

## Tips for a GREEN Christmas

Care of Creation Tip of the Week: I'm dreaming of a GREEN Christmas

According to the Nature Conservancy "Household waste increases by more than 25% from Thanksgiving to New Years Day. And in the U.S., annual trash from gift-wrap and shopping bags totals 4 million tons!" So this is a particularly important time to remember to take your RE-USEABLE bags with you when you shop!

Bags can also be a great re-useable GIFT WRAP ALTERNATIVE— whether they be commercial gift bags stuffed with colorful tissue, re-useable shopping bags from stores or non-profits (like TPC's own blue bags), or re-useable fabric gift bags (such as those sold at TPC's Alternative Gift Market or craft shows). These all make gift-wrapping colorful, quick, and GREEN!

Care of Creation Tip of the Week: Under the Christmas Tree

We're all familiar with the environmental mantra "reduce, re-use, recycle". There's a reason "reduce" comes 1<sup>st</sup> – it often has the biggest impact. So in addition to "greening" your gift *wrapping* (to reduce waste), consider ways to green your gift *giving*.

TPC's own Alternative Gift Market provides many opportunities – fair trade coffees, teas and chocolates, re-useable cloth gift bags, support for the Intergenerational Garden, Honduras Mission trip and many other activities that work to improve life for all of God's Creation.

Our own PCUSA Mission Office also has a wonderful document with "Ideas for Reclaiming Advent and Christmas" with some great alternative gift giving ideas. [http://www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/enough/pdf/mt\\_advent\\_2012.pdf](http://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/enough/pdf/mt_advent_2012.pdf)

In our household we've looked to reduce our accumulation of "stuff", and have enjoyed giving gifts of time and skills – a gift certificate for a meal prepared (and cleaned up!), a car wash, a computer tutorial, a bush planted, a week of dog walks, and so on.

Care of Creation Tip of the Week: O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree...

For those who love a "real" Christmas tree, there are some ways you can green this experience too.

- 1) Consider buying a LIVE tree and then planting it outside after the ground thaws in the Spring. A young, vigorously growing tree absorbs CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere.
- 2) Use energy efficient LED lights on your tree.
- 3) If you've bought a cut tree, put it out for Baltimore County's curbside pick-up when you're done so it will get recycled (mulched) rather than land-filled.

4) When I was growing up, when we took our Christmas tree down we'd then put it out in the woods to provide shelter and habitat for small creatures.

#### Care of Creation Tip of the Week: Party Green

Tis the season for PARTIES – school, work, neighborhood, friends and family. There are many opportunities to “green” your Christmas and New Year’s parties.

1. Online party invitations – saves paper, delivery.
2. Use candles and LED holiday lights instead of your regular lights – saves electricity.
3. Use natural decorations – pinecones, holly, magnolia leaves, string cranberries & popcorn (and then compost), instead of store bought (and later trashed).
4. Food and drinks – go for local, seasonal, fair trade, organic options when possible.
5. Dishes – use yours (and wash), or buy 100% recycled/eco-friendly compostable dinnerware.
6. Clean-up – make sure recycling bins are well marked and in easy reach for those empty bottles and cans.

#### Care of Creation Tip of the Week: New Year’s Resolutions

As 2017 winds down and 2018 looms, it’s the time of year many people think about making New Year’s Resolutions. One of the great gifts former Assoc. Pastor Roger Rice gave to our Earth Corps group was sharing the “8 Modes of Ministry” with us. It challenged us to expand our efforts to care for creation in many new and different ways.

There’s not enough space here to go through all 8, but I encourage you to make a New Year’s resolution to expand your creation care ministry. So in addition to *action* (the focus of the past weeks’ tips), consider some of the other areas of ministry including *advocacy* (working for changes in laws, regulations, policies that impact the environment), *education* (learning more about our environment, our impacts and remedies), and *spiritual* (praying for creation and experiencing God in nature).