

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas and established it on the rivers.” *Psalm 24:1-2*

On April 20, 2010 the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded, killing 11 workers and injuring 17 more, and set in motion what would become the largest oil spill in U.S. history. In the 85 days that followed, 60,000 barrels of crude oil gushed daily into the Gulf of Mexico, leading to the closure of rich fishing grounds. Oil inundated beaches and marshes along the Gulf Coast, wrecking havoc on coastal eco-systems and harming animals such as birds and sea turtles.

BP finally succeeded in capping the well in late summer, but not before an estimated 4.9 million barrels of crude oil spilled into the Gulf. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the spill killed 4,080 birds, 525 sea turtles, and 72 marine mammals.

Communities along the coast are still feeling the impact both economically and environmentally—from tourism to fishing.

One local responder provided some insight and reflection on the Gulf Oil Spill:

We just don't know what the long-term impacts of this massive disaster may be on the waters and wildlife. We just don't know how long it will be before the charter boat captains and shrimpers and seafood restaurants and their workers can recover from their income losses and return to life as they knew it "before" this thing happened.

But this I do know, a reminder I was given while listening to scientists describe the mind-numbing complexity of the Gulf's ecosystem: God's Creation is a wondrous thing. It is a finely woven tapestry of living creatures, interdependent and carefully balanced, resilient yet incredibly fragile. And God has given us this marvelous miracle of abundant life to nurture and protect. As I contemplate what may now be some closure on the first crisis stage of this tragedy, I come full circle. Might this disaster serve as a launching point for a more authentic, impassioned discussion among people of faith regarding our roles as stewards of God's Creation? Might it prompt a different kind of conversation about our dependence on oil, our insatiable consumption of energy and resources? Can the horror many of us have felt looking at oil-soaked birds and oil-drenched marshes be translated now into a powerful change in behavior?

The long-term effects of this oil spill tragedy are unclear. But of our responsibility as God's faithful stewards there can be no doubt. God's dazzling Creation is ours to protect.

What can you do?

Let your policy makers know that the Deepwater Horizon well may be capped, but people of faith are still concerned about our brothers and sisters in the Gulf and the long term recovery of the region, its people and its creatures.

SIGN THE PRAYER PETITION FOR THE GULF

In this time, we call on you to rise above partisan politics to ensure a comprehensive and effective response to this crisis. You are doubtless receiving many recommendations. We emphasize the following:

- Work with stakeholders
- Hold responsible parties accountable
- Ensure that help reaches those in need
- Commit to a long-term recovery
- Take steps to prevent future disasters
- Respond to yet-unknown needs

The situation that continues to unfold in the Gulf demands a comprehensive, but more importantly, a moral response. The bonds that connect us to one another and to all Creation have been damaged in the Gulf. We have failed as a country to protect not only ourselves but the gifts with which we have been blessed.

As we begin to move forward and prepare as a nation for our recovery from this spill, we urge you to remember God's commitment to us and to Creation, and to honor God's vision of health and wholeness for all.

Sincerely,

Name: _____

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