

Written by Pastor Jeff Conlon of Faith United Parish of Fitchburg, MA
Shared at 6/30/2017 meeting with Senator Elizabeth Warren's staff.

MORAL IMPERATIVE CLOSER

Many of our decisions re: the environment, whether in the oceans or on land, I believe can be framed in terms of immediate short-term financial gains for the few vs. long-term sustainability for future generations. Until fairly recently our nation had not placed much value on the critical importance of sustainability. That attitude is changing but the current administration seems to be intent on moving us backward.

Caring for the earth is a moral imperative far more than it is an economic equation. From a faith perspective, the earth belongs to God because God created it. We are not free to do with it as we please. (Gen. 1, Psalm 24:1, and Rev. 4:11) All of us recognize that our time here on earth is finite; others will inherit the earth we leave behind. Genesis 1 informs us that God gave us the **responsibility** to care for the earth as good stewards. This is one way in which we reflect the image of God: we were created as earth's caretakers and given creativity ourselves.

According to Genesis 1, on the fifth day God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures" ... and God saw that it was good, so God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas." The Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument bear witness to the truth of this text by virtue of the beauty and diversity of life contained within its boundaries. We are not even fully aware as yet of all the richness that it holds and what even greater value it might hold for future generations.

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Unfortunately, it is the nature of democracies, due to the election cycle, to often favor short-term thinking over long-term planning. It takes moral courage in a democracy to stand up for what is right for future generations. Teddy Roosevelt, who initiated the American Antiquities Act of 1906, had the foresight to see the need for public lands to be set aside for preservation. Today we have a lot more knowledge about our oceans than we did back then, and as a result we realize that so much of what happens on land is dependent upon our oceans.

Those of us in the faith community would urge Senator Warren to show the same moral courage on this issue, which she has shown in the past on other issues. The faith community will stand beside her. As a nation we need to show moral leadership, through our example of caring for our coastal waters that contain very unique and priceless treasures as this marine monument does. Many of our nation's mayors and governors are taking the lead on reversing climate change in the face of an administration moving backwards. [We are living at a crucial moment in earth's history] We must all join together in this fight to make environmental preservation and sustainability an absolute moral imperative. Future generations will look back on this time in history and judge us accordingly. Let's leave them a precious legacy of caring for the earth.