

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
706 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Murphy
136 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

July 8, 2016

Dear Senators Blumenthal and Murphy,

As Connecticut clergy and religious leaders, we have a responsibility to pass the riches of our faith traditions on to future generations. Deeply embedded in our faith traditions is the moral imperative to care for our natural world. The ocean inspires a great sense of mystery, awe, and promise. With modern subaquatic cameras, we are finally getting an inkling of what wonders lie underwater, and what these wonders reveal to us about the Divine. Up until very recently, most of us did not know that only 100 miles off the New England coastline, under the Atlantic Ocean, we have canyons as deep as the Grand Canyon and mounts nearly as high as the Rockies, which are highly biodiverse areas in the Atlantic.

As a matter of faithful stewardship of God's gifts, we believe it is a moral imperative to shelter this special place from harm. The coral canyons and seamounts have rare cold-water corals more than a thousand years old. They are home to hundreds of species. Scientists are continuing to identify new species in this area, which are proving to be some of the most exotic and wondrous creatures on Earth. In some of our faith traditions we might liken this place to an underwater modern "Noah's ark" which will help a diversity of species be more resilient to climate impacts.

We also appreciate these undersea treasures are integral to the historical heritage of tribes native to this region. Long before the advent of industrial activity in these waters, these tribes exercised wise stewardship of the gifts of the ocean. We owe it to future generations to maintain these gifts with the same level of care these tribes have demonstrated over many centuries.

By showing reverence and care for the natural world, we honor the Divine. By designating these special areas as national monuments, we improve the chances our communities can get to know, love, and be good stewards of these beautiful, unique, and biodiverse areas. These special places deserve permanent protection so they can thrive for generations to come.

We ask that you use your position of influence to ensure protection for New England's Coral Canyons and Seamounts as the first marine monument in the Atlantic Ocean.

With hope,

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Conference Minister, Connecticut Conference United Church of Christ
Middletown, CT

The Reverend Thomas Carr
Pastor, Second Baptist Church
Co-Founder, Inter-religious Eco-Justice Network of Connecticut
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