**Parish Parishioner 8: Let’s have a green Christmas …**

**Part 2**

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Looking at ways of cutting costs this Christmas, like many of us I expect, I keep a re-gifting drawer to squirrel away unwanted gifts I have been given. Care must be taken not to commit the cardinal sin of re-gifting the present to the original donor. Splitting up large toiletry boxes, such as Boots offer 3 for 2, will enable you to create more gifts ideally for tombolas, raffles and for local charities in need, especially at this time of year.

Flowers are always popular, especially if you can find some with plastic free packaging (eg ‘Freddie’s Flowers’ or ‘Bloom and Wild’), but giving bulbs and seeds is more eco-friendly. Some festive cards even contain wildflower seeds, but I haven’t road tested these. I am however attracted to an online idea of family contributions being pooled to make a gift of monthly flower deliveries for a year to brighten someone’s life every few weeks (maybe grandmas come to mind..).

Edible gifts are nearly always appreciated and rarely end up in landfill, as the pet dog will usually polish off Nana’s burnt cookies. Recipes can be adapted to include sustainably sourced items, such as homemade jam. Batch cooking portioned into glass jars (useful for fetes too) eliminates the wasteful issue of packaging, but my most recent venture is to buy sustainable gifts in themselves to help the recipient on their environmentally friendly journey.

I am attracted to the online ‘Peace with the Wild’ site, and shall buy at least one of their sustainable travel cups made from endless eco-friendly options such as duck egg rice husk and lagoon rice. Pepperminty jojoba lip balm is suitable for my granddaughters, though I am still looking for a suitable recipient for the organic man balm (macadamia and frankincense) They do offer gift cards and I am impressed by their glowing testimonials from customers ([www.peacewiththewild.co.uk](http://www.peacewiththewild.co.uk)).

It isn’t just our gifting and when we try to dispose of it that creates chronic environmental issues, but glittery wrapping and sparkly ribbons are a disaster. If your wrapping paper stays in a ball when you scrunch it up (after receiving of course) then it can be recycled. If it unfurls, it can’t.

227,700 miles of Christmas wrapping paper is thrown away each year, which in visual terms (I am unreliably informed) would stretch to the moon and back. (I am not sharing that particular strange fact with my bright grandson, in case he wants to check out these facts).

Researching green options for wrapping I came across a Japanese technique called Furoshiki. It creates no waste and is far more pleasant to do than other alternatives. Using any leftover fabric you have, or charity shop options, or buying a scarf to use which then becomes part of the gift itself, there is a simple method of tying the present up . Just Google Furoshiki for instructions. Gifts wrapped like this would look lovely under the tree, but perhaps not suitable or practical to send through the post.

On 25th December, over the years, I have sat and winced at the sight of children (and adults) ripping open their beautifully wrapped presents. I have been known to hide away good sheets, but not to go as far as to iron them for future reuse as my Auntie Betty did.

Other wrapping tips include using newspapers, magazines or simply plain brown paper. The latter can be decorated in any way you wish, including green items, leaves, berries or cinnamon sticks. This assumes the recipient does not have a dog to pilfer the present decorations under the tree. Our dog once ate all the silver wrapped chocolates on the tree whilst we were at the Christmas Eve Nativity Service, and was very unwell as a result. The silver paper and glitter seemed to pass through him unchanged, decorating the garden for many weeks…. such is the nature of non-biodegradable waste!

Glass jars are wonderful for storing and recycling, and reusable wrapping paper can now be bought at a cost. Tags can be cut from old Christmas cards, if they survived your last declutter (mine sadly didn’t). Then there is sellotape. Even if your presents and wrapping are eco-friendly sellotape will contaminate the whole recycling process. Use washi tape instead ([www.eco-craft.co.uk](http://www.eco-craft.co.uk)) or paper-based packing tape, as both are compostable.

Lastly, but not least is the issue of Christmas cards. There is the E-card popular amongst working colleagues and IT geeks, but for the rest of us there are many eco-friendly cards on line to buy, many containing wildflower and bee meadow seeds, but fewer it seems with a Christian design, although I found some delightful ones on Etsy. For our local church friends, adding our greetings to the church board for that purpose at St Oswald’s, seems like a good green idea. For friends at a distance I try and employ an old fashioned, much maligned and forgotten method, very loved by recipients and, I think, more life affirming than any present you can send. I write them a letter.