

THE STORY OF CARBON MAN

I think there are probably lots of stories about Carbon Man, because he has been around for a long, long time. And if you helped paint the picture of Carbon Man that we have here, you probably have ideas about his story too.

We know for sure that he wasn't always this big. Many, many years ago he was very small, like the smallest person in this room. That was before man knew how to use fire, and how to make smoke. Fire was the first way that man learned to use carbon to make his life better. He learned that fire could keep him warm at night, cook his food, and even keep him safe from wild animals. **These were all good things.**

Later people learned to use fire to make tools from metal, and to shape metal into beautiful shapes. **And these were all good things.** Carbon Man was still quite small then, because there weren't many people in the world, so the smoke didn't get thick or stick around very long.

Over time, people came to live in bigger towns and cities. They still used fires to stay warm – first wood fires and then coal. The air in these cities was very polluted and Carbon Man began to grow bigger.

About five hundred years ago, people learned to make furnaces and very complex machines. They still didn't know enough about health to worry much about air pollution. With the complex machines, people could make many things that they needed, much more easily. They didn't need to weave cloth for their clothes at home; paper for newspapers and books could be made in a mill. Bread for a whole town could be baked at one bakery. **These were all good things,** but air was getting more polluted and Carbon Man was growing bigger.

About one hundred and fifty years ago, people discovered oil in Pennsylvania, and started thinking of all the ways to use it to make life better. About one hundred years ago the automobile was invented and people began to fly in airplanes. Carbon Man was a teenager then. He wasn't quite grown up and he was still pretty thin.

When your grandparents were children, their families were lucky if they had *one* car. And only really adventurous people got to ride in airplanes. A lot has changed since then, hasn't it?

How many cars and trucks does your family have?

And how many people here have ridden in an airplane?

Being able to travel makes our lives better, doesn't it?

Being able to travel certainly is a good thing.

About thirty-five years ago, people realized that cars were causing too much air pollution, so we started having rules to make cars not pollute so much. And factories have rules so that they don't pollute so much either.

But all the motors and furnaces and engines that work to make our life better put out something that most of us didn't think of as pollution. That is Carbon Dioxide. Carbon Dioxide is what comes out of our mouth when we breathe. But it comes out of cars and airplanes, motors and furnaces too. And machines put out a whole lot more Carbon Dioxide than humans do. Carbon Dioxide is what has made Carbon Man so big and fat!

Just in the last ten years people have realized that it is the Carbon Dioxide that is making our planet get warmer, and changing our climate. Sometimes in the winter, when it is cold, we think that sounds like a good thing, but it really isn't. The icy glaciers up in our mountains are melting. The trees in our forests are having trouble staying healthy. And the streams don't always have enough water for the salmon. And the longer our planet gets warmer, the bigger and fatter that Carbon Man is going to be.

We all know that being really fat is not healthy. Carbon Man has been around for a long time, and we hope that he can lose some weight, get healthy again and live a long, long time. We would like to help him do that, by cutting down on the Carbon Dioxide that people in our church community put out in our daily lives.

Would you like to help?

*We have a list of **Hot Ideas to Cool the Earth** for you to take home with you today. You can discuss it with your family, and decide which changes you can make to help Carbon Man (and the Earth) get healthy. And I'll bet that there are some things on the list that your family does already.*

We would like you to check off which things you do already, and which things you are going to do this year. If you will return your list to us, we will bring back Carbon Man in the fall, after he has been on this healthier diet for the summer. And then we can all see what a big difference our actions can make.

Leslie Romer