



EMBARGOED UNTIL 10 A.M. EST WEDNESDAY, FEB. 26, 2020

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Study naming 100 US ‘super polluters’ to be released at Ash Wednesday news conference on Capitol Hill

- WHO:** The United Church of Christ; Environmental Integrity Project; Interfaith Power & Light; people affected by air pollution; a member of Congress
- WHAT:** News conference and Ash Wednesday ritual
- WHEN:** Wednesday, Feb. 26, at 10 a.m. EST
- WHERE:** United Methodist Building, 100 Maryland Ave. NE, Washington, DC 20002
- WHY:** To release the report, “The Toxic 100: America’s Super Polluters,” documenting 100 industrial facilities emitting the most toxic air pollution into heavily populated areas. Includes a detailed demographic breakdown of people living within three miles of these hazardous plants.
- VISUALS:** Interactive U.S. map where anyone can find where polluters are; clergy marking worshipers with ashes as the Christian season of Lent begins

REPORTERS AND EDITORS: Armed with data from a respected research firm, a church known for its environmental justice work will release a study naming 100 “super polluters” whose airborne emissions put nearby communities at risk. The report will be released at an Ash Wednesday news conference, Feb. 26 at 10 a.m. on Capitol Hill.

[United Church of Christ](#) leaders will reveal the “Toxic 100” polluters, along with demographic details on who lives near them, including the number of children under age 5 – the most vulnerable population because of their developing bodies. Presenting the report will be the [Environmental Integrity Project](#), a nonpartisan watchdog enlisted by the UCC for the study. EIP based its research on self-reported data from the 15,500 facilities included in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Toxic Release Inventory. Speakers will include citizens affected by pollution, leaders of the nonprofit [Interfaith Power & Light](#), and U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas.

The UCC has a [long history](#) of environmental justice work. Its groundbreaking 1987 study, “[Toxic Wastes and Race](#),” is still cited by activists and academics.

“We titled this study ‘Breath to the People’ (Isaiah 42:4-6) because we believe everyone – and most of all our precious children – should have clean air to breathe,” said the Rev. Traci Blackmon, UCC associate general minister. “Local, state and federal authorities and the polluters themselves must act now to rid the air of toxic chemicals. Our report will recommend how.”

[A website](#) accompanying the study's release will include the full report and an interactive map showing all 100 sites. Visit the site before Feb. 26 to view a promotional trailer and other information.

Participants will demand action, including an end to rollbacks in environmental protections. A brief "imposition of ashes" ritual for the start of the Christian season of Lent will be led by the Rev. Melanie Mullen, The Episcopal Church's national director of reconciliation, justice and creation care.

NEWS CONFERENCE SPEAKERS ON FEB. 26:

- Citizens affected by air pollution
- The Rev. **Traci A. Blackmon**, Cleveland, Associate General Minister, UCC
- The Rev. **Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.**, past Executive Director, Commission for Racial Justice, UCC, which produced "Toxic Wastes and Race" (1987)
- The Rev. **Brooks Berndt**, Cleveland, Minister for Environmental Justice, UCC
- **Courtney Bernhardt**, lead researcher of the report and Director of Research for the [Environmental Integrity Project](#)
- U.S. Rep. [Sheila Jackson Lee](#) (Texas, 18th District)
- The Rev. **Susan Hendershot**, President, [Interfaith Power & Light](#)

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The [United Church of Christ](#), a mainline Protestant denomination, has nearly 900,000 members and 5,000 congregations nationwide. Headquartered in Cleveland, it is a church of many firsts: the first mainline denomination to ordain a woman, the first to ordain an openly gay man and the first predominantly white denomination to ordain an African American. More on the UCC's justice ministries is [here](#).