June 28, 2016

The Honorable Gina McCarthy
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

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Dear Administrator McCarthy,

As religious leaders in Pennsylvania, we are concerned with climate change and its impact on the human community. Our faith traditions teach us that we are stewards, not owners, of God’s creation for current and future generations. We write to thank you for your commitment to addressing methane pollution, and to urge you to issue national standards that cut emissions of this harmful pollutant from existing oil and gas operations.

Under the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Protection Agency is granted clear authority to develop methane standards for the oil and gas industry. We believe that the implementation of precise standards helps to protect human and nonhuman communities by controlling natural gas and methane emissions.

Methane is a highly potent heat-trapping pollutant. According to the IPCC, one ton of atmospheric methane contributes to planetary warming more than 86 times as much as a ton of CO2 during the twenty years after release. The Environmental Protection Agency must address methane pollution immediately and thoroughly in order to prevent the most devastating impacts of climate change.

Oil and gas sources also emit other dangerous pollutants that harm Americans’ health, such as smog-forming volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and cancer-causing toxics like benzene. To protect public health, stronger methane pollution standards must include regulations on VOCs.

Climate change is one of the great moral issues of our time. Methane, a dominant contributor to climate disruption, must be subject to stricter government concern and action. Today, we witness the heavy burden placed on those who are least responsible for climate change. As people of faith, we are called to care for children, the elderly, and the poor. We believe that issuing national standards on existing methane sources in the oil and gas industry will help care for these vulnerable communities.

We applaud your leadership and urge you to continue to protect human health and God’s creation by issuing a strong national existing source methane standard. As faith leaders we urge the EPA to use the strongest regulatory tools and provisions of law available to protect the public and move quickly to create safeguards for existing oil and gas facilities.

Sincerely,

Bishop James B. Walker, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church Seventh Episcopal District
Rev. Sandra Strauss, Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Rev. Alison Cornish, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light
Rabbi Seth Adelson, Congregation Beth Shalom, Pittsburgh
Rev. J. Howard Cherry, Pittsburgh
Rev. Karen Moeschberger, St. John's United Church of Christ, Allentown
Rev. Christy Dowdy, Huntingdon
Rev. Charlotte Whiting, United Church of Christ, Lancaster
Rev. Rodney Martin, Littitz
Rev. Douglas Hunt, Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light, Haverford
Rev. David Carlisle, Verona
Rev. David Ackerman, Penn West Conference United Church of Christ, Greensburg
Rev. William J. Shaw, White Rock Baptist, Philadelphia
Rev. Darryl T. Canady, Rodman Street MBC, Pittsburg
Rev. A. Carl Prince, Zion Baptist, Philadelphia
Rev. Benjamin T. Halley, Union Baptist, Allentown
Rev. Patrick Cheston, Christian Hope MBC, Philadelphia
Rev. Vernon S. Thompson, Morris Chapel Baptist, Philadelphia
Rev. Joseph D. Lewis, Trinity AME Zion Church, Pittsburgh
Rev. T.R. Nicholson Greater Faith M.B. Church, Philadelphia
Rev. Patrick Barrett, St. Paul AME Zion Church, Media
Rev. Ronald Green, Sr., Hickman Temple AME, Philadelphia
Rev. Ray Hammond, Bethel AME Church, West Chester
Rev. Gracher L. Selby, St. John AME Zion, Bethlehem
Rev. Linwood Smith, Jr., Mt. Zion AME Church, Atglen
Rev. Mark K. Tyler, Bethel AME Church, Philadelphia
Rev. Paul J. Thomas, AME Union Church, Philadelphia
Rev. Glenn Shepherd Morris Brown AME, Philadelphia
Rev. David Randolph, Sr., St. Matthew’s AME, Philadelphia
Bishop Claude Barnes Church of Faith, Inc, Philadelphia
Bishop James McNeal, Jr., Church of New Faith, Philadelphia
Rev. Bruce Gibson New Destiny CME, Pittsburgh
Rev. Arthur Green, Holsey Temple CME, Philadelphia
Rev. Bonita C. Hobbs, Mt. Zion CME, Darby Township
Rev. Mark Terwilliger, Countryside Community United Methodist Church, Clarks Summit
Rev. Inge Williams, Shoemakersville
Rev. Susan Jamison, Lewisburg
Rev. Dale Dennis, II, Russell Tabernacle CME, Philadelphia
Rev. Queen Dickey, St. John CME, Harrisburg
Rev. Aaron Donnelly, St. Paul CME, Chester
Rev. William Irons, St. Matthew CME, Twin Oaks
Rev. Derrick Price, Williams Temple CME, Philadelphia
Rev. Travis C. Coon, Antioch Baptist, Sewickley
Elder Ronald Burnett, Christian Teaching Ministries Pittsburgh
Rev. Selbie Jones Coraoplis C.O.G.I.C., Pittsburgh
Rev. John A. Knight, Cornerstone Baptist, Pittsburgh
Elder Curtis Lewis, El-Beth EI Temple, Pittsburgh
Rev. James E. Hunt, First Baptist-Penn Hills, Pittsburgh
Rev. Les Boone Hazelwood Presbyterian, Pittsburgh
Rev. Theodore Pugh, Sr. Jerusalem Baptist, Pittsburgh
Rev. L.C. Carter King of Kings Baptist, Pittsburgh
Rev. Keith Moncrief, Missionary Temple COGIC, Pittsburgh
Rev. Barbara A. Gunn, Mt. Carmel Baptist North Versailles
Rev. Louis Otey Jr., New Covenant Christian, Swissvale
Rev. Paul Metzloff, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Dallas
Rev. Dr. Jane Ellen, Nickell, Allegheny College, Meadville