

RESOLUTION #1:

I. Type of Resolution: Policy Statement

II. Title and Author:

Reducing Plastic Pollution

Commission for Earth Care

III. Intent: This resolution intends to acknowledge that a critical part of our call to care for God's creation involves reducing the production and our use of plastics which have deeply and adversely impacted human and non-human health as well as planetary ecosystems.

BE IT RESOLVED that the 221st Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire urges all parishes, missions, and gospel-oriented communities to reduce the use of single-use plastics and packaging within their churches and church-related gatherings.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that parishes consider working together with other congregations and forming community partnerships with organizations working to reduce plastic in their town and in New Hampshire.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire encourages all members to commit themselves to seek and implement life-style changes in order to move from a disposable culture to a reusable, sustainable one.

IV. Rationale: Scripture declares that the earth is God's sacred gift, meant to be shared for the common good for all life (Ps. 24:1); and that when we fail to do that, all its inhabitants suffer (Isaiah 24; 3-6). Bill McKibben, environmentalist, and co-founder of 350.org, describes this as "de-creation."

"We are engaged in the swift and systematic de-creation of the planet we were born into... we have even more rapidly destroyed its inventory of life...In our time, the morally transcendent question is whether we will take the difficult steps to stop the de-creation before it goes further" (Bill McKibben, "Climate Change and the Unraveling of Creation," *The Christian Century*, December 8, 1999, 1196-97).

Plastics pollute the Earth and degrade into microplastics, spreading into the atmosphere, land and ocean on a massive scale. According to the United Nations Environmental Program, "Around the world, one million plastic drinking bottles are purchased every minute, while 5 trillion single-use plastic bags are used worldwide every year. In total, half of all plastic produced is designed to be used only once — and then thrown away.... Today, we produce 300 million tons of plastic waste each year. That is nearly the equivalent to the weight of the entire human population" (<https://ideas.ted.com/seeing-climate-change-solutions-inspires-collective-action-book-excerpt>).

Plastics are made from harmful petrochemical ingredients that instead of degrading, break down into microplastics that enter our land and water ecosystems, are consumed by animals, birds and fish, which in turn are consumed by humans.

Currently, only 9% of all plastic waste is recycled. About 12% is incinerated, while the rest—79%—accumulates in landfills, dumps, oceans and the ecosystems of the planet. It is estimated that by 2050 there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans (by weight).

We have a plastic pandemic which is rapidly growing, polluting the environment and impacting life. God has given us the responsibility to care for the earth and all of its inhabitants. It is the way of love. Reducing our use of plastic is an urgent critical step God's people can take.

Parishes, missions, and gospel-oriented communities may wish to partner with organizations such as Sustaining Earth Our Island Home (sustainingislandhome.org). Plastics Working Group - New Hampshire, or Ten Towns Toolkit (10towns.org).

This resolution is written with the support, help and permission of the Environmental Justice Mission Group of the New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ, who made the resolution for the Annual Conference, "Free from Plastic Pollution."

V. Plan of Action: The Commission for Earth Care asks that delegates bring this resolution to their home faith communities, and that these communities discuss, encourage, and implement ways they can reduce plastic waste and report those efforts to the Commission.

VI. Projection of Cost: There is no direct cost associated with the implementation of resolution.

VII. Accountability: The Commission for Earth Care will compile reports from parishes, missions, gospel-centered communities and individuals and share those reports in its report to the 222nd Diocesan Convention as well as in the online newsletters The Vine and "Sustaining Earth, Our Island Home."

VIII. Supporters: Diocesan Council, Commission for Earth Care

Approved November 3, 2023