



GRACE NOTES

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, 46 WOODLAND STREET, HARTFORD, CT 06105 860-527-7792

January 2021

SEEKING THE TRUTH

Happy New Year! Through a year of pandemic which is now peaking, a time of deep division in our country, and a time of violence and death, we tiptoe into a new year with some trepidation and perhaps fear.

Yet there is hope, too. New vaccines, a new approach to addressing the virus and all of its implications, through science-based medical practitioners, and experienced public health professionals, and an end to the politicizing of a public health disaster are all in the wings. More important than all of that is the re-awakening of our faith as we have re-experienced God's action in the birth of Jesus, discovering in new ways what it means to be children of God.

Ephesians 1:3-14 (NRSV)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴ this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Devotion

God's word is meant to be heard. God has chosen us and adopted us as God's children. In Jesus we have redemption and forgiveness. "In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit." (vs. 13) In Baptism and its affirmation we celebrate that we have been called and claimed by God. In the church we claim that God's call is effective because we have heard God's promise in the word.

(continues on page 3)

Seeking The Truth — pages 1, 3 — 5
Pastor's Message — page 2
Reducing the Use of Plastic — pages 6 — 16
What You Can Do Now — pages 16 & 17
Lighten Project Approved — page 18
Caring for Creation — pages 19 — 21
Enlighten Solar Panel Report — page 22
Renewal of Wedding Vows / Congratulations Shihan Ghazi / December Anniversary & Birthdays — page 23



Pastor's Message — A New Day is Coming

At the risk of understating the threats that we face as a people and as a planet, I choose to look forward with hope and trust. Hope in science, and absolute trust in our Triune God. We have lived through a time in our lives that evidenced the worst in us, the differences rather than the similarities and we have been pawns in a game that those with wealth and power have used as levers to force some of us to do harm to others. It is our role to stop these behaviors in every way we can: with our treasure, with our action and with our hearts.

In these things, God is with us. These are the things we embrace fully without question and point us in the direction that we must follow. There will always be differences of opinion on approaches to issues and in vantage points of difference. That is fundamentally different from doing harm, ignoring the law, our Constitution and the tenets of our faith. As I have said time and time again, we don't seek out political discord. We welcome it. That's our system. We argue, debate and then come to a decision. That does not involve hate, it involves a difference of opinion. But, too, we believe that all humankind is created equal. No single voice speaks for the whole.

We equally respect those of faith and no faith, people of wealth and those desperately poor, we value and care for immigrants and refugees, just as we do our own relatives who were immigrants and refugees in years past. We hold up and respect people who are native to this country. They are the only people that have an argument that this is their land. We must at the very least treat them with fairness.

Justice and the law must treat all people the same. We need to empty out the privatized jails that make money on those least able to find or afford representation through the courts, people that are mostly Black and brown, whose mistakes have forced them behind bars for extraordinary time, for doing what you and I of privilege would not even be brought to the courts.

The police can no longer be expected to treat mental illness, family issues and the impact of desperation of poverty and addiction. The war on drugs has killed more than it has saved. We need to reconsider ways of treating people with training suitable to the tasks. The police cannot and should not be expected to do all that they do with inadequate training and armed with military equipment. We need to reconsider how justice is levied in this country.

And we Churches need to remember our roots and things we used to do about the common good, more broadly, rather than simply taking care of our own. New concepts in working together with different faiths to care and advocate for the poor and the immigrants, refugees and mentally ill. GHIAA is a very important means for cooperation in bringing about serious, profound social change in our communities. Our relationship with St. Matthew's and other churches, synagogues, mosques, seminaries, and "nones" (people who are atheists, humanists, spiritualists, secularists, etc.).

May we come together in helping and advocating for those vulnerable and suffering. This is who Jesus taught us to be.

As I move towards my seventh year with this wonderful congregation I asked your assistance and support so that we may continue to maintain our focus outside of our building where Christ is. Guided by the Holy Spirit may our lives together grow closer and may we beat this virus, and draw closer to one another once again.

My true hope for 2021 is that we may hug each other once again, when it is safe to do so, and presuming there would be people who would want to hold each other even for a moment once again. Love to all of my brothers and sisters.

Pastor Rick

SEEKING THE TRUTH

(continued from page 1)

Martin Luther, in his explanation of the third article of the creed says: “The Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and kept me in true faith.”

How are we made children of God? Ephesians confesses it this way: “God chose us before the foundation of the world...and destined us for adoption as his Children through Jesus Christ.”

Mindy Ehrke '85 M. Div.

Pastor Lyman County Parish, Kennebec/Vivian/American Lutheran Churches of Kennebec, Vivian and Presheo South Dakota



Yes, the power of our faith is with us, too. And, with the help of Pastor Ehrke, and the power of an experience of our own Dorothea Glatte, the doors of hope and truth may be opened in a new way making it clear that theology and science are not at odds, but are united in God's creation...

It was in the midst of all this worsening of our public health crisis that Dorothea made a decision to attend a Zoom meeting recently. She found in that meeting one of the most remarkable developments already in motion; we know and trust in God's presence in the world, but we don't always see it. This is driven by scientists who had established an organization years ago referred to as BioLogos. She shared with me a recording of the meeting she attended. I was both thrilled and astounded. So much of the discord we have faced is in the clash between the educated and the uneducated, the faithful and those of no faith, those focused on their own needs and those who care about others, and those ruthless enough to cause these divisions to be amplified as a means of increasing their own wealth and power.

I asked Dorothea to share her experience with all of us:



“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” Psalm 139:14 (NIV, copyright 1978, The Zondervan Corporation)

“...And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?” Esther 4:13b (NIV, copyright 1978, The Zondervan Corporation)

When I think of Dr. Francis Sellers Collins, the verses I've posted above immediately come to mind. I did not know very much about this remarkable individual until three weeks ago. I was participating in a Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Town Hall Meeting via ZOOM on December 18, 2020, when Dr. Scott Sundquist, (the Seminary's current president), encouraged each of us to make time to listen to an interview with Dr. Collins posted on the Internet. Dr. Sundquist felt very strongly that we would be blessed by Dr. Collins' interview and personal testimony.

(continues on page 4)

SEEKING THE TRUTH

(continued from page 3)

Dr. Collins was responsible for overseeing the International Human Genome Sequencing Consortium, the group that successfully carried out the Human Genome Project. The Project focused on identifying and mapping all of the genes of the human genome from a physical as well as a functional standpoint. (See Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Genome_Project, accessed as of 28 December 2020). The project started in 1984 and was finally completed in April 2003. Then in 2009, Dr. Collins was appointed by President Obama to serve as the Director of the National Institutes of Health, (“NIH”), and was reappointed by President Trump in 2017 to continue serving in the role at the NIH. Remarkably, Dr. Collins acknowledges Jesus as his Lord and Savior. He does not hide his faith “under a bushel”. However, this has not always been the case. If anyone can testify to the truth of the words penned by King David in Psalm 139 over two thousand years ago, it is Dr. Collins. If you have access to the Internet, please make time to listen to Dr. Collins answer questions about the Corona Virus, the COVID-19 vaccine as well as his personal journey of faith and how God has used him in the field of science and medicine throughout the past forty years. I’m convinced his interview will bless you as it did me. God, the Creator and Sustainer of all that is, all that was and all that is yet to come, bless you and yours throughout the coming New Year 2021!

Shalom, Dorothea.



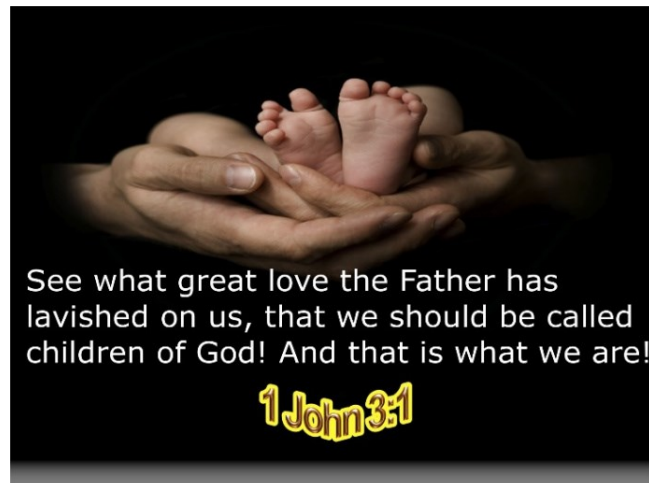
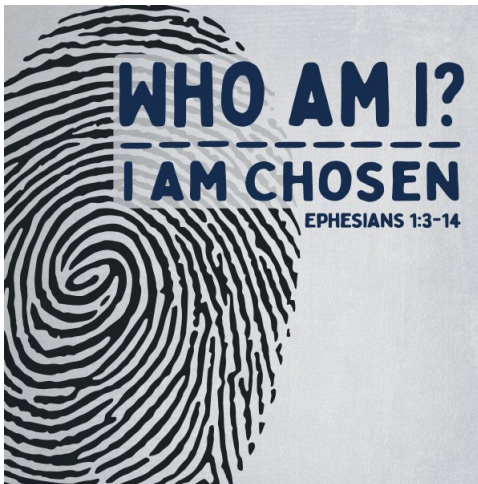
Dorothea and I discussed the Zoom session that I had the opportunity to listen to... here is the link: <https://biologos.org/resources/2020-christmas-leadership-breakfast-a-conversation-with-francis-collins>. This wonderful hour or so confirmed my deep belief that God is present, and God is in control of all that is seen and unseen. To encourage you to go to this link and listen to every morsel of Dr. Collins witness, is part of what Dorothea and I want to say. The other part is that we must, in some way, bring others to understand that theology and science are not two different ways of looking at our world and circumstances. Quite the contrary it is through science that we learn and better understand the awe of our God’s actions, love, truth and caring for each and every one of his children. I was moved to listen to Dr. Fauci’s boss, Dr. Collins, who is responsible for historical research that has profoundly impacted each of us in ways that we probably do not fully understand (I know I don’t). It was in this work that he came to deeply believe in the living God, and this is about which he speaks in the interview. By the way, the National Institutes of Health has him engaged world-wide with the pandemic, and the organization he is responsible for has a budget well over \$40 billion.

(continues on page 5)

SEEKING THE TRUTH

(continued from page 4)

We know where the truth is and from. May we follow the science and the grace and gifts of our faith as we search for truth in this world. There is no politics here, there is no selfishness and greed here. The BioLogos website is a wonderland of discovery and hope. Go to it. Look at it, read and listen. And, continue your prayer and meditation regimen with the sure truth that science is not at war with faith; science is our learning about our faith and God and in doing so owning and reminding ourselves that God has put us in charge of all of creation, climate change, the creatures on the planet, including all of his children. May we see how some of what we do at Grace has much to do with caring for all people, respecting all people, freeing all people, and caring for our environment... that is God's Creation. See other articles in this issue about ways that you can further help with these tasks. Thanks be to God! Happy New Year!



Reducing the Use of Plastic (Internet source)

1. Follow the "5-R" Rule

Here's a fun little "rule" to remember: **Reduce, Refuse, Reuse then Recycle.**

- **Reduce:** First and foremost, REDUCE plastic usage. Find alternatives you can use instead. Lucky for you, this article is packed with simple and practical ways you can cut out plastic in your life.
- **Refuse:** When single-use plastics are offered to you, politely REFUSE them. Try to break the habit of accepting that bottle of water or taking the straw that is handed to you along with your smoothie. Just say no.
- **Reuse:** When you do end up with a plastic item (it happens to all of us), REUSE it as many times as you can. Give it more than one life.
- **Repair:** Something broken? Instead of making it a habit of throwing things out right away, try your best to fix them first. You'd be surprised what a little duct tape or needle and thread can do.
- **Recycle:** As a last resort, RECYCLE the plastic items you have once they can't be used anymore. And be sure you're recycling them properly.

2. Stop buying plastic bottles of water

Stop buying bottles of water, and unless it's necessary, politely decline them when they are given to you.

Instead, fill up at the tap. If you're privileged to live in a place where the water is drinkable, great. If not, invest in a filter system.

What if the water isn't safe to drink?

- If you're traveling in a place where the water isn't potable, consider packing a [Steripen](#) to make the water safe to drink.
- For home filtration systems, we personally love [Big Berkey](#). We use it in our campervan so we can drink tap water no matter where we're parked!



What's the best reusable water bottle?

Answer: the one you ALREADY HAVE!

However, if you're in the market for a new water bottle, invest in a sturdy one that you'll be able to use for years to come. We love our [Hydro Flask water bottles](#) because they come with a lifetime warranty and they keep our water icy cold.

3. Go Zero Waste for items you use Every Day

This zero waste laundry detergent from EC30 makes it super simple to keep your clothes smelling fresh without having to buy a giant plastic jug every couple of months. Just think how much plastic that will save over time!

Going 100% Zero Waste is a massive and somewhat unrealistic step for many people, but you don't have to go all in to make it count. I've said it once and I'll say it again: **Begin with what you can change.**

Here's how you can make the biggest impact: Swap one or two items you use regularly with a zero waste alternative.

(continues on page 7)

Reducing the Use of Plastic

(continued from page 6)

Start by thinking about one or two items that you use often that come with plastic packaging. For example, laundry detergent, shampoo or hand soap. These are things you use on a near daily basis. Just think about the amount of plastic you could eliminate from your life if you were able to cut out the packaging...

Simply drop two of these surface cleaner swatches from EC30 into a glass spray bottle and you have a zero-waste surface cleaner.

Here's the cool part: There is a brand that has completely eliminated plastic packaging from all of its products, making it super easy to find a zero waste alternative.

[EC30](#) has a line of household products as well as everyday self care items that are unlike anything you've seen before. The products come to you in "swatches" that are comprised of 100% active ingredients. This means you add water once you're ready to use the product.



Eliminating water from their products has allowed EC30 to get rid of all plastic packaging. These products come to you in compostable cardboard instead of a jug that'll sit in landfill far beyond your lifetime.

If you want to see these products in action, check out our video review:

HUGE Bonus: Because EC30's products only contain active ingredients, this means they don't need to ship water. This means their products weigh far less than the traditional versions, allowing them to get products to the consumer with 50% fewer carbon emissions. Let that sink in for a second because that's huge! [They've got lots of details about their journey to carbon neutral on their website.](#)

Our favorite EC30 items:

- **Laundry detergent:** I'm so excited to no longer need to buy giant plastic jugs for doing laundry. That in itself is going to save us lots of plastic waste each year.
- **Shampoo swatches:** Ben is stoked to bring these on our next international trip (it'll make getting through airport security a breeze!)
- **Toilet bowl cleaner:** Not the sexiest product to talk about, but I was super impressed with how much it foamed up and how well it cleaned our toilet. Also, I've never seen a zero waste option for toilet cleaner before, so it's a really good way to make a simple plastic-free swap!

Our advice: Test out the [Try it All Kit](#) so you can sample all the different products EC30 offers and see which ones work best for you. You can get an additional \$10 off when you use the coupon code: **Wandering10**. After testing them all out, we are pretty confident you'll be able to swap at least a couple products you use daily out for a zero waste version! Plus, EC30 has made it super simple with a subscription program so you can get these products delivered to you when you're running low.

(continues on page 8)

4. Try plastic-free deodorant

Ditch traditional deodorant that comes in plastic packaging. Instead, opt for brands that have more eco-friendly alternatives like a glass jar or a cardboard container.

Bonus: Most of the brands in eco-conscious packaging are also all-natural and don't contain aluminum and other toxic chemicals.

Personal Experience:

- I've tried a ton of different natural deodorants and have had great luck with [Piper Wai](#), which comes in a glass jar that are great for reusing.
- I also really like [Native](#), and am happy that they now offer their deodorant in cardboard packaging. My only complaint is that the cardboard version costs \$1 more than the plastic package, which seems a little backwards...
- Ben is obsessed with [natural crystal deodorant](#). While it comes in a plastic container, each crystal lasts at least a year, meaning less plastic is thrown away. Also, once you get used to using a crystal, your body naturally doesn't even really need deodorant anymore. Ben is proof. (And I never thought I'd say that!)

Feeling crafty? Try [making your own all-natural deodorant](#) using shea butter, arrowroot flour and essential oils. And store it in a small glass jar (reuse one you already have).

5. Travel with backup

[Traveling responsibly](#) is super important to us, and we have made it our mission to create as little waste as possible when we're far from home.

We've found that when traveling, it is so much easier to say no to plastic items like straws, bags and cups when we are prepared.

Psst! Check out our [eco-friendly packing list](#) so you can be more prepared on your next trip and save lots of plastic.

More eco-friendly travel tips:

- Have your reusables ready on the plane so you can (politely) refuse if they only have plastic utensils and cups.
- If you don't speak the local language, use Google Translate and memorize (or write down!) the phrases for, "No straw/bag/water, please," so you can politely decline single-use plastics.

6. BYO-Toiletries

While we're on the subject of travel... the next time you stay at a hotel and you see those mini toiletries, avoid the urge to stash them in your purse. I used to look at them and think, *"Oh they're so cute!"* but now I look at them and think, *"What a waste of plastic!"*.

And if you *do* need to use them (we've all forgotten our shampoo), refill them over and over again so you can use them on future travels.

Reducing the Use of Plastic

(continued from page 8)

Bonus: When you stay in hotels with the big refillable containers (it's becoming more and more common), let them know you appreciate their efforts to reduce plastic waste!

Interesting Fact: In order to receive a 5-star rating in most markets, hotels need to provide personal toiletry bottles. This is an outdated practice, and hopefully it is done away with soon.

7. Keep reusable bags in your car

Everyone knows they should have reusable bags by now, but one of the top reasons people don't use their bags (us included) is they forget to bring them.

Stash them in your car or your purse or your pockets so you don't forget.



Psst! When they [pack up this small](#), you can always carry one on you.

8. Skip the produce bags at the grocery store

All those veggies and fruit have already been touched by many hands... Gross, I know, but a plastic bag isn't going to help protect them much. Just sayin'! Ditch those pesky (and unnecessary!) bags and just be sure to wash your produce extra well!

Alternative Tip: If you just can't bring yourself to *not* put produce in a bag (or you want to buy a bunch of potatoes and don't want them rolling all over your shopping cart!), try a [reusable produce bag](#) or at least reuse the plastic kind until they can't be used anymore.



And while we're on this topic, avoid buying the veggies on styrofoam trays wrapped in plastic when possible. So much unnecessary waste!

9. Say no to disposable straws

There's just no need for them. 'Nuff said. Buy a sweet reusable straw instead.

We've tried a bunch, but [these are our favorite!](#)

10. Invest in reusable utensils & containers

Bring your own takeaway containers, cups, coffee thermos, and utensils with you so when you get food or drinks to-go, you won't waste any packaging. The restaurant might even thank you for saving them the cost of to-go containers.

2020 Note: With businesses trying to prioritize hygiene more than ever, some places are not accepting reusables for the time being. But it doesn't hurt to ask!

Here are some of our favorite reusables:

(continues on page 10)

Reducing the Use of Plastic

(continued from page 9)

- [Utensil set](#)
- [Collapsible coffee cup](#) or [coffee thermos](#)
- [Collapsible cups](#)
- [To-go containers](#)

And just like with reusable bags, store a set of reusables in your car so they're handy when you need them.

Related: Check out our eco-friendly gear in our [online storefront!](#)

11. Use what you already have

We live in a world where we're constantly told we need more or we need the newest model. And sure, there are times when having the newest model is truly worthwhile, more efficient, or just a hell of a lot cooler!

But a lot of the time this “consumer mindset” that we’re spoon-fed from an early age benefits the big brands more than benefits us.

This is true even for eco-friendly products. Do you really need a *new* reusable tote bag? Why buy a 7th water bottle when you already have 6 that do the job. Instead of buying a fancy eco-friendly container for takeaway food, use a container you already have at home. (yes, even if it's plastic!).

Before heading to the store to make a purchase, ask yourself the following:

- *Do I really need to buy this new?*
- *Do I already have something that will work?*
- *Could I borrow this item from someone?*

Buying new doesn't have to be your go-to option for everything. Get friendly with local thrift stores or join a “Buy Nothing” Facebook group in your area (they are an incredible resource!).

Obviously there are always going to be things you want to buy new — like underwear and toothbrushes, duh! — but there are many items that will do the same job whether new or lightly used.

12. Fix 'er up

Get in the habit of fixing things instead of throwing them away. Think of your belongings as having a lifespan. Do everything you can to extend that lifespan and keep them out of landfills.

Oh, and it might be obvious, but getting in the habit of fixing things before going out and buying new is going to save you a heck of a lot of money.



Psst! YouTube is an amazing resource for finding tutorials that walk you through how to fix specific items.

(continues on page 11)

13. *Really think about your purchases*

I'll be blunt: It's a lot of work to be a conscious consumer.

There's a lot to think about and brands sometimes make it difficult to find the answers you're looking for. But you don't have to make all the changes at once. Research one product at a time to find the best brand or option, then stick with them.

Here are some things to consider when you're making a purchase:

- **Choose brands wisely:** Research the brands you are loyal to. What is their stance on the environment? Do they have any sustainability practices? Are there more eco-friendly alternatives?
- **Compare packaging:** If there is a glass option versus a plastic, go for glass. If you have the choice of buying a large container or a small one, go for the big one (if it's something you use often and won't expire).
- **Avoid individually packaged items:** While a teeny bit more convenient, individually packaged items are incredibly wasteful. If you want things to be portioned, put them in individual jars or reusable bags.
- **Buy for the long run:** Ask yourself if there's an option that'll last longer. For example, a single plastic lighter will last you until the lighter fluid runs out. Instead, opt for a USB rechargeable lighter that you can use for years and years. And likewise, opt for better quality. It may cost a little more now, but you won't have to replace things as frequently if you prioritize quality.

14. *Don't buy... DIY*

Hey, that rhymes!

If you like getting crafty, consider learning how to make your own beauty products, household cleaners, and prepared foods.

Not only are you going to be able to save a ton of packaging (wahoo!), but you can also choose *exactly* what goes into each item. Say buh-bye to chemicals, toxins and additives and say hello to an all-around healthier lifestyle.

As with most of the advice on this list, start small. Think of a few things you use often that you could potentially make yourself.

For example, we eat a lot of sriracha, salad dressings and kimchi, so we started making them ourselves instead of buying them in plastic packaging. Additionally, I make a simple body scrub, face toner, and window cleaner so we don't have to buy those either.



Reducing the Use of Plastic

(continued from page 12)

One of the beauties of the Internet is it's packed with all sorts of resources and tutorials. Simply search "DIY recipe for [insert product]" and you should find tutorials to choose from!

Once you get in the habit of making things yourself you'll see how easy it is, and how much money it can save in the long run.

Some of our favorite DIY products:

- **Body scrub:** coconut oil + essential oil + sugar and/or coarse salt
- **Facial Toner:** apple cider vinegar + tea tree oil + witch hazel
- **Window cleaner:** alcohol + white vinegar + water
- **Not in the mood to DIY?** EC30 has a really nice [zero waste surface cleaner](#). Simply drop the swatch into a reusable spray bottle filled with water, and you've got yourself a surface cleaner (free from fillers and nasty ingredients, by the way!).

15. Buy in bulk when possible

There are many package-free stores popping up in cities all over the world where you can buy things like pasta, quinoa, nuts, dried fruit, spices and lots more *without* the packaging.

Just bring a mason jar (or [something similar](#)) and fill 'er up.

And if there isn't a package-free store near you, ask your local grocer if they'd consider bringing in some bulk food items. You never know what kind of changes you can see when you ask for them.

Alternative options: Shop at your local farmers market or go a step further and support a specific farm in your area by signing up for a CSA box. Not only are you reducing the amount of packaging in your life, but you're also supporting the little guys instead of a major corporation. Win win.

16. Consider buying solid toiletries

Think about all those plastic containers sitting in your bathroom... Shampoo, conditioner, face wash, toothpaste, mouthwash, lotion... I could go on.

Now, consider how many times a year you purchase each item. I know personally, that is *a lot* of plastic containers.

What if you could make a few swaps? Trade in that plastic bottle of shampoo for a solid bar (or a shampoo swatch, [like this one!](#)). Swap out your eye makeup remover for coconut oil (it works!). Start using a lotion bar instead of the traditional stuff. We've used solid shampoo, conditioner, lotion, body wash, face wash, perfume, eye makeup remover and bug spray (to name a few). The great thing is the solid version typically comes in a cardboard box instead of plastic packaging.

Some swaps have worked amazingly, and others — like mouthwash — are things we're just not able to find a comparable alternative. Start with what you *can* swap.

(continues on page 13)

Bonus: The added bonus of going with solid toiletry items is they are perfect for travel and get you through airports in a cinch. Plus, you won't have to restock with those silly little bottles a few days into your trip.

17. Try a bamboo toothbrush instead of plastic

Did you know plastic toothbrushes are a very common piece of trash to find in the ocean?

Yeah, I know... we've been using them for years, so we're no saints.

We each have electric toothbrushes for daily use (gotta take extra good care of those chompers!).



But for taking on short trips, [bamboo toothbrushes](#) are an environmentally friendly alternative to the disposable plastic kind.

Alternative Tip: If you love your plastic toothbrush and can't give it up, repurpose used ones by using them to clean around your house. This will extend its life!

18. Do away with disposable razors

While we're on the subject of bathroom products, another one to really think about is your razor choice...

There are all sorts of options, and some are better than others.

Single-use razors will pile up in the landfill, while razors with interchangeable heads create less waste over time. Even better are [metal safety razors](#) for which you just replace the blade.

19. Swap out tampons

If you haven't tried a [menstrual cup](#), now's the time to get on board! I've been using one for more than 3 years now, and it is seriously game-changing.

Not only will you never need to buy tampons again (which will save you SO MUCH money and all those plastic applicators) but you can leave it in much longer than a tampon, which is very convenient, especially when traveling.

Alternative Tip: If you just can't get on board with this idea, try swapping traditional tampons for one that doesn't have an applicator, like the [OB brand](#). Or at the very least, opt for a cardboard applicator instead of plastic.

20. Take a close look at your cotton swabs

Is the stick between the two cotton bits made of plastic? If so, here's a super simple swap: Just buy the kind with a paper stick next time!

There are also reusable silicone swabs out there if you want to eliminate the need for the disposable kind.

(continues on page 14)

21. Avoid products with "microbeads"

One of my favorite face washes in the past was from Neutrogena, and it was packed with these little "microbeads". I loved how they felt when I washed my face, and I bought that product over and over again.

But you guessed it... those little beads are made from tiny pieces of plastic.

Microbeads get washed into the drain and are too small to be filtered out. They enter our waterways and wind up in lakes and streams and in the tummies of unsuspecting fish. And then we eat the fish, creating a disgustingly depressing food chain problem...

The great thing, is you can still get exfoliation without the plastic microbeads. Try a natural option, like [St. Ives Apricot Scrub](#). This is another old favorite, but since it comes in a plastic container, you could try making your own instead. Here are a [few recipes I'm excited to try](#).

And when it comes to making body scrubs, a simple combination of coconut oil, essential oils and a natural exfoliant like coffee grounds, coarse salt or cane sugar does the trick quite well.

On a Positive Note: We are happy to see that the UK has taken steps to [eliminate all products with microbeads](#). Hopefully some other countries will follow their lead.

22. Stop buying plastic wrap & baggies

These single-use items are so wasteful. They get used once, then end up in a landfill.

The great news is there are some really great alternatives that can be used over and over and over...

- **Instead of plastic wrap**, save your leftovers using [silicone lids](#) or [eco-friendly beeswax wrap](#). We have both and like them for different purposes.
- **Instead of disposable baggies**, purchase reusable silicone bags. They're awesome!
- [Stasher](#) is one of the best brands on the market, but [these are a good budget-friendly option](#) that we personally use.
- This simple kitchen swap will save a lot of plastic, and it'll also save you money over time.

23. Wash your synthetic fabrics in a special bag

Did you know synthetic clothing or fabrics break down each time you wash it and small pieces of plastic make it to our waterways? Pieces of micro-plastics have been found in even the most remote parts of the oceans. Fish consume them, and we consume the fish. So, essentially we're consuming tiny bits of plastic. Yum.



(continues on page 15)

Reducing the Use of Plastic

(continued from page 14)

We all have clothing made from synthetic fabrics (polyester, acrylic, nylon, rayon, spandex, etc.). This covers most athletic clothes.

One option for reducing your impact on the environment is to stop purchasing these types of fabrics, but truthfully, athletic ware made from natural materials just aren't the same quality.

Stop those micro-plastics from reaching the waterways by washing all synthetic fabrics in a specialized bag ([GuppyFriend](#)) made to trap them. What a simple solution!

24. Switch to wool dryer balls

Dryer sheets are another source of — you guessed it — microplastics.

The good news is there are some great (inexpensive) alternatives.

Instead of dryer sheets, get a set of eco-friendly [wool dryer balls](#). Over time, it'll save you money, and they do the same job.

Insider Tip: If you miss having your clothes come out of the dryer smelling like a *fresh meadow* or *mountain air*, put a few drops of your favorite essential oils on the balls before tossing them into the dryer. Lemongrass + Lavender is my personal fave!

Also, we used to like putting dryer sheets in our backpacks and packing cubes to keep our clothes smelling fresh while traveling. Now, we use a little sachet filled with lavender. Perfect swap!

25. Rethink your coffee

This may be a sore subject for some, but those K-Cup machines — while convenient — create a ton of waste.

Every time you brew a cup, a puppy dies... err... a (super unnecessary) plastic container gets added to a landfill.

If you already have one of these machines, I'm not saying to go throw it away. That would just add an even bigger amount of waste to the landfill. But if you're perhaps debating what type of coffee maker to buy, go with something that won't create garbage with each cup.

Psst! [French presses](#), [percolators](#), or [pour over styles](#) are great alternatives. Plus, they make way better coffee than K-cups in our opinion!

26. Share your opinions

When one person makes changes to their lifestyle, it can add up to make a big difference over time. But when a *company* makes shifts, the difference is magnified.

As consumers, we have a lot of power, and over time, companies will hear our collective voice if we speak up. This is where major change will start to happen.

- **The good:** When a company or a small business is taking steps to reduce plastic usage (or otherwise reduce their impact on the environment), commend them for it. Support them by buying their products, email them, tell your friends about them. This can go a long way.
- **The bad:** On the other hand, if a company has a product you love that comes wrapped in unnecessary plastic, contact them to see if there's a way to reduce this. (*Tip: Being polite in situations like this goes a long way!*)

What you can do now– Nancy Urban

We hope you're able to find a few tips in this article that seem easy to add to your life to reduce plastic usage.

Instead of trying them all at once, take it one step at a time. Little by little, you'll start to reduce your plastic consumption and you'll find that these simple swaps can actually be quite satisfying. And before you know it, they'll just be a part of everyday life.

We say this time and time again, but we are FAR from perfect. And ya know what? We probably never will be. But it's okay, because striving for perfection is exhausting and can cause you to give up eventually.

We try to do our part and learn about more ways we can reduce our impact. And we try to be better than yesterday.

Another thing to point out is that plastic is just one part of the puzzle. There are other ways to reduce our impact on the environment that have nothing to do with plastic.

Here are just a few:

try composting

be mindful about your meat consumption

reduce the amount of fossil fuels you use

pick up trash when you have the chance

learn about your carbon footprint and ways you can lessen it

We can each make a difference, and even the smallest acts count.

A note on Plastic & Privilege

We want to take a moment to address something that isn't always talked about when it comes to plastic or the environment: *Privilege*.

What you can do now

In many ways, the eco-conscious community tends to be centered around the white, upper-class experience, and the conversation can get very judgmental. We've been part of the problem.

But the truth is what is an “easy swap” for one person just might not be possible for another. Without diving too deep into it, *where* you live can make a huge impact on what resources are even available to you. For example, some neighborhoods have affordable grocery stores with many zero-waste options, while other neighborhoods don't have this luxury.

Plus, other life struggles come into play as well. When you're living paycheck to paycheck, caring for a sick family member, or struggling with mental health, thinking about how to reduce your plastic usage likely won't make it to the top of your priority list.

To be honest, we're sick of the judgmental “all or nothing” approach that often goes hand-in-hand with the eco-conscious community.

All this is not to undermine the urgency and importance of reducing the amount of plastic we use. Our earth is hurting, and change is necessary.

But we do want to remind you (and ourselves!) that everyone is coming from different places of privilege.

If you're able to make some big changes in your lifestyle, we hope this article lights your fire and gives you some simple, actionable tips to make a difference.



Plan for insulation and lighting improvements

At Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hartford, CT

Using the DISTRESSED COMMUNITY INCENTIVE

Two years ago we had an energy audit performed by artisenergy solutions and the proposed project of insulation and new lighting was too expensive for our budget.

In November, 2020 they reconnected with us and explained that the new incentive would reduce our costs significantly.

The costs on the open market and subsidized are: insulation, \$21,884.71 and lighting \$8,526.09 subsidized 4,376.94 subsidized 1,705.22 \$ 6,082.16 is the total for the subsidized project.

It can be paid by 48 monthly installments with 0% interest. (\$126.71/month)

Their calculations, based on our usage in 2017-2018

Annual saving for heat \$1,503.20

Annual saving for light \$1,520.90

The CNG bill in November 2020 was \$487.37.

The connection fee is \$160, so the gas purchase and delivery and various charges came to \$327 for 337 CCF. That is cubic hundred feet. \$.97 / CCF That means that the estimate based on \$.66/CCF is low. In round figures my revised heat saving would be \$2,250.00 per year!!

We need to do the electrical project in order to attach the insulation project. Now that we have solar panels to produce most of our electricity the project for lighting updates may save us less than their estimate.

Just calculating the heating savings I estimate that in four years we will save \$9,000.00.

The project must be signed and submitted for approval before the end of the year.
DECEMBER 31st DEADLINE

As treasurer, I recommend that we agree, sign the contract and get ready to save during the next four years and more.

Dale Eberhardt

November 23, 2020

Caring for Creation– Lynn Johnson

Lynn Johnson has given us many good ideas that she has tried out herself. I appreciate that, as when I look at some products on line, I often wonder—Do they really work? Thank you Lynn.

For those of us who may not have the means to order items that are “earth friendly”, there are many other ways that we can be more aware of what we are supporting when making purchases.

Support organic items:

Pesticides and chemical fertilizers pollute the soil and waters, even people’s drinking water. They kill off bees and butterflies. Some say “I can’t afford organic prices”. BUT one can shop for what is on sale and in season and stick to basic items such as carrots, onions, potatoes.

Avoid plastic packaging whenever possible:

If one looks, one can often find paper, glass, aluminum, or canned items as an alternative. Buy less meat and support a local store that offers a meat counter where the meats are not prepackaged in foam containers or plastic wrap. Eggs come in cardboard cartons and milk in non-plastic containers. Shop for produce that is not pre-wrapped, BUT then don’t put it into a plastic bag!!!!!!

What will I line the waste baskets with???

Some of us are old enough to have grown up in a pre-plastic era. Our parents used the paper grocery bags in the waste basket, often with an old magazine or newspaper folded in the bottom to catch the drips. Yes, we had to clean the baskets more often, but a small price to pay for preventing those plastic bags from going out into the world to wreck havoc on the environment.

If we look around and pay attention to what we are doing; if we ask ourselves how can I change this to be more “earth friendly” we might be surprised at what we find. And isn’t this a good way to start the New Year?

Just like Lynn shared her list with us, let’s share with and support one another as we continue to work toward better care of God’s Creation.

Caring for God’s Creation





Lynn's List of Earth Friendly Finds

This is a list of items I personally use, find helpful and believe are good for the Earth. They can easily be found on the Internet. I have listed their general names, with some of the specific products I use.

Sustainable Bags for Shopping, all sizes

Keep a bunch in your car, so you'll never be without. I love the net bags to put your veggies in. I order mine from "eco.ware."

Recyclable Bags for Waste

From "Inwaysin", made from starch, but nice and strong.

Sustainable Sponges and Dish Soap

"Mindful Goods" is a great website with vegan eco-sponges, natural dish soap and all kinds of gift ideas.

Automatic Dishwasher Soap

I like the "Seventh Generation" brand.

Earth Friendly Laundry Soap

"Tru.Earth" has a remarkable laundry eco-strip, literally biodegradable paper infused with anionic and non-anionic surfactants, whatever they are. My laundry gets clean and I have no plastic container to pollute our Earth!

Cora Balls

I only know one name for this unique product. Toss it in your washing machine, and it will collect 30% of your plastic microfibers. We have to start somewhere!

Dryer Balls

*All wool balls are good, I put essential oils on mine for a nice smell.
Dries clothes faster!*

Toothpowder in Glass Container

I like the "Dirt" Company toothpowder, or there are recipes to make your own.

Bamboo Toothbrushes

Lots on the internet



Lynn's List of Earth Friendly Finds

Face Masks made of Cotton or Natural Materials

Many choices on the internet

Recycling Boxes for Wrappers

I eat a lot of protein bars, so I was thrilled to find a way to recycle their wrappers through "Terracycle." They send you the box, with the postage on it to mail back when it's full to the brim!

Bamboo Paper Products

I just love "Who Gives a Crap" and get their 100% bamboo toilet paper, tissues and paper towels. Profits go to provide toilets in the third world.

Earth Hero "Choices make Changes"

Great site with all kinds of cool products and ideas for gifts.

And finally, three beloved, highly recommended, organizations...

doTerra Certified Pure Essential Oils

I'm a Wellness Advocate for "doTerra" essential oils. They're great for cleaning and disinfecting, particularly Lemon and On Guard. Their health benefits are numerous. I literally cannot get out of bed in the morning without Peppermint!

The Arbor Day Foundation

I've been a member since 2007, and love their work planting trees everywhere needed. If you donate, they send you wonderful cards to give to your friends, telling them you've planted a tree in their honor.

Blue Earth Compost (for Greater Hartford)

Alex and Sam do great work collecting and composting food scraps from homes all over greater Hartford. My whole 12 floor building has a contract! Once a year, they gift you with their awesome compost you helped create. Call 860-266-7346 to sign up!

I offer these things in the spirit of helpfulness. I would love it if you would share your Earth Friendly finds with me at lynnsilverwolf@gmail.com. Thanks!



Monthly Energy Production Report for Grace Evangelical Church

Enphase Energy maximizes your solar energy production and keeps you informed about your system. Your monthly energy report shows how your system performed and how much you contributed to offsetting the global carbon footprint.

Week	Peak Power	Energy Produced
11/01/2020 - 11/07/2020	14.7 kW	408 kWh
11/08/2020 - 11/14/2020	14.1 kW	269 kWh
11/15/2020 - 11/21/2020	14.3 kW	358 kWh
11/22/2020 - 11/28/2020	14.4 kW	175 kWh
11/29/2020 - 11/30/2020	13.7 kW	65.7 kWh
November 2020 Total:		1.28 MWh
Previous Month Total:		1.55 MWh
Year to Date:		6.17 MWh

For more details on these production results, please visit your [Enphase® system](#).

Your **Carbon Offset** for this month: 1,945 lbs
You have offset the equivalent of: **23 Trees**



All trademarks are the property of their respective owners.
©2008-2020 Enphase Energy, Inc. All rights reserved.
This is an automated system notification from Enphase Energy Inc.,
1420 N. McDowell Blvd., Petaluma, CA 94954, USA.



Renewal of Wedding Vows

A wedding and 56 couples join Ismael and Nilda Bolorin to renew their wedding vows on Sunday, December 27, 2020 of the Holy Family at Maria Reina de la Paz in Hartford.

Looking forward to a new year of many blessings with family and friends!



Congratulations to Shihan Ghazi and his daughter

on their new home for Ghazi-Do Martial Arts and Build a Better You Family Services. They are located at 60 Love Lane right next to Swift Factory. Ghazi is retiring from Mercy House next month to work full time with the youth.



January 2021 Anniversary & Birthdays!

**May you all be blessed
as you celebrate
your special days!**

Happy Anniversary
Guenther & Edith 01/30
Mamet

Did we miss your
birthday or anniversary?
Contact the office,
860-527-7792 or email

[office.gracelutheranhartford@
gmail.com](mailto:office.gracelutheranhartford@gmail.com)
to update our records.

Darrell Urban	01/06
Rebecca Lewis	01/08
Cynthia Potter	01/08
David Budhoo	01/13
Bruce Klotz	01/17
Gisela Scholz	01/18
Judith A Dudek	01/18
Madison Boodhoo	01/21
Maya Boodhoo	01/21
Bear McLaren	01/23
Matthew Friedrichs	01/24
Anne Edwards	01/27
Guenther Mamet	01/29





Grace Lutheran Church
46 Woodland Street
Hartford, CT 06105



Our Staff and Council Leadership

The Rev. Rick Kremer, Pastor

rickkremer@aol.com

Nilda Bolorin, Parish Administrator

***Note new email**

office.gracelutheranchurch@gmail.com

Dorothea Glatte, Lay Minister

Lloyd Smith, Lay Minister

Louisa Barton-Duguay, Religious Worker

Artist in Residence for Outreach

Barbara Ruhe, President

Barbara Calogero, Secretary

Dale Eberhardt, Treasurer

Janice Potter, Financial Assistant

Dale Eberhardt, Organist

Walter Scott, Sexton

www.graceistheplace.org

