7 tips for a Mindful & Meaningful Christmas

Amid the Christmas bustle, the gift giving and party planning, remember to pause and refocus on what this season really celebrates. The birth of Jesus reminds us of God's limitless love for the whole world. And as recipients of this gift, WE have the capacity to love, to forgive, to seek justice, to live as peacemakers—for the sake of the whole human family and our wondrous home.

This Christmas let's be mindful of the place of grace we share with Earth and all creatures, and honor it. The following suggestions may seem simple. But with every small action, we make way for more meaningful relationships and an equitable and peaceful planet.

1. Spend time outdoors. Step out of the holiday fray and admire the beauty that is ours to enjoy each day. Even taking in a view from indoors can help us realign ourselves and refresh our spirit. This is also a wonderful way to engage in prayer or a time of meditation.

2. Shop close to home. Shipping gifts around the world contributes to greenhouse emissions and global warming. Buying local supports the people in your community and your economy.

3. Give peace a chance. Avoid toys and gifts that promote violence. Instead, choose presents that nurture creativity and fun.

4. Support the world community. Give, or donate in someone's name, to causes that advance justice and protect people, wildlife and our planet. Relish this opportunity to consider the interconnectedness of all things.

5. Buy less, experience more. Plan events with family, friends and co-workers that allow you to enjoy quality time together. Take a class, catch a movie, organize a game night—and treasure the time together as you create memories.

6. Share the gift of love with others. Volunteer at shelters or senior living communities; remember the neighbor down the street, or in a distant country; care for rescue animals; feed the birds.
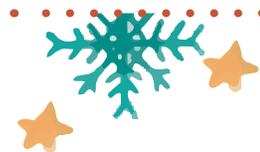
7. "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances … " — I Thessalonians 5:16-18