

Reference and Counsel – Motion 1.8

MOTION 1.8

RELATING TO: Plastics Consumption

SUBMITTED BY: Synod Council

MOTION:

That the Eastern Synod Assembly, congregations and individual members a) consider the damages created by our ever increasing plastic consumption, b) determine how to best mitigate these damages in their own contexts and c) encourage the ELCIC to do likewise.

RATIONALE:

Estimated decomposition rates of common marine debris items (Ranked from most common to least common based off of the findings from the International Coastal Cleanup hosted by the [Ocean Conservancy](#)):

1. **Cigarettes/Cigarette Filters** - 1-5 years to biodegrade
2. **Plastic Food Wrapper/Containers** - 20-30 years
3. **Plastic water bottles** - 450 years
4. **Plastic bags** - 10-20 years
5. **Plastic caps and lids** - 450-1,000 years
6. **Plastic utensils** - 450 years
7. **Plastic straws and stirrers** - up to 200 years
8. **Glass bottles** - 1 million years (estimated, exact time unknown)
9. **Aluminum cans** - 80-200 years
10. **Paper bags** - 1 month <https://4ocean.com/blogs/blog/how-long-does-it-take-trash-to-biodegrade>

From poisoning and destroying marine life to disrupting human health and hormones, from littering our beaches and landscapes to clogging our waste streams and landfills, the plastic pollution is now threatening the survival of our planet and everything on it <http://www.pachurchesadvocacy.org/join-campaign-end-plastic-pollution/>

Plastic has been highlighted as one of the biggest environmental threats facing the world by the UN in a call to action issued to mark [World Environment Day](#). While emphasising the success of many international efforts to tackle [plastic waste](#), the organisation described how the “scourge of plastic” has reached every corner of the Earth. Levies and bans ... were found to be among the most effective strategies for dealing with the problem. Presenting case studies from more than 60 countries, the UN analysis explored the different strategies being implemented and suggested measures that policymakers can take to curb the problem. Bans on products such as styrofoam and plastic bags in parts of the world as diverse as New York City and Rwanda have proved highly effective. The report found 30 per cent of the nations that had introduced restrictions on plastic bags had seen substantial declines in bag consumption in the first year following the action. <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/world-environment-day-un-plastic-pollution-waste-ban-bags-recycling-a8384311.html>

Estimates show up to 10 million tonnes of plastic garbage ends up in the oceans each year, and across

the oceans there are multiple islands of trash, including one in the Pacific that rivals the size of the province of Quebec <https://globalnews.ca/news/4250508/canada-recycle-plastics-85-percent-2025/>

If current pollution rates continue, there will be more plastic in the sea than fish by 2050, said the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) ... Eight million tonnes of plastic - bottles, packaging and other waste - are dumped into the ocean every year, killing marine life and entering the human food chain, UNEP added. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-environment-un-pollution/nearly-200-nations-promise-to-stop-ocean-plastic-waste-idUSKBN1E02F7>

There are two heartbreaking images on the internet with regard to the damages that plastics do to marine life:

- <http://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/pft/2015/10/27/the-turtle-that-became-the-anti-plastic-straw-poster-child>
- <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/whale-dies-thailand-80-plastic-bags-its-stomach-180969232/>

POLITICAL ACTIONS:

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in a joint communiqué at the end of the [June 2018 G7] summit that he and the leaders of France, Germany, Italy and the U.K. agreed to a [non-binding, voluntary] plastics charter that would deal with the pollution created by single-use plastics items like bottles, cups and bags that have become everyday items of modern life (Japan and the US did not commit) <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/plastics-charter-g7-reaction-1.4699860>

Environment Minister Catherine McKenna launched consultations for a national plastics strategy in April [2018], but has set no deadlines for when one might be produced <https://globalnews.ca/news/4250508/canada-recycle-plastics-85-percent-2025/>

Nearly 200 countries signed a U.N. resolution in Nairobi [in December 2017] to eliminate plastic pollution in the sea, a move some delegates hoped would pave the way to a legally binding treaty. If current pollution rates continue, there will be more plastic in the sea than fish by 2050, said the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) which organized the meeting. Eight million tonnes of plastic - bottles, packaging and other waste - are dumped into the ocean every year, killing marine life and entering the human food chain, UNEP added. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-environment-un-pollution/nearly-200-nations-promise-to-stop-ocean-plastic-waste-idUSKBN1E02F7>

On December 28, 2015, President Obama signed the [Microbead-Free Waters Act of 2015](https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/microplastics.html), banning plastic microbeads in cosmetics and personal care products. <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/microplastics.html>

IDEAS FOR SYNOD ASSEMBLY, CONGREGATIONS AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS:

- Learn about microplastics, microbeads and microfibers, what types of products they are found in and what their effects are <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/microplastics.html>, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jun/20/microfibers-plastic-pollution-oceans-patagonia-synthetic-clothes-microbeads>
- Use this grid to find out which products are red/orange/green re the inclusion of microbeads

<http://www.beatthemicrobead.org/product-lists/>

- Check your city's recycling rules as to what can and can't be recycled. Just because something's metal or glass or plastic doesn't mean it can be recycled.
<https://ottawa.ca/en/residents/garbage-and-recycling/recycling>
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/recycling-blue-box-challenges-evolving-tonne-1.4584484>
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/10-kinds-of-packaging-that-are-a-pain-in-the-blue-box-1.4658988>
- Stop using disposable plastics, especially single-use plastics like bottles, bags and straws. Instead use reusable water bottles, mugs, fabric lunch bags, canvas shopping bags. Buy solid shampoo and conditioner bars instead of liquid. Make your own dishwashing soap, toothpaste, sunscreen and store in a glass container. Beeswax food wraps are an excellent alternative to plastic wrap
<http://www.sustainablebabysteps.com/alternatives-to-plastic.html>
<http://www.sustainablebabysteps.com/homemade-toothpaste.html>
- Take a plastics inventory of your house and try to find alternatives to your plastic items.
- Take a plastics inventory of your church and try to find alternatives to your plastic items (eg: single-use plastic common cups).
- Consider petitioning grocery stores to offer food packaging alternatives. Check if there's a zero waste grocery store in your area or an environmental directory. <https://nugrocery.com/>

RECOMMENDATION:

Adoption