

Chestnut Hill United Methodist Church

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
REVIEW COMMISSION

*A faith community of open hearts and open minds*

Rev. Linda Noonan, Co-pastor  
Rev. Hal Taussig, Co-pastor

I am Reverend Linda Noonan and I am co-pastor of Chestnut Hill United Methodist Church in Philadelphia. I speak today on behalf of my congregation.

It has long been known that mercury contamination threatens the health of all citizens, but we understand that the risk is greatest for some of our most vulnerable citizens, particularly expecting mothers and children. The impacts on babies and young children are especially profound. Child welfare colleagues have said that exposure to even small amounts of mercury can affect the way children learn, think, memorize and behave, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that the mercury level in one of every six women of child-bearing age is unsafe for a developing child. We cannot afford to risk the health of our mothers and children.

Psalm 24 says: "The earth is ~~the~~ God<sup>s</sup> and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it..." These words are a reminder and a call to all who believe that the earth—this magnificent creation—does not belong to us, but to God. As humans, created in God's image and who share this fragile planet with all of God's creation, we bear responsibility for its stewardship. The earth is not ours—we are merely caretakers, charged by God to preserve its beauty and ensure its sustainability.

We believe that in a healthy society, the well being of all is a priority. We believe that we are to love God and to love our neighbors. Healthy persons and communities grow and flourish when society creates a safe environment that does not pose risks for any of its members.

**The pastors and members of Chestnut Hill United Methodist Church call on the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to implement the mercury rule exactly as proposed by the Department of Environmental Protection.** We can't tolerate the delays in implementation that the federal rules allow. And we can't tolerate a mercury emissions trading system that would allow mercury "hot spots" to continue.

The Biblical prophet Micah calls on us (Micah 6:8) to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. Allowing current levels of mercury pollution to continue is wrong. To do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly, we must adopt the more rigid standards and timelines proposed by the DEP.