

OPERATION BLESSING

Christmas

AROUND
THE
WORLD

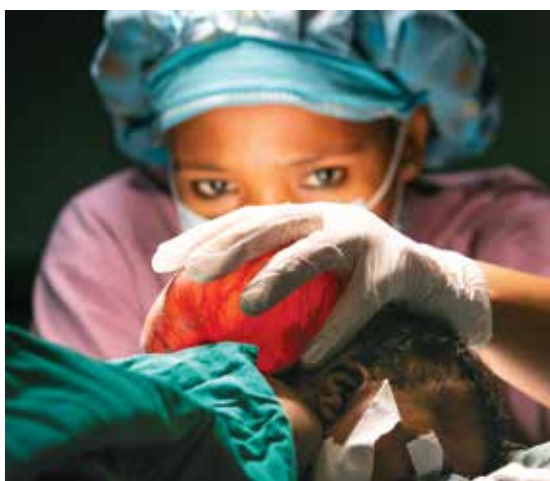


DIY CRAFTS & TRADITIONS
FROM COUNTRIES BLESSED BY FRIENDS LIKE YOU!



*For God so loved the world,
that he gave his only Son, that whoever
believes in him should not perish
but have eternal life.*

JOHN 3:16



Dear Friend,

This year, you can take your Christmas to a new level and bring the whole world into the celebration!

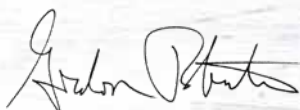
Christmas is always a special time of joy and giving—a time when you and I celebrate the birth of our Savior. Faithful friends like you make the international humanitarian outreaches of Operation Blessing possible, and those outreaches give us a glimpse of Christmas in many of the countries you help serve.

From Costa Rica to Kenya to Japan and beyond, each nation has its own rich and wonderful traditions for celebrating the birth of Christ. We've gathered this exclusive collection of unique Christmas crafts from around the globe for you, so you can bring a special sparkle to your own holidays.

As you make these beautiful decorations to share with your family and friends, I pray that you'll experience great joy in knowing that Christ came as a gift for all the world.

May God bless you with a very merry Christmas!

Yours in Christ,



Gordon Robertson
President, Operation Blessing



Advent Wreath *from Germany*

The Advent wreath originated in Germany. The four candles signify the four Sundays leading up to Christmas, and each represents a particular virtue of the Christmas story: joy, hope, peace, and love. Each week an additional candle is lit, often accompanied by a Scripture reading or devotional. Some people include a fifth candle, which is lit on Christmas Day, to represent Christ, the Son of God come to earth to save us from our sins. While certain churches use Advent wreaths in the U.S., these wreaths remain more popular in Germany, and many German families create their own simple versions to use in their homes.





MATERIALS: *platter or tray, four or five pillar candles, greenery, other decorations of your choice*

Step 1: Choose a platter, tray, basket, or other container as the base of your Advent wreath. Consider something with sentimental meaning for your family.

Step 2: Set up your four or five pillar candles. You can experiment with colors and sizes. Some families choose a separate color for the joy and/or Christ candle. If you use a fifth Christ candle, place it in the center of your wreath.



Step 3: Surround the candles with greenery of your choice. Either use battery-operated candles or be sure that the greenery and decorations don't reach the flames.

Step 4: Add additional decorations such as berries, flowers, dried fruit, cinnamon sticks, ribbons, twine, or Christmas decorations. You can also include a small sign with the name of each candle.



Jícara Ornament *from Costa Rica*

The jícara tree, native to this part of the world, produces round, smooth fruit also called jícara. This gourd-like fruit is used to make bowls, cups, and other crafts, including Christmas ornaments!

A part of Costa Rica's rich cultural heritage, the jícara with its smooth surface allows the artist to carve beautiful and intricate designs.

Traditionally, artisans would begin this craft by selecting the jícara, boiling them, cutting them in half, cleaning the inside, and smoothing the surface.

Here in America, you can purchase prepared jícara halves online or in certain craft stores.



MATERIALS: *jícara halves, acrylic paints, paint brushes, permanent marker, carving knife, drill, spray varnish, something sparkly like glitter, yarn*



Step 1: Sand off any rough areas on the jícara and apply a base coat of paint with paintbrush. You can use one or more colors. Allow to dry.



Step 2: Using a permanent marker, draw lines or drawings to decorate your jícara.

Optional: Following the outline of your drawings, carve the jícara using a gouge, knife, or small carving drill called a dremel.



Step 3: Paint the final decorative touches on your jícara. Add sparkles such as glitter or metallic paint pen if desired. Allow to dry.



Step 4: Apply transparent varnish spray (matte or glossy).



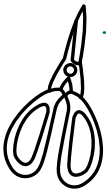
Step 5: Drill two small holes at the top. Using yarn, twine or ribbon, create the hanger for your ornament. Place on tree and enjoy.





Angel Decoration *from India*

Papier-mâché was brought to India from Persia by settlers who came to the Kashmir area in the 14th century. It consists of pulp paper that is glued together into shapes and hand-painted. Although this angel craft is not traditional papier-mâché, it has the feel of papier-mâché due to the pulp wood and painting technique. While the artisan pictured uses a hardboard painting panel and a jigsaw to cut it, feel free to use foam board or thick cardboard for a simpler version of this project.



MATERIALS: foam board, strong scissors or box cutter knife, chalk powder, glue, craft paints, paint brushes, clear gloss varnish, sandpaper (optional)



Step 1: Draw the outline for your pieces on your board based on the template pictured. Note that each part is drawn and cut separately.

Piece #3 will be positioned between #1 (body) and #4 (legs) to create a wider sitting area for the angel.

Download template at ob.org/angel-template



Step 2: Cut out your foam board pieces using strong scissors, a box cutter knife, or a jigsaw. Glue pieces together and allow to dry.



Step 3: Mix chalk powder and glue to a paintable thickness. Apply the mixture to the angel pieces and allow to dry. If desired, smooth gently with sandpaper.



Step 4: Paint at least one base coat of your primary colors onto your pieces until opaque, allowing to dry in between layers.



Step 5: Paint patterns, details and features onto your angel. Allow to dry, then apply two or three layers of clear gloss varnish to create a deep shine. Display your angel on the edge of a table, mantle or shelf.



*For at one time you were darkness, but now
you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.*

EPHESIANS 5:8

Frosted Mason Jars

from United States

Invented in America in 1858, perhaps nothing says “Americana” quite like traditional Mason jars, used both historically and currently for canning home-grown produce such as fruits, vegetables, sauces, and pickles. The Mason jar has also become a staple of the trendy farmhouse-style décor. Meanwhile, candles and twinkling lights have long been Christmas traditions, representing Jesus as the Light of the World.



MATERIALS: *Mason jars, glue, paint brush or sponge, Epsom salts, crystal glitter, twine or ribbon, greenery, additional decorations, battery-operated tea light candles*

Step 1: Remove lids. Paint a thin layer of glue onto the outside of your Mason jar. Leave the bottom and the rim without glue. A collection of different sized jars can create a nice look.

Step 2: Combine Epsom salts with your desired amount of crystal glitter. Sprinkle the mixture across the wet glue, turning as you go and covering the jar.

Step 3: Wrap a thick layer of twine or ribbon around the rim of the jar and tie in a bow. Arrange and attach greenery, berries, or other decorations.

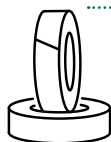
Step 4: Place battery-operated tea lights inside your Mason jar, and use your imagination to display your beautiful creations any way you like.



Fanal Light-Up House

from Haiti

Fanal is a Haitian Creole word meaning “beacon,” as in from a lighthouse. The Christmas decoration called a *fanal* is generally a small model house or building with colorful tissue paper in the many cut-out windows. It glows from a light placed inside. While artisans create elaborate versions, children and families also love to make and display this traditional craft.



MATERIALS: *white poster board or thin white cardboard from gift boxes, colorful tissue paper, X-Acto knife, clear tape, scissors, battery-operated candle or small light string*

Step 1: Cut out the pieces of your house. We used a simple style of four squares, two triangles for the gables, and a folded rectangle for the top. You can also find various templates online by looking up “mini cardboard house template.”

Step 2: Draw interesting window patterns onto your house pieces. Place them on as many or as few sides as you like.

Step 3: Using an X-Acto knife, cut out the windows and gently remove them. We highly recommend that an adult do this part.

Step 4: From the back side, cover the windows with various colors of tissue paper and tape the tissue in place.

Step 5: Attach your house together using clear tape or your choice of adhesive. Place a battery-operated candle or a small string of lights inside, and display under your tree or in any prominent area.





Origami Snowflakes

from Japan

Japan is known both for its beautiful winter snowfalls and its ancient art of origami paper folding.



MATERIALS: *six sheets of equal-sized origami paper. We used five-inch squares. Optional: light string or string for hanging.*

*Follow along the steps with a live video at ob.org/origami



Step 1: Fold in half vertically, open, and fold top corners to center line.



Step 2: Open, then fold top corners to the new diagonal lines formed. Fold these new triangles over the existing diagonal line. The paper should look like a little house.



Step 3: Fold the straight edges of the house to the center line.



Step 4: Fold bottom right corner over to the left edge.



Step 5: Open everything except the top folds, going back to the "house" shape in step 2.



Step 6: Fold the little triangle on the bottom left corner inward.



Step 7: Take the bottom right corner and bring it to the left guideline created by a small triangle. Do not crease yet.



Step 8: There will be a guideline along the top edge of this triangle formed by the previous step. Fold this edge back and down. There will be a diamond-shaped section of paper formed by this action. Firmly press and crease everything into place.



Step 9: Fold the new left section with the lower left triangle toward the center.



Step 10: Fold in half vertically away from you. The complex folds should be showing.



Step 11: Rotate so the side with more folds is facing toward you, with the points of the paper slanting to the right. Fold the triangle on the right side backward and crease. The tip will point down and be visible behind the paper.



Step 12: Flip, and fold tip that is pointing down up to the top edge.



Step 13: Open the last two folds. Your paper should look like a pointy tadpole. Notice the little pocket formed on the right side.



Step 14: This is the base for your snowflake. Repeat five times for a total of six pieces. The tail of the tadpole will attach the snowflake pieces by slotting into next piece's



Step 15: Attach all six snowflake pieces to each other and adjust to form the final shape. This step might take some patience, but the result is well worth it.



Step 16: Place a string through the center to create an ornament, or string multiple snowflakes together to make a garland. Inverted, they also look like lovely poinsettias.

Handwoven Place Mat *from Peru*

Indigenous people in the Amazon region of Peru hand-weave place mats, coasters, and other items out of natural chambira fibers. They begin by making dyes from plants and boiling the fibers to create different colors. For this Christmas version, they chose bright, cheerful shades. Families use these place mats and coasters to decorate, resulting in a beautiful atmosphere in harmony with nature.





MATERIALS: *jute or twine with your choice of thickness and colors, colorful thread, needle, glue gun (optional)*



Step 1: Depending on the look you'd like to achieve, start with several shades of thin jute and twist them together, or start with a thicker pre-woven jute rope in a natural shade about 5–8 mm thick.



Step 2: Begin to curl your jute fibers into a spiral pattern. In Peru they would periodically sew the expanding layers in place. You can either sew or use a glue gun to secure.



Step 3: Continue spiraling and securing until you've reached your desired size for a small coaster or large place mat.

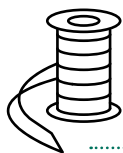


Step 4: If you used a natural color, select a needle and colorful threads, then proceed to decorate your coaster or place mat by creating bands of color, Christmas trees, or anything you like.

Motanka Angel Doll

from Ukraine

The motanka doll is one of the most ancient handmade items in Ukrainian households. Historically, it was made of any pieces of fabric that could be found at home. The doll is created by twisting and tying rather than sewing. Traditionally, motanka dolls have no facial features, which allows small children to imagine the doll's emotions while playing.



MATERIALS: *two pieces of fabric (8x16 inches for the body and 8x8 inches for the wings), synthetic or cotton filling, thick thread, golden ribbon*

Step 1: Use the filler toward the narrow top of the long piece of fabric to create a head, and then tie into place with thread.

Step 2: Roll up the bottom of the fabric piece and tie up both of the ends into what will become arms.

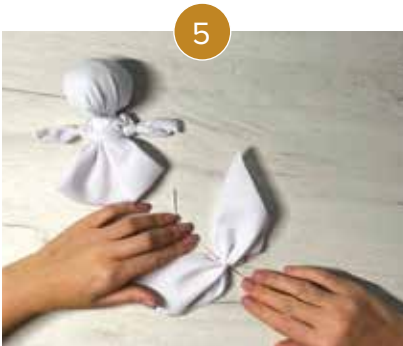
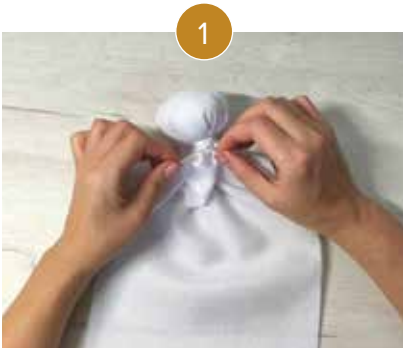


Step 3: Fold the doll in half to the head so that the arms are now under the head.

Step 4: Tie a diagonal crisscross pattern over the chest to create the shape and hold everything in place.

Step 5: Use the smaller piece of fabric to create the wings and attach them to the body with thread.

Step 6: Decorate the angel with the golden ribbon and enjoy your Christmas doll!



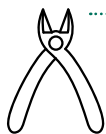
And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

LUKE 2:13-14



Bead Ornaments *from Kenya*

Throughout Africa, beadwork is quite popular, but nowhere is it better seen than on the colorful Maasai people of Kenya. Small beads are used to create elaborate handmade jewelry worn by even the simplest of village women. Not surprisingly, handmade beaded ornaments are popular at Christmas in areas like Kenya and South Africa.



MATERIALS: seed or large beads, 16-gauge crafting wire, 24-gauge crafting wire, crafting pliers, wire cutter, pencil and paper

Step 1: Draw a simple outline on a piece of paper as a guide for shaping your wire. We suggest a simple shape like a star, bell, or Christmas tree.



Step 2: Using pliers and the thicker 16-gauge wire, form your outline shape. You'll want to leave extra at the end for twisting it closed and adding a curl if desired before cutting the wire.



Step 3: Twist the thin 24-gauge wire around one side of the frame four or five times. Add small or medium seed beads to fill the space.



Step 4: Once you have enough beads to fill the space in the frame, cut one-inch past the beads and twist the end around four or five times to finish the row.

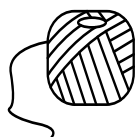


Step 5: Repeat this process as you cover the ornament with rows of beads.



Parol Star *from Philippines*

During the wet, cold month of December, Filipinos love to fill their neighborhoods with bright, colorful stars called *parols*. The name comes from the Spanish *farol*, meaning “light,” and the parol originated during the Spanish colonial era in the Philippines. It represents the star that announced Jesus’ birth, and parols were used to light the way to churches. Parol-making contests are also popular in schools and communities.



MATERIALS: 10 bamboo sticks, five two-inch bamboo sticks,* yarn, glue gun, plastic or paper to cover, scissors

**Dowels may be used in place of two-inch bamboo sticks.*

Step 1: Begin with 10 bamboo sticks of the same length. You can purchase these online. Other thin straight sticks can also work.

Step 2: Form two stars. Use glue gun, rubber cement, or even small nails to secure in place and reinforce tips with yarn, string, twine, or rubber bands.

Step 3: Use your small two-inch bamboo sticks on the inner points of one star and secure with glue or nails.

Step 4: Secure the other star on top. If you’ve used bamboo or other flexible wood, you can also secure the outside tips together with yarn.

Step 5: Cut colorful plastic, tissue paper, or cellophane and cover your star, gluing it in place. If you would like to use lights, place a small string of battery-operated lights inside, and leave a small hole in the back or on the bottom for the light wire and for replacing lights.

Step 6: Add decorations, streamers, and/or curling ribbons to the tips of the star. Tie a fastener to the top for hanging.



1



2



3



4



5



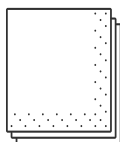
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Nativity Cave *from Lebanon*

In keeping with Middle Eastern culture, it is believed that the stable where baby Jesus was born was most likely a cave, not a wooden structure. That's why families in Lebanon, fashion caves and rocky villages under their Christmas trees. While some create complex artistic scenes, many just use simple crinkled brown paper to create their Nativity.



MATERIALS: *brown crafting paper or plain brown paper bags, Nativity figurine set, clear tape, lights, and other decorations*

Step 1: Tear your paper to create rough edges and intentionally crinkle it.

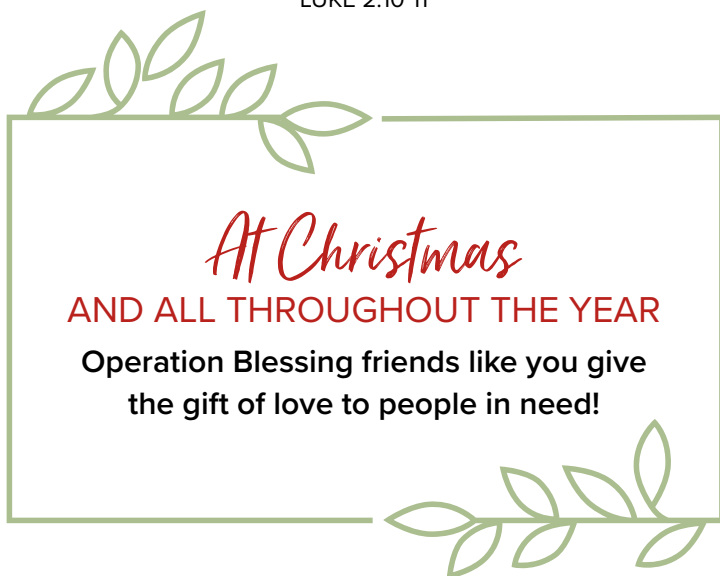
Step 2: Form it into a rough hollow cave shape, using clear tape to hold it in place. You might consider making various levels by adding small boxes and covering them with paper.

Step 3: Decorate cave with Nativity figures, lights, a sprinkling of snow, a star, or other elements.



And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

LUKE 2:10-11



Operation Blessing is a nonprofit, humanitarian organization dedicated to partnering with YOU to demonstrate God’s love by alleviating human suffering in the U.S. and around the world.

For more than 40 years, your love has shown through Operation Blessing as together we’ve provided hunger relief, medical care, clean water, and disaster relief to millions around the world.

Through compassionate, efficient, and locally focused programs we are able to target the specific needs of those we serve and provide a gateway for our partners to truly be the hands and feet of Jesus for those who are suffering and in need.

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