

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

July 14, 2016

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### **Christian Leaders Call for Permanent Protection of Bears Ears Monuments Protect God's Creation for Generations to Come**

Washington, DC – Today, leaders from fourteen Christian denominations and organizations called on the Obama Administration to permanently protect a 1.9 million acre area in Southeast Utah known as Bears Ears. They would like President Obama to follow the recommendation of a coalition of five tribes to make the area a national monument. Their call to action came in [a letter](#) released days before Administration officials plan to visit Bluff, Utah for a listening session about protecting Bears Ears.

The letter included a recognition of the historic nature of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal coalition's proposal, as well as the urgency to protect the area now, given repeated destruction of antiquities in Bears Ears. The letter said, "reckless erasing of history, as well as the desecration of sacred places, must stop." The religious leaders' letter also expressed respect for the tribes' expertise: "The tribes leading the Bears Ears national monument proposal have experience living sustainably on the land since time immemorial, and traditional knowledge related to Bears Ears is irreplaceable. Now, the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition is offering the United States a true gift: a national monument which will help our nation to learn from them."

**Rev. Dr. Genny Rowley of the Alliance of Baptists** said, "As decision-makers gather in Bluff this week, my prayer is that we continue moving towards protecting Bears Ears by designating it National Monument. Honoring the sacredness of this land is an opportunity for justice and reconciliation, in a process led by tribal leaders who continue to graciously offer their wisdom and stewardship."

**Evangelical Lutheran Church in American Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton** said of the letter, "The Gospel calls the ELCA to the ministry of justice and reconciliation in upholding the dignity of Native American people and enhancing the wellbeing of their communities, which includes the care and stewardship of land and all creation."

**Creation Justice Ministries Executive Director Shantha Ready Alonso** said, "With the release of this letter, we want Administration officials, leaders of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, and other community members who gather in Bluff to know they will be in the Creation Justice community's thoughts and prayers. May our nation have the wisdom to protect what is sacred."

*Creation Justice Ministries represents the creation care policies of 38 Christian communions, including Baptist conventions, mainline Protestants, Historically Black Churches, Peace Churches, and Orthodox communions. Learn more at [www.creationjustice.org](http://www.creationjustice.org)*



# CREATION JUSTICE MINISTRIES

*Justice for God's planet and God's people.*

## CHRISTIAN LEADERS ON BEARS EARS NATIONAL MONUMENT PROPOSAL

Our national parks and monuments are an extraordinarily powerful tool for the people of the United States to tell our collective story. It is critical to ensure that the story includes historic and current contributions and wisdom of Native people. Rooted in, and in continuity with, our Lutheran faith and ministry, it is with great hope and joy that we support the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal coalition's recommendation for a Bears Ears National Monument."

Bishop Jim Gonia  
Rocky Mountain Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
([Read his full statement here.](#))

"We must protect our God-given treasures on earth and recognize the treasures of Native Americans. Both are consistent with a number of resolutions adopted by conventions of the Episcopal Church."

Bishop Scott Hayashi  
Episcopal Diocese of Utah  
([Read his full statement here.](#))

"National parks and monuments are sacred places where we take Sabbath – where we learn, play, and pray. Now is the time to accept the gifts of knowledge and stewardship being extended to us by the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition. Let's permanently protect Bears Ears through the establishment of a Bears Ears National Monument."

Rev. Rebecca Kemper Poos  
Immediate Past Moderator, Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Church of Christ  
Senior Minister, Congregational United Church of Christ in Buena Vista, CO  
([Read her full statement here.](#))

"As Christians we believe all people are made in the image of God, with inherent dignity and worth. As Lutherans, by our baptism, it is our commitment to respond to the unending call of peace and justice work. A Bears Ears National Monument is a step towards justice for our communities that have suffered dehumanization for centuries. It is with the gift of tribal leadership that may contribute to ongoing healing and preservation of culture."

Prairie Rose Seminole  
Program Director for American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America