

Reuse this shopping bag to reduce plastic use and protect God's good creation !



February 2026

To reduce our collective exposure to single-use plastic, Pastor Daniel Na (right) inspired us to populate our beautiful Stockton Lake community with reusable non-plastic shopping bags. Stockton United Methodist Creation Care Ministry is giving quality organic cotton bags to people beyond the walls of our church who will use and appreciate them.



Fact Sheet: Plastics poison God's good creation—including us!

1. Our planet is overburdened with plastic! It is so commonplace, we don't even notice it! Plastic creates pollution at every stage of its creation, use, and disposal. The skyrocketing amount all around us threatens the health of all living things.
2. Single use **plastic bags** we use for a few minutes never biodegrade and almost none get recycled. Each of us Americans uses an average of 365 **plastic bags** a year—literally one **bag** per day and the residue stays in the environment! On average, each of us uses nearly five pounds of plastic each year. In 1950, the world produced just 2 million tons of plastic. It now produces more than 450 million tons per year (p. 23), projected to double between 2019 and 2039! (p. 55) Roughly 40% of the plastic produced annually becomes **single-use plastic packaging**. (p. 23) We see it polluting our neighborhoods, our rights-of way, Stockton Lake water and shorelines, Stockton State Park; it is all around us.
3. Plastic continuously sheds microplastics—tiny shards, similar to the way human skin continuously sheds invisible dead skin cells. Microplastics enter our bodies when we breathe, eat, and drink. Some smaller microplastics, called nanoplastics, are tiny enough to pass through the lungs and gut and enter the bloodstream, where they travel throughout the body and accumulate around the heart and in the brain. Invisible to the human eye, microplastics and nanoplastics have been found throughout human bodies: in our lungs, blood, liver, spleen, kidneys, breast milk, feces, urine, testicles, carotid arteries, in arteries leading to the human heart, in the heart, in the brain, in the uterus, in the placenta, even in meconium—the first stool of newborns, which indicates that babies are entering the world already burdened with plastic. (p. 26) The National Institutes for Health even found nanoplastics in raw honey!
4. Common chemical ingredients in plastic, like PBDEs, phthalates, bisphenols, and PFAS, are known to leach into the body and disturb the body's hormone system. They can cause cancer, reproductive disorders, diabetes, neurological impairments to developing fetuses and children, and death.
5. The journey of a single **plastic shopping bag** that might have a useful life of about 20 minutes—from production to disposal—is hidden from consumers through oil and gas wells, pipelines, injection wells,

compressor stations, petrochemical facilities and ethane crackers, secondary manufacturing facilities, trains, barges, and incinerators. The infrastructure required to extract fossil fuels, transform them into plastic, and deal with waste has a massive environmental footprint. Each step of the plastic production cycle increases our collective carbon footprint and it disrupts almost exclusively the lives of the poorest and most marginalized. (p. xvi)

6. Plastic recycling has never worked, it doesn't work now, it will never work! Recycled plastic contains even more toxic chemicals than new plastic! The U.S. plastic recycling rate is less than 6%; most of the plastic we use every day is not recyclable. (p. 12) Plastic recycling plants spread the chemicals even further. They release heavy metals and other toxic chemicals into the air and soil; their wastewater releases microplastics into the environment, exposing workers and surrounding communities to their harmful effects.
7. God created us in God's image and dedicated us to keep watch over, to guard, to protect, and to have charge of planet earth, God's good creation. United Methodist Resolution 2017, adopted in 2024, expects United Methodists to avoid single-use plastics and replace them with either fully recyclable non-plastic items, or better, with reusable items.
8. Switching to reusable versions of single-use products—like shopping bags, cups, forks, straws, plates, storage containers—is an easy way to prevent wasted resources, avoid toxic chemicals, and reduce plastic pollution and its climate-warming greenhouse gas emissions. Switching to reusables saves money! (p. 160)
9. As global heating surges beyond the target 1.5°C (2.7°F) threshold, plastic production is responsible for around a sixth of the world's industrial carbon emissions. As plastic slowly breaks apart over hundreds to thousands of years, it breaks into methane and ethylene gases, major contributors to climate change.
10. Plastic is made from fossil fuel and chemicals. The world's biggest oil and gas companies are also the biggest plastic producers. The U.S. is the world's largest plastic polluter, generating about 40% of the world's ethane-based petrochemical from shale gas. (p. 56) Despite the fact that plastic is made from fossil fuel and inundates our lives, the connection between plastic and climate change is not yet well socialized within the general public.
11. The most powerful thing we can do to protect ourselves and God's good creation from plastic is to “push for government regulation on plastic. We need to adopt new laws that curb the production of unnecessary plastic and ban unhealthy chemicals in those that remain.” (p. 36)
12. In 1994, Denmark placed a tax on **plastic bags**—the first in the world. Danes now use an average of four **plastic bags** a year—FOUR! Let's imitate the Danes!

Highly Recommended Reading

1. *The Problem with Plastic*, Judith Enck with Adam Mahoney, The New Press, ©2025. Page numbers cited are from this book. Check out a copy from Stockton Branch of Cedar County Library or SUMC Library.
2. National Institute of Health (NIH), National Library of Medicine, National Center for Biotechnology Information, Microplastics: A Real Global Threat for Environment and Food Safety: A State of the Art Review, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9920460/>, Jan. 15, 2023.

Please reuse this bag regularly! Creation Care Ministry, Stockton United Methodist Church

<https://www.stocktonumc.org/about-creation-care>