Show Some Love, Use A Mug…
(or a paper coffee cup)

This month I would like to thank Marilyn Rafter for her thoughtful donation of reusable coffee mugs for coffee hour at Saint Alban’s Episcopal Church. In talking about “Stewardship” and what our roles are as Christians when it comes to being “Good Stewards”, it seems appropriate to include “Caring for God’s Creation” in that conversation.

At Saint Alban’s we pride ourselves on being a loving and caring environment and we love to bond over coffee and treats after church. But.....did you know that Saint Alban’s throws away an estimated 3,000-4,000 Styrofoam (polystyrene foam) coffee cups every year? That’s just coffee cups, we also use plastic stirring straws and Styrofoam plates. We are not alone in this.

Saint Alban’s has used these “single use” plastic and Styrofoam items all these years because we do not have a dishwasher and we have wanted to save the poor souls who volunteer for coffee hour from having to also wash 30-60 coffee mugs by hand. In our effort to save a little time we have unintentionally contributed to over 50,000 pieces of non-biodegradable material ending up in landfills just over the last 10 years.

**Fun Fact:** It is commonly estimated that Styrofoam can take up 30 percent of the space in some landfills. When or “if” our plastics make it to the landfill, they do not decompose quickly. The estimated lifespan of Styrofoam in a landfill is between 500 to 1 Million years! According to the Society Of Environmental Journalists, “Some fraction of all discarded Styrofoam does not go into landfills. Some estimate that fraction at 20 percent, at least in the United States. A lot of that is just littered around the landscape, and a lot of that ends up in water. It does not biodegrade. It is chemically stable, and bacteria and microorganisms do not feed on it.” ([https://www.sej.org/publications/backgrounders/styrofoam-facts-why-you-may-want-bring-your-own-cup](https://www.sej.org/publications/backgrounders/styrofoam-facts-why-you-may-want-bring-your-own-cup))

We are fortunate that Fort Wayne is one of the few cities that DO recycle Plastics #1-#7. Styrofoam or (polystyrene foam) is considered a #6 plastic. The only requirement is that these items are clean and not contaminated by food waste. Unfortunately our cups, plates and straws usually just end up unwashed and in the garbage. After all, our whole reason in using these single use products is to cut down on cleanup.

**For more information about recycling in Fort Wayne, Visit:**
Another Fun Fact:

“According to the United Nations, at least 800 species worldwide are affected by marine debris, and as much as 80 percent of that litter is plastic. It is estimated that up to 13 million metric tons of plastic ends up in the ocean each year—the equivalent of a rubbish or garbage truck load’s worth every minute. Fish, seabirds, sea turtles, and marine mammals can become entangled in or ingest plastic debris, causing suffocation, starvation, and drowning. Humans are not immune to this threat: While plastics are estimated to take up to hundreds of years to fully decompose, some of them break down much quicker into tiny particles, which in turn end up in the seafood we eat.” - The PEW Charitable Trusts.

Plastic Pollution is just a fraction of a much larger issue contributing to things like Climate Change and the destruction of our Island Home. (Yes I said the “C” Word!) I will spare you from reading a much larger article, and move on...
So.....why should we be concerned? Won't the world end in destruction no matter what we do or don’t do? We can just let our children and grandchildren deal with all of this, right? Isn't the world given to us to use as we please?

**The Earth was created by God and we have been commanded to take care of it.**

**Colossians 1:16-17 New King James Version (NKJV)**

16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or [a]principalities or [b]powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

**Genesis 1:28 New King James Version (NKJV)**

28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that [a]moves on the earth.”

**Genesis 2:15 New King James Version (NKJV)**

15 Then the Lord God took [b]the man and put him in the garden of Eden to [c]tend and keep it.

We will have to begin making some difficult choices. The harsh reality is that we as a society and as fellow Christians have to decide whether convenience is more important than having a clean and healthy place to live and raise our families. Their won’t always be an easy solution to pollution but we can take baby steps....

Most of us don't realize how much our actions or lack of action can impact the lives of others. Sometimes the impact is unseen by us. Sometimes the decisions we make seem small. Decisions such as; driving instead of walking or riding a bike, using a plastic grocery bag instead remembering to bring a reusable cloth bag, always buying “new” clothing or toys instead of buying gently used items, using Ziploc baggies instead reusable containers, using Single Use plastic dishes and cutlery instead reusable or biodegradable plant-based products, using Aerosol versus pump stray, etc. Of course we don’t always have the ability to choose the more environmentally friendly option.....but some times we do. Baby steps...

In an effort to be part of the solution while also demonstrating what it means to be a “Good Steward” to our youth, Saint Alban's Episcopal Church has started the “Coffee Mug Mission”. We are now moving away Styrofoam cups and other Single Use plastic items where possible. This is a small step, but a virtuous one. In an effort to support this mission we will also be accepting volunteers from the congregation to take turns washing our mugs as to not make more work for our Generous Coffee Hour Hosts. Some may find this to be a great bonding experience! We thank you in advance for all your support.

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