



Climate Conversations

Celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas with a Creation Care Mindset

St Mark's Creation Care Ministry

November 2023



Agenda

- Land Acknowledgement
- Opening Prayer
- Preparing for the holidays
- Discussion
- Celebrations and afterwards
- Sharing and Q&A
- Closing Prayer

Opening Prayer

God of all creation, as we enter with joy into the season of Advent, anticipating your coming in the humbleness of a child, your Son Jesus.

Let us honor the goodness of all your gifts in the natural world. In a season too often marked by overconsumption and excess, let us give thanks for all the good things throughout nature. Each day, let us ponder their goodness as signs of your love.

May the light of Advent grow daily together with our love for your creation, redeemed by your Son, whose coming we will celebrate soon.

Amen



Thanksgiving & Christmas are Wonderful

- Thanksgiving & Christmas are special
 - Celebration
 - Family & friends
 - Familiar traditions & rituals
- Activities
 - Gathering with family and/or friends
 - Food
 - Decorations
 - Presents or gifts
- Making the holidays meaningful, easy, and positively impactful makes them better



Traditions Impact Climate Change

Huge holiday impacts on climate include:

- 1430 pounds of GHG per person over 3 days of festivities at Christmas
- Household waste rises 25%, Thanksgiving to New Year
- \$293 million food waste at Thanksgiving
 - 6 million turkeys, 200 million pounds, wasted, have a huge carbon footprint
- Electricity usage rises
 - 66.3 billion KWH to run holiday lights
- 67% of consumers return gifts, 13% of all gifts & about 5 billion pounds
 - 16% of gifts are not used



Starting out Right Increases Holiday Joy

- Thanksgiving
 - Give thanks for blessings
- Christmas
 - Celebrate the birth of Jesus
- For both...
 - Prepare, and avoid stress
 - Enjoy
 - Choose to do what truly matters
 - Less can be more
 - Consider impacts for Creation Care



Take Guidance from the Bible

- Matthew 2 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh
- Proverbs 23 Be wise, and set your heart on the right path: Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags
- Proverbs 11 One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.
- Hebrews 15 Do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.
- Psalm 147 Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving



Creation Care Mindset for Impactful Holidays

- Ask yourself what is truly important at Thanksgiving and Christmas
 - Gifts, food, decorations and clothes?
 - Or time with loved ones, reflecting, and being grateful for what you have?
- Reflect your choice in how you prepare for the holidays, use your time and shop
 - Write down activities, gifts and errands for decorations and food
 - Plan tiny islands of time to prepare
 - Creation Care practices & mindset so what you do has less climate impact



Decorations

- Make your own decorations
 - Popcorn garlands, cards, stars
- Deck the halls with real boughs - natural branches, pinecones, dried fruit, nuts & sprigs of berries, candles
- Search thrift shops for gently used items
- Revitalize family decorations
- Reusable advent calendar
- Reduce Christmas lighting with LEDs
- Avoid plastic decorations and wrapping
- Consider tree composting or a plastic tree
 - 25-30 million trees/yr sold in the US



Source: <https://utopia.org/guide/how-to-have-a-green-thanksgiving/>



Source: <https://www.thesoutherncross.org/environment/creation-care-at-christmas/>

Invitations and Greetings

- Invitations
 - Digital invitations
- Christmas cards
 - Email cards
 - Make your own cards from recycled paper
- Text holiday greetings to friends & family
- Digital thank-you notes



Source: [Paperless Post](#)

Transport and Travel

- Travel less
 - If traveling, drive more, fly less
- Consider walking or public transport
- If you drive
 - Consolidate shopping into fewer trips
 - Drive at less congested times
 - Inflate tires correctly
 - Don't leave the car idling
- Consider online shopping
 - Ordering online may have less carbon footprint than in-person shopping, depending on distance and returns



Give and Receive Gifts Differently

- Put time into selecting fewer & quality gifts
- Buy less stuff
- Shop for gifts at thrift stores
 - Unique gifts at great prices
- Refurbished technology
- Give time or experience, or a donation to charity, instead of physical items
- Give gifts with a conservation message
- Gift fairs with local artisans or fairtrade
 - St Mark's Alternative Gifts Market, Dec 3
- Edible gifts
- Wrap gifts in recycled paper or newspaper



Enjoy a Sustainable Christmas Party

- Decorations from nature
- Eco-candles
- Encourage sustainable attire
 - Second-hand or homemade
- Reusable cutlery and dishware
- Buy local
- Plant based food or lower-emission meat
- Organic drinks
- Reusable containers to take home extra food
- Recycling and composting bins



Discussion & Breakout Session

Questions:

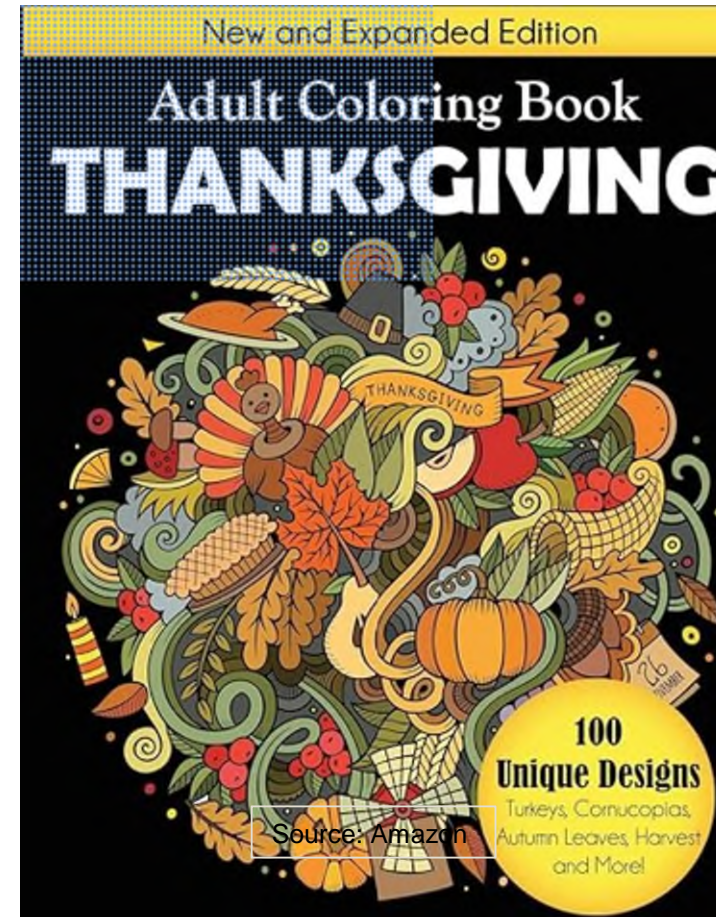
- How will you create meaningful celebrations?
- How will you prepare for a sustainable Thanksgiving & Christmas?
- How would sustainable Thanksgiving and Christmas preparations be different from before?



Enjoy the Day, Sustainably

Gadgets & televisions use electricity

- Use devices and gadgets less
- Enjoy “old-fashioned” fun
 - Play (cooperative) board games
 - Solve puzzles
 - Adult & children’s coloring books
- Create a ‘grateful jar’ or ‘tree of thanks’
- Connect with friends or family virtually
- Start new traditions - brainstorm ideas
- Light gratitude candles
- A-to-Z: Take turns coming up with things you are thankful for in every letter of the alphabet



Source: Board Game Arena

Enjoy the Meal

- Plan your menu & shop for what you need
- Select seasonal local fruits & vegetables
 - Go organic, consider farmers' markets
- Less meat, more sides, or plant-based
 - 20-pound turkey = 64 pounds of CO₂
 - If turkey, spatchcock or sous vide
- Local organic or biodynamic wine & spirits
- Make your own meal, less processed food
- No-bake desserts
- Ceramic dishes and cloth napkins
- Smaller plates & a slower pace



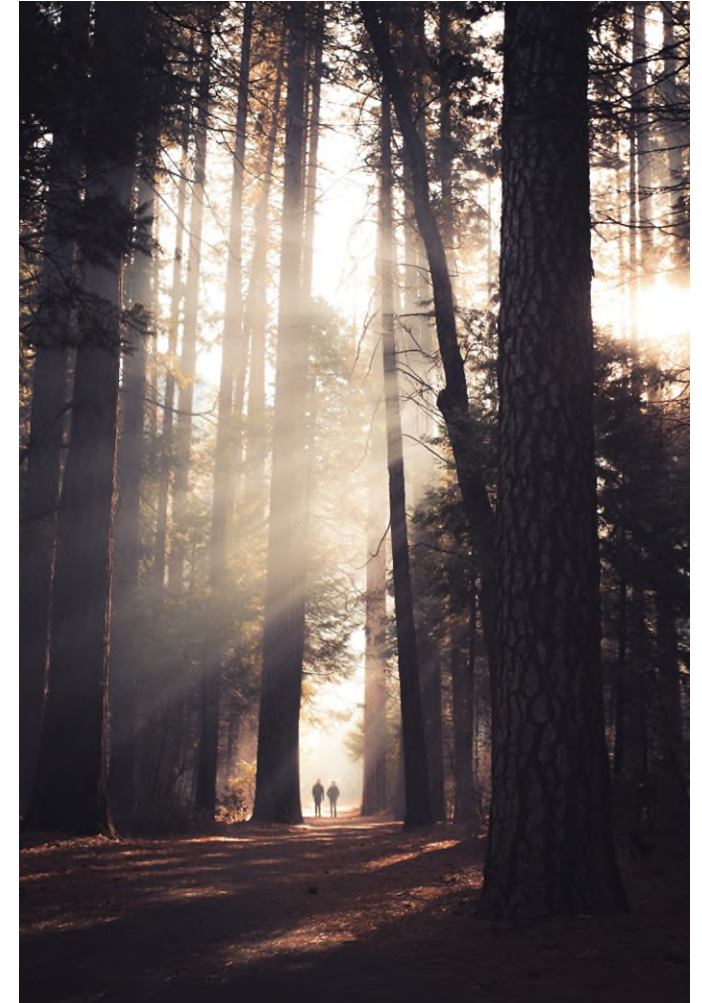
Clean up sustainably

- Share food in reusable containers
- Store leftovers in reusable containers
- Freeze some of the leftovers
- Donate extra items to food banks
- Wash with sustainable soap
- A full dishwasher
- Recycle or compost if needed



Afterwards

- Enjoy a walk after your meal
- Christmas carol fest
- Share stories
- Skip black Friday shopping and 'Boxing Day' (December 26) shopping



12 Days of Christmas

- 1) Day of Gratitude
- 2) Post-Christmas Light Tour
- 3) Act of Kindness
- 4) Thank-You Card Campaign
- 5) Make Decorations
- 6) Create a Gift for Neighbors or Friends
- 7) Explore Small Businesses or Craft Fairs
- 8) Bake Night & Deliver some to Neighbors
- 9) No-Spend Day of Activities
- 10) Give Back
- 11) Movie Night
- 12) Book Exchange



Sharing, Discussion and Q&A

Questions

- What activities can you do on Thanksgiving or Christmas that are more meaningful & sustainable?
- How might you change Christmas dinner to be more sustainable?
- What is one thing you could do during the 12 days of Christmas?



Make a Difference

My idea of Christmas, whether old-fashioned or modern, is very simple: loving others - Bob Hope

Christmas is the season of joy, of holiday greetings exchanged, of gift-giving, and of families uniting – Norman Vincent Peale

Closing Prayer

Dear God,
As I look through my gift shopping list,
I hold up to you each person listed on it.
I ask that the fire of your abundant love burn within
each of them.
I pray that the gift I find for each person will bring joy
into that life.
Help me to keep a balance this season, Lord.
Let me keep my buying in perspective,
not to spend more than I need to or can afford.
Let me not give in to the pressures of this world
and not equate love with money spent.
And Lord, help me to find time in the frantic moments
of each day to become centered on you.
Amen

