

A-CROSS the world

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

IDEAL
FOR 5-11s

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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.



An Ethiopian cross



A Sudanese cross



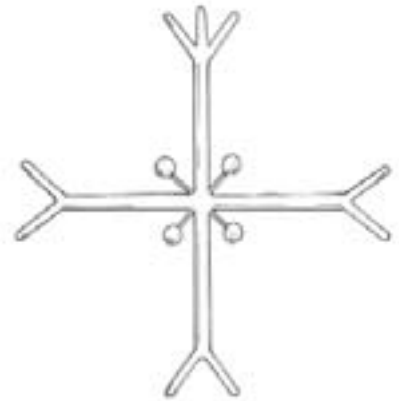
An Egyptian cross



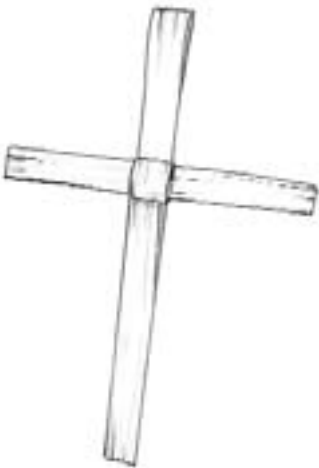
A mid-African cross



An African crucifix



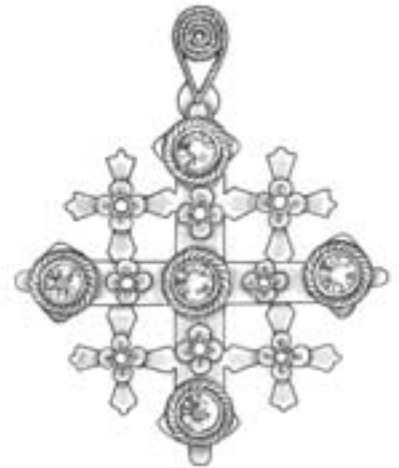
A Lebanese cross



A palm cross



An Iranian cross



The Jerusalem cross



An Ethiopian cross

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?

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

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.

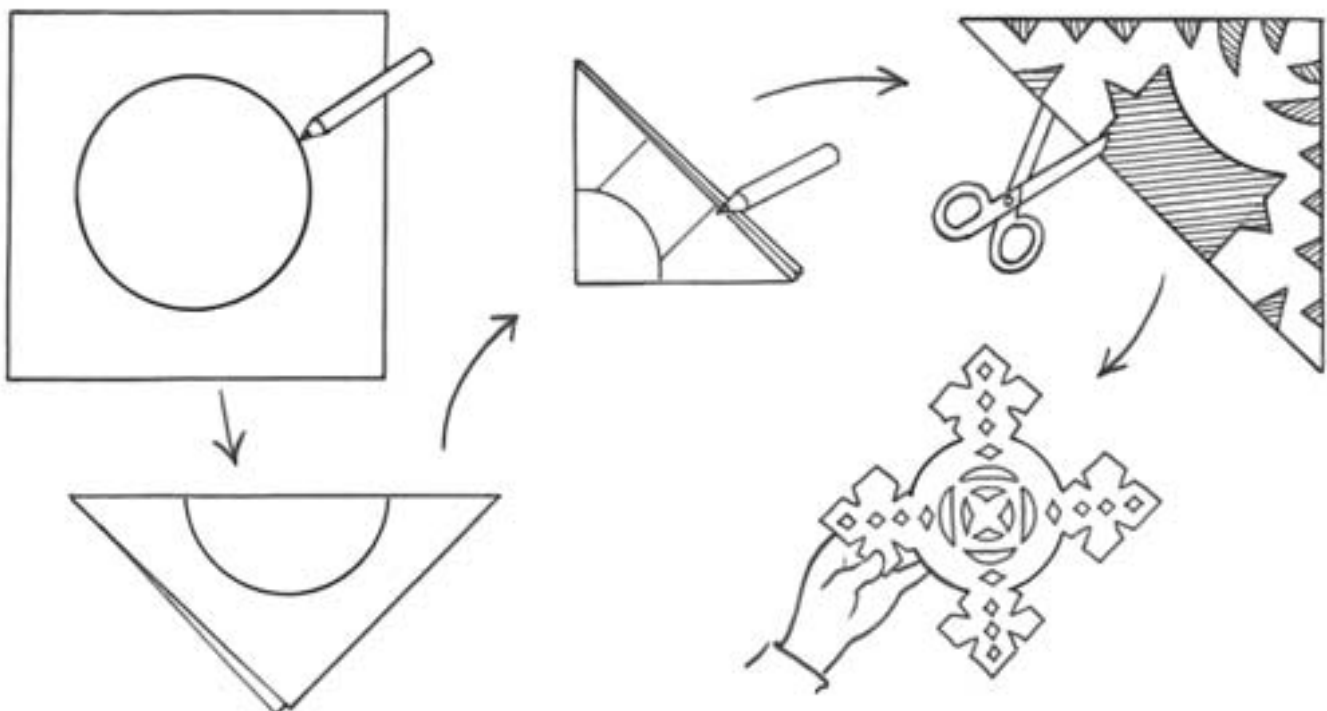
- Take a square of paper and draw a circle in the middle, using a pencil. Fold the paper in half, corner to corner, and then in half again.
- Draw two straight lines from the circle to the longest edge of the folded paper. These lines will act as your basic cutting guide.
- Add further symmetrical patterns 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.



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

Around the world today the cross is, arguably, the one universally recognized symbol of the Christian faith, but this unifying sign for diverse Christian communities has been much adapted, decorated and interpreted to convey particular stories that are dear to the community from which they come.

This book tells the stories behind forty crosses from a wide diversity of cultures and Christian faith traditions and sets out to promote discussion and debate on why this single, historical event continues to exercise such an influence worldwide.

The book is divided into two sections.

Section One contains:

Stories, information, Bible links, wondering questions and suggested activities on the forty crosses, as well as photocopiable illustrations of each cross. The material for this section was originally produced in-house by the Church Mission Society.

Section Two contains:

A wealth of extension material ideal for use in the classroom at Key Stage 1 and 2, in collective worship and in church-based activities, including icebreakers, games, prayers and poems, crafts and session outlines for special activity days, assemblies, holiday clubs and all-age worship.

Full-colour images of the forty crosses covered in this book can be found on the BRF website www.brf.org.uk/acrosstheworld

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