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**FAITH LEADERS ACROSS OHIO AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT IN SUPPORT OF
POPE FRANCIS' ENCYCLICAL ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

Faith leaders across Ohio express support for the Pope's encyclical, *Laudato Si* (Be Praised). Just as the Pope's encyclical is rooted in Catholic faith tradition and biblical teachings, other religious groups have deep roots in caring for creation and support the Pope's teaching on the relationship between care for creation and concern for the poor. Faith communities are already engaged in ministries and actions that address the intersection between care for the environment, concern for the most vulnerable, and faith.

The following faith leaders offer comment and are available to the media:

STATEWIDE:

Sara Ward, Executive Director of Ohio Interfaith Power and Light

At Interfaith Power & Light, we know first-hand that climate change is a moral issue not only for Catholics, but for people of all major faith traditions —and that people of all faiths are busy putting belief into action. Congregations across Ohio have been hard at work practicing what the Pope is now preaching on climate action, embracing energy efficiency, renewable energy, and climate-friendly practices. Ohio Interfaith Power & Light calls us all to take bold steps to move forward into the clean energy era so we can find real solutions for all Ohioans.

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Ohio Interfaith Power and Light is a statewide organization and an affiliate of the national Interfaith Power and Light network of 40 states and over 18,000 congregations and 6-7 million persons of faith.

The Rev. Rebecca Tollefson, Executive Director of the Ohio Council of Churches

As a body that speaks for the moral dimensions and the long-term, and is trans-national, the church has a very important role in promoting environmentally sustainable living. As a community of faith, we will act on behalf of creation, confident that the One who made us walks with us...As followers of Christ, humility, simplicity, sacrifice, service, and prophetic courage, guide our decision making and our actions.

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The mission of the Ohio Council of Churches is to make visible the unity of Christ's church, provide a Christian voice on public issues, and engage in worship, education and service, representing 6,000 Ohio Christian congregations and 3 million members.



CENTRAL OHIO:

President Jay Rundell, Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO)

“We at MTSO commend Pope Francis for his encyclical on the environment. Faith communities have a role to play in confronting climate change and other means by which human activity is harming our planet. As president of a school with deep commitments to both ecology and social justice, I am particularly struck by the pope’s observation that the poor benefit the least and suffer the most from our dependence on fossil fuels. A commitment to living more environmentally responsible lives benefits not only the earth but the least privileged of our brothers and sisters with whom we share it.”

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Methodist Theological School in Ohio equips graduate students of many faith traditions for lives of lasting significance. Located on 70 hillside acres in Greater Columbus, the MTSO campus provides an ideal setting to promote serious Christian scholarship and prepare transformational leaders for the church and the world.

SOUTHERN OHIO:

The Right Rev. Thomas Breidenthal, Bishop of Southern Ohio Episcopal Church (unavailable June 25-July 3)

When we act so as to make Christ known, we bear witness to our common life in Christ, and we further that common life by inviting others to work with us. In this way, for example, initiatives regarding sustainability and the environment have risen up among us: Interfaith Power and Light, the organic plot at Procter, the clergy wellness day focused on going green, the “Green Summit,” community gardens in Avondale on the site of the former St. Michael and All Angels, and Good Earth Farm in Athens, which has already become a destination for mission trips from around the diocese.

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The Episcopal Church is home to more than 25,000 people in Southern Ohio. Our communities of faith can be found in Cincinnati, Columbus and Dayton and in farm towns and county seats all across the southern half of Ohio.

NORTHERN OHIO:

The Rev. Marcus Lohrmann, Bishop of Northwestern Ohio Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

The ELCA statement on caring for creation says: “We of the ELCA are deeply concerned about the environment, locally and globally, as members of this church and as members of society. Even as we join the political, economic, and scientific discussion, we know care for the earth to be a profoundly spiritual matter.” Pope Francis’ encyclical is another reminder that we must not harm others by destroying the Earth that sustains us all.

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The Northwestern Ohio Synod is one of 65 synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and comprises 165 congregations and 259 clergy.

The Right Rev. Mark Hollingsworth, Jr., Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Ohio

Advocating for and practicing environmental fidelity are essential aspects of our vocation to be faithful stewards of creation. To that end, the Episcopal Diocese of Ohio is currently building a new camp and retreat center around a sustainable farm. A destination for school field trips, immersion experiences, seminars, and camp programs, it will model alternative energy use, water reclamation, restorative land care, sustainable food production, and physical and spiritual wellness. Together, we all must teach and learn how to be responsible caretakers of this fragile Earth.

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The Episcopal Diocese of Ohio is a diocese of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America comprising the northern 48 counties of the state of Ohio.

The Rev. Dr. Tony Minor, Advocacy Director for Lutheran Metropolitan Ministries

Black churches have a powerful role to play in working for clean air and water and finding solutions for environmental issues. We need to address the issues impacting the health and well-being of our communities. We know climate change will put vulnerable populations at greater risk, including the elderly, our kids, and people already suffering from burdensome allergies, asthma, and other illnesses. Heat waves and other extreme weather events can also disproportionately affect low income communities and some communities of color, raising environmental justice concerns. Pope Francis' encyclical highlights that the impacts of climate disruption fall most heavily on our poor and vulnerable brothers and sisters.

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Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry serves with people who are oppressed, forgotten and hurting including individuals who are homeless, unemployed and involved in the criminal justice system and individuals with behavioral health, guardianship and life-skill needs.

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Ohio Interfaith Power and Light's (OHIPL) mission is to empower a religious response to climate change and to promote energy conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy. OHIPL focuses on tangible results in religious communities—putting faith into action. OHIPL is organized around education, advocacy, and stewardship initiatives to engage the faith community in a religious response to climate change.