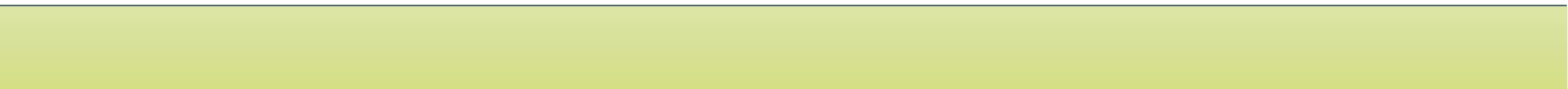


Climate Conversations

Preparing for a Creation Care Christmas

St Mark's Creation Care Ministry

November 2025



Agenda

- **Land Acknowledgement:** Saint Mark's Cathedral acknowledges that we gather on the traditional land of the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish People, who are still here, and we honor with gratitude the land itself and the life of all the Coast Salish tribes.
- Opening Prayer
- Framework
- Discussion
- Actions
- Sharing and Q&A
- Closing Prayer
- **November: Preparing for a Creation Care Christmas**
- Christmas is a time of joy and celebration with Christmas trees and ornaments, special foods, family celebrations, presents and more. The spike in shopping and energy usage also has a big impact on climate change. We'll discuss the impact of Christmas and the holiday season on climate, creation care practices for a more meaningful and less impactful Christmas, and how to make sure the reason for Christmas is at the center of our celebrations.

Opening Prayer

God of all creation, 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



A Joyful Season

- Thanksgiving through Christmas is a joyful time
- Thanksgiving for a time with family or friends
- Advent prepares the way to Christmas
- A marvelous Christmas
- Traditions
 - Celebration
 - Decorations
 - Gifts
 - Special meals



A Shopping and Spending Season

- That celebration has a cost
- Ingredients for meals
- Gifts
 - Averaging \$920 per person
- Cards
 - 2 billion Christmas cards
- 113 million Americans travel
- Christmas trees and decorations
- \$1 trillion of spending in the holiday season
- Spending is shifting from discretionary to needed goods



Climate Change is Changing Traditions

- White Christmases are green
- Christmas trees turn brown faster
- Stormy weather and snowstorms make travel difficult
- Winter sports seasons are shortening
- Food costs are rising



Climate Impact of the Christmas Season

- Household waste increases 25%
 - 25 million extra tons, from Thanksgiving to Christmas
- 25-30 million Christmas trees release greenhouse gasses
- 1 pound of wrapping paper = 3.5 pounds of CO₂ and 1.3 pounds of fossil fuels
- Christmas lights use 6.6 billion kWh
- Americans waste 30%-40% of food per year,
 - Waste increases 25% during the holidays
 - 200 million pounds of turkey are thrown away during Thanksgiving week
- 3 days around Christmas, 1,430 lb. of CO₂



A Christmas Creation Care Mindset

- Ask what is truly important at Thanksgiving and Christmas
 - Gifts, food, decorations and clothes?
 - Time with loved ones & gratitude for what you have?
- Clear the clutter
- Avoid the culture of consumerism
- A sustainable Christmas has a spiritual character
- Christmas in harmony with nature
 - Nature walks
- Celebrate Advent and Christmas traditions
- Reflect as you prepare, spend time & shop
 - Write down activities, gifts and errands
 - Plan tiny islands of time to prepare



The Bible has Lessons on What to Do

- 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



An Intentional Christmas

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



Discussion & Breakout Session

Questions:

- What are your favorite traditions for Thanksgiving, advent and Christmas?
- How can you slow down and plan for Christmas?
- What will make Thanksgiving and Christmas more meaningful for you?



Activities in a Way to Care for Creation

- Plan, with a Creation Care mindset
 - Shopping lists
 - Activity schedule with downtime
- Prepare
 - Start preparing in plenty of time
- Optimize
 - The right amount of food
 - Selective decorations
 - Meaningful gifts
- Stop
 - Reflect and enjoy



Decorations

- Locally grown tree or artificial tree
 - Wooden Christmas tree
- Wreaths from real branches
- Brass, glass or wooden decorations
- Make your own decorations
 - Natural decorations like paper chains, pinecones, dried orange slices, evergreen clippings or popcorn garlands
- Fewer lights
 - LED Christmas lights – or none at all
 - Turn off lights when people are away



Source: Amazon

Travel and Drive Sustainably

- “Travel” virtually and avoid the crowds
- Short, direct flights with less baggage
- Combine trips for holiday shopping and errands
- Shop virtually
 - Returns are not carbon-free
- Carpooling
- Public transport, biking or walking



Refreshments and Meals

- Use recipes and create a shopping list
- Purchase and prepare the right amount
- Eat seasonally
 - Root and winter vegetables
 - Local ingredients and foods
- More vegetables, less meat
- Reduce stovetop and oven cooking times
- Cloth tablecloths and napkins, and reusable tableware
- Save and enjoy leftovers
 - Eco-friendly non-plastic containers



Give Meaningful Gifts for the Long Term

- Give experiences
- Eco-friendly products, not plastic
- Wood, bamboo or paper gifts made from recycled or FSC-certified materials
- Gifts with a conservation message - a nature book, refillable thermos, solar-powered gifts, or gifts that require no power,
- Refurbished or renewed items
- Quality over quantity
- Gifts with a longer lifespan
- Homemade or hand-crafted products
- Reusable or recycled gift wrap
 - Avoid ribbons, foil and tape



Other Tips

- Keep Creation Care top-of-mind
- Send e-cards
- Wear clothes you already have
 - Or, buy high quality pre-loved clothes
- Close the curtains when it's dark
 - Retain heat
- Candles
- Share sustainable holiday tips with family and friends
- Homemade window decorations
- Organize Christmas caroling



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

- How can you decorate more sustainably?
- How might you make changes in how you give and receive gifts?
- How can you make holiday events or parties and Christmas dinner more sustainable?



Make a Difference

It is Christmas in the heart that puts Christmas in the air – Representative WT Ellis

What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas ... perhaps ... means a little bit more! – The Grinch

Gifts of time and love are surely the basic ingredients of a truly merry Christmas – Peg Bracken

When we recall Christmas past, we usually find that the simplest things - not the great occasions - give off the greatest glow of happiness – Bob Hope

Christmas is a season for kindling the fire for hospitality in the hall, the genial flame of charity in the heart – Washington Irving

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

