

March 8, 2018

President Donald Trump
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC

Secretary Ryan Zinke
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear President Trump and Secretary Zinke,

As religious leaders, we write in opposition to expanded oil and gas drilling and seismic testing in public waters. Offshore drilling brings unacceptable risks to God's oceans and coastal communities.

Offshore drilling could produce perilous consequences like oil spills that can poison the God's oceans, including wildlife and clean water. No oil company or Administration can guarantee the safety of drilling offshore.

Because the faith community serves as first responders in disasters, we know painfully well the devastation that oil spills can cause to our communities. It is well documented that oil spills can wreak havoc on ecosystems and local businesses and residents alike. Seismic testing that often precedes offshore oil and gas development also harms marine life, including imperiled sea mammals and important fisheries.

Any increased oil and gas drilling offshore will inevitably lead to increased pollution, oil spills, and harm to marine life. Drilling not only impacts marine life, but also impacts people who depend upon the oceans for food and jobs.

Expanding drilling into our Arctic, Atlantic, Eastern Gulf of Mexico and Pacific waters—still largely unspoiled by drilling's inherent hazards and harms—would put our coastal residents, businesses, oceans, and climate at grave risk. Exposing the Gulf of Mexico to additional drilling would further burden residents with the pollution and risks that have already caused great, lasting harm to the region.

God created the oceans with an abundance of life and, as stewards of God's earth, we should work to preserve and protect God's marine creation. As people of faith, we also uphold our duty to love our neighbors. Oceans provide food sources and livelihoods for millions in the U.S. and globally.

We urge the Trump Administration to focus on investments in renewable sources of energy such as wind and solar, as well as maximize our energy efficiency, instead of looking to expand fossil fuel exploration in God's ocean. God entrusts us to be good stewards of God's oceans and coasts. We should honor this sacred duty and position our country as a global leader in energy stewardship.

We ask you to join us as God's steward of the oceans and to respect the local residents, businesses, and millions of Americans who have already made clear their support for preserving, not drilling off our nation's beaches.

Sincerely,

Rev. William Miller
African Methodist Episcopal Church
Charleston

Rev. Brenda Kneece
Belmont Baptist Church
Columbia

Rev. Jeff Kackley
Dorchester Presbyterian Church
Summerville

Rick Joyce
Sustaining Way
Greenville

Rev. Sotello Long
President
Disciples Home Missions
Summerville

Elsie Long
Elder
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Dr. Jim Watkins
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Pawleys Island

Rev. Dr. Jeremy Rutledge
Circular Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Charleston

Rev. Anya Marsalek Leveille
New Emanuel AME Church
Charleston

Rev. Danny Reed
Unitarian Church in Charleston
Mount Pleasant

Rev. Lori Hlaban
Unitarian Universalist
Beaufort

Rev. Cecil Bromell
Macedonia Missionary Baptist
Darlington

Rev. William Sally
Jerusalem Baptist
Charleston

Rev. James Lewis
Covenant Missionary Baptist
Georgetown

Rev. Leonard Griffin
Morris Street Baptist
Charleston

Rev. Clary Grady
Reid Chapel AME
Columbia

Rev. Ceaser Richburg
Bethel AME
Columbia

Elder William Prioleau
Evening of Prayer COGIC
N. Charleston

Rev. Henry Rivers
Wallingford Presbyterian
Charleston

Rev. Wendy Price
Atlantic Beach Mission CME
N. Myrtle Beach

Rev. Virginia Folks
Larry Temple CME
N. Charleston

Rev. Jetson Maness
Vanderhorst Memorial CME
Charleston

Rev. Alfred Williams
Canaan Missionary Baptist
N. Charleston

Rev. Benjamin Snoddy
Mount Moriah Baptist
Spartanburg

Rev. James Blassingame
Mt. Zion Baptist
Sumter

Rev. Joiquim Barnes
New Hope CME
Lexington

Rev. Michael McClain
Liberty Hill Miss Baptist
Catawba

Rev. John McCoy
Nazareth Baptist
Rock Hill

Rev. Michael Malcom
United Church of Christ