

Governor Jack Dalrymple  
Office of Governor, State of North Dakota  
600 East Boulevard Avenue  
Bismarck, ND 58505-0100

December 1, 2016

Dear Governor Jack Dalrymple:

The Earth Care Committee of the Church of Reconciliation (PCUSA) of Chapel Hill, North Carolina brings you greetings of peace and good will in this Advent season.

We are concerned to hear recent reports from your state regarding the treatment of the Standing Rock Sioux in their protest for protection of sacred lands and water. We address you now from our shared faith life in the Presbyterian Church. In our basic document of RESTORING CREATION FOR ECOLOGY AND JUSTICE (from the 202<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly), we are committed to “Lift up the environmental awareness and sensitivity that is built into Native American traditions and show the interplay between the Christian story and the Native American story.” We have sent support and continuing prayers for these, our brothers and sisters, because we deeply believe in their brave efforts to protect sacred land and the water of the Missouri River which is so important not only to them but to all Americans in the watershed. They say that “Water is Life,” and we agree. We cannot drink oil.

If you are indeed, as you say, interested in public safety and in protecting these peoples from harsh winter conditions, we urge you to manifest this in your treatment of the Standing Rock Sioux. We are alarmed to hear of blocking supplies from reaching the protesters’ camp—even threatening to use hefty fines to keep demonstrators from receiving food, building materials, and portable bathrooms. Starving out peacefully protesting people who have legitimate grievances about misappropriation of their lands and waters in a North Dakota winter seems cruel and unnecessary punishment. Their blood will be on your hands.

In his 2015 Encyclical, which our church has carefully studied, Pope Francis told us that *“it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best. Nevertheless, in various parts of the world, pressure is being put on them to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture.”*

We pray you will treat these people as your sisters and brothers in this season of love and hope.

Sincerely yours,

Nancy Corson Carter, facilitator  
The Earth Care Committee of the Church of Reconciliation (PCUSA)  
110 North Elliott Road  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514