

Awakening the Nation with Action against Pipeline

Collegium Statement of Solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation

In solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation and with the guidance of the UCC's Council for American Indian Ministry, the UCC Collegium of Officers declares its opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline, which is proposed to deliver over a half-million barrels of fracked oil from North Dakota to Illinois. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe has voiced its objections to the pipeline and initiated non-violent action that has led to the arrest of at least 28 persons in seeking to block construction. The pipeline would travel underneath the Missouri River and thereby threaten to contaminate a water source for the people of the reservation and numerous others who live downstream. After educating itself about the relevant background to the pipeline, the Collegium regards this matter as one that touches upon vital matters of racial justice, the honoring of sacred space, and the climate impact of fossil fuels.

Racial justice surfaced as a matter of consideration in the determination of siting the pipeline within a half mile of tribal lands as opposed to an alternative proposal to site it near the predominantly white city of Bismarck. The company's initial environmental assessment noted the threat the pipeline would pose to the drinking water of Bismarck residents while failing to even recognize the existence of the tribe or the jeopardy posed to its drinking water.

The honoring of sacred space surfaced as a critical issue because the pipeline would cross through lands of longstanding religious, cultural, and ancestral significance to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. These lands include burial sites. Moreover, the water of the river itself is regarded as a sacred, life-giving force. The Sacred Stone Spirit Camp, where demonstrators have encamped, is named for sacred stones where members of the reservation come to pray for guidance and strength. The demonstrations notably began and have continued as an intentional act of prayer.

The climate impact of the fracked oil to be transported by the pipeline is also of notable concern. The 2015 GS resolution entitled Transition from Fossil Fuels to Renewable Energy advocated for a complete transition to clean energy by 2040 along with "an immediate ban" on all fracking, the injection of a chemical-water mixture underground to extract oil. Our society cannot successfully transition to

a renewable future if we continue to build costly and enormous infrastructure for fossil fuels.

About the demonstrators, LaDonna Allard of the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation notes, “Our major action is prayer. We do a prayer ceremony every day.” To people everywhere, Allard extends the invitation to pray in solidarity. The prayer Allard evokes is prayer that encompasses and accompanies action. The Collegium extends this call for prayerful action and actionable prayer. As part of this effort, we encourage the further spread of this important cause through online advocacy. Together may we embody a faithful commitment to the divine call for justice.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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