator.

Pope Francis joins the chorus of religious figures and communions that have spoken out about caring for creation. In a powerful ecumenical gesture, Francis highlighted the immense contribution of Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the global discussion of creation care and stewardship in the opening of the encyclical. Previous popes, along with every denomination that make up the National Council of Churches and Creation Justice Ministries, have stated the importance of protecting that which God has created.

"For many years, faith leaders and scientists have been describing the urgent need for action to address climate change," offered Jim Winkler, President and General Secretary of the National Council of Churches. "I am grateful that Pope Francis has added his powerful voice to this cause. God's Creation is at risk and we must all join together to care for the Earth."

"Christians from many denominations and faith traditions have been concerned about environmental degradation and how it is impacting the poor and vulnerable for decades," stated Tricia Bruckbauer, Program Director for Creation Justice Ministries. "We are hopeful that Pope Francis' call to care for creation will change hearts and minds and allow us to take strong personal, community, national, and global action to begin to heal the earth and care for those that are being harmed by the effects of climate change, pollution, and environmental carelessness."

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*Since its founding in 1950, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA has been the leading force for shared ecumenical witness among Christians in the United States. The NCC's 37 member communions --*

*from a wide spectrum of Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, Evangelical, historic African American and Living Peace churches -- include 45 million persons in more than 100,000 local congregations in communities across the nation.*

*Creation Justice Ministries – formerly a program of the National Council of Churches – represents the creation care policies of 38 national Christian denominations on issues such as environmental justice, climate change, and conservation.*