



Recommended news, resources and ideas from *EarthAware*, the environmental awareness and climate justice ministry at Morristown United Methodist Church.

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Imagine a school bus filled with plastic. Now multiply that by 21 million! Each year, 30 million tons of plastic are produced. Of that, 50% will be discarded after a single use, and overall, 93% will not be recycled. In the 21st Century, we continue to look for convenience and often don't think of how that convenience may affect our environment. Plastics - in all shapes, sizes and types are some nearly ubiquitous, making our lives easier everyday, but that convenience has a cost to our planet. We're even finding plastic in the food we ingest - microplastics can be found in fish, shellfish, salt, honey, sugar, beer, and drinking water (both tap and bottled).

According to the World Wildlife Fund, an average person could be ingesting approximately 5 grams of plastic every week. The toxic chemical additives and pollutants found in plastics threaten human health on a global scale. Scientifically-proven health effects include causing cancer or changing hormone activity (known as endocrine disruption), which can lead to reproductive, growth, and cognitive impairment.

Vulnerable groups, including children, pregnant women, workers in the informal waste sector and marginalized communities are particularly exposed, thus raising concerns of human rights and environmental injustice. The adverse effects of plastic are particularly acute for babies in the womb, with increased risks of prematurity, stillbirth, birth defects of the reproductive organs, neurodevelopmental impairment, impaired lung growth, and childhood cancer ([Minderoo-Monaco Commission on Plastics and Health, 2023](#)).

The researchers found that, on average, a liter of bottled water included about 240,000 tiny pieces of plastic. About 90% of these plastic fragments were nanoplastics. This total was 10 to 100 times more plastic particles than seen in earlier studies, which mostly focused on larger microplastics. Nanoplastics may be more dangerous to human health than microplastics because they could be more easily mistaken for natural components in the body.

The effects of *plastic production* on human health also have important monetary costs, recently estimated to more than \$920B in the USA alone for diseases and disability caused by the plastic-associated chemicals PBDE, BPA and DEHP.

There are important steps you can take to help mitigate the environmental damage of plastic use and production. Imagine what you can do to refuse, reduce, reuse, and recycle plastics. United Methodist Creation Justice Ministries shared some great tips to help us "go plastic-free" on their website" <https://umcreationjustice.org/july-creation-justice-tips-lets-go-plastic-free/>, and we've got some ideas below, too. It is our responsibility to do as much as possible to protect God's creation! For more information go to <https://www.beyondplastics.org/>

ACTIONS

- ◆ Use a refillable stainless steel water bottle.
- ◆ Use glass or metal storage containers. These last indefinitely and are more sustainable than plastic.
- ◆ Continue to support EarthAware's two plastic recycling programs. Bring in thin plastic #'s 2 & 4 and your used toothbrushes, toothpaste tubes and packaging.
- ◆ Choose a water filter certified under NSF/ANSI 401 to reduce microplastics like the Brita Elite Filter. The *standard* Brita pitcher filter is not certified for microplastics reduction.
- ◆ Rethink your laundry detergent, household cleaners and personal care- eliminate the giant plastic jugs! ECOS has plastic-free detergent sheets in a cardboard box; Blueland has tablets for a variety of cleaning supplies for home and body; use You can also go to a refill shop and reuse containers for eco-friendly options! There are great refill stores in Summit, Maplewood, Montclair and Sparta.
- ◆ Use Earth 911 link to find recycling centers by zip code and type of plastic. <https://search.earth911.com/>