



“We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.” (LS Preface)

In the United States we have a federal law, the “Clean Air Act passed in 1970 which regulates all air pollution sources. The Act has been amended and reauthorized several times as we made progress on this critical public health issue. The World Health Organization estimates that 3 million people worldwide die prematurely from poor air quality. Many of these victims did not live in the developed countries that emit the majority of air pollutants.

Increasing air pollution from mining, refining and manufacturing processes has been a human health concern in our country since the 19th century, when we began evolving to a more industrial economy. Today the largest emissions in this country come from burning coal to produce electricity and burning gas/diesel to drive vehicles. As developed countries began to burn more of these fossil fuels, we saw a significant increase in the number of cancer and serious lung illnesses related to emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxide and smog. The Centers for Disease Control tracks U.S. cases of asthma and COPD. Currently 1 in 13 adults (7.7%) suffer from asthma with women affected at the highest rate. The asthma rate among children is 8.4% with black and Puerto Rican children being more affected. Communities located “downwind” of industrial areas are more exposed to harmful chemicals, soot, dust and metal fumes like mercury, which is a known cancer agent.

Our country has made many advances in technology to reduce and control harmful air pollution by encouraging alternative energy sources, and our education and awareness is increasing, but many poor and developing countries do not have the regulations or equipment to control manmade pollution. We need to acknowledge that the people most affected by climate change, which is accelerated by burning fossil fuels, are the most vulnerable and those who have contributed the least pollution.

Pray/Learn:

As we pray for all people who suffer from lung diseases and the most vulnerable citizens who are exposed to harmful air pollutants, we can learn more about what is occurring around the world and how other countries are responding to public health crises involving dirty air. Last fall India and China faced [widespread problems](#) from extreme air pollution.

Seasonal wildfires in our western states and the more recent firestorms in Australia caused severe hardship to both humans and wildlife due to drought conditions. Read more about [Australia in the aftermath of their devastating brushfires](#) in early 2020 - going from fires to floods.

The Insurance Information Institute presents [information and statistics on U.S. wildfire](#) events and losses of life and property.

Fast/Change

There are things we can all do to improve the quality of air both inside our homes and in our local communities by reducing our dependence on fossil fuels. Read more about [OZONE Action Days](#) and learn tips for reducing ground level ozone, a harmful air pollutant from the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments.

The [Ohio Environmental Protection Agency](#) provides Information on air quality index maps and programs for Ohio.

We can encourage our elected officials to support more companies to develop alternative energy sources and provide economic incentives for communities and homeowners to save energy and install wind and solar. Check with your electricity provider to see if they invest in alternative energy or offer “green credits” toward research and development.

The 2019 “Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act” is a bipartisan bill, championed by Bishop Frank Dewane of Florida. He has publicly welcomed the bill as a hopeful sign that action on climate change is a moral issue that concerns all people. [Citizen’s Climate Lobby has information](#) about the carbon fee and dividend as well as a link to write a letter to congress.

Give/Volunteer

Local and national organizations have long been active in advocating for solutions to lung disease and all forms of cancer. The [American Lung Association](#) has good information on major lung disease research initiatives.

The [Wood County Relay for Life](#) is schedule for May 16, 2020. Consider joining a cancer survivor or walking in memory of someone from our community.