

Have a GREEN Christmas!



Soon we will be celebrating the most wonderful time of the year: the Gift of God's only Son, Jesus, born to save humanity. The 3 Wise Men visited baby Jesus offering deeply meaningful gifts. From this came our tradition of giving gifts.

Though the sharing of presents started with good intentions, the Christmas season is highly commercialized in our culture. Many of us tend to shop and eat to excess during this season, instead of thinking of the real meaning of the holiday.

In the United States, the month between Thanksgiving and Christmas sees 25 percent more waste than other months. This adds to our landfills, pollutes our environment, and increases the effects of climate change.

With a few changes, we can lessen the negative impact that our festivities have on our beautiful God-given planet earth...our home.



Wrapping

DID YOU KNOW THAT TRADITIONAL WRAPPING PAPER AND TISSUE ARE NOT RECYCLABLE? They need to be disposed of in the trash ... to be sent to a landfill. Consider the following alternatives to avoid this waste:

1. Use Kraft (shipping) paper. It comes in brown or white. Decorate using fabric ribbons and things found in nature such as greens and pine cones. Save and reuse the ribbons from year to year. Compost the greens and recycle the paper.
2. Use fabric. The simplest way is to wrap it around a box as you would wrapping paper and secure with a safety pin at the bottom. Decorate with found objects or a ribbon. You can create beautiful packages using the Furoshiki method. Look up *Furoshiki* or Japanese wrapping with cloth.
Make simple bags with a drawstring at the top (think pillowcase).
These are great for odd-shaped objects.
3. Paper gift bags can be used over and over. Good ones to buy have a dull finish and are recyclable. Bags with glitter or metal or a shiny finish go in the trash.
4. Use old Christmas cards to decorate packages or for nametags.
5. Since tissue is not recyclable, get creative with padding gifts if needed. Try fabric netting, tulle, newspaper or magazine pages.
6. Use part of the gift to wrap it (eg, a scarf to wrap a sweater or dish towel to wrap a cookbook).

Gifts

1. Bring your reusable bags when shopping.
2. Reduce the number of gifts that you give. It is better to give one quality gift that will be useful for years than several less useful that will be discarded in six months. Clutter can become a burden.
3. If a gift requires batteries, consider buying rechargeable batteries and a charger.
4. Give an experience! Consider tickets to a play, a sporting event, ice skating, snow skiing, a concert, museum membership, music lessons, summer camp, hot air balloon ride, zip lining or rock climbing. Memories often last longer than things.
5. For the person with everything, give a donation to his/her favorite charity.
6. Give the gift of your time. Make personalized coupons offering a gift of service to the recipient. Young people can offer to help older family members with chores such as raking leaves, shoveling snow, cutting grass, walking the dog, and most of all, helping with technology! New parents would welcome coupons for babysitting by experienced sitters.
7. With children, consider the 4-gift rule: Want, Need, Wear, Read. Buy a puzzle or board game that the family can enjoy together. See more ideas at www.newdream.org/simplify-the-holidays.



Entertaining

1. To prevent food waste, plan the menu carefully, letting others know the best menu item to bring to avoid having 15 desserts and no appetizer! While cooking, compost vegetable and fruit trimmings.
2. If there extra food, fill a few Aid for Friends trays (available at church exits and the Parish House) while the food is fresh. Ask guests to bring containers to take leftovers home.
3. Use real dishes. If you need more, ask a guest to bring some. If you have a really large gathering, consider renting dinnerware. You won't even have to wash them!
4. If you really want disposable dinnerware, use dishes that are made of recycled paper and are compostable. Chinet makes such a product.
5. If plastic is used at an event, rinse and recycle it or wash and store it for future use.
6. Prevent sewer system back-ups. Do not pour fat or grease into the sink or toilet. Put grease in a jar or old coffee can and dispose in the trash.



If we all practice a few of these tips, we will give our God a great Christmas gift:
a healthier and GREENER earth!



Care of Creation Team
Justice and Peace Ministry