CREATION JUSTICE MINISTRIES

PROTECT & RESTORE
GOD’S MARINE CREATION

IN THE BEGINNING...

In the bible, God calls upon mankind to be stewards of the Earth and take measures to protect the environment. "The Lord proclaims: The one who established the sun to light up the day and ordered the moon and stars to light up the night, who stirs up the sea into crashing waves, whose name is the Lord of heavenly forces." - Jeremiah 31:35

God’s creation emerged out of chaotic waters. Starting with the book of Genesis, our relationship with God’s ocean is both powerful and personal.

Worldwide there are coral reefs, seamounts, kelp forests, seagrass meadows, mangroves, and many other sensitive habitats facing perilous threats. We are called to defend the integrity of God’s creation from increasing threats of oil drilling, mining, climate disruption, acidification, harsh commercial fishing practices, plastic pollution, and more.

OCEAN FAST FACTS

The coast is home to nearly half of all people on Earth. Today, 40 percent of the world’s population lives within 100 km (62 mi) of a coastline. This number is expected to increase to 50 percent—4.25 billion people—by 2030.

The ocean is humankind’s most effective buffer against climate change. The ocean is the Earth’s largest heat and carbon sink. It has absorbed 93 percent of the heat generated by industrial-era carbon dioxide emissions, and it captures nearly 30 percent of the carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere every year.

We’re safeguarding God’s beautiful creation for future generations. With our stewardship, God’s ocean can continue as a source of spiritual, ecological, and economic strength.

We invite you to join this community of ocean champions growing across the United States. Together, we can take up the mantle of being stewards of this earth, and all the marine creation within, to ensure that the wonders of the sea can continue to be discovered and celebrated by all generations.

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The ocean is full of living laboratories for scientific exploration and discovery. From coral gardens to nurseries for baby manta rays, we still have so much to learn about the wonders of all that God has created.

The efforts to protect our ocean are as wide-ranging as the challenges that we are facing. The community of stewards of our marine creation feel this pull for many reasons. Our ocean has intrinsic and necessary value to all facets of human life. As such, we have a duty to care for the blue world in the best way we can.

The Vitality of Our Blue Economy

Healthy oceans support healthy economies.

A NOAA survey found that almost 49 million adults participate in ocean and coastal recreation and spend over $141 billion in ocean recreation related goods and services.

Coastal recreation spending supports more than 3.1 million jobs, $409 billion in business income, and $135 billion in household incomes.

Combined, U.S. commercial and recreational saltwater fishing generated more than $208 billion in sales and supported 1.6 million jobs in 2015. It is critical that this practice continue to become more sustainable, so that creation can thrive in the coming generations.

Our ocean fuels scientific discovery and wonder...

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Healthy, diverse and unique marine ecosystems are increasingly important for research and conservation efforts. We don't know what we don't know, and we cannot afford to lose these wonders of the ocean before we know still lies beneath its surface.

DID YOU KNOW?

Deep sea sponges have been recognized as a source for a promising treatment of pancreatic cancer.

Scientific expeditions into ocean sanctuaries and deeper, formerly unexplored waters routinely turn up new species such as the Genie’s Dogfish, a type of shark, found in the deep waters of the Western Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico.

Genie’s Dogfish, discovered in the Western Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico in 2018.
The Blessing of Our Marine Sanctuaries

Our marine sanctuaries and marine protected areas (MPAs) are safe havens for sea creatures such as whales, sea turtles and seabirds. As caretakers of God's creation, we show reverence for special places marine life need -- not only to survive, but to thrive.

"And God said, 'Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.' So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it." (Genesis 1:20)

The United States has many types of marine protected areas: marine national monuments, marine national parks, marine reserves, marine sanctuaries, and wildlife refuges.

Marine national monuments are home to rare and at-risk species from humpback whales, green sea turtles, and puffins to deep-sea corals. Protecting special places in the ocean helps ensure that future generations will enjoy and benefit from them.

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary is a U.S. National Marine Sanctuary in the Florida Keys. It includes the Florida Reef, the only barrier coral reef in North America and the third-largest coral barrier reef in the world.

This August, The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries released a draft proposal recommending a range of potential changes to existing boundaries, regulations, and marine zones in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, to better address long-term declines to the region's marine resources as well as ongoing and emerging threats due to changing ocean conditions.

Action: NOAA will accept public comment on the proposals through January 31, 2020. The public comment period will include opportunities for engagement, including public meetings.

Marine monuments continue the bipartisan tradition of permanently protecting natural and historic treasures for the future. Since Congress passed the Antiquities Act in 1906, giving the President the authority to create national monuments on our public lands and waters, 16 Presidents – eight from each party – have used it to preserve special places. Protecting America's public lands and waters remains popular among Americans across regions and political affiliations.

Our five marine monuments in United States waters.
God’s marine creation both faces disproportionate risk and importance as the Earth experiences the climate crisis. Heat and excess carbon dioxide have damaged the chemical balance of the ocean, making it more acidic. This imperils the diversity of life therein. When life in the ocean is in danger, food security and livelihoods of millions around the world are also in jeopardy. Furthermore, warming ocean waters are linked to more frequent and dangerous weather events such as hurricanes. These severe weather events imperil the physical safety of coastal communities, and threaten to impoverish millions who lose their homes and businesses amidst the harsh winds and floods. The time to act is now.

The Trump Administration has proposed eliminating nearly half of all protected areas in America’s ocean, the largest-ever rollback of ocean protections in U.S. history. This includes eliminating protections in three ocean sanctuaries designated as marine national monuments—the Pacific Remote Islands, Rose Atoll, and Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monuments. These areas are currently providing areas of refuge for many species of fish and marine wildlife that are already facing a range of threats.

In November 2018, the Trump Administration approved five permits to allow deafening seismic airgun blasting for offshore oil exploration along the Atlantic Coast. Ocean noise is already impacting endangered marine life, and seismic blasting could do irreparable harm to tens of thousands of dolphins, whales and other marine wildlife, and kill or scare away fish species that U.S. fishermen rely on for their livelihoods.

In July 2018, the Administration proposed new regulations that would weaken protections for endangered marine species, including manatees, turtles and whales.

The Acting NOAA Administrator has also proposed removing the word “climate” from the agency’s mission statement.
The Path Ahead

To protect God’s beautiful creation, we must restore coastal ecosystems and protect healthy oceans. Here are some actions you can take to help preserve God’s marine creation.

Call your elected officials and encourage them to support legislation that maintains marine protected areas, including marine sanctuaries and marine national monuments.

Limit your plastic usage and encourage your community to prioritize plastic-free options. Buy resusable items to store food. Ask your local restaurants about switching to metal or paper straws rather than plastic.

Educate your local community and encourage local government to address issues like rising sea level, coastal drilling, and climate change.

Engage on social media by sharing articles, following ocean-protection accounts and participating in sign-on letters related to oceans issues you care about.

Submit public comments to federal agencies proposing new rules and regulations that will impact our marine creation.

Be cautious of the chemicals you use. One of the biggest sources of pollution occurs as a result from land and includes chemicals, oil, salts, pesticides and fertilizers. These pollutants damage marine habitats and endanger marine wildlife.

Support the youth in your life in advocating for protecting this wonderful marine creation for future generations. Help them share with their youth groups, classmates, and peers encourage each other to become ocean champions themselves.

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Northeast Canyons & Seamounts

In 2016, faith communities celebrated the designation of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, the first marine national monument in the U.S. Atlantic.

Located 150 miles off the coast of Cape Cod, our first marine national monument in the Atlantic Ocean protects 4,900 square miles of God’s marine creation, nearly the size of Connecticut. It features canyons as deep as the Grand Canyon, and mounts higher than anything east of the Rockies.

It is one of the most biodiverse areas in the Atlantic, where rare cold-water coral reefs more than a thousand years old make their home and nurture a myriad of species. Scientists are continuing to identify new species in this underwater ark for some of God’s most exotic and wondrous creatures.

Without protection, the area would have been at risk of future damage from mounting offshore industrial activity -- including expansion of commercial fishing, drilling and mining.