

Green Christmas - 2021

Celebrate a Creation-Friendly Christmas This Year!

Make your holidays festive without placing a burden upon the Creation! Christmas cards, gifts, gift wrapping all have a cost to the planet as well as to your wallet. We offer you the following suggestions.

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7

Whether cards or wrapping, please remember: **NO GLITTER!** Glitter is a microplastic (combination of aluminum and plastic) that contributes to our plastic pollution problem. To better understand the issue, visit <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/oct/22/glitter-environment-microplastics-hazard>

CARDS: Consider an e-card as an eco-friendly Christmas card option

Use less paper-intensive means by emailing or calling those with whom you'd love to chat. (It may actually mean more to them in the end than a card that is likely to soon be discarded.)

E-cards are a fun way to share a warm greeting. Create your own or use one of several e-card companies. (Personalize your greetings with a family picture and send it as an email attachment.)

If you don't want to abandon the printed card, select an eco-friendlier option by finding cards and envelopes printed using post-consumer recycled paper. Some companies plant a tree with every order.

- Paper Culture, a certified green business, plants a tree with every order, uses 100% post-consumer recycled paper, and offsets their carbon footprint through carbon credits.
- Look for eco-friendly cards on Etsy, helping an artist while considering the impact on the planet.
- Buy cards from a local source that keeps money local – e.g., from Arizona Highways: <https://www.shoparizonahighways.com/>

Wrapping: Make it glitter free and unique (glitter paper and cards can't be recycled)!

- *Reusable fabric wrap* (bandana, fun T-shirt, scarf)
- *Potato chip bags* (cut, wash and use silvery side out)
- *Tote bags*
- *Brown grocery bags* (cut open, iron flat, have the kids or grandkids decorate)
- *(Reusable) gift bags*

GIFTS: Earth-friendly suggestions

Sustainability is the best gift you can give. It minimizes the use of our precious natural resources (especially water) and helps keep discarded items out of the waste stream.

- *Reusable water bottle.* Most single-use plastics are *not* recyclable (despite the number in the recycling logo ... only a #1 or #2 find a new use - most #s 3-7 enter the landfill and frequently end up in our oceans). A reusable thermal bottle can last years and keep beverages at the desired temperature a long time.
- *Solar-powered phone charger.* No need to worry if your current phone charger is a vampire appliance. Solar energy is free!
- *Reusable sandwich bags and stainless steel straws.* Perfect for packing lunches and no plastic waste.
- *Fair Trade products* Fair Trade Certified™ goods support responsible companies, empower farmers, workers, and fishermen, and protect the environment. From chocolate to clothing to coffee, let your consumer \$\$\$ reflect your values.
- *Products that give others a chance at a better life.* SERRV [one of the first Fair Trade organizations in the world] helps build hope within communities, WHEAT [dedicated to ending hunger and poverty at the root], Feed My Starving Children [Christian organization dedicated to feeding God's starving children].
- *Plant trees for each product or sponsorship.* For campers and grillers: Prime 6's 100% sustainable charcoal (made from recycled hardwood-waste sawdust, has no fillers or chemicals, reusable up to seven times until it's burned away completely). Sponsorships: National Wildlife Federation, Arbor Day Foundation.
- *Adopt (symbolically) an animal.* Help sustain habitat and populations of threatened and endangered species. (Organizations: National Wildlife Federation, World Wildlife Fund, Sierra Club, and others.)

Before contributing to any nonprofit organization, it is wise to check with Charity Navigator for information on its actual performance; www. <https://www.charitynavigator.org/>

- *Clothing and accessories made from recycled and sustainable materials.* From plastic bottles and coffee grounds remade into a hoodie (Coatree), to products with minimal packaging (United by Blue), look for products that minimize the use of natural resources and add little/nothing to the waste stream.
- *Plants, seeds with a purpose.* Live plants with creative planters help clean the air while bringing nature inside. Consider seed packets for planting seeds that will attract pollinators and hummingbirds. (Terroir Seeds has sustainably grown and harvested seed collections: <https://underwoodgardens.com>)

Other festivities: Advent, Winter Solstice

Experiences are more meaningful and leave longer memories than most "things."

- Consider an evening scripture reading and lighting a candle around an *Advent wreath*.
- Host a family *winter solstice* party. Provide a votive candle for everyone to use in lieu of electric lighting. Select a word for the next year that reflects your intention (generosity, kindness, tolerance, compassion, etc.) and commit to your word with all your family gathered. Read the nativity story together – or watch the story told through the eyes of the KOG children's ministry for 2020.

A special request: While fun, ugly Christmas sweaters create a **huge** drain on natural resources used to make them, please purchase one from a local thrift store and donate it back post-holidays.