



Thinking About It

September 12, 2018

Rachel Yates

Your Presbytery staff and work groups are really not trying to torment you, even if it sometimes feels that way. The most recent example was dinnertime at yesterday's Presbytery Gathering. Our theme was Stewardship of Creation, and the Planning Team tried to be mindful of the theme in its planning. If you attended, you saw that firsthand during dinner.

Online registration asked people to pick whether to bring their own reusable or recyclable dinnerware, eat from their hands, or use compostable plates provided by our host, Kettle Moraine United Presbyterian Church. Because the congregation couldn't serve everyone on china, we tried to come up with Earth-friendly options, rather than create unnecessary paper or Styrofoam waste.

It puzzled people to select their dinnerware. Some doubted they'd remember to bring their own plates on the day of the event. "I'd better put the dishes in my car right now, or I'll forget!" Fifty-four registrants committed to bring their own dinnerware; six promised to eat from their hands (though I didn't see this); and the remainder used compostable ware.



We wanted to be intentional about stewardship of creation, not just talk about it. We've come to expect that dinner will be provided and the trash whisked away by our host congregation. It's all taken care of; we don't need to worry about it. It's a pattern we wanted to interrupt – if only for one Gathering.

Caring for creation requires intention. As a nation, we've come to rely on many, waste-heavy conveniences. Out of habit, we place our produce in clear plastic bags in the grocery store; at checkout, we then put that bag into another plastic grocery bag along with other groceries. We use new straws with every fast-food beverage, but not just straws – cups and lids, too. We use plastic baggies to store food instead of reusable containers. We drink water from disposable plastic bottles.

Changing those habits requires us to be mindful. It took months for me to remember I had reusable grocery totes in the trunk of my car. Once I even abandoned my shopping cart at the register to run outside and retrieve the forgotten tote bags. If I have fewer than ten items, I often decline a bag altogether, explaining that I'm cutting back on my plastic. Then, I juggle the items out to the car. Now, I'm trying to break the habit of one-use takeout containers. By bringing a reusable plastic bowl and lid to the restaurant, I can take extra food home without adding more Styrofoam to our landfills.

These are small steps, and they won't save the planet. Until I have the authority to make other sweeping changes for the environment, however, these are some of my ways of living into God's original commandment to till and keep the land. (Gen. 2:15). What will you do? Think about it.