

HAVE A MERRY, SUSTAINABLE CHRISTMAS!

The bishops of England and Wales, following the Pope's lead, are encouraging us to change our lifestyles so as to help reverse climate change. Here are some tips for Christmas. Remember the 3 R's – refuse, re-use, recycle. For instance, you can reduce plastic use in toiletries by buying bars of soap and bars of shampoo, instead of bottles of handwash and shampoo. You will find a wide range of green toiletries (plastic free/ethically sourced/organic/vegan) on offer online, and some high street shops sell shampoo bars, for instance Lush and Superdrug.



PRESENTS Don't buy unnecessary presents. Each year the UK spends about £700 million on unwanted presents. Find out what people need before you buy. Offer home-baked treats. Arrange a spending limit with family and friends. Check that the items you buy are green and ethical –workers properly paid, not tested on animals, sustainably sourced, local if possible. Lists of ethical companies can be found by looking online. Best of all, make reciprocal arrangements with family and friends to not buy each other presents. They may be relieved!



WRAPPING PAPER Half of the paper America consumes each year is used to wrap and decorate consumer products! In Britain every Xmas we throw away 226,800 miles of wrapping paper. There is no need to throw it away. It can be re-used many times. And you can buy wrapping paper made from hemp, or from recycled paper. How about using attractive and re-usable cloth material instead of paper? Use ribbon instead of tape for sealing, so that the paper can be more easily re-used or recycled. The ribbon can be re-used as well, as can the bows.



CARDS Do you need to buy cards for people you see regularly? If you decide not to, explain that you are trying to reduce consumerism. Home-made cards are a great idea – people like the thought and effort that goes into them. You can use up leftover resources – cards, calendars, things around the house etc... A much better idea is to send a Happy Xmas email. If you receive cards, recycle don't bin them. It's estimated that each year we bin 1 billion cards instead of recycling them.



XMAS TREES Millions of Xmas trees both real and artificial are discarded every year in the UK. To cut down on plastic dependence and to offset carbon emissions, buy a living tree, and keep it in the pot in the house or garden when not being used. They can be used year after year. Norfolk pines are suitable, as they don't grow large. Many Local Councils will collect and compost your tree when you've finished with it. Or you can take it to the local recycling centre, or compost it yourself in your garden. Decorations can be home-made or home baked. Use LED lights, as they use up to 95% less energy than traditional bulbs.



MEALS You've probably seen headlines like "Tackling the world's most urgent problem: meat" (United Nations Environment Programme). Growing animals for food involves destruction and pollution of the land, forests, waters and atmosphere, and takes resources from the poorest people. Include some vegan meals over the Xmas period. Vegan meal recipes can be found online – at Veganuary.com for instance - and there are plenty of vegan ready meals in the shops.

FOR MORE IDEAS look online. Type in something like "tips for living sustainably over Xmas". Also, whatever you're looking to buy online, add the words "eco-friendly". Let's use Christmas time to move closer to God by thinking about how we can care for His creation. Have a healthy, holy, wholesome green Christmas!

(<https://www.gwp.co.uk/guides/christmas-packaging-facts/>)