

Green Notes: Weekly Updates, News and Reviews from First United Methodist's Green Team

Five Steps to a More Sustainable Closet

Many of us aren't aware of the social and environmental impacts of the clothes we wear – and no longer wear. In fact, the manufacture of clothes, shoes, belts and accessories is the second-largest polluting industry in the world, after oil and gas.

How is that even possible? Consider the entire chain of events required to produce one shirt: the pesticides used to grow cotton, chemicals used to produce synthetic materials, toxics in dyes, exploitative labor conditions, and the energy used to manufacture clothing (and resulting greenhouse gas emissions). Each link in the chain has a significant impact on the environment and public health.

And Scott Cassel, CEO of the [Product Stewardship Institute](#), says that what happens to clothing once we no longer want it is just as shocking, "Eighty-three percent of used textiles are disposed in the garbage, even though the majority of these items can be donated for reuse and recycling. Even items that are worn and torn can be reused as rags and insulation."

The Green Team wants our congregation be part of the solution to this source of planet-warming emissions and the associated social justice issues. Brooke Bowlin of [Secondhand Sustainability](#) suggested five ways each of us can start making our closet more sustainable:

- 1. Wear what's already in your closet.** The most sustainable thing we can do is to wear our clothes longer. When we "shop our closet" and repeat our outfits, we don't buy as many new clothes.

2. **Quit fast fashion.** The fast fashion business model relies on exploitation. Fast fashion brands produce a large quantity of clothing quickly and cheaply. Look for sustainable brands instead.

3. **Shop secondhand.** Like shopping our own closets, shopping at secondhand stores reduces the demand for new production. Missoula has a great selection of secondhand clothing stores!

4. **Repair.** Mend your clothes. It's both useful and sustainable.

5. **Take care of your clothes.** Wash less, use low-heat settings and air dry. Bring back the clothesline!

What ideas would you add to this list? How can our congregation reduce the social and environmental impacts of our shopping habits? Email your ideas to Carole Addis at cjeanaddis51@gmail.com. And stay tuned for more in future editions of Green Notes!