

Christmas Tips

This Christmas season take to heart John Wesley's Rule for Christian Living: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can!" "Doing good" doesn't have to be expensive. Be thoughtful about what you give, especially in relation to caring for creation and justice.

When you shop online for gifts, check the "About" portion of the website before you buy. Find out what the company is or is not doing to care for creation and justice. Support those sources that help, not harm.

Give Fair Trade presents this Christmas. Buying Fair Trade provides the creators—farmers, laborers, and artisans—fair prices and stable incomes, reduces poverty, creates better working conditions, and promotes environmentally sustainable practices. It's a just and good deal for all!

Choose earth-friendly gifts that keep giving, for example: a shampoo bar, jams or other preserves from local farmers, a bracelet made of plastic recovered from an ocean, a bamboo toothbrush, a packet of seeds for native plants or wildflowers. Sustainable presents spark good conversation.

Buy children's gifts with sustainability in mind. Will the toy sustain the child's interest? Is it made of sustainable materials? Will it be something that can eventually be passed along to another child?

Christmas shop without plastic bags. We've been learning to take our own reusable bags to the grocery store. The same principle works in retail stores.

If giving money is your default, consider purchasing stock on the recipients' behalf in renewable energy, for example (possibly solar or wind). Add a note that you are investing with hope for their future that they live securely in a sustainable world. Throughout the year, as the stock reports come, the two of you will have opportunity to talk about what you value both in terms of money management and care for the Earth.

Thinking big this Christmas? Consider appliances, solar panels, tankless water heater, low-flow water-saving faucets and toilets, replacement windows, additional insulation, LED lights, even an electric car. Prioritize decisions that contribute to energy efficiency. Upgrade your home to care for your other home: Earth.

Christmas lights are symbols of the Light that came into the world with the birth of Christ. Enjoy them and use LEDs wherever you can to take care of the world that Jesus lit up with his presence. You can also give a package or two of the lights to someone you love to help them love creation.

Create less waste by how you wrap your gifts. One of the savviest zero-waste decisions is to save wrapping paper, tissue paper, bows, and ribbons to reuse each year. Rather than wrapping paper, go for reusable gift bags. Or adorn your gift with fabric like a scarf that can be worn. Look also for old maps, sheet music, or plain paper painted with children's handprints and art.

Avoid food waste, which in landfills becomes methane and exacerbates the climate crisis. Food waste is a major contributor to our environmental woes: 43% comes from homes, and the holidays are especially waste-filled. Across the globe, near and far, too many people are hungry. Consuming too much and wasting what's left over aren't healthy for people or planet. Justice means ensuring enough for all.

The #1 food item thrown away is bread (over 240 million slices annually). Put any partial loaves in the freezer. Look up recipes for bread dressing and bread pudding that can add to your holiday feast.

Compost the food scraps from preparation and leftovers. Fill the guests, not the landfill.

Be mindful of water. Too many places are experiencing drought, which endangers food crops, wildlife, and people whose livelihood suffers. Don't run the faucet while cleaning vegetables. Rinse them instead in a bowl full of clean water. Then use the water on your indoor or outdoor plants. Likewise, when filling your dishwasher, don't "pre-wash" with running water. A good scraping—preferably into a compost bucket—or just a splash of water is plenty.

Save trees. Use cloth napkins, which you can simply toss in the washing machine with other items. Check with thrift stores; they may have holiday themed napkins. If you need to use paper ones, arrange for them and any paper towels to be composted. Once alive as trees, they can be composted and then used to feed the soil.

Make a statement with gifts and party favors that give back. Look for something plantable, like herbs, succulents, or seed packets. Or indicate that in their honor, you've given a monetary gift, such as [planting new trees](#) in an area harmed by wildfires. Any such option can lead to conversations about caring for God's earthly garden.

Those shipping boxes easily recycle because cardboard is clean and easy to reprocess. Every ton of it that's reclaimed saves 17 trees.

Dispose of your tree carefully. Replanted is best. Composted or chipped for trail footing in parks is good. Do not burn a tree. That releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Reuse and reuse a plastic tree (ideas here: [Washtenaw County Trash to Treasure Guide](#))

As you put away your new clothes, scrutinize your closets and drawers for clothing you can donate. Put those to work for someone else. Clear away the excess and discover the joy of simplicity. Ideas here: [Washtenaw County Trash to Treasure Guide](#)

Engage your children in passing along gently-used toys they have outgrown. Talk with them about the fun they had and now they can help other children have a good time too. Make the task an after-Christmas tradition to encourage the children to care for their toys and for other children.