

Earth Care Speech

Hello everyone! Welcome to Westminster Presbyterian Church on this Youth Sunday. We are Alex and Bryan Renzoni, two members of the Westminster Youth Group. Today, we would like to talk about our planet Earth and the responsibility that we all share in caring for and maintaining it. Psalm 96 says, “Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.” This verse reminds us that God’s earth is precious, and in a modern era filled with new technologies and higher production demands than ever before, it is of utmost importance that each and every one of us play an active role in our communities to reduce, reuse, and recycle. New York state has already taken initiatives such as banning the use of plastic bags, but this is just the beginning. Please be sure to always clean up trash around you, limit the amount of waste you produce, and encourage others to take part in this growing global movement.

The story of the Road to Emmaus is especially relevant today with respect to climate change. These verses depict the story of two men traveling to the small village with a man who, unbeknownst to them at the time, was Jesus himself. This story teaches us how difficult it can be to recognize something in the present moment. In a sense, the world’s inhabitants are the men who are unaware of Jesus’s presence. They know of his existence but ignore it when confronted with it directly. Similarly, Jesus is representative of caring for the Earth, which is something that we are all aware of, yet sometimes struggle to

acknowledge it in the present moment. In a time when people all over the world are asked to stay at home, one can easily convince themselves that the Earth is actually becoming healthier in the sense that there are fewer cars on the roads and less carbon dioxide emissions. However, unlike the men who traveled on the road to Emmaus, let us not forget the importance of Earth care until it is too late. Rather, let us implement healthy practices into our everyday lives starting now. If we, as a congregation, want this planet to provide for future generations as it has provided for us, then we cannot afford to lose any more time.

Climate change is truly an imminent threat to life as we all know it here on Earth, but each action we take to care for this planet is a step in the right direction. As a part of the Westminster Youth Group, we have had opportunities to travel across Buffalo and help our local communities through the Buffalo-Niagara Riverkeeper along the Buffalo River. This project allowed us to see how this ongoing crisis affects our own community and demonstrated to us the ability that even one person can have to make a meaningful impact, as we fight towards a cleaner Earth. While participating in these cleanups, it was painfully obvious that there is a lot of work that needs to be done; one simple cleanup event will not permanently affect a given area, as much as we may like it to. As a part of the Westminster Youth Group, these experiences have taught us the importance of promoting an environmentally conscious community in order to start a change that could have a global impact.

We also hosted a climate change conference right here at Westminster! This conference included congregations from across the entire region, demonstrating how much this community truly cares about the world around us. It is important to note that having a “green thumb” isn’t the only way to help; consider taking public transportation or carpooling to church each week and recycle your bulletins after each service if you don’t need them.

Furthermore, throughout Lent, we encouraged the Westminster congregation to reduce the amount of plastic that they used in their daily lives. While this task might seem cumbersome, the suggestions on the “Lent with Less Plastic” calendar were quite practical and simple! Even though Lent is over, you should still consider following these practices on a daily basis: avoid plastic water bottles and straws, switch out a plastic toothbrush for a bamboo one, and find ways to actively reduce the amount of paper used in meeting. One of the many benefits of today’s technologies is that we can connect and work with others like never before. At your next meeting, try using an electronic agenda or meeting through digital platforms like Skype or ZOOM. Any ways you can help the cause will only help preserve our beautiful planet for future generations of God’s children. So, if you haven’t already, please consider making a promise to yourself and those around you to keep this planet clean and healthy so that we all may enjoy what it has to offer for generations to come. Today can truly be the start of something incredible if we all pitch in and work together to take on the global threat of climate change. Thank you.