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Betty was priested in 2003 and she moved from her diocesan post to being priest-in-charge of two parishes. She retired in August 2008 but she is still running all-age crafts and is involved in a project for under fives, which is attached to a church in Bradford.



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A-CROSS the world

An exploration of forty representations of the cross
from the worldwide Christian Church



Martyn Payne and Betty Pedley

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It has proved impossible to trace the origin of some of the prayers. Should readers have information as to the source of some of the unaccredited material, CMS and BRF would be grateful to hear from them.

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Foreword

For most people, the cross is a familiar symbol. Yet we can easily forget that it is so much more than a classic design for a pendant or a common feature of a skyline view. It tells a story, one of a gruesome execution that has nevertheless been greeted by many as a triumph rather than a tragic failure. This is a story that has had an impact on the lives of millions over the past two thousand years. It is a story that continues to inspire and shape the lives of individuals and societies around the globe.

This imaginative resource book, *A-cross the World*, offers fascinating insights into this story, its origins and the variety of ways in which its meaning has been understood by Christians throughout the world. By examining the ways the cross is depicted, we uncover further stories about the diverse communities for whom the story of the cross of Jesus Christ is at the heart of their faith.

The depiction of the cross commonly associated with Archbishops of Canterbury is the Canterbury cross. The original Canterbury cross, dating from around AD850, was excavated in 1867 in St George's Street in Canterbury. In this resource book, it features only in the Appendix. But it is a modest example of the type of associations, often hidden to most of us, which we encounter through this book. There is a great deal to learn from this highly practical and illuminating volume.

+ *Rowan Cantuar*
Archbishop of Canterbury

How to use this book

The world family of those who follow the Christian faith crosses many boundaries of culture, colour and nationality. Nevertheless, whether it be the traditional churches of Western Europe or the ancient fellowships of the Middle East, the indigenous communities of faith springing up in Asia or the local congregations of Africa, the Orthodox cathedrals of Eastern Europe or the emerging base-communities of Latin America, there is one sign that they all hold in common—the cross. This is often the one unifying symbol for these diverse groups of Christian believers and yet even this very cross has often been adapted, decorated or interpreted to convey a particular story of its own. This book seeks to explore some of these stories, along with ideas for special events in churches, project work and assemblies in schools, including craft ideas that groups can follow, should they wish to produce their own versions of these crosses for display.

Since the material in this book was first published in a ringbinder format by the Church Mission Society (CMS) in 2001, it has been welcomed and widely used both in schools and in churches throughout the country. This book edition from BRF and CMS aims to make the material even more well-known and available and includes fifteen new crosses as well as a wealth of new suggestions as to how to use this resource with groups in schools, churches or as part of worship.

The book is in two sections. Part One contains the stories of forty different crosses from around the world. Each one includes:

- A Bible link, with some wondering questions
- A craft idea for making a similar cross
- Information about the life of the Christian Church in that part of the world

Part Two contains the following material for leaders so that they can put together ideas for special events and for particular situations:

- Outline for a two-hour programme
- Ideas for a holiday club

- Ideas for all-age worship
- Ideas for collective worship at Key Stages One and Two
- Bible activities for small groups
- Further cross designs and ideas

The raw material for these sessions is grouped in the opening pages of Part Two under the following headings:

- Icebreakers
- Games
- Prayers, poems and quotations
- Craft ideas
- Spoken theme prayers
- Visual prayers
- Key words for the crosses

There are then outlines and worked examples of different sorts of presentations, showing how the material can be organized and used. They include:

- An outline for a two-hour special programme along with two worked examples
- A holiday club outline
- An outline for all-age worship, including a calendar of dates for festivals linked to particular countries and crosses
- Outlines for collective worship at Key Stages One and Two

The final part of this section offers a series of small-group activities linked to the meaning of the cross as discovered through various Bible stories.

In the appendix you will find:

- Guidelines for events involving children
- Information about CMS and BRF
- Further cross designs and ideas for crosses

The material in this book has come together over a number of years, during which it was tried and tested

in a wide range of events with children. The authors hope that this volume will inspire many more such events to take place in our schools and churches and that it will help children, with their teachers and leaders, to think again about the meaning of the cross and why it is such an important and enduring symbol for Christians all around the world.

We hope you will enjoy using *A-cross the World*. BRF and CMS would be very happy to hear how you have used this material. The authors are very aware

that this collection of crosses and the information linked to them is by no means exhaustive. We are sure that you will be inspired to find and develop your own ideas as you discover and work with other crosses, which have either local or global connections. However, by sharing these stories in churches and in schools, it is hoped that the experience Christians have of God's love for the whole world and of his continuing mission to 'the people of all nations' will be better known and understood.

Introduction:

Cross reference

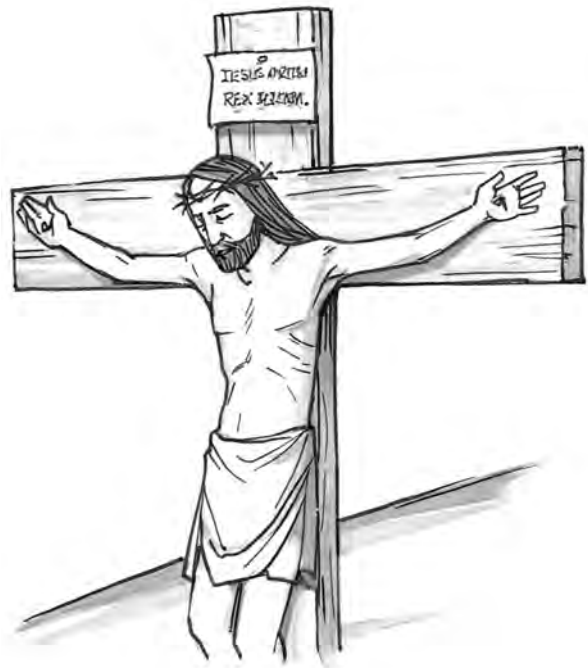
A UNIVERSAL SYMBOL

Around the world today the cross is, arguably, the one universally recognized symbol of the Christian faith. It is carried high in liturgical procession, it is worn prominently as jewellery or ornamentation, and the sign of the cross is made to bless the faithful or to ward off evil. The cross defines the shape of the lowliest Christian church and sits atop the steeple of the grandest cathedral. Whether made of stone or wood, marble or precious metal, the cross signifies to the world the central event in the story of Jesus Christ—an event that, for Christians, stands as the turning-point in human history. It was the moment when a holy God of love made it possible for unholy people to be reunited with their creator. It was the moment when death's full stop was turned into a comma for those who believe. It was the moment when a high and mighty God tasted the full horror of the worst that human beings can do to each other.

THE HISTORIC CROSS

It was not always the case, however, that the sign of the cross was so universally used by the Christian Church. The cross itself is, of course, quite crudely an execution post. It was an instrument of torture and death that the Roman empire had adopted as its particular means of public punishment, setting an example of humiliating agony that was designed to enforce its rule of law. The Romans had taken this form of execution from the Phoenicians and used three types of cross: a cross shaped like a capital T (the *crux commissa*), sometimes called the tau cross or St Anthony's cross; a cross shaped like a capital X (the *crux decussata*), sometimes called St Andrew's

cross; or the more familiar Latin cross with its two beams (the *crux immissa*), which is probably the one used to crucify Jesus, since reference is made in the Gospels to the board, on which the words 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews' were written, fixed above his head.



Although crucifixion is a most painful form of death, the writers of the New Testament do not describe Jesus' physical suffering in great detail. They are more interested in the eternal meaning of Jesus' death and its consequences. The cross itself soon came to represent symbolically the rescue story that God had accomplished in Christ.

In the Old Testament, bodies of executed criminals were sometimes hung on a tree as a grim warning to others. To be hung up like that was therefore seen as being under a curse. Early Christians saw that as being true for Jesus, whom they believed was cursed on behalf of the whole human race for all the wrong that we did. This view

explains the description of the cross as the 'tree' or 'tree of shame'. Perhaps because of its association with shameful death, the first Christian communities tended not to use the cross as a sign of their victorious new faith.

Instead they preferred secret signs or symbols—images such as the fish (*ichthys*, Greek for 'fish', the initial letters of which in Greek are a mnemonic for 'Jesus Christ Son of God Saviour'); the Chi-Ro (the first two Greek letters of 'Christ') or the shepherd and the lamb (a favourite image taken from Jesus' own description of himself in the Gospel of John). The first Christians liked to 'hide' the cross design within another important symbol of the faith. The best example of this is the Anchor cross (see p. 155). In the New Testament, Christian hope in Jesus is referred to as a sure anchor for life (Hebrews 6:19).

The Emperor Constantine abolished crucifixion in the Roman empire in AD315 and this led to the gradual acceptance of the cross by believers as the main symbol of their faith. In AD325 the Council of Nicaea made the cross the official symbol of Christianity. With this acceptance came an increasing interest in exactly what the cross of Christ was like, and many claims were made about its whereabouts. Helena, the mother of the emperor, for example, claimed to have found the true cross on one of her journeys to the Holy Land. Throughout Christian history there have been countless so-called pieces of the 'true' cross, sold as religious relics.

THE CROSS OR THE CRUCIFIX

In the early centuries of the Church, Christians were very wary of making any representation of Jesus' physical appearance. The early believers' Jewish roots and their adherence to the commandment not to make any 'graven image' ensured that there were very few early pictures of Jesus. It was in this context that the cross gradually became a symbol (one of several) of the faith. Many of the early crosses, rather than displaying the body of Christ as part of their design, showed a lamb above or below the cross—a reference to Jesus as 'the Lamb of God'.

In time, however, the quest for the true likeness of Jesus did lead to various representations of Christ, fuelled by visions and miraculous relics such as the Veronica cloth, which was a likeness of Jesus said to have been imprinted on a cloth handed to him by

St Veronica during their brief encounter as Jesus stumbled his way to the cross.

These representations led, in turn, to portrayals of Christ on the cross, and in the course of Christian history tensions have often arisen between those who preferred the crucifix (a cross with the figure of Christ on it) to the empty cross as a symbol of their faith. Perhaps a more helpful approach is to recognize the need for both these symbols—the first reminding believers how Jesus totally encompassed in himself the suffering of the human race, with the second emphasizing the empty tomb and the truth of his resurrection.

A-CROSS THE WORLD

Thus the cross has become a focus of faith for Christians. Throughout history, many individuals and religious orders have adopted particular designs of the cross as symbols of special significance to them. There are, therefore, many versions of the cross that have become associated with particular saints or religious movements. This practice of creating a 'special cross' continues today. Different indigenous churches all over the world have taken the same simple cross and, using local art and cultural artefacts, have turned it into a symbol that expresses their own experiences of the faith. In this way each cross speaks about the unity of believers, which links the many diverse cultures and also provides special insight into, and understanding of, God. Each cross thereby contributes to the big picture of God's love for the whole world.

THE CROSS WE SHARE

The aim of this resource is to present an overview and examples of a collection of crosses that are shared by the Christian family worldwide and to offer background on the crosses as a help to the churches and schools in this country. It aims to be a contribution to the understanding of the Christian faith and, for some, a means by which that faith can develop and deepen.

In order to give you an opportunity for further reflection and to enable you to discuss this important symbol, the book also contains suggestions for making a version of each of the crosses, using various

craft techniques. Churches, schools and study groups that have already used the first version of some of this material have found this to be a helpful way to reflect on these symbols and a means of appreciating the rich contribution that we can receive from the worldwide Church. Schools have used the material to explore the use of symbol to express faith within different cultures. Church groups have used the resource as a basis for Good Friday workshops or for special mission weekends. The material also lends itself to banner-making and to displays that celebrate Christian links across the world.

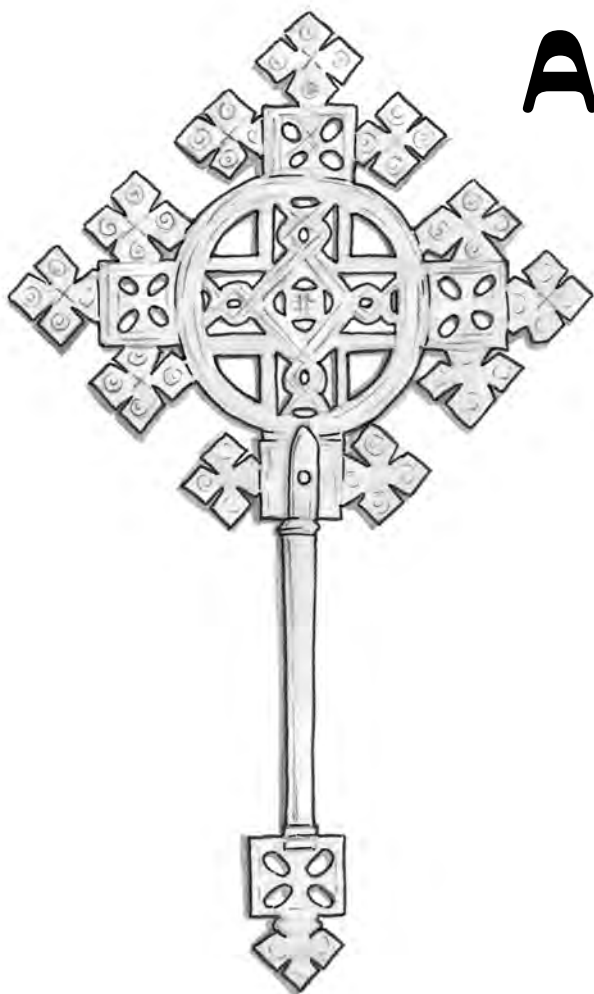
The book also contains a wealth of further ideas and potential activities for exploring the meaning of the cross for Christians today, particularly for sharing it with children and in the context of all-age worship,

special children's events, lessons and corporate worship in schools as well as in small midweek groups.

By no means does the resource give an exhaustive list of the very many crosses and cross designs that exist worldwide. We have drawn upon links with the Church overseas in order to put together this collection and we are always eager to hear of other cultural expressions of the cross that can further enrich an understanding of the Christian faith and encourage the proclaiming of 'the good news of the cross' to the world.

As a stimulus for discussion and an inspiration for display work, the forty crosses explored in this book are available to view on the BRF website www.brf.org.uk/acrosstheworld.

An Ethiopian cross



Bible link: Acts 8:26–35



The Lord's angel said to Philip, 'Go south along the desert road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza.' So Philip left. An important Ethiopian official happened to be going along that road in his chariot. He was the chief treasurer for Candace, the Queen of Ethiopia. The official had gone to Jerusalem to worship and was now on his way home. He was sitting in his chariot, reading the book of the prophet Isaiah. The Spirit told Philip to catch up with the chariot. Philip ran up close and heard the man reading aloud from the book of Isaiah. Philip asked him, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' The official answered, 'How can I understand unless someone helps me?' He then invited Philip to come up and sit beside him. The man was reading the passage that said, 'He was led like a sheep on its way to be killed. He

was silent as a lamb whose wool is being cut off...' The official said to Philip, 'Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or about someone else?' So Philip began at this place in the Scriptures and explained the good news about Jesus.

This is the story of the first Ethiopian Christian, a minister in the government, who met the evangelist Philip as he was travelling home from Jerusalem.

Wondering about this Bible story



- I wonder what Philip told the official about the cross of Jesus?
- I wonder what the official said to the queen when he eventually arrived back at her court?
- I wonder whether he ever met Philip again?

The story of this cross



According to one tradition, St Matthew first brought the gospel to Ethiopia, though others link its first appearance there to the conversion of the royal treasurer who met the evangelist Philip while travelling back from a visit to Jerusalem (see the Bible link).

Ethiopia became a Christian state in AD332, when the emperor of the kingdom of Axum, as Ethiopia was then called, responded to the preaching of two shipwrecked young men, Frumentius and Edesius, from Syria. Frumentius went on to become the first archbishop of the region and took the title of 'Abba Salama', a title still used to this day. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is one of the most ancient national churches in the world and the third largest in the Orthodox tradition after those of Russia and Romania. About half of Ethiopia's population are members of this church.

Church services are held early on Sunday mornings. They generally use the ancient Geez language of northern Ethiopia, although modern, everyday Ethiopian (Amharic) is being used increasingly for parts of the liturgy. Church buildings are usually circular and have roofs of thatch or corrugated iron. At Lalibela, in the north of the country, there are eleven churches dug out of the rock, which date from the 13th century and are still in use today.

Along with its historic neighbour, the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is under pressure and its members are, as on many occasions in their history, tolerated rather than valued by the government.

There is a rich tradition in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of training special singers and musicians from a very young age to contribute to the worship. The scriptures are chanted from memory by *dabtara*, as these young vocalists and instrumentalists are called. These boys are given responsibilities within communal worship and are even known as junior deacons.

There are many stories about the early Christian pioneers in Ethiopia, and pictures of these saints are preserved on church murals and in religious artwork. One picture at the church on Mount Zuquala is very early evidence that war and drought—features of life in this region in recent years—are not purely modern



phenomena. In the picture, St Raguel is praying for peace, symbolized by the lion and the lamb lying at his feet. He is also crying for his country, which is suffering a severe drought, and a bird has come to drink the saint's tears in order to quench its thirst.

The Ethiopian cross is sometimes also called the Axum cross, derived from the original name of Aksumis, which is a religious centre of Ethiopian Coptic Christians in northern Ethiopia. The shape and variety of the crosses used within it are distinctive features of the Christian Church in Ethiopia. There are handheld crosses, usually made of wood, which are used to bless worshippers; processional crosses, which are very elaborate in design and made of metal; pendant crosses; and special crosses that adorn church buildings.

The basic Ethiopian cross takes the form of a circle with the cross set inside it. Some Ethiopian crosses are designed in rhombus shapes and have vegetable motifs, which are links to the narrative of the garden of Eden and the tree of life. There is sometimes a square tablet, which may contain words or occasionally a picture, at the base of some of these crosses. Triangles, details of flowers and various zigzag patterns are also very common in different makes of this cross.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is well known for its ornate metal and wooden crosses. Apart from the crosses worn by individual Christians, churches have their own processional versions and all priests carry small hand crosses, which are reverently kissed by the faithful. Some women even have magnificent crosses temporarily tattooed on to their faces at festival times.

The large processional crosses are very striking, with their ornate metal patterns and the brightly coloured cloths that usually hang down from the latticework. The designs are often complex and colourful, reflecting the craftsman's desire to indicate that, for believers, the cross is a symbol of vibrancy and life and not just a place of death.

One of the most important feasts of the Ethiopian church year is *Mesquel* in September, which is the Festival of the True Cross. It is celebrated in both Western and Eastern traditions and commemorates the traditional finding of the true cross in Jerusalem by St Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine. In Ethiopia there is an extra dimension, as, according to their version of the story, Helena was led to the place where the cross was buried by lighting a bonfire. As part of contemporary celebrations in Ethiopia, bonfires are lit. The ashes are later marked on the foreheads of worshippers and also spread on to the fields to ensure good crops.

The following are some words from the daily liturgy used in the Ethiopian Coptic Church.

Deacon: Pray before the cross,
All you, the faithful,
Holding it on the right
And renouncing Satan,
For it has been sanctified by the
blood of Christ the Saviour.

Congregation: Honoured art thou, O Cross, King of
woods,
Honoured art thou, O Cross.
And honoured is the blood of the
Divinity, the Word, which
Sanctified thee.

Priest: In honour of this Cross,
We Christians prostrate ourselves
with fear and awe,
For the Son Himself in person
Hath sanctified it with His blood,
not with that of others,
When, on the Cross,
Divinity died in His humanity.

- Stick the enlarged template on to some card and then carefully cut round the shape of the cross.
- Cover the cross with silver kitchen foil and smooth the foil down, folding any of its extra edges around the back of the cross and taping them down so that the foil does not peel off.
- Decorate this silver cross with beads, old buttons, sequins and glitter. Try to ensure that you make the patterns and colours symmetrical.
- Alternatively, simply colour in the templates or stick coloured wrapping-paper, cut up into lots of different shapes, on to them.

Another craft idea for creating ornate crosses in the Ethiopian style is to cut snowflake-type patterns from folded paper.

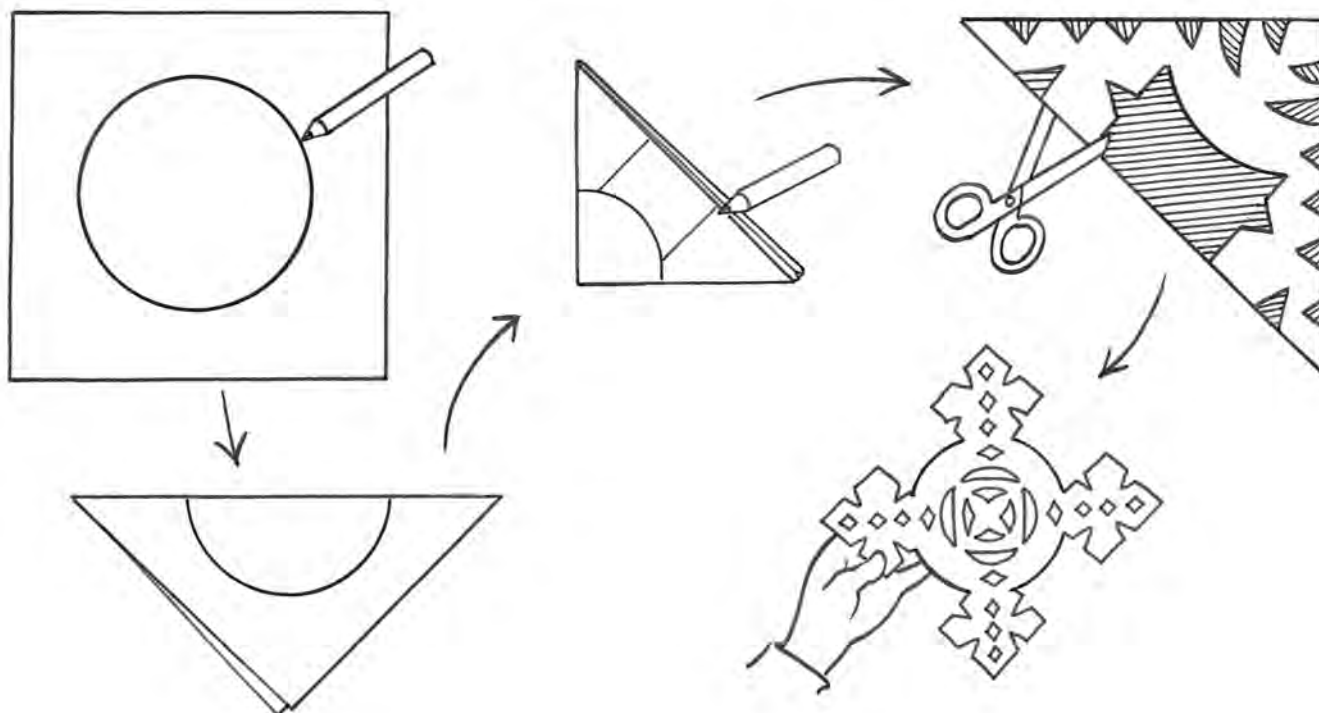
- Take a square of paper and draw a circle in the middle, using a pencil. Fold the paper in half, corner to corner, and then in half again.
- Draw two straight lines from the circle to the longest edge of the folded paper. These lines will act as your basic cutting guide.
- Add further symmetrical patterns to all three edges of the paper, as in the example below. Cut away the shaded areas and open out the paper to reveal your decorative cross.
- Different coloured papers could add a further dimension. If large versions are mounted on card, they can become paper copies of the processional crosses that are so popular in Ethiopia.

Crafting the cross



A craft idea for making a similar cross

Enlarge the illustrative examples given on page 157 as templates for making your own Ethiopian decorative crosses.



A Sudanese cross

Bible link: Lamentations 5:1–5



Our Lord, don't forget how we have suffered and been disgraced. Foreigners and strangers have taken our land and our homes. We are like children whose mothers are widows. The water we drink and the wood we burn cost far too much. We are terribly ill-treated; we are worn out and can find no rest.

This is from the last chapter of Jeremiah's book of weeping for the destruction of Jerusalem and the taking into exile of the people of God. Many Sudanese find the words of this sad poem very meaningful in their situation today.

Wondering about this Bible story



- I wonder where God is when things seem to go so horribly wrong?
- I wonder what God feels about all the pain in the world?
- I wonder what can be said to those who suffer through no fault of their own?

The story of this cross



The Dinka tribe of southern Sudan are proud to lift high the cross that is the sign of their Christian faith. Their cross is, however, a rather special one because of how it is made. It is carved out of ebony and then decorated with beaten bronze. To create circular bands of bronze for their crosses, the Dinka use spent cartridge cases ejected from rifle barrels or gun chambers. Sadly, there are plenty of such cartridges left lying around as a result of the war that has been tearing Sudan apart for over 40 years. Sudanese



Christians carry these crosses as visual symbols of their faith and hope amid and despite the suffering of their people and the destruction of their country.

New songs and local crosses have been special features of the Sudanese church in recent years, as it has coped with massive loss of human life, cattle wealth and land. Sudanese Christians have been obliged to rely on God completely. For example, despite all the setbacks they have met, members of the Episcopal Church of Sudan challenge us with their cry, 'But God is not defeated!' The old animistic

and 'magic powers' that once held such influential sway over the Sudanese people have been largely rejected and their symbols turned into finely crafted crosses of ebony or mahogany decorated with brass and ivory. These individual crosses are often linked to their owners' stories of survival and faith. There are several pictures of such Sudanese crosses on the BRF website.

One young man called Makuel, who took the name Philip when he was baptized, made a remarkable cross. Using metal from the wreckage of a MIG jet fighter that had been shot down near his home, he created a cross from the very object that had brought death and terror to his people. The shape that Makuel created captured a collision of the noses of four jet fighters. At the point of 'contact' between them, he has carved the person of Christ. So the power of death is again challenged and transformed into a victory for life. The Reverend Marc Nikkel was instrumental in making this and the story of other Sudanese crosses well-known in the UK. As a joint mission partner of CMS and the Episcopal Church of the USA, Marc worked tirelessly to come alongside and understand the plight of Sudanese Christians and to work with them in their struggles.

More information on this cross and the wider story of the Sudanese church can be found in *But God Is Not Defeated!* edited by Samuel Kayanga and

Andrew Wheeler, published by Paulines Publications Africa and available through CMS. This book was published to celebrate the centenary of the Episcopal Church of Sudan in 1999.

Crafting the cross

A craft idea for making a similar cross



You will need:

- ✘ Garden cane, at least 26cm long
- ✘ Insulating or reflector tape in two different colours: bright yellow and black
- ✘ Garden twine
- ✘ Sticky tape

Cut up the cane into two lengths of 18cm and 8cm. Stick small 1.5cm strips of black tape at intervals around each length, leaving space for strips of the yellow tape to be inserted in between the black ones. Attach the 8cm crosspiece to the upright and secure it with the twine. You may find some sticky tape useful in making the join as firm as possible.

Tell the story of this cross as you do this craft activity together.

To purchase this book, visit www.brfonline.org.uk

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