

Reclaiming the *Holidays*

Decorations

Rather than purchasing a fresh Advent wreath, you can make one. The lower branches of a Christmas tree that were cut to fit into a stand make excellent wreath material. Use beeswax candles in your wreath. They are organic and biodegradable. If you have an artificial tree, it is best to use it as long as you can. If you purchase a live tree, go local.

Holiday Activities

Volunteer at a local shelter, food bank, community center or church. Other forms of service and outreach you can embrace this Christmas include food donations, meal delivery, and opening your home to newcomers. Take up a collection at your meal to support local efforts to alleviate hunger, or have your guests bring nonperishable items to donate. Take a sabbath from electronic devices.

Holiday Treats

Many baking items such as sugar, cocoa, vanilla, and spices are harvested under grueling conditions. Purchasing fair trade baking goods, as well as snacks, chocolate and beverages helps prevent child labor and oppressive working conditions and ensures workers a fair wage.

Attract wildlife outside with edible decorations. Coat pinecones with organic nut butter and roll them in seeds. Make garlands out of air-popped corn or chunks of stale bread.

If you feel called to celebrate differently this year, talk with loved ones and explain why you have made a switch. Be gentle in your explanations and invite others to journey with you through the process. For further ideas visit www.presbyterianmission.org/justliving.

Gifts

Knitted items, framed photos, handcrafted toys, works of art, and other personally made gifts show care and concern for the recipients because they require time and thought to create.

Minimize the impact your gifts have on local landfills by packaging them in reusable or biodegradable materials. Wrapping gifts in blankets or table linens creates practical and reusable packaging options.

If you are gifted with crafts, music, dance, or other talents, give the gift of knowledge, while passing on traditions and heritage.

