



Bears Ears National Monument

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Interfaith Joint Statement on the Care of Creation & the Perpetual Preservation of Utah Wilderness

We, the undersigned, as leaders of different yet connected faith traditions, recognize a shared call to care for all of Creation and respect the interdependent web of all existence of which our fragile Earth is a part.

In the opening chapters of the Hebrew Bible, God creates the Earth before creating humanity and subsequently assigns to humanity the role of guardian of God's creation (Genesis 2:15).

We have been taught – through the Gospel lessons of Jesus and the prophets of the Hebrew Bible– the lessons of pilgrimage into the wilderness and the vital role that an appreciation of God's magnificent creation can play in our own spiritual formation.

Our stewardship of the Earth requires us to think deeply about the many ways in which our activities affect the planet, including through climate change, environmental degradation, and loss of biodiversity.

The urgent, existential threat posed by our warming planet and a 1,000-year drought disproportionately and negatively impacts the underserved, underprivileged and indigenous people.

Utah is a public land state, where federal lands such as national parks, national forests, national monuments, and wilderness areas make up 66% of the land area. As a condition of statehood, Utah's territorial citizens – including the founders of most religious institutions participating in this letter – agreed to forever disclaim all right and title to the public lands lying within the boundaries of Utah.

Utah's wild lands contain some of the world's richest concentrations of sacred sites important to the spiritual well-being of Native American cultures that endure, despite challenges, today, including the Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute, White Mesa Community, Confederate Tribes of the Goshute, Skull Valley Goshute, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone, Paiute Tribe of Utah, San Juan Paiute, Pueblo of Zuni, Hopi Tribe, and the Navajo Nation.

These lands are deeply valued by people from many different spiritual traditions as places of inspiration, connection, renewal, and solace. They also provide habitat for endangered or sensitive wildlife, including desert bighorn sheep, cougar, and the Mojave desert tortoise, as well as for elk, deer, mountain lion, bear, coyote and many other animals.

These public lands are at the heart of the Colorado River watershed, which provides water to 40 million people – making it the second largest source of fresh water in the United States.

The publicly owned wild lands of Utah belong to everyone, and the protection of our public lands works to the benefit of current and future generations.

The federal designation of publicly owned wild lands as national monuments or wilderness areas helps to provide vital protection for these sacred and fragile places. In Utah, America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act embodies these protections.

Within the State of Utah, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and Bears Ears National Monument protect areas of outstanding natural beauty and the complex and sensitive ecosystems they encompass.

Both national monuments also contain priceless and fragile paleontological, cultural, and historical resources.

The preservation of these ecosystems and resources closely aligns with our Biblical mandate to preserve and protect God’s creation. Accordingly, we call on the people of Utah, the United States, and around the world to consider the ways in which their actions and their use of Earth’s resources may affect this fragile planet.

We further urge leaders of Utah to consider the immense public benefits, including benefits to local economies, provided by protection of the unique and sensitive lands of southern Utah, including those encompassed by Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments, as well as the lands included in America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act.

We ask our leaders to end their legal and political battles against Utah’s national monuments and the roughly 8.5 million acres of BLM wilderness across the state, and to work together with sovereign tribal nations and our federal partners to ensure these supreme masterpieces within God’s creation endure for generations to come.

Catholic Church



The Most Reverend Oscar Solis
Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City

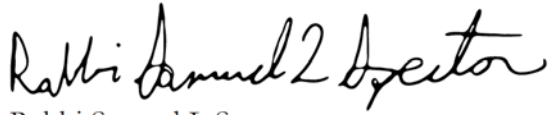


Rev Richard Sherman
St Christopher’s Catholic Church, Kanab



Rev Samuel Dinsdale
St Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, Holladay

Jewish



Rabbi Samuel L. Spector
Congregation Kol Ami Synagogue



Cantor Sharon Brown-Levy
Congregation Kol Ami Synagogue

Episcopal Church



The Right Reverend Phyllis Spiegel
Episcopal Diocese of Utah



The Very Reverend Tyler Doherty
Cathedral Church of Saint Mark, SLC

Greek Orthodox Church



The Very Reverend Archimandrite George Nikas
Greek Orthodox Church of Greater Salt Lake

United Church of Christ



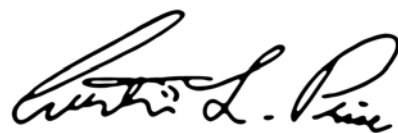
Reverend Brent Gundlach, Pastor
United Church of Christ, Holladay

United Methodist Church



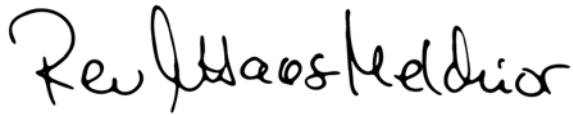
Bishop Karen Oliveto
United Methodist Church, Mountain Sky Conference

Baptist Church

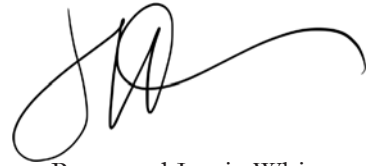


Reverend Curtis Price, Pastor
First Baptist Church, SLC

Presbyterian Church



Reverend Mirjam Haas-Melchior
Executive Presbyter of the Presbytery of Utah



Reverend Jamie White
First Presbyterian Church



Reverend Hansen Wendlandt
Community of Grace Presbyterian Church
(PCUSA)

Lutheran Church (ELCA)



Bishop James Gonia
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America,
Rocky Mountain Synod



Reverend David Nichols
Mount Tabor Lutheran Church, SLC

Unitarian Church



Reverend Monica Dobbins
First Unitarian Church SLC

Ecclesiastical Allies
Colorado River Watershed

+ *John C. Wester*

The Most Reverend John Wester
Archbishop of Santa Fe

+ *John Taylor*
Los Angeles

The Right Reverend John Taylor
Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles

+ *Jennifer Reddall*

The Right Reverend Jennifer Reddall
Episcopal Diocese of Arizona

+ *Paul-Gorden Chandler*

The Right Reverend Paul-Gorden Chandler
Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming