

♥♥♥ GIVING GIFTS THE GREEN WAY ♥♥♥ **

The character of a society is the cumulative result of the countless small actions, day in and day out, of millions of people. – Duane Elgin

In order to care for Earth we need to learn about our own impact on Earth's resources and what our consumption is relative to the rest of the world. Our second principle talks of affirming and promoting **justice**, equity and compassion in human relations; our sixth principle says that we promote the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and **justice** for all. However, in general the more we have and the more resources we use, the less there is for others who share this planet with us. Western countries are 20% of the world population, but we are consuming over 80% of the earth's resources, causing a disproportionate level of environmental damage and an unfair distribution of wealth. With the emphasis on consumption this time of year, it is a good time to reflect on our values, the choices we have, and the changes that we may wish to make to bring our lives into alignment with our values.**

The UUCD Green Sanctuary Committee invites you to simplify your holidays and, in the process, to have more fun and cut down on stress. We suggest you rethink the quantity and type of gifts you give. We do not owe a gift to everyone, in fact gifts, especially elaborate or expensive ones are often not appreciated or impose a burden on recipients who feel they need to reciprocate in kind. Such gifts may also be perceived as a substitution for loving interactions.

For children, give gifts that reflect your values – no violent or violence-oriented gifts/games. Explain to children the difference between “want” and “need,” and limit gifts to a few “wants” plus some “needs.” Tell them that the Earth needs people to stop buying things that use up the planet's rapidly decreasing resources.

Let the adults to whom you usually give gifts know that you are rethinking your holidays. Request that they not give you gifts, so you won't feel obliged to do the same. You may replace the gift with a card, by doing something together, or with simple gifts you've made. To build a world where materialism and selfishness are replaced with love, caring, generosity, ecological sensitivity, and awe and wonder at the grandeur of creation, we need to start with ourselves. As Gandhi said, “We need to be the change we want to see in the world.”

Here are ideas to get your creative juices going:

Imaginative Gifts

- ❖ Make a beautiful coupon for babysitting, help painting a room, garden work, making dinner, teaching a skill, or offer any of your talents. For someone special, make a set of reusable gift certificates: "Good for a Massage", "Good for One Home Cooked Meal", "Good for a Walk in the Hills", and "Good for a Hug".
- ❖ Provide a box of a variety of nice cards and a roll of stamps for someone who is homebound.
- ❖ Make a list for a loved one: all the reasons that you love the person, quotes you think the person would enjoy, or all your favorite memories of things you have done together.
- ❖ Or just write letters of appreciation to a spouse, parent, child, and friends.

Gifts of Togetherness

- ❖ Plan a hike to Stebbins Cold Canyon and take along a picnic. Check Yolohikers.org for local trails.
- ❖ Plan a bike trip to explore town by walking through different neighborhoods or to different parks.
- ❖ Have a potluck dinner party, then play charades or board games, or work puzzles together.
- ❖ Invite friends and their children to make baker's dough ornaments and cookies or use recycled materials to make simple gifts or decorations.
- ❖ Have a cookie exchange party where each person brings their favorite cookies and copies of the recipe.

Gifts Of Self

- ❖ Treat yourself to a crafts course; learn to throw pots, knit scarves, and make gifts for those you love!
- ❖ Give a gift from your kitchen: homemade baking mix, holiday breads, jams, a pot of soup, etc.
- ❖ Write personalized stories with simple illustrations for a child you know. You might even make the child the main character. It doesn't take a degree in English or Art to do this; it only takes love for a child.
- ❖ Interview older family members about how they met, where they grew up, what they are proudest about in their lives, the most unusual thing that they ever did, and memories of their parents and grandparents.
- ❖ Collect dress-up clothes, assembled from Dad's and Mom's old clothing and from local thrift stores: silk nightgowns, wild shoes, silly ties, a fancy dress, hats, - all packed in a pretty box for hours of creative play.

* Ideas from various sources including: www.newdream.org and www.tikkun.org.

** To find out how your life impacts the world, see <http://www.myfootprint.org>.

- ❖ Give children items that can be assembled into a homemade playhouse: large box, scrap wood, cardboard, small hammer, non-toxic paint, rope, pulleys, shingles, anything that you can find that might be put to good use. Include a certificate promising that you will help them build the house.
- ❖ Make decorations from garden greens. A thrift store bowl, filled with greens and pyracanthus berries from the garden, and decorated with a bow and/or candle makes a lovely, inexpensive centerpiece.
- ❖ Make simple cloth bags to use for gifts - a good project to teach a child how to use a sewing machine. Use pinking shears and sew simple straight lines with a machine. Unbleached muslin bags can be decorated with fabric pens or paint. The bags can be used year after year instead of new wrapping paper.
- ❖ Read bedtime stories into a tape recorder or camcorder as if the child was right in the room with you.
- ❖ Make your own cards or holiday decorations. Let the card also serve as envelope to reduce paper used.
- ❖ As for wrapping paper, use newspapers, especially colored pages or decorate paper bags.

Intangible Gifts

- ❖ Give a gift that won't end up in a landfill: dancing lessons, tickets to the theater a movie or play (and your company, too), a certificate for a massage!

Environmentally Sound Gifts

- ❖ Pack a cloth grocery bags with "green" cleaning supplies or energy efficient light bulbs.
- ❖ Try an "Environmental Activist Starter Kits." Kits might include membership to non-profit organizations, such as Amnesty International, Sierra Club, Tuleyome, or others. Add a tablet of recycled paper tablets and refillable Parker pens to be used for writing letters to newspapers and politicians.

Thoughtfully Purchased Gifts

- ❖ Store-bought gifts are not all bad and quality is more important than quantity. Consider giving gifts that bring out your child's creativity, while not generating junk, packaging, and more plastic. Why not a kid's cookbook with healthy, yummy recipes; a craft kit with organic yarn or fabric; some durable tools for building things; sheet music for your young musicians; CDs for young children, a magnifying glass for studying bugs, plants, and rocks; a set of seashells; a stamp book for learning about other countries; several kinds of modeling clay or homemade play dough; or gardening tools, seeds, and a pot of soil for an indoor gardening or a special place for an outdoor garden.
- ❖ Long-lasting gifts for children: www.poppywood.com, www.naturalplay.com, and www.globalexchange.org.

Local Gifts

- ❖ Shop for that special Gift at the Artery, the Davis Art Center's Annual Holiday Sale, or other stores that carry local products.
- ❖ Put together baskets or boxes of food from the Farmer's market.
- ❖ Find local merchants in your area and find out about the goods they carry and the origin of the goods. For information about brand names, check: www.responsibleshopper.org and www.coopamerica.org.

Buy Ethically And Give Gifts That Will Serve For Years

- ❖ Find places where you can get fair trade gifts: www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/fairtrade/.
- ❖ Give books such as Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone by Deborah Madison or The Complete Italian Vegetarian Cookbook by Jack Bishop or a subscription to Ode (www.odemagazine.com) or membership in Coop America (www.coopamerica.org).

Give Gifts that Help Others

- ❖ Give to charitable organizations in your own name or another's. Let your children help you decide. Some possibilities: UU Church of Davis, UU Ministry for Earth, UU Service Committee, STEAC, Doctors Without Borders, Sierra Club Foundation, Nature Conservancy, Yolo Basin, and many other NGOs.

Ask for Nothing at All

- ❖ Do you really need anything else? Asking for less is a radical act.



**May the important things in life enrich your holidays:
Love, health, laughter, the beauty of nature, peace, joy....**



♥♥♥ Blessings From the UUCD Green Sanctuary Committee! ♥♥♥