

RESOLUTION REGARDING THE USE OF PLASTIC FOAM (i.e. Styrofoam®)

Presented by Trinity United Church of Christ, Waynesboro, PA and Creation Justice

Background information:

1. Styrofoam® is made of expanded polystyrene foam.
2. Polystyrene is made by linking styrene molecules into a polymer
 - a. Polymer is defined by Merriam-Webster as: a chemical compound or mixture of compounds that is formed by combination of smaller molecules and consists basically of repeating structural units
 - b. Polystyrene is used in many applications, including food service.
 - c. Styrofoam® is a registered trademark by Dow Chemical Company and refers to Dow's building material products. Referring to polystyrene products, such as coffee cups and other food services materials as "Styrofoam®" is incorrect.
 - d. For the rest of this proposal, "Styrofoam®" will be replaced with "plastic foam."
3. It takes 500 years for plastic foam to decompose (Business Barbados, 2016).
4. Landfill contents are 25-30% plastic, which includes plastic foam (Business Barbados, 2016).
5. Styrene and benzene are known carcinogens in animals, and suspected carcinogens in humans.
6. Plastic foam containers leach styrene when they come into contact with warm food or drink, alcohol, oils, and acidic foods (i.e. fruit juice). Foam cups actually lose weight when they are used.
7. Microwaving food in plastic foam containers increases styrene leaching into food and is considered a health risk.
8. In 1986 the EPA listed polystyrene manufacturing as the 5th largest hazardous waste contributor in the United States (Business Barbados, 2016).
 - a. Polystyrene is manufactured with petroleum
 - b. Petroleum is non-sustaining and heavily polluting
9. The United Nations Environment Programs estimated in 2006 that 46,000 pieces of plastic, including plastic foam, float in every square mile of ocean (Business Barbados, 2016).
 - a. Polystyrene is lightweight and floats readily, which means that it travels easily down storm drains and runs off into waterways.
 - b. Plastic from urban runoff is the primary source of plastic ocean debris worldwide.
 - c. As plastics enter the waterways and oceans, they break down into smaller and smaller pieces, which are then ingested by marine life, causing harm or death.
 - d. A study of beach debris at 43 sites along the California coast found plastic foam to be the second most abundant form of beach debris.
 - e. In 2015, microplastics, including degraded foam plastic, were found in 59 of 60 samples of water from the Chesapeake Bay Watershed (Hunt, 2015).
10. 100% of human fatty tissues sampled in 1972, 1976, and 1982 contained levels of styrene. A 1988 survey found levels of styrene in fatty tissue to be 8 to 350 nanograms of styrene per gram of tissue (ng/g). 350 ng/g is 1/3 the level of styrene that is toxic to nerves or nervous tissue (Business Barbados, 2016).
11. Non-plastic foam food packaging products are available online at the following websites (this list is NOT inclusive – there are others, and users are encouraged and expected to do their own research for quality and price)
 - a. <https://greenpaperproducts.com/styrofoam-alternatives.aspx>
 - b. <https://begreenpackagingstore.com>
 - c. <https://www.goodstartpackaging.com/>

d. <http://letsogreen.biz>

12. The faith and mission of the UCC, as presented in the 3 Great Loves initiative, is to empower disciples to let their lights shine through love of neighbor, love of children, and love of creation. We are called to become more aware of how we are to care for creation and how when one part of creation is threatened, all of creation is put at risk.

RESOLUTION:

1. Whereas plastic foam is a known pollutant, and
2. Whereas components of plastic foam are known carcinogens in animals and are suspected carcinogens in humans, and
3. Whereas landfills are filling up with plastics, and it takes 500 years for plastics to decompose, and
4. Whereas alternatives to plastic foam packaging are readily available, and
5. Whereas we are called as people of faith to care for creation,

Therefore, be it resolved, that

Penn Central Conference of the United Church of Christ encourages all congregations to avoid the use of plastic foam in food packaging and other activities within their church facilities.

Be it further resolved that congregations educate their members about plastic foam and that they encourage them to use alternatives such as paper products or better yet, ceramic or other dishwasher safe products.

Works Cited

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