# Logos2

# Protect our Water/Clean Water for Pennsylvania

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**March 27, 2018**

**Good morning! Many thanks to my friends and colleagues who are here today to speak about the importance of water—clean, safe, water for all Pennsylvanians, and for all of our sisters and brothers everywhere.**

**I come here as a person of faith and part of an organization that represents a number of Christian traditions in Pennsylvania. Water has a central place for us—as it does in the practices and beliefs of many other faith traditions. First, water cleanses. It washes away impurities and pollutants, and it is used to purify objects for ritual use. For Christians, water is used for making people clean in a spiritual sense through baptism.**

**But more importantly—water is a primary building block of life. Without water there is no life, yet water has the power to destroy as well as to create. We can find ourselves at the mercy of water when we witness floods, draught, or contamination that renders water sources unusable.**

**The more specific significance of water manifests itself differently in different religions and beliefs but it is these two qualities of water—symbolic and life-giving—that underlie its place in our cultures and faiths.**

**It has been a little over 45 years since the Clean Water Act became the law of the land in the wake of rivers burning and the knowledge that we were poisoning our children and families. This was an important first step in cleaning up, restoring, and protecting this vital resource that we all depend on for our very lives.**

**As people of hope, we would hope that after 45 years, we would not have to worry about the water we drink, bathe in, and use to grow our crops and process the foods and products we buy. Alas, our hopes have been dashed as we’ve learned more about statistics on our waters in the Commonwealth and throughout our American society. Over a period from January 2016 through September 2017, Pennsylvania was second in the US—only behind Texas—with the most facilities that exceeded their permitted pollution allowances, with nearly 8% of the total incidences across the country during that period. We suspect that the number of these releases is actually much higher, given the cuts that have been made to the EPA and PA DEP budgets for ensuring compliance with federal and state environmental laws. And even for those facilities that are cited, the vast majority go unpunished.**

**The contamination of our waters puts the safety of our neighbors at stake—particularly the health and safety of our most vulnerable neighbors—children, seniors, and those with other health problems.**

**We believe that the earth is not ours, but has been given to us by God to hold in sacred trust. We violate that trust when we permit the ongoing destruction of our planet by those who fail to follow the law. We call on both the PA Department of Environmental Protection and the EPA to do the job they have been established to do, which is to provide for the health and safety of all citizens. We demand sufficient funding from both federal and state sources in order to carry out this work. Businesses that repeatedly violate clean water laws must be held to account by the enforcement of meaningful fines and actions that effectively end their polluting with impugnity. We also urge them to seek and implement less polluting ways to do business.**

**The evangelist Matthew wrote in his gospel what we know as the Golden Rule, “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets (Matthew 7:12).” Presumably, this is what those who pollute our waters would want for themselves. We urge our elected officials, policymakers, and corporations to recognize that this is a two-way street and to do likewise.**