

April 2020 Laity Minute

You're staring at that leftover Easter candy, aren't you? You've eaten all the jelly beans (except the black ones, of course), and one more Hershey Kiss won't hurt anyone. The last Little Debbie bunny cake is weighing on your mind. You decide the bunny cake should not go to waste. So, you unwrap it and enjoy every last delectable bite and now, sadly, it's all over. But is it?

Long after the last jelly bean, Hershey Kiss and the bunny cake are consumed, one thing still remains: Plastic. The plastic bags the yummy candy was packaged in, the plastic eggs the kids hunted, and the plastic bag you may have brought them home from the store in are still around. And will be for the next 1,000 years since that is how long it takes for plastic to decompose.

I'm sure you have read about climate change. You've probably read we are in full blown climate crisis, too. People have a lot to say about this issue, which makes sense due to the economic, cultural, and societal ramifications. But, this idea of climate crisis has been in existence a long time. On April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans protested in all corners of the country to bring attention to environmentalism and to demand a new way forward for our planet. This was the first official Earth Day event. This year, 2020, marks the 50th anniversary of this movement.

Climate crisis is a big, complicated issue. Sometimes with the magnitude of it all, it seems overwhelming. There's no way I can fix this, I conclude. How can I possibly make a dent? I'm just one out of billions of people. It feels a little like digging in the sand.

Sure, we can recycle. Hamblen County has the only free curbside pickup in Tennessee. It doesn't get easier than that. We can plant trees, use reusable water bottles, conserve water, and use energy efficient light bulbs. But, does that totally solve the problem? Undoubtedly, all those help. Anything we can do helps. But, there's a bigger picture lurking under that pile of plastic.

As Methodists, we have a responsibility to take care of creation. "All creation is the Creator's, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God's creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings. God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect." – UM Social Principles., Para. 160.

You don't have to march in the street on Earth Day this year. (Unless you want to!) You don't need to install solar panels on your house this very minute. What may be worth considering is that there is no need to get overwhelmed. The small things still count. We can recycle our plastic utensils after a church lunch. We can use compostable plates. Use a dish cloth instead of a paper towel. Recycle the newsletter and bulletin. How can we as a church follow this Social Principle and care for God's creation?

Yes, there are monumental piles of trash and tons of recycle out there. But, I hope you can go outside on Earth Day and smell the fresh East Tennessee air. I hope you can marvel in those majestic Smoky mountains in the distance. I hope you can enjoy melodious songs of the birds in your backyard. All of those are small things to love which God has given to us to care for. Maybe it's time to return the favor no matter how small?!

Peace,

Kelly



Happy Earth Day!

Please access <https://www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/environmental-justice> and <https://www.umc.org/en/what-we-believe/umc-topics/social-issues/creation-care> for more information.