Sustainable Autumn Living

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1 NRSV). Autumn is the season of harvest. The harvest is a time of plenty for those who have been blessed with a bountiful growing season. It is also a time for final preparation before the chill of winter. For those who have plenty, this can be a season of celebration, but for those who are struggling autumn can be a difficult time.

As people of God we are called to be Christ's faithful evangelists in the world. Christ's earthly ministry was one of service with the poor and outcast. Autumn is a season full of service opportunities for individuals and their congregations. Together we can work to bring about a more sustainable world and provide for people's immediate needs during this season of harvest by: Working Diligently, Celebrating Responsibly, Sharing the Bounty, and Preparing for Winter.

Enough For Everyone

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

www.pcusa.org/justliving

Working Diligently

Autumn is filled with work: leaves pile up, a new school year starts, and preparations for winter begin. There are a variety of tasks that each of us perform in order to accomplish what needs to be done before the onset of winter. Each of us is called to work diligently, using our time wisely, to glorify God.

Back to School: Teachers and students of all ages are called back to the halls of academia. Myriad sales mark increased opportunities for consumption by creating the illusion of need. Simplify this season by committing to buy nothing new for school. Select used textbooks, continue using last year's school supplies, and, if new clothes are required, shop secondhand.

Benefits and Open Enrollment: For employees with benefits, fall is often a time for open enrollment. As needs change, re-evaluate benefit options available. Enroll in the program that provides the best fit. Work for benefits for all people by writing local, state and national officials, or getting involved in benefit campaigns.

Volunteer: While there is generally an abundance of work to be done during the harvest season, consider volunteering free time. Soup kitchens, missions, churches, and service organizations are likely to need volunteers. Contact organizations of interest and share Christ's love through service. Get new ideas and find organizations that may be new to you at *www.volunteermatch.org.*

Yard Waste and Cleanup: Dispose of yard waste sustainably by finding local composters or municipal facilities accepting organic matter. Add yard waste to home compost bins as space and pH levels allow. Some leaves can be used as mulch or insulating material for plants such as roses and shrubs during winter months.

Hunt and Fish Responsibly: As vegetable and fruit harvests draw to a close, hunting season begins in many areas. License fees support local conservation and wildlife protection efforts. Bring along a Bible or prayer book to enjoy during times of stillness while on the hunt. Find ways to use as much of the hunted animal as possible and donate extra meat to others in need. Let hunting and fishing be spiritual practices by giving thanks to God and taking only what is necessary.

Fall and Winter Farming and Gardening: As daylight hours shorten, the growing season comes to an end, and farmers and gardeners alike wind down their efforts. Some plants require fall planting and care. Root vegetables make excellent seasonal additions to fall and winter cooking. Canning fruits and vegetables preserves them without the energy expense of freezing. Contact your local extension service for classes and information on canning and preserving.

Celebrating Responsibly

Fall marks the beginning of the holiday season in the United States. Labor Day, Halloween, All Saints Day, and Thanksgiving all provide ample opportunity for celebration. The way each of us lives and celebrates reflects the deeply held beliefs guiding our actions. By celebrating with intention, we share God's love for us with the world.

Fair Wages: There are many who work diligently every day who are not compensated with a living wage. Within each of our communities are laborers who suffer from human rights abuses and unfair wages. Make a difference this Labor Day by getting involved with efforts to support human rights and fair wages for all people.

Harvest Locally: Pumpkins, apples, corn, and other produce can usually be harvested locally. Visit a nearby farm and participate in a harvest. Pick out a pumpkin, enjoy fresh pressed cider, and talk to the growers. Learning more about your food and where it comes from creates a connection with growers and the earth that is missing from grocery shopping. Search for farms nearby at *www.localharvest.org.*

Scale Back for Halloween/Harvest Celebrations: Halloween is becoming an increasingly consumer-driven holiday. Consumer groups estimate the average U.S. citizen will spend between $40 and $60 this Halloween. Reduce spending by constructing a costume from old clothes or shopping at a thrift store. If hosting a party, decorate naturally with gourds, squash, cornstalks, and hay bales. Cut costs by reusing and borrowing decorations from others.

Sweet Treats: Sugar, cocoa and vanilla, main ingredients in Halloween candy and fall baking, are often harvested by children and workers under ghastly conditions. Support just harvesting and educate others about worker rights by distributing fairly traded candy and chocolate. Fair trade and organic options for sugar, cocoa, and vanilla are also available.

Trick-or-Treat with Purpose: Share Christ's love with the world with an intentional approach to trick-or-treating. Organize a trick-or-treat food drive in your community where neighbors donate canned goods to local food pantries. "Reverse Trick-or-Treating" increases awareness about fair trade by thanking neighbors for their generosity with fair trade chocolate and information on the difference fair trade makes. *www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/fairtrade/cocoa/reversetrickortreating/*

100-Mile Thanksgiving: Celebrate Thanksgiving in a sustainable way by cooking and serving food that has been grown locally. Challenge friends and family to eat food that comes from farms less than 100 miles away from home. Eating locally supports local economies and sustainable, small-scale farming operations. Check out our Alternative Thanksgiving Ideas: *www.pcusa.org/enough/thanksgiving.*

Sharing the Bounty

Harvests are times of plenty for many people, yet the biblical call is not for some, but for all, to live abundantly. The call to abundant life is found throughout scripture and is extended to rich and poor, powerful and oppressed, human and non-human alike. Where we find abundance we are called to share with our neighbors; where scarcity exists we rely on our neighbors. We are all called to live in community.

Prayer: In every prayer contemplate "give us this day our daily bread" and what it means for yourself and others. Prayer helps structure thoughts and actions as we make daily decisions about consumption, sharing and community.

Glean a Field: Most crop fields are not fully harvested by the conclusion of the harvest. Ruth and Naomi survived by gleaning from Boaz's fields. Talk to local farmers to glean crops left behind on their fields. After gleaning, donate the produce to local shelters and missions.

Eat Cents-ably: Remember others with each meal by participating in the Cents-ability program. Place a Cents-ability cup from the Presbyterian Hunger Program on your table. Before each meal, contribute a few coins to feed hungry people around the world. Over time coins add up and make a substantial donation that can be used to alleviate hunger and eliminate its causes. Allow this practice, along with table prayers, to keep you mindful of your own food choices. Eating cents-ably is a great way to teach responsibility and stewardship.
www.pcusa.org/hunger/centsability.htm

Community Meals: Community meals are a great way to share the bounty of the earth. Ensure room for all people at the table by providing food for people with plenty and for people in need. Create a common space where people can come together and share in fellowship around a table well spread.

Non-Disposable Potluck: Churches and neighborhoods can share in meal preparation by creating weekly potluck meals. Avoid all disposables; paper plates and plastic utensils consume resources unnecessarily and release environmental toxins as they degrade in landfills. Biodegradable disposables are often made from food (such as corn or potatoes) that could have otherwise been used to feed people. Instead of disposable items, use dishes and silverware that can be washed and reused; clean-up time is ideal for fellowship.

Preparing for Winter

The shortening days of autumn foreshadow winter's arrival. Embody God's call to justice by planning ahead and preparing for winter. God's call looks different to different people, so challenge yourself by exploring new lifestyle practices during this preparatory time.

Clothing Drive
Organize a clothing drive at your school or church to provide an opportunity for people to share new and gently used clothes with others. Fall's cooler temperatures increase the need for warm clothing and blankets. As a rule of thumb if you didn't wear it last season, donate it this season.

Prevent Heat Loss
Insulate attics, weatherstrip windows, and cover windows after sundown to minimize heat loss. Preheat ovens no more than ten minutes prior to cooking. Be an energy steward by maximizing energy retention and minimizing energy loss. Maintain a cooler home temperature and commit to wearing sweaters to further prevent heat lost to the environment.

Plan a Sustainable Christmas Celebration
Begin discussions with friends and family about a sustainable Christmas in the fall. Plan out a low-stress Christmas celebration that is Christ-centered rather than consumption-driven. Simplify your holiday season with preemptive planning to prevent holiday tension and return to the true significance of the season. Now is the time to agree to spending limits, create pacts to buy nothing new for Christmas, dedicate greater time for family or friends, and otherwise shape future holiday celebrations. Check out Ideas for Reclaiming Advent and Christmas from Enough for Everyone: *www.pcusa.org/enough/christmas.*

Resources for Further Study

We hope the information in this guide will assist you and yours this autumn. However, there are many other resources that can assist each of us as we strive to live responsibly in the world. As our world is ever changing, it is important to utilize a variety of resources to inform our understanding of God's world. We have compiled a brief list of some resources that provide excellent information for further study and reflection.

Online:

- Just Living: Access companion materials to Autumn Living. Join the Enough for Everyone network and explore how individuals, couples and families can practice faith in daily life. *www.pcusa.org/justliving*
- Explorations in Just Living: The Enough for Everyone blog is dedicated to exploring lifestyle integrity. We invite you to share in this lifelong journey with us. *http://presbyterian.typepad.com/enough/*
- PC(USA) Policy: Denominational policies that guide and shape the ministry of Enough for Everyone can be found online at *www.pcusa.org/enough*
- PC(USA) Environmental Justice Ministries: Offering resources for churches and congregants as well as links to PC(USA) resolutions and resources dealing with environmental justice. *www.pcusa.org/environment/*
- National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Programs: Providing a wealth of resources for Christians addressing a wide range of topics related to environmental justice. *www.nccecojustice.org/*
- Alternatives for Simple Living: Equips people of faith to challenge consumerism, live justly and celebrate responsibly. *www.simpleliving.org*
- Earth 911: A great resource for general information about environmental stewardship. Includes a search engine to find local recycling options for any product that may be reused or recycled. *www.earth911.org*
- Energy Star: A nice home energy guide can be found here as well as a number of energy saving tips. Be sure to check out the interactive guide to energy saving. *www.energystar.gov/*
- Green Guides: National Geographic: *http://www.thegreenguide.com/*, treehugger: *www.treehugger.com/gogreen.php*, and Co-op America: *www.coopamerica.org/pubs/greenpages/* offer excellent and comprehensive guides to greening your purchases. These guides are searchable and organized by category for convenience.
- Carbon Footprint: Calculate your carbon footprint at *www.nativeenergy.com.*

Enough for Everyone

Our scripture and our tradition call us to care for the natural world so that all may live abundantly. God cares deeply for all of creation and seeks to preserve the diversity of life. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeks to live in accord with the call to environmental justice, and the Enough for Everyone program aims to assist individuals in living a just life that honors God.

At the heart of Enough for Everyone is deep concern for global economic justice and a commitment to live out our faith in Jesus Christ with integrity. We are called by God in Christ to bring good news and to proclaim release to those held captive by human structures and injustices. Living as global disciples means evaluating our lifestyle choices. Adopting changes for individual and congregational lifestyle integrity witnesses to our commitments to mission and justice for God's people and God's creation.

Enough for Everyone is part of the Presbyterian Hunger Program. Your financial support enables the Presbyterian Hunger Program to witness to the healing love of Christ and to bring hope to communities and individuals struggling with hunger. Give online at *www.pcusa.org/hunger/give.* Or mail your check, made out to PC(USA) with "H999999 Hunger" on the memo line, to PC(USA), Box 643700, Pittsburgh PA 15264-3700. Thank you!

Download this resource and view supplemental content at *www.pcusa.org/justliving.* Or order by calling Presbyterian Distribution Service at (800) 524-2612 and request PDS #25432-08-371.

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