

Testimony in support of PA's participation in the RGGIPastor Paul Metzloff, December 8th, 2020

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Pastor Paul Metzloff; I serve a Lutheran congregation in Kingston, PA and I'm representing Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania this afternoon, in support of our Commonwealth linking to the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

Since I'm a pastor, I'll start by quoting the Book of Genesis (chapter 2, verse 15 to be specific): "The Lord God took the human and put him in the garden . . . to till it and keep it." Alternatively, that could be translated as to 'serve and protect' it.

In either case, this very first commandment that God gives to humanity is clearly to care for creation. To live within it, certainly, to use and enjoy it, but also to take care of it. There is a moral imperative here, a calling. A commandment.

When Jesus is asked about commandments (and here I'm quoting from the 12th chapter of Mark's gospel), he says that the most important commandments are to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" and to "love your neighbor as yourself."

I would argue that caring for creation fits perfectly here – loving God by protecting and preserving God's creation, and loving our neighbors by protecting and preserving their environment: the air they breathe, the water they drink, the land that produces their food, the livable climate they need to thrive. These are also commandments.

And, of course, commandments are not things you do when you feel like it, or have the time, or if you think the economy will support them. They're things you're required to do.

And this is by no means only a Lutheran or even a Christian perspective. Every other faith tradition of which I am aware – and I have been both a GreenFaith fellow and worked with PA Interfaith Power and Light – all faith traditions call for protecting and preserving creation. It makes no difference if we call it God's creation or Earth Mother or Nature or Turtle Island. Whatever. We're supposed to take care of it.

Even the Environmental Rights Amendment to our Constitution says that "*As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people.*"

So that's pretty clear. All the way around.

But to speak more specifically about RGGI . . . Bill McKibben – an environmental writer and activist, who is also a person of faith, and (I would argue) a prophetic voice – likens the efforts against climate change to the Allied effort in the Second World War.

And I appreciate this comparison because before I was a pastor, I spent sixteen years in the U.S. Army, and had the privilege to teach military history at West Point. And so I understand the unprecedented mobilization that our nation undertook during WWII – not just in the sense of fighting on land, at sea, and in the air but in our society, our culture, our industry. Everything was focused on it. Nothing was more important than winning the war.

That's what we need to do now. With climate change.

And participating in RGGI is a part of that. It's a flexible and proven way of reducing our carbon emissions, which are among the highest in the nation. It's something that we already know works, is widely supported by (over 70%!) of voters, and has concrete benefits for our neighbors – whether they are those neighbors in need of good clean energy jobs, protection from pollution, or simply hope for a vibrant future.

Speaking of loving our neighbors – and in conclusion – in preparing for this hearing, I was struck by a map showing current RGGI states, with Pennsylvania in the center, between our neighboring states of NY and New England to the north, and VA and MD to the south. This reminded me, given my background in military history, how our state got its nickname of "The Keystone State" during the American Revolution – Pennsylvania was in a critical position in the center of the original 13 states. Geographically, economically, politically, and militarily. And today, I would add, environmentally.

Let's be the Keystone State again. In RGGI.

God's grace and peace be with you. And thanks again!