

# PLASTIC FREE JULY

2020

WHAT  
IS  
YOUR  
IMPACT?

Anglican  
EcoCare







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## WELCOME FROM THE REVEREND PATRICK KING

It's a common misconception that plastic takes a long time to decompose. When organic material is sent to landfill, bacteria get to work and begin the process of biodegradation, transforming waste into useful compounds which in turn serve to enrich the soil. Those bacteria don't have the same appetite when it comes to plastic, and so that process of returning nutrients to the earth doesn't happen.

What does happen, is that plastics break down. They become brittle and fragment with age, particularly thanks to a process called photodegradation. This kind of decomposition requires sunlight, not bacteria. And this kind of decomposition does not mean a release of trapped nutrients back into the earth, but instead leads to smaller and smaller pieces of plastic. Plastic buried in landfill rarely sees the light of day; but at sea, where a lot of discarded shopping bags, soft drink bottles and six-pack rings end up, plastic is bathed in as much light as water. Plastic in warm ocean water can degrade in as little as a year, which sounds like a marvellous thing until we realise that these 'microplastics' (remember, plastic just breaks down into smaller and smaller bits of the same material) end up in the guts of animals or wash up on shorelines, where humans are most likely to come into direct contact with the toxins.

### **Every single piece of plastic ever made still exists.**

Those pieces of plastic may be decades old bottles in landfill, 'safely' leaching out toxins into the ground around it, or they may be infinitesimally small by now – fragments of a plastic bag churned around in the ocean and exposed to sunlight until the pieces only exist at a microscopic level. But they're there. And now they're in the food chain. A new study led by researchers at the University of Newcastle, Australia, and commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund for Nature found that on average, human beings are eating 5 grams of plastic each, every week. That's as much plastic as your credit card, in your diet, every week. In particular, it's in our water, in our shellfish, and in our beer. And at this microscopic, almost cellular level, it's become part of our bodies.





All this may well feel rather overwhelming, and certainly calls for a widespread international response. We might find ourselves asking what can we do, and what effect can we have; as individuals, as local communities, as a church. But just as the Gerasene man was brought to his senses and then sent back into his community to declare just how much God was doing among them, so are we called to proclaim to the world, in word AND in deed, that God's love for creation is such that not even a single sparrow can fall to the ground outside God's care.

As the COVID-19 pandemic forced us into lock-down, we had to change our consuming habits. We may have found it hard to avoid single use plastics! Like so many things affected by the coronavirus, we do what we can with God's grace. As we, and the world, now prepare to come into the new day, after lock down, we have an opportunity to help create a plastic reduced world. It is in changing our own habits, in putting our own house in order, that we speak prophetically to the world to declare Christ's presence in all things.

The wind, one clear day, called out  
to my soul with a scent of jasmine.

'In return for the aroma of my jasmine,  
I'd like all the aroma of your roses.'

'I have no roses; all the flowers  
in my garden are dead.'

'Well then, I'll take the withered petals  
and the yellow leaves, and the waters of the fountain.'

The wind left. And I wept. And I said to myself:  
'What have you done with the garden that was entrusted to you?'

(Antonio Machado)

## The Fifth Mark of Anglican Mission

*"To strive to safeguard the  
integrity of creation, and sustain  
and renew the life of the earth."*

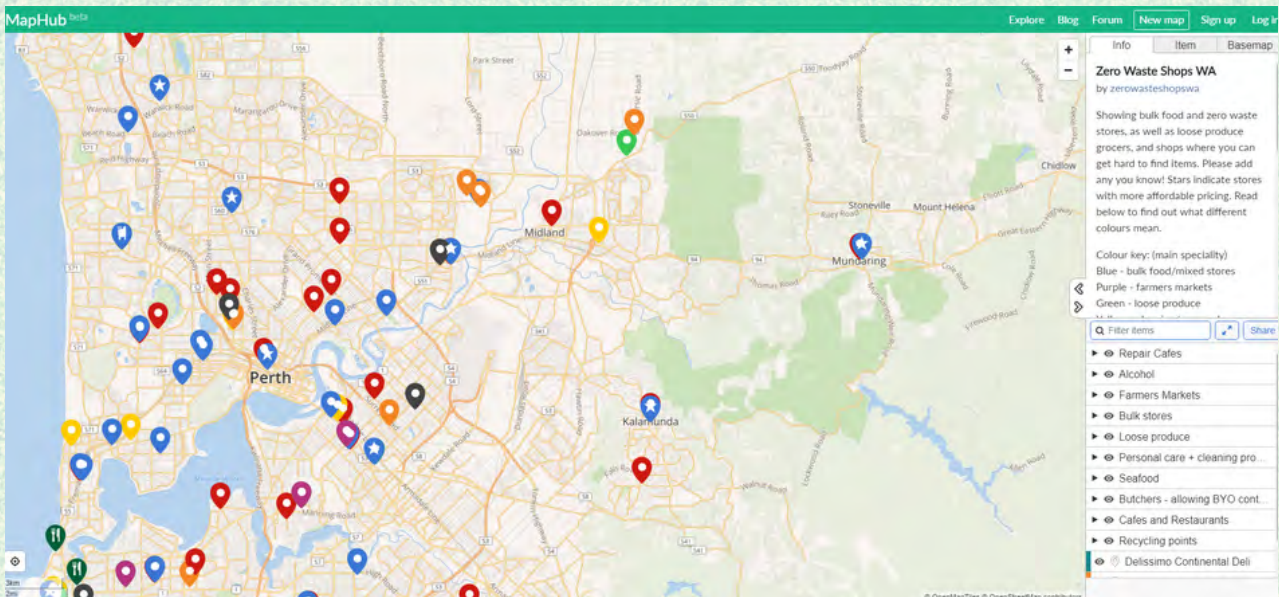




## OUR CHOICES MATTER

Our daily lives and consumer choices are part of our Christian Mission - we show forth our care for Creation and for other people by what we choose to buy. We can make a significant difference by seemingly simple choices regarding waste and plastic use.

The zero-waste food movement is really starting to take off. If you want to know where you can shop close to you to produce minimal waste here is a great community led website, '**Zero Waste Shops WA**'. It's a easy to use maps of bulk food shops, ethical butchers, eco-cafes and much more. <http://bit.ly/WAzerowasteshops>



## SOME PLASTIC FREE IDEAS





## A PRAYER BASED ON PSALM 102.25

'In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth,  
and the heavens are the work of your hands.'

Loving God,  
thank you for the gift of creation.

As we experience each day,  
may we take time to wonder and give you thanks.

From each sunrise to every sunset,  
in every season, and with every breath,  
may we celebrate our home in creation,  
and the glorious gift of life.

As the climate changes through our lifestyles,  
give us compassion to care deeply that people are suffering now,  
from drought, flood, wildfires and terrible storms.

Give us the imagination to see  
that many species, and future generations are in peril  
and may never know the beauty and  
diversity of creation that we enjoy.

Give us passion to act now,  
to pray for the changes needed within our communities,  
our churches, our nation, and among the nations,  
for climate change to be brought under control.

Guide us Lord, and guide our leaders, to act as you would have us act.  
May our prayer and our actions flow from our love for your creation,  
in all its beauty and diversity, a longing for justice for the poor,  
and our commitment to all future generations  
of your children on this Earth.

**Amen.**



# PLASTIC FREE PLEDGES & ACTIONS



Across the world millions of people each July take a pledge to reduce their use of consumer plastic. This is an ideal opportunity for your parish, school or agency to take the pledge together as an act of Christian witness. A prayer is given below for your priest or minister to use in this communal pledge. Or you can simply share these links for online pledging through your social media and other networks.

- More information and links for taking (and sharing) your pledge online can be found here: <https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/>
- A more general pledge to avoid using single-use plastics for both individual people and groups can be found at <http://bit.ly/pfindiv> and <http://bit.ly/pfgroups>

## A PRAYER FOR PLASTIC-FREE JULY

God, creator of the universe,  
 Fill us with your love for the creation,  
 for the natural world around us,  
 for the earth from which we come  
 and to which we will return.  
 Awake in us energy to work for your world;  
 and as we strive to proclaim your love for creation  
 in our words and by our deeds,  
 let us never fall into complacency, ignorance,  
 or being overwhelmed by the task before us.  
 Help us to restore, remake, renew.  
**Amen**



## HYMN - IN THE GARDEN WE BEGAN

1. In the garden we began,  
charged by God to tend and keep  
all the creatures and the land –  
but we've held these treasures cheap:

*Spirit, teach us how to care  
for the waters, earth and air.*

2. In the desert we were fed,  
taught and tested and refined,  
but new deserts we have made –  
land eroded, salted, mined:

*Spirit, teach us how to care  
for the waters, earth and air.*

3. Through the water we have come,  
through the font our faith proclaimed,  
but what damage we have done –  
toxins dumped and rivers drained:

*Spirit, teach us how to care  
for the waters, earth and air.*

4. Till our greed and waste are cured,  
till the damage is repaired,  
till the balance is restored,  
till your gifts are justly shared:

*Spirit, teach us how to care  
for the waters, earth and air.*

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NUNGARIN 77.77.77

Alexander Scutt

♩ = 96

In the gar - den we be - gan, charged by God to tend and keep all the  
crea - tures and the land - but we've held these trea - sures cheap Spi - rit,  
teach us how to care for the wa - ters, earth and air.



# Did you know that Plastic Free July started in Fremantle?



Plastic Free July is an initiative of the **Plastic Free Foundation**, an independent, not-for-profit organisation established in 2017 in Fremantle.

The Plastic Free Foundation has a vision of a world free of Plastic Waste. In 2011, founder, Rebecca Prince-Ruiz, developed a small team in local government in Western Australia to promote and encourage a plastic free world. The incredible work they have done can be seen on the next page, taken from their 2019 Annual Report on their website, <https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/>

Have a look at their Facebook page also for current information and projects <https://www.facebook.com/PlasticFreeJuly/>

## Own Your Impact!

The Western Australian Government has created a very useful website to help us reduce our waste and environmental impact: <https://ownyourimpact.com.au/>

Here you can find information, quizzes, suggestions for waste detoxing and challenges. Suggestions for throwing low waste parties and correctly recycling our electronic goods are among the many excellent articles.





## IMPACT IN 2019

# 250 Million participants

adopted 325 million 'choose to refuse' behaviour changes



## Stories of change

are shared with others telling about baking, recycling, switching to unpackaged goods, litter clean ups, school projects and community and workplace events

# 16%

more likely to reduce waste

Plastic Free July participants are ahead of the global trend, being more likely to adopt plastic waste avoidance behaviours

# ↓ 23kg each

The participants reduced their waste and recycling by 23kg per person per year (almost five per cent)

# 825 Million kg of plastic waste avoided

including millions of single-use drink bottles, coffee cups, packaging, straws and plastic bags



## Well-being

They have a positive sense of well-being, which increases with participation in Plastic Free July



# 100M+ readers globally

Plastic Free July is newsworthy. Across the world, 2214 pieces of media coverage were generated with global readership reaching over 100 million people

# 80%

support action to reduce plastic waste

by consumers, by producers, by retailers, and by government



**Plastic Free July inspires me to step up my commitment to reducing single-use plastic in my daily life and on tour.**

JACK JOHNSON, MUSICIAN



# MAKING KEEP BAGS



It's been two years since Western Australia introduced its 'plastic bags ban'. Since then, lots of people have used thicker, more durable plastic bags or reusable bags brought from the store. These are good alternatives to disposable plastic bags, but there are more environmentally alternatives. One of these is to make your own bags from old clothes. That way we are recycling as well as giving up plastic. It's not that hard. Below is a pattern to get you going.

Once you get the hang of this, you may want to form a small parish group to produce alternatives to plastic bags that you can supply to local supermarkets.

## MATERIALS

- Old or unwearable Heavy-weight cotton T-shirt
- Sewing machine
- Medium-size bowl
- Water-erasable marking pen
- Scissors



## STEPS

1. Turn T-shirt inside out and pin bottom of the T-shirt along the hem. Using a sewing machine, sew bottom of T-shirt closed. Flip shirt right side out and lay flat on table, making sure all seams are lined up.
2. Place the medium-size bowl about half-way over the neck hole. Using a water-erasable marking pen, trace along the edge of the bowl. Cut along the outline, making sure to go through the front and back sides of the shirt, in order to create an opening for the bag that's larger than what the neck hole allows.
3. Turn T-shirt inside out and pin bottom of the T-shirt along the hem. Using a sewing machine, sew bottom of T-shirt closed. Flip shirt right side out and lay flat on table, making sure all seams are lined up.

**Maybe you prefer a video?**

**<http://bit.ly/keepbag>**



## A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

There are many excellent theological reflections, books, resources and responses to the broader environmental crisis and climate catastrophe. Few however, focus on one of the main causes of these problems – unwise human use of plastics.

In less than seventy years, cheap and mass production of plastic has made it ubiquitous across the globe and engendered catastrophic environmental consequences due to both methods of its production and disposal.

The raw materials for all forms of plastic are taken from the environment, from God's Creation. We know that God declared His creation 'very good'.<sup>[1]</sup> So, at the most fundamental level, plastic, like all Creation, carries God's imprimatur and therefore is to be part of the outworking of the economy of salvation for all Creation.

*Though it may seem at first thought a parody, plastics, like the elements of the Eucharist, are, to use words from the Church of England's Common Worship, "the fruit of the earth and the work of human hands".*

For its redemption however, Creation 'waits with eager longing' for the unveiling of the children of God, that is ourselves.<sup>[2]</sup> How we as creatures of God, created by God to be stewards and lovers of Creation.<sup>[3]</sup> engage and treat the world is therefore very important. The same importance applies to what we create from the world's resources, gifted to us from God.

It is a telling indictment on how we use and treat plastic that the word has become a pejorative term, indicating that something is tacky, unreal and unfulfilling. Let us contrast this with the Eucharist which is the ultimate reality and peak of beauty and fulfillment in this world. In the Eucharist, we take elements created by God as part of the earth's bounty and, having shaped them into something new, we offer the union of God's Creation and our creative power back to God. With plastic, by and large, we do not, keeping the supposed benefits solely in the human world, breaking the link between the human and the divine. This is especially the case with single-use plastics.

Single-use plastics are purchased, used and discarded solely for the convenience and pleasure of an individual or single family or group. Once thrown away, the harm and damage they cause are not thought about. They have served their purpose, albeit for a brief transitory period. Single-use plastics are then both a symbol of the individual's power over Creation and the less-privileged in Creation, and a means to exercise that power. They thus function almost as an anti-Eucharist.

[1] Genesis 1.31

[2] Romans 8.19

[3] Genesis 2.15



One of the consequences of single-use plastics is their decomposition into microplastics. A recent Australian study found people are regularly consuming unseen microplastics with our food and water.[4] Many of these microplastics enter the food chain via single-use plastics and we consume around five grams every week. That is much more than a Communion wafer.

The consumption of these microplastics connects everyone in the world since they infect virtually all levels of the food chain. Again, the contrast with the Eucharist is stark. In the Eucharist, people come together as one, through a personal response to the call of God, in Christ, by the Spirit, to eat of the bread of life as a visible symbol and reality of God's presence and grace. Microplastics connect all people unconsciously, without choice, through an unseen consumption of a substance of ill-health as an invisible testament to human will and excess.

Plastic, as its name indicates, can be moulded and manipulated by human will and creativity into limitless forms. Our personal creative powers are gifts from the Triune God, who is an eternally relational community of Three Persons, each giving one to the other. This image of a self-giving community is what we, as human people and human societies, are called to be.



Our plastic use however is generally individualistic and opportunistic, even before we consider the damage done to Creation. Plastic production and consumption often hinders and harms the communion and interpersonal connectedness God created us for, as those who bear God's image. Disposable bags, replacement heart valves, novelty plastic toys and hearing aids are all products of human creativity. For all of these forms, plastic is the vehicle but our creativity and our will is the cause. This creativity is a gift from God. We may choose to use it for service, as in the examples of heart valves and hearing aids, or to satisfy our individual human wills and desires. This malleability of plastic to our will means it can become a temptation to express our will over that of God's, satisfying our desires over God's

Plastic misuse and disposal then is not simply an environmental or economic problem. It is a spiritual and theological one: it speaks of the way we understand the God we claim to worship. From a Christian view, it stems from not applying our tradition, which views the world and our lives Eucharistically, into all realms of human endeavour. A Eucharistic view of life is one where engage in thanksgiving to God and Creation, allowing our thankfulness to inform our decisions and actions that impact upon Creation.

[4]. <https://www.wwf.org.au/ArticleDocuments/353/pub-no-plastic-in-nature-assessing-plastic-ingestion-from-nature-to-people-jun19.pdf.aspx?OverrideExpiry=Y>



Self-focused, individualised use of the gifts of Creation, such as plastic, is contrary to the personhood God calls each of us to inhabit. We are called to be in communion with Creation and in communion with all people, full of the spiritual knowledge that our actions and non-actions affect everyone in Creation and Creation itself. By engaging more deeply in our Christian faith, with the knowledge of whom God calls us to be – a relational person with creatures and Creation – we are moved to change our actions which harm that relationship.

By viewing and engaging the world through a Eucharistic lens, we begin to discern those actions and non-actions we participate in which are not Eucharistic, which do not offer thanksgiving to God, and which attempt to keep benefit within the human realm and limited to individuals or individual groups. This may inform our choice to refuse or limit purchasing single-use plastic.

As Christian witnesses to God's good Creation and God's call for our Stewardship, we are also moved to challenge institutional and corporate actions that view plastic as simply a manufactured commodity by which profits are made. A Christian viewpoint demands that companies and governments see plastic as it really exists – within a realm of interrelationships affecting Creation and all people. As Christians, we may support movements based on this reality, which outlaw the fiction of consequence-free single-use plastic. In practice, this may mean calling for laws that ensure companies and countries are responsible for the recycling or safe disposal of the plastic they produce, not solely personal consumers.

Plastic is the paramount symbol of human will and usurped divinely gifted creativity. Since plastic mostly expresses limited, expedient and worldly desires, it may be seen as a manifestation of the human subjection to the powers of this world. As Christians conformed to Christ, the powers of this world no longer have dominion over us. Can we view our use of plastic in light of this freedom given to us by Christ?

With God's help, we do not have to be subjected to plastic's ubiquitous sway over modern life. Each day there are more alternatives to plastics being promoted and encouraged throughout the world. As a Eucharistic community, we know that God is intimately involved in God's Creation and in our every earthy, daily lives. This means that every act, and even every purchase we make, can be made with Christ through the Holy Spirit to the Glory of God. When we chose to refuse or limit our plastic use, especially single-use plastics, we are participating in God and showing forth our fifth Mark of Mission by to “safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth”.





*"Without God, we can't;  
without us, God won't."*

~ Archbishop Emeritus, Desmond Tutu



We are told that God declared his Creation 'very good'. As stewards of creation, we are called to use our own creative power, gifted from God, to ensure its care. We are also told that creation waits with 'eager longing' for the revealing of humanity as the children of God.

We cannot, however, restore our relationship with God, as people, as communities or as church, without also restoring our relationship with Creation as the primal expression of God's love and mission. Creation includes us. We stop seeing ourselves as acting upon Creation – for good or for ill – but must revise our understanding of Creation as a seamless weave that includes humanity as part of the universal unfolding of God.

### **Living God**

Where there is waste, let us bring recycling,  
Where there is recycling, let us bring reuse,  
Where there is reuse, let us bring sustainability,  
Where there is sustainability, let us bring justice  
Where there is justice, let us bring love.

**Amen.**

John Polhill

**If you would like to know more about the work of the Anglican  
EcoCare Commission, please email [ecocare@perth.anglican.org](mailto:ecocare@perth.anglican.org)  
or call 9425 7276.**





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