

Andrea's sermon for Sunday, March 21, 2021

Hello, I am Andrea Nova, Minister of Music at Belleville Church.

Thank you, Ross for the opportunity to deliver my first sermon ever, which I pray will inform, move, and motivate you to help me with an environmental mission and a fundraiser. First, let us meditate on a couple of verses from scripture.

Psalms 24 verse 1 and 2: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; For he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters."

Psalms 95, verse 5: "The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land."

Genesis, Paragraph 1, verse 26: "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'"

These verses show that God cares for ALL his creation and expects us, as Christians, to do the same. We have gone long enough with the illusion that we are doing all we can to care for God's creation. As we approach Earth Day, April 22nd, let us contemplate a new way to use the power of our collective influence for the benefit of this community and our planet.

One of my responsibilities as your Minister of Music is to communicate the needs of the musical instruments to the Stewardship and Finance Committee, who have recently approved a new necessary \$5,000 repair of the little chapel organ. I feel strongly about our responsibility of caring for our musical instruments, but I am even more passionate and troubled by climate change, toxic pollution on land, and plastic pollution in our oceans.

For some time I have been aware of the floating islands of plastic debris in the oceans. I am sure you too have heard about the plastic accumulation zones the size of Texas. The disturbing news and images of massive amounts of plastic floating in the sea have led me to evaluate my personal carbon footprint and even join in Climate Change marches led by youth holding signs such as: "There Is No Planet B".

Currently, scientists tell us that the problem is even bigger. Unlike cardboard which is biodegradable because it is made up of plants and other elements found naturally on the surface of the earth, plastic is not. Plastic is made from petrochemicals, which are fossil fuels mined from below the earth's surface. Therefore plastic DOES NOT naturally decompose, instead it accumulates on the earth surface and poisons habitats. In the ocean, plastic tossed about in the current breaks down into smaller pieces called microplastic, causing in the ocean a "microplastic smog". This smog does not clear up on a sunny day, it does not evaporate. Scientists who study the effects plastic pollution has on the oceans say that when fish digest microplastic, it lowers their reproductive rates. As more plastic is created every day and only about 20% is recycled, this microplastic refuse, also known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, is currently twice the size of Texas or three times the size of France, and growing.

Two years ago, a French long-distance swimmer Ben Lecomte, set out to make a new world record by swimming across the Pacific Ocean, followed by his crew in a sailboat. He swam eight hours a day, ate and

Andrea's sermon for Sunday, March 21, 2021

slept the rest of the time. The route intentionally included 300 nautical miles through the plastic vortex, in order to witness first hand plastic pollution and collect scientific samples. Lecomte swam 300 nautical miles to point attention to the 300 million tons of mostly single use plastic produced by humans each year.

On Day 57 of this expedition labeled "*From the Smog of Microplastic*" Ben wrote: "*I will keep on swimming even though I reached my goal of 300 nautical miles – our mission isn't over and the perspective I get from under the water is too important to stop. Today the water was particularly choppy and even though we are in the highest plastic concentration zone, it was difficult to detect plastic at the surface. During my second hour, I started seeing more microplastic below me and asked my crew member Josh for his camera to capture it. It became denser and denser the further I swam. I stopped swimming and asked Josh to jump in the water to get footage of this awful display – it was disgusting. Microplastic pieces and fragments were everywhere from right below the surface to about 5 meters down. Had I not been swimming through it, we would have never seen it from our boat.*"

5 meters deep is about 15 feet of plastic stew as wide as a state or a country!

When I hear such disturbing information, I feel like saying: "Somebody, give me something to do, some action to which I can channel the sadness and frustration, so I don't have to hold on to this depressing image."

Lecomte said that he was doing his part to raise awareness for climate change, but I see him as a modern prophet. He brings us along to places we dare not go ourselves to show us what is invisible from land or even from his boat. Ben Lecomte explains the call to environmental stewardship by saying: "I think it's my duty to use my passion to make a change. We have to find what our role is if we want to preserve what we have."

What is OUR role here at Belleville church? Is there a mission we can embark upon beyond our very successful Thrift Shop and recycling programs? How can we have direct tangible impact on reducing the USE of single-use plastic?

An example of single use plastic is this container of laundry detergent. Its sole purpose is to transport liquid detergent from the factory to the store and from the store to your home. The main ingredient of liquid laundry detergent (about 80%) is tap water. Tap water is the ONLY reason the container needs to be plastic and heavy. After we use up the detergent, there is no other use for the container, no re-fill stations are available.

I knew there had to be a better product available and after an online search, I found what I was looking for. Three young business-dads in Canada, (Ryan, Brad and Kevin) were very much annoyed by the "endless parade of plastic packaging promoted on children's TV programming," and decided to start a company offering laundry detergent that is effective (it washes clothes well), gentle on humans and their clothes (nearly 70% plant-based-derived or biodegradable ingredients) and ZERO plastic packaging. By taking the tap water out of the detergent, Tru Earth company can package their product in a cardboard envelope. Don't you agree that this product belongs on the shelves of OUR supermarkets? Instead, our laundry detergent isles are lined with endless single-use plastic containers. Every time we reach for one of these and add it to our shopping cart, we are strengthening the petrochemical industry and perpetuating the destruction of our environment. I don't believe God is pleased.

Andrea's sermon for Sunday, March 21, 2021

We need to make a conscious change in our behavior and Say No To Single Use Plastic. By switching to an environmentally responsible detergent we will strengthen the market for THIS product which is worth supporting and deserves a prominent place in our supermarkets.

But we are creatures of habit and change is difficult for us. Still, I believe that when we act as a community, great goals can be achieved. Ten years ago, I was filling out an application to become the second resident in Georgetown to interconnect my solar panels to the grid. The former general manager of the Georgetown Municipal Electric Department Mr. Snow paid me a visit in my modest home on Pond Street. He tried to discourage me from going solar, telling me not to waste my money because installing solar panels is not going to make any difference. "It's a drop in the bucket" were his exact words. He tried to avoid the paperwork he had to file and wanted to save himself the few man hours of what was the utility's responsibility in the interconnection process. Not only did I reject his advice, I later became a solar salesperson in his town. Mr. Snow was wrong about the financial investment I was making, which proved to be more than sound and something I will always be proud of. But he was right about one thing. My quiet installation of 22 solar panels did not change the world. In the grand scheme of things, the clean electricity produced is modest and the planet is still in trouble. That is why we need to do more than just mind our own carbon footprint. Since I turned 50, I am becoming increasingly unapologetic about speaking up on issues I care about. I now see evangelizing in a whole new light. It is critically important to work together on environmental issues. No man is an island, we need everyone to help, so we can be saved together, as a people. As Ross puts it, it is in community that we create our heaven on earth.

With my business degree I feel very qualified and willing to manage this Environmental Stewardship Mission for the next month – from today till Earth Day 2021, which is April 22nd. By purchasing Tru Earth Laundry Detergent wholesale for about \$7 and change, adding in the cost of shipping, handling and running the online store, the total cost of this product is about \$10. By selling the detergent for \$19.99, we can capture a \$10 profit per 32 load envelope.

This month-long mission by the Belleville church community is a grass-roots marketing and word of mouth promotion which can raise the necessary \$5,000 we need for our chapel organ repair and at the same time introduce 500 households to the idea of reducing the use of Single-Use plastic. I plan to announce the results of this mission challenge on Sunday following Earth Day 2021.

What is the plan?

Step One: Take a flier with the free laundry detergent sample home and put it in your laundry room. Since it looks like mail, it is very easy to misplace. For those of you who would like to receive your free laundry detergent sample by mail, just text me your address to cellphone number 978.314.5801. You can request free samples for your friends and family as well. Just text me the amount of samples you would like and your mailing address.

Step two: Next time you do laundry, USE the Tru Earth detergent SAMPLE instead of your usual laundry detergent. It is designed to completely dissolve in warm or cold water, doing a great job even in HE washing machines.

Andrea's sermon for Sunday, March 21, 2021

Step three: Once you love it, and I know you will, go to the online store www.SayNoToSUPlastic.com and order your envelope containing 32 loads of Tru Earth laundry detergent. The online cost is \$19.99 plus applicable sales tax. Your detergent will arrive by regular mail and shipping is free. Each sale will earn \$10 towards our chapel organ repair. This online store was set up and is managed by me, so you can be assured that from now till Earth Day 2021, EVERY PURCHASE WILL COUNT towards our chapel organ repair fundraiser.

Step four: Call, text or email **everyone you know in the continental United States** who does laundry. Tell them about environmental stewardship and the new eco-friendly Tru Earth laundry detergent. Encourage them to visit the online store. It will give you a reason to reconnect with old friends you have not heard from for a while. I will prepare a sample email you can use to save you time.

I can report from experience that by being kind to the environment has improved the quality of my life. For example, I have been driving a purely electric car for over 5 years. Although in the beginning it took a little getting used to, I don't miss going to the gas station, shivering in the cold wind as I stand for over a minute squeezing the nozzle at the gas pump while inhaling toxic fumes. Instead, I plug my car at home overnight which only takes seconds. I don't miss taking my car to get oil changes because electric vehicles don't have oil to be changed. I also don't miss waiting for the combustion engine to warm up in the wintertime. Electric cars turn on like a light switch, and you can drive them right away.

And I don't miss carrying plastic jugs of laundry detergent from the store, knowing they are made mostly of tap water, and I certainly don't miss worrying about the uncertain destiny of the single use plastic container.

Change is difficult, but it is possible when you experience it in the vibration of LOVE. Love for the whales, the sea turtles, the dolphins, love for the lobsters (with the side of melted butter) and all of God's creatures that have the right to their habitat. And also love for ourselves and the future generations. I asked three of my girlfriends, all moms, to try this detergent and I include their impressions and positive reviews on the back of the fliers. Even before this official announcement, Lynn Varney has already inspired her friend Cate from Pittsfield, who went to the online store www.SayNoToSUPlastic.com and purchased her laundry detergent after trying the sample and Loving it!

THE GOAL: The Belleville Environmental Stewardship challenge is to introduce Tru Earth laundry detergent to 500 households before Earth Day 2021 (April 22nd) and by doing so raise \$5,000 for our chapel organ repair.

I challenge all of you to join me in cheerleading this environmental stewardship goal.

Just imagine 500 of plastic containers in a pile right here before us. What would that look like?

We will not recycle this imaginary pile of plastic. We can do better than that!

We can make sure they are not created in the first place.

Thank you for listening and don't forget to do your laundry in a whole new way!

God bless you.