

EMERGENCY RESOLUTION NO. 0531
(SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY)
PROTECTING THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it (Psalm 24:1). We believe that protecting the environment goes to the heart of living the faith, and that environmental destruction is one sign that humanity has lost the moral compass. All religions agree that the natural world, with its rich diversity of landforms, waters and creatures comes forth from a loving Creator. Native peoples who live close to the land have developed a deep love and respect for Mother Earth. We believe every nation has special responsibility in its stewardship of this gift of creation to shape responses that protect the environment and ensure it for the entire human family.

Created by President Eisenhower in 1960 and expanded by President Carter in 1980, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has been one of the greatest conservation legacies of both political parties. It contains 19.6 million acres in the remote corner of Alaska. It is a wildlife sanctuary of awe-inspiring natural wonder: a sweeping expanse of tundra studded with marshes and lagoons and laced with rivers dramatically situated between the rugged foothills of the Brooks Range and the wide, icy waters of the Beaufort Sea. It is often called the "American Serengeti".

WHEREAS, the Refuge is home to a greater abundance and more diverse spectrum of wildlife than any other protected area. It allows the Gwich'in people to continue their subsistence way of life, and to protect water quality and quantity. It is one of the few ecosystems left on earth in its original condition. It is a national treasure and such places are anchors in a changing world; and

WHEREAS, on April 28, 2005 the United States Congress adopted a budget that allows opening the pristine region to exploration for oil and gas along the 1.5 million-acre stretch of land along the Beaufort Sea; and

Coastal plain oil development would require a spider's web of industrial complexes across virtually the entire plain - hundreds of miles of roads and feeder pipelines, refineries, living quarters for hundreds of workers, landfills, water reservoirs, docks and gravel causeways, production plants, gas processing facilities, seawater treatment plants, power plants and gravel mines; and

WHEREAS, while technology and environmental regulations have improved their performance, spills still regularly occur during oil operations. For example, there are over 400 spills every year of crude oil and other toxic substances at the oil field in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, just 30 miles west of the Arctic Refuge; and

WHEREAS, the threats to wildlife would be enormous. In a letter to President Bush, over 1000 scientists and natural resource managers from the U.S. and Canada confirmed that oil development could significantly disrupt the fragile ecosystem of the coastal plain and seriously harm caribou, polar bears, muskoxen, snow geese and other wildlife. Biologists project that the birthrate of the Porcupine caribou may fall by 40 percent if drilling is allowed; and

WHEREAS, expanded conservation, greater use of the renewable energy, and alternative fuels are more consistent and effective in protecting all of our environment,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada meeting in Portland, Oregon July 23-27, 2005, register to President George W. Bush and Alaska Governor Frank H. Murkowski disapproval of any effort to allow oil and gas exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and that Assembly delegates send a copy of this resolution to their elected congress persons.