

This year, with the global financial crisis, there are both economic and environmental reasons to simplify and green our holiday giving. Here are a few easy ideas:

Make your own gifts – things like colorful homemade soup mixes in glass jars, homemade bread and other baked goods, produce or herbs from the garden, or craft items made with eco-friendly materials.

Give experiences rather than material gifts – tickets to films, concerts, or other local events; handmade gift certificates for home-cooked meals, household chores, or other services; digital magazine or music subscriptions; lessons to learn new skills; or passes to parks and other places of beauty.

Give used goods still in excellent condition. While this might require some hunting on your part, used gifts already exist and thus require no new energy use, materials, processes, or packaging to be produced.

Give gifts that give forward – donations in another's name that contribute to improvements in the environment or in the lives of people around the world. For example, purchase animals like chickens, pigs, heifers and sheep for people in need from organizations like [Heifer International](#) or [Oxfam America Unwrapped](#).

If you buy new, off the shelves...

- Be thoughtful and pick *durable* items that won't end up in a landfill in a year or two.
- Choose products made from recycled or renewable materials.
- Whenever possible, buy products that do not require extensive transport to reach store shelves.
- If you do buy imported items, look for fairly traded goods. Remember that those of us in the U.S. can purchase *Equal Exchange* fair trade coffees, teas, and other products at wholesale prices through our special Holy Cross account at <http://interfaith.equalexchange.com>. (For assistance in ordering, contact Dana Taylor at dtaylor@cscsisters.org.)

Here are a few other websites to help you green your giving this season. Enjoy your holidays!

- www.sierraclub.org/holidays
- www.thedailygreen.com/environmental-news/latest/best-green-gifts
- www.recipe-recipes.net.

In peace,
Mary

P.S. Remember too that you can access excellent Advent resources and reflections at the [Education for Justice](#) website:

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