

Kate & Mack's

12

Days of Christmas
Around the World



Parents' Guide for "Kate & Mack's 12 Days of Christmas Around the World"

Hi, parents!

Here are some helpful tips for our 12 Days of Christmas lessons. These tips help you know how to utilize this piece, whether you have only 15 minutes or a couple hours that you want to invest each day.

If you haven't already, we think it's a great idea to sign up for the daily downloads. These daily emails make it especially easy to do the activity with your kids if you get it one day at a time. If you haven't done that yet, you can sign up at wycliffe.org/12days.

Here's how the lessons work:

1. To start each lesson, read about some of the interesting ways that each country celebrates Christmas.
2. Next, you'll read some fun facts.
3. Then there's the activity. Mack and I tried to mix up the variety, so sometimes it's a recipe you can make as a family, and other times it's a craft that your kids can do on their own (with maybe a little help from you).

We think it's a great idea to read about the country and its fun facts together as a family. Then your kids can do the activity, whether on their own or with you. You

might want to learn about one country a day, or maybe you want to read about all the countries and then do the crafts and recipes on a weekend. You can choose whatever works best for your family, depending on the amount of time you have available.

- ✓ If you have **5 minutes**, you can read the fun facts.
- ✓ If you have **10-20 minutes**, you can also read about our adventure in each country.
- ✓ If you have **20+ minutes**, you can do an activity.
- ✓ If you have **30+ minutes**, you can read everything and get started on the activity*.

Some activities are short, but some might take more time for kids to finish. Think about your kids — can they pay attention for a long time? Do they need to take breaks? How much help will they need? With these answers in mind, you can decide if you should do one day's content all at once, or split it up into little questions.

Here's a brief overview of what each day looks like:

Day 1 – Belgium

- ✓ "Merry Christmas" in Dutch is *Vrolijk Kerstfeest*.
- ✓ Learn about the Belgian version of Santa Claus — and his assistant!
- ✓ Color the nativity scene.
- **Supplies:** pencils/crayons/markers.

Day 2 – Nigeria

- ✓ Merry Christmas" in Igbo is *E keresimesi Oma*.

- ✓ Learn about the Nigerian “Christmas cloth.”
- ✓ Write down a list of all the things you can thank God for this year.
- **Supplies:** pen/pencil/marker.

Day 3 – Brazil

- ✓ “Merry Christmas” in Portuguese is *Feliz Natal*.
- ✓ Learn about a Brazilian Christmas tradition called a *presépio*.
- ✓ Be an *amigo secreto* (secret friend) this Christmas!

Day 4 – Georgia

- ✓ “Merry Christmas” in Georgian looks like გილოცავთ შობა-ახალ წელს.
- ✓ Learn about the traditional Georgian Christmas tree, called a *chichilaki*.
- ✓ Make *gozinaki* candy.
- **Supplies:** walnuts, honey, sugar.

Day 5 – New Zealand

- ✓ “Merry Christmas” in Maori is *Meri Kirihimete*.
- ✓ Learn how Christmas is a time for the beach and barbecuing.
- ✓ Make pavlova.
- **Supplies:** egg whites, sugar, vanilla, lemon juice, cornstarch, whipped cream, mixed fruit.

Day 6 – Lithuania

- ✓ “Merry Christmas” in Lithuanian is *Linksmų Kalėdų*.
- ✓ Learn about the traditional Christmas meal, called *Kūčios*.

- ✓ Make a straw ornament.
- **Supplies:** paper or plastic drinking straws, string/yarn, hot glue gun, scissors.

Day 7 – Ethiopia

- ✓ “Merry Christmas” in Amharic is መልካም የግና.
- ✓ Learn about a special Christmas service.
- ✓ Read about the arrival of the wise men and the importance of their gifts.
- **Supplies:** Bible, pencils/markers/crayons.

Day 8 – Puerto Rico

- ✓ “Merry Christmas” in Spanish is *Feliz Navidad*.
- ✓ Learn about the popular tradition of Christmas caroling, called *parrandas*.
- ✓ Make *arroz con dulce* (rice pudding).
- **Supplies:** rice, coconut milk, salt, cinnamon sticks, ginger, whole cloves, nutmeg, sugar, raisins.

Day 9 – Kazakhstan

- ✓ “Merry Christmas and Happy New Year” in Kazakh is Рождество мейрамы және Жаңа жыл құтты болсын.
- ✓ Learn why New Year’s is a bigger holiday than Christmas.
- ✓ Remember the real reason for Christmas by reading Matthew 1:18-25.

Day 10 – Zimbabwe

- ✓ “Merry Christmas” in Ndebele is *Khisimusi enhle*.

- ✓ Learn what Santa arrives on when he visits big stores.
- ✓ Make a Christmas card and give it to someone you know.
- Supplies: pencils/markers/crayons.

Day 11 – Portugal

- ✓ “Merry Christmas” in Portuguese is *Feliz Natal* (like we learned in Brazil!).
- ✓ Learn who brings kids gifts (it’s not always Santa).
- ✓ Make *rabanadas* (French toast).
- **Supplies:** sugar, cinnamon, eggs, milk, oil, French bread.

Day 12 – India

- ✓ “Merry Christmas” in Hindi is शुभ क्रिसमस.
- ✓ Learn about the importance of lighting a clay lantern.
- ✓ Make a paper star lantern.
- **Supplies:** cardstock, star template, scissors, hot glue gun, hole punch, glitter (optional), markers/pencils (optional), string/ribbon/yarn.

At the very end, Mack and I get to remind kids about the true meaning of Christmas — the birth of Jesus Christ!

We hope you find these tips helpful as you travel around the world with Mack and me. Enjoy learning some of the cool things we experienced on our trip to these 12 countries.

And to you and your family, Merry Christmas!



Hi, kids!

It's my favorite time of year — Christmas! Christmas is a wonderful holiday, and the days leading up to it are filled with yummy foods, fun parties, Christmas pageants, gift shopping, caroling and more.



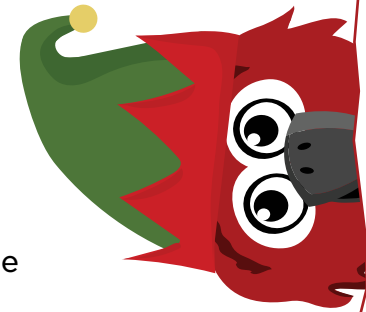
But the reason why Christmas is my favorite time of year is because of the reason for the season — the birth of Jesus Christ! Over 2,000 years ago, God fulfilled a promise that he'd been making to people since the creation of the world. He sent Jesus, our Messiah, to save us from our sins so that we can live with him in heaven forever one day! And that's the reason why we celebrate Christmas each year. Or at least, that's how Christmas started.

Today, there are a lot of traditions that don't have anything to do with Jesus. And depending on what country you live in, you probably celebrate Christmas differently. You might not even celebrate it on December 25! Mack and I thought it would be fun to learn more about how 12 different countries celebrate Christmas. So get ready, because we're traveling to Belgium, Ethiopia, New Zealand and more — all to learn how they celebrate Christmas! And then afterward, we'll remember the real reason we celebrate Christmas. Jesus is born!

**So are you
ready?**

Let's go!

Day 1 – Belgium



Vrolijk Kerstfeest! That means “Merry Christmas” in Dutch, the main language spoken in Belgium. And to get us started on learning about Christmas around the world, Belgium is going to surprise us: they don’t get presents December 25! Instead, they believe that St. Nicholas (or *Sinterklaas*) brings them presents on December 6, which is St. Nicholas Day.

The night before St. Nicholas Day, kids put their shoes in front of the fireplace. They might leave a drawing or a snack as a present for him, and maybe even a carrot for his horse. They also leave something for Sinterklaas’ assistant, who they call Zwarte Piet, which means “Black Peter” in English. In the night, Sinterklaas lands on the roof with his horse and Zwarte Piet, who then climbs down the chimney and leaves presents in and around the kids’ shoes.

While kids get presents on December 6, Christmas Day is more of a religious festival in Belgium. On Christmas Eve, families eat a special meal that starts with a drink and nibbles (what we’d call appetizers), then they have dishes like seafood and stuffed turkey. The dessert (called *Kerststronk*) is a sponge cake covered with chocolate butter cream (like frosting) that is made to look like a bark-covered log. How fun!

Families often give small presents to each other on Christmas Eve, and some people go to a midnight Mass service. Then, on Christmas morning, they eat the same kind of breakfast they’d eat on a normal Sunday: freshly baked crusty rolls with butter and cold meats or jam, pastries, coffee cake and sometimes even a special sweet bread that’s made in a shape to look like baby Jesus. Throughout the day, people often visit friends or distant relatives. Christmas is a wonderful holiday to spend with the people we love!



Fun Facts

- 🌍 As in many parts of the world, most people have a Christmas tree that they decorate with lights, ornaments, garlands and a star on top. And they'll often have a nativity scene too. Some people even have life-size ones!
- 🌍 For school Christmas parties, kids buy a small gift and then play a game to give out the presents. A popular one is playing music and passing the gift around while everyone sits in a circle. When the music stops, the person holding the gift gets to keep it.

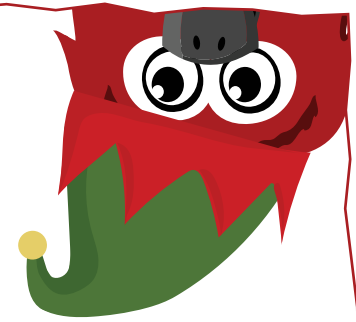
Let's color the nativity!

The nativity scene is often a part of Christmas decorations. It usually shows Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus in the stable, and sometimes even a couple of animals, shepherds and an angel. Let's color a picture of the nativity and then place it somewhere in the house — like on the fridge or by the Christmas tree — so that we can remember the true meaning of Christmas.





Day 2 – Nigeria



E keresimesi Oma! That's "Merry Christmas" in Igbo, one of the many languages spoken in Nigeria. In fact, there are 520 languages spoken throughout the country. That's a lot!

In Nigeria, Christmas is a time when lots of family members come together to celebrate and enjoy time together. And if you live in the city, you probably travel to a village to visit your grandparents and older relatives. Sounds like fun! Parents often give their kids a new cloth, called a "Christmas cloth," that the kids wear on Christmas Day. Then the kids go from house to house in the neighborhood getting Christmas gifts, which usually are small amounts of money.

Lots of families have Christmas parties that last all night long on Christmas Eve. When Christmas morning arrives, they go to church to worship God and thank him for all he's done. That's a wonderful way to start Christmas morning, don't you think? Another cool thing about Christmas in Nigeria is that the church choir might even come visit people in their own homes to sing Christmas carols to them.

A traditional Christmas meal might include beef, goat, sheep, ram or chicken as the main meat dish. Then you might have pounded yam (that's like a sweet potato), *jollof* rice (cooked in a tomato stew with ingredients like

chicken and curry powder), fried rice, vegetable salad and maybe some kind of stew. Maybe Mack and I will have to visit our friends in Nigeria to get a taste of this yummy Christmas dinner!

Fun Facts

- 🌍 People often decorate their houses for Christmas, and they usually have an artificial Christmas tree. Family members give each other presents, and then sometimes they might dress their kids in new outfits to go visit Santa Claus.
- 🌍 Kids love to play with firecrackers around Christmas. Sounds like a fun way to celebrate!



Let's thank God for all he's done!

It's really cool that many Nigerians spend Christmas morning at church, praising God and thanking him for all he's done for them! To help us prepare ourselves for the true meaning of Christmas, let's thank God for some of the things he's done in our lives this past year. How many can you think of? Write them down and then hang them someplace you'll see every day so you can keep thanking God for all of the ways he shows how much he loves you!



I thank God for ...

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.

— 1 Chronicles 16:34 (NLT)

Day 3 – Brazil



Feliz Natal! That's "Merry Christmas" in Portuguese, the main language spoken in Brazil. That's where our next stop is, and it's a country in South America. In fact, Christmas falls in the middle of Brazil's summer because most of the country is in the southern hemisphere, and seasons are the opposite of what they are in the United States! Sometimes people even like to celebrate Christmas on the beach.

An important tradition in Brazil is the *presépio*, where people create a nativity scene and set it up in their homes, malls or other public places. *Presépio* comes from the word *presepio*, which means the bed of straw that Jesus slept on.

In Brazil, Santa Claus is called *Papai Noel*. But instead of living at the North Pole, Brazilians believe that he lives in Greenland. Papai Noel brings presents to kids while they're asleep on Christmas Eve, but he doesn't wear the traditional red and white suit you see in many countries around the world. Instead, he wears silk robes and carries the gifts in a big brown bag. Other than that, there's not much else known about how Papai Noel travels or what he looks like.

Many families attend midnight Mass at church on Christmas Eve. This service is called *Missa do Galo*. *Galo* means "rooster," and it's called that because it's the rooster that announces the beginning of

the Mass, which finishes in the early hours of Christmas morning. Families often get together for a big feast that night too. Foods like turkey, pork and fish are served, as well as fruits and vegetables, rice, nuts and more. Sounds like a lot of yummy foods!



Fun Facts

- 🌍 Kids sometimes leave a sock near a window. If Papai Noel finds your sock, he'll exchange it for a present!
- 🌍 Secret Santa (or *amigo secreto* as it's called in Brazil, which means "secret friend") is popular in Brazil. It's tradition to give small gifts throughout the month of December using a pretend name. Then on Christmas Day people find out who their amigo secreto was!

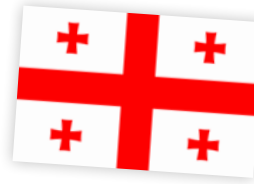
Let's be an amigo secreto this Christmas!

Secret Santa — or amigo secreto in Brazil — is a fun way to make someone's Christmas season extra special. After all, who doesn't like to receive presents? Especially when it's a secret!

This Christmas, find someone that you can be an amigo secreto to. Maybe it's a classmate, a teacher or someone you know from church. Or maybe it's your mailman or garbage man! You can either get them something small, like a Christmas ornament, or maybe bake them some Christmas goodies. Then write a short note and have someone else deliver your present. You'll not only make someone else smile when they receive your gift, but you'll feel pretty special knowing that you're making someone's day with a small but thoughtful gift!



Day 4 – Georgia



გილოცავთ შობა-ახალ წელს! That's what "Merry Christmas" looks like in Georgian, the main language of Georgia. And no, not the state of Georgia — the country! Did you know that there's a country named Georgia? It's true! The country of Georgia touches Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan and part of Russia. (You'll probably need your parents to help you find this country on the map!) Anyway, here's what "Merry Christmas" looks like if you write it in the same alphabet we use for English: **Gilotsavt shoba-akhal ts'els**. That's still hard to say, even though I can now kinda read it!



Guess what? Christmas isn't celebrated on December 25 in Georgia. Instead, people celebrate it on January 7. That's because religious holidays in Georgia are based on a different style of calendar than the one we use in the United States. So their Christmas Day lands on a different day of the year than ours does!

On Christmas Day (January 7, not December 25), lots of people go on an *alilo*, or a parade in the streets. They wear special clothes and costumes to celebrate Christmas (some people even dress up as characters from the Christmas story), and some people carry Georgian flags. Sounds like fun!

In Georgia, the traditional Christmas tree is called a *chichilaki*, and it's made of dried wood that's shaved into long curly strips to form a small tree. Then it's decorated

with small fruits and sweets, and often has a wooden cross at the top. Later, on January 19, people often burn the *chichilaki* as a way to mark the end of last year's troubles or hardships. Pretty interesting, right?

Fun Facts

-  Kids get their presents on New Year's Eve from *Tovlis Papa*, which means "Grandfather Snow." He normally wears all-white clothing, including a heavy cloak that's made of sheep's wool. This keeps him warm on his travels down from the mountains as he walks around Georgia to deliver treats to the kids!
-  Two popular Christmas treats are *gozinaki* (a honey walnut candy) and *churchkhela* (grape juice and walnut candy). Yum!





Let's make gozinaki candy!

Gozinaki candy is something that many Georgians like to eat around Christmas. Let's try making it for ourselves so we can taste what another country's Christmas candy is like!

Ingredients:

- ✓ 2 pounds shelled walnuts
- ✓ 10 tablespoons honey
- ✓ 2 tablespoons sugar

Here's how you make it:

1. Pour the walnuts into a pan and heat on low-medium for 2-3 minutes. Be careful you don't burn them!
2. Remove them and let them cool slightly. If there are still any skins left on the walnuts, gently remove them. Then chop them up.
3. In a different pan, add the honey and heat on a low temperature, stirring continuously for 8-10 minutes. Make sure the honey is nice and thick!
4. Lower the temperature and add the sugar, stirring until it blends in.
5. Gradually add the chopped walnuts to the honey and sugar mix. Continue stirring for another 2-3 minutes.
6. If you have a wooden chopping board, wet the surface and then wipe off any extra water. Add some of the walnut and honey mixture to the board. (If you don't have a chopping board, you can use a cookie sheet.)

7. Flatten the mixture with the back of the spoon or a rolling pin that has also been dampened with water. Make it into a nice square!
8. When you're done, you can cut the gozinaki into diamond-shaped chunks. Then enjoy this tasty treat!



Day 5 – New Zealand



Merry Christmas from New Zealand! Or in Maori, one of the languages spoken in New Zealand: **Meri Kirihimete**. Just like Brazil, Christmas is in the middle of summer for New Zealand. That means they're on summer vacation from school! (Well, kids and teachers are, at least.) Since it's summer vacation, lots of people go camping over the holidays or vacation at holiday homes. They also enjoy spending time outside or at the beach, soaking up all the sunshine (after all, it's not snowing or cold for Christmas in the Southern Hemisphere!).

And since it's summertime, they often like to have a barbecue for Christmas lunch (they call it "the barbie" instead of barbecue). Sometimes they'll barbecue ham or venison, or some other kind of exotic meat. They also like to barbecue shrimp and fish. Sounds delicious to me! And don't forget about dessert, including a hot fruit pudding with custard and ice cream, meringues, pavlova, cold fruit salad and more. Yum!

In November and December, there are lots of Santa parades.

These parades started back in the early 1900s as a way for stores to promote the arrival of Santa for kids to come and visit. There are even giant floats in the parade! Santa and his elves walk around cities, showing off the brightly colored floats. Sounds like a fun way to celebrate, don't you think?



Fun Facts

-  In 1960, a giant Santa was built in Auckland. It weighs over five tons and is about 59 feet tall. That's huge! The giant Santa has been set up almost every year since then.
-  Red, white and green are important Christmas colors in New Zealand too, but they represent something else. The red represents the pohutukawa tree (New Zealand's Christmas tree), the white represents the golden sands of the beaches and green represents all the beautiful landscape of the country!



Let's make pavlova — yum!

Pavlova is a dessert that's often part of the Christmas Day meal in New Zealand. It's a crisp white meringue (made from beaten egg whites) that's topped with fresh fruit and whipped cream. You'll need your mom or dad to help you make this recipe, but it's worth the time it takes to make this wonderful, delicious dessert. You can even double the recipe and make a two-layer pavlova!

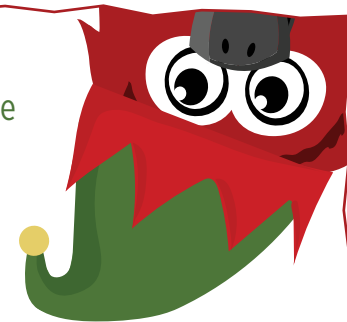
Ingredients:

- ✓ 4 egg whites
- ✓ 1¼ cups white sugar
- ✓ 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ✓ 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- ✓ 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- ✓ Whipped cream
- ✓ Mixed fruit (like strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, kiwi or mangoes — any kind of fruit you like!)

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F.
2. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and draw a 9-inch circle on it.
3. In a large bowl, beat the egg whites until they're stiff but not dry (this is where you'll need your mom or dad's help!).
4. Gradually add sugar (about 1 tablespoon at a time), beating well until thick and glossy.

5. Gently fold in vanilla extract, lemon juice and cornstarch.
6. Now you can spoon the mixture inside the circle drawn on the parchment paper. Spread the mixture toward the outside edge, working from the middle so that the edge gets slightly higher. This will act as a rim and will make it look almost like a shallow bowl (that way your fruit and whipped cream have somewhere to sit later!).
7. Bake for one hour. When it's done, let it cool on a wire rack.
8. Once it's all cool, you can fill the center of the meringue with the whipped cream and fruit. Now dig in and enjoy. Yum!



Day 6 – Lithuania



Linksmų Kalėdų! That's "Merry Christmas" in Lithuanian. That's our next stop — the cold, snowy winter wonderland of Lithuania!

One interesting thing about Christmas in Lithuania is that Christmas Eve is actually more important than Christmas Day. There's a big feast (called *Kūčios*) on Christmas Eve, but families first have a lot to do before the meal! The whole house needs to be cleaned, bedsheets need to be changed and everyone gets bathed and puts on clean clothes first. All this cleaning was a tradition because people thought it helped protect them from evil or diseases in the coming year.

Lots of people fast (that means they don't eat anything) during Christmas Eve day. The *Kūčios* meal starts when the first stars can be seen in the night sky. (If it's cloudy, the dad decides when the meal will start.) In the center of the table is a plate of Christmas wafers. Each person gets one wafer, and these are eaten first. Sometimes there's also an apple that's cut into pieces for people to share too. The apple represents the fruit eaten in the Garden of Eden.

The *Kūčios* meal doesn't have any meat in it, but it normally has 12 different dishes — one for each of Jesus' disciples. Some traditional dishes include fish, *kūčiukai* (small sweet pastries), dried fruit soup, beet soup, vegetable salad, potatoes and more. Sounds like a lot of tasty food!

After the meal is finished, kids might get a visit from "The Old Man of Christmas" (that's what they call Santa Claus). People also exchange presents among themselves. And after presents are opened, kids often go to bed while their parents go to midnight Mass. It's always good to start Christmas morning remembering why we celebrate this holiday — Jesus' birth!



Fun Facts

- 🌍 Popular Christmas tree decorations are made from white paper straws in the shapes of stars, snowflakes and other geometric shapes.
- 🌍 For the Kūčios meal, the table is often decorated with straw. Then a white tablecloth is laid over it, and candles and small branches or twigs from a fir tree are scattered across the cloth. The straw reminds people of baby Jesus lying in the manger!

Let's make a straw ornament!

Ornaments are a fun part of decorating the Christmas tree, so let's try making some ornaments similar to Lithuanian paper straws! Paper straws can be hard to find (they can sometimes be found in the party decoration aisle at the store), so you can use drinking straws instead if you want. Either one works to make a fun, new ornament for your tree!

Supplies:

- ✓ Straws (paper or plastic)
- ✓ String or yarn for hanging the ornament
- ✓ Hot glue gun
- ✓ Scissors

Instructions:

1. Take 16 straws and fold them into an L-shape.
2. Glue two pieces together so that they look like arrows. Do these until you have used all your straws and have eight pieces.

3. Glue each piece together until it makes this beautiful star!
4. Tie a string onto one corner of the star. Now hang it on your tree!



Day 7 – Ethiopia



መልክም የገና! That's what Merry Christmas looks like in Amharic, the main language spoken in Ethiopia. Or if you want to be able to read it, it looks like this: *mäləkamə yägāna*.



Just like Georgia, Ethiopia follows a different calendar and celebrates Christmas Day on January 7. Lots of people fast on Christmas Eve (January 6) in preparation for *Ganna* (that's what they call the Christmas celebration). At dawn on the morning of Ganna, people get dressed in white. Most people wear a traditional garment called *shamma*, which is made of a thin white cotton cloth with brightly colored stripes across the ends. Then they head to Mass, which often starts at 4 a.m.!

If you live in the country, you'll probably go to Mass in an old church that's been carved out of rock. If you live in the city, you'll go to a modern church that's built in three circles, each inside the other. The choir sings from the outer circle, and everyone is given a candle. Then they walk around the church three times in a quiet procession, holding the candles. After that, they go into the second circle and stand for the service. The men and boys are separated from the women and girls. The center circle is the most important and holy place in the church, and that's where the priest serves communion.

Mass is an important part of starting Ganna. Later in the day, people might eat a traditional Christmas food called

doro wat, which is a thick and spicy stew made of meat, vegetables and sometimes eggs. Doro wat is eaten on top of injera, which is kind of like a flat bread. Pieces of the injera are used as an edible spoon to scoop up the doro wat. And to continue the festivities, people often play games together. Sounds like a fun day of celebration!

Fun Facts


-  Ethiopian tradition believes that one of the wise men who came to visit Jesus came from Ethiopia. Cool!
-  Ganna isn't a time for presents. Sometimes kids might get a small gift of clothes from their family, but it's mostly a time for going to church, eating lots of food and playing games.





Let's meet the wise men!

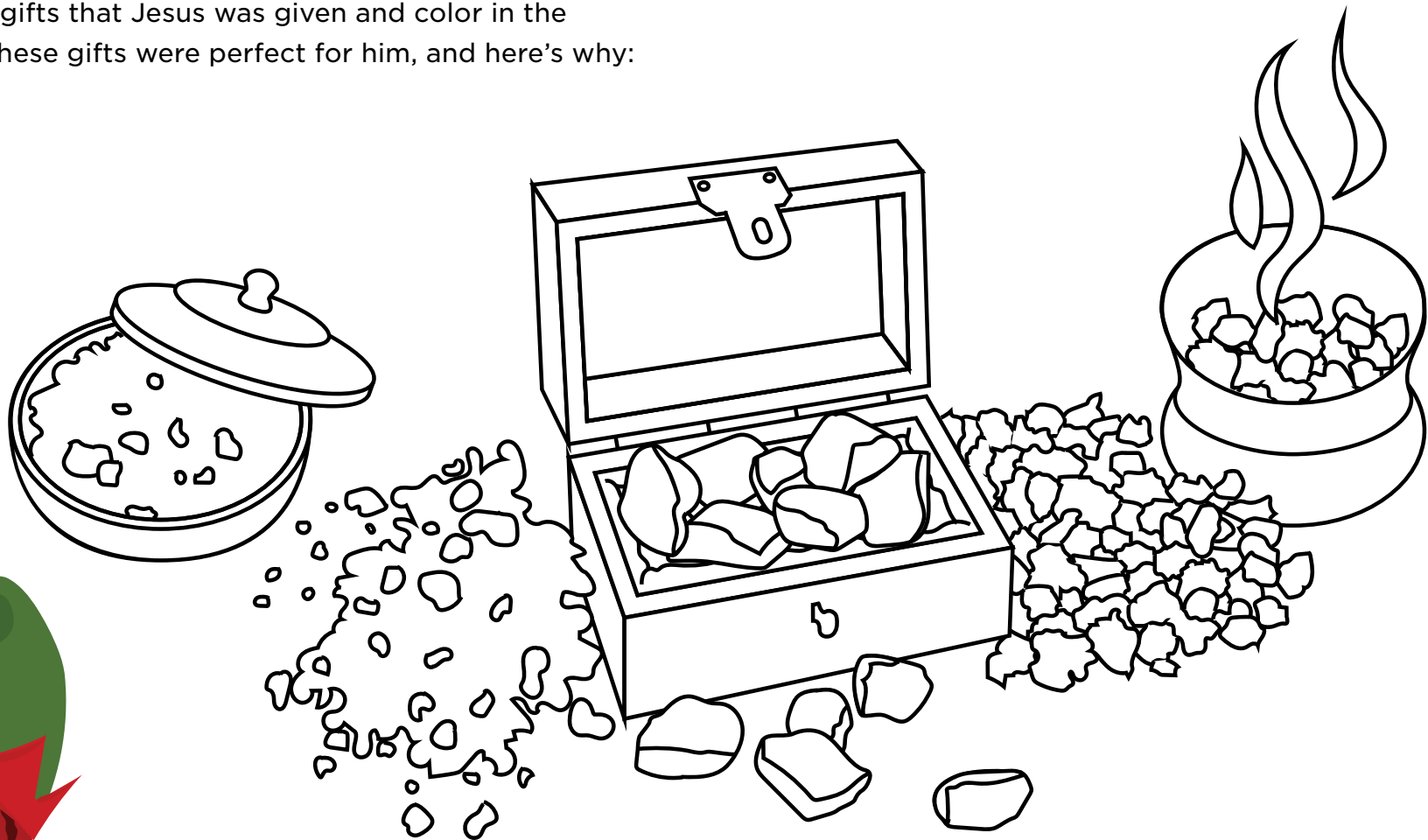
In Matthew 2:1-12, we learn about the wise men who came to visit Jesus. They brought with them three gifts — gold, frankincense and myrrh. Did you know that the Bible doesn't ever say there were three wise men? People just assume that, since there were three gifts. But for all we know, there could have been 10 wise men who came to visit Jesus!

As a family, read Matthew 2:1-12 together. Then talk about the three gifts that Jesus was given and color in the picture. These gifts were perfect for him, and here's why:

 **Gold** is a gift worthy of a king, and Jesus is the King of all kings.

 **Frankincense** was used in the temple worship as an offering of thanksgiving and praise to God. Jesus is the High Priest, and his life was the ultimate offering to God.

 **Myrrh** was used when someone died. Even though the wise men couldn't have known exactly how Jesus would die, they knew that the Old Testament talked about his suffering for mankind. And myrrh represented the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross.



Day 8 – Puerto Rico



Feliz Navidad! That's how you say "Merry Christmas" in Spanish, a language spoken in many countries in Latin America — including Puerto Rico, our next stop!

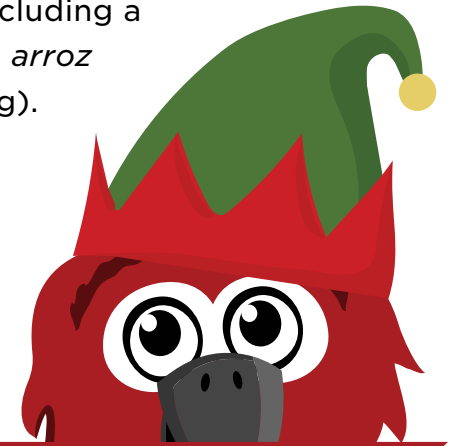
In Puerto Rico, the Christmas season isn't celebrated just in December. In fact, the holiday celebrations begin as early as November and can continue until mid-January! Sounds like a fun way to celebrate this wonderful time of year, don't you think?

A popular tradition in Puerto Rico is caroling, called *parrandas*. People begin singing late in the evening (around 10 p.m.) and visit different houses. People are meant to be surprised and wake up to the singing, and then they come and join the group too. The fun and singing can last all night long, finishing when the sun rises!

From December 15-24, special Masses (called *Misa de Aguinaldos*) happen every day at 6 a.m. Most of the service is sung, and traditional Puerto Rican instruments are played, including the cuatro (a Puerto Rican guitar), guitars, güiros (a percussion instrument) and maracas (a rattle or shaker).

Christmas Eve is called *Nochebuena*, and it's when the main celebrations happen, including the Christmas meal. Christmas Day (or Navidad) is the day that people

recover from all the excitement on Nochebuena. On Christmas Eve there's a special Mass at midnight with carols, a nativity play put on by kids, and lots of candles. And to celebrate, there's a big meal that includes *lechón asado* (roast pork that cooks all day long, starting in the early morning) served with rice, plantains and other delicious foods, including a popular Christmas dessert — *arroz con dulce* (like a rice pudding). Talking about this food is making my mouth water!



Fun Facts

- 🌐 Puerto Rican homes are often decorated with both palm branches and Christmas decorations like the ones you'd find in the United States. Nativity scenes — called *nacimientos* or *pesebres* — are also popular.
- 🌐 On New Year's Eve, tradition says that at the stroke of midnight you need to eat 12 grapes for luck. People also like celebrating with fireworks!

Let's make arroz con dulce!

Every country has different treats and sweets that they like to eat around the holidays, and arroz con dulce is a favorite in Puerto Rico! This tasty dessert is enjoyed around Christmas and New Year's, but also throughout the year too. So grab your mom and dad and let's get a taste of a Puerto Rican Christmas dessert!

Ingredients:

- ✓ 1½ cups rice
- ✓ 4½ cups coconut milk
- ✓ 1½ teaspoons salt
- ✓ 3 cinnamon sticks
- ✓ 2 ounces ginger
- ✓ 6 whole cloves
- ✓ Pinch of nutmeg (optional)
- ✓ 1½ cups sugar
- ✓ ½ cup raisins

Here's how you make it:

1. Rinse rice and then cover it in water and let it soak for two hours. The rice will soak up the water, so make sure you have a couple extra inches of water above the top layer of rice!
2. Once the rice has been soaking for around an hour and 40 minutes, combine the 4½ cups coconut milk with the salt, cinnamon sticks, ginger, cloves and nutmeg in a medium-size pot.

3. Bring to a boil over high heat. Then reduce the heat to medium, cover and boil for 15 minutes.
4. Drain the rice thoroughly and add it to the pot. Mix and bring to a boil over medium heat.
5. Add the sugar and raisins. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes or until rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed.
6. Remove the cinnamon sticks and cloves. Then spoon the rice into a flat serving platter. Allow it to cool at room temperature.
7. Once it's cooled, you can eat it!



Day 9 – Kazakhstan



Рождество мейрамы және Жаңа жыл құтты болсын!

That's what "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year" looks like in Kazakh, the main language spoken in Kazakhstan. Kazakh is written in Cyrillic, a different alphabet than the one we use in English. Here's how to say it using letters similar to our alphabet: **Rojdestvo meyrarı jāne Jaña jıl quttı bolsın!** Pretty cool!

About 70 percent of people living in Kazakhstan are Muslims, so Christmas isn't a big holiday. But for Christians living there, they still like to celebrate — it just might not be on December 25, since they still have to go to work and school. If Christmas doesn't happen on a weekend,

Christians celebrate at church on the Sunday before Christmas Day. Some people wonder what Christmas is about, and they also like the idea of a party, so it's a good chance to invite their friends to church who haven't heard about Jesus or the meaning of Christmas before.

Hospitality is an important part of their culture, so people get together with friends from church for a meal. Tables are often covered with fruits, nuts, chocolates, *baursak* (like doughnuts), salads and *plov* (a dish made of rice, beef and carrots).

Even though Christmas Day isn't celebrated by many people, the following week is the biggest celebration of the year for Kazakhs — New Year! So even though there isn't a Christmas tree, Santa or Christmas presents, there is a New Year tree and Father Frost (his name in Russian is *Ded Moroz*, and *moroz* actually means frost!), and his helper, the Snow Maiden. Kids also get New Year presents. At New Year celebrations, kids often recite a poem or sing a song for Father Frost, and then he gives them a present. I guess that even though it's not Christmas, it's a lot like it!



Fun Facts

- 🌍 Christmas is almost always snowy in Kazakhstan. That's because it snows for around four months of the year during the winter months!
- 🌍 In Kazakhstan, horses pull Father Frost's sleigh, rather than reindeer. Cool!

Let's remember the reason we celebrate Christmas!

Since most people living in Kazakhstan are Muslims, they don't know the reason why Christmas is so important. But we do — it's the day we celebrate Jesus' birth! It can be easy to forget, though, that Christmas is really about Jesus and not just about the Christmas tree, pretty lights, yummy foods or presents we get to open. Let's take a moment to remember the reason we celebrate Christmas by reading Matthew 1:18-23 together. (You can read it in Luke 2:1-23, too.)



Matthew 1:18-23 (NLT)

The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

18 This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit.

19 Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

20 As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

21 And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

22 All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet:

23 "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"

Day 10 – Zimbabwe



Khisimusi enhle! That's how you say "Merry Christmas" in Ndebele, one of the main languages spoken in Zimbabwe. And like our other stops in Africa (Ethiopia and Nigeria), most people spend part of Christmas Day in church!

The morning starts with a church service, and then afterwards it's time to party and eat! People often go from house to house, visiting all of their friends and family on the way home. Sometimes this can take the whole day! At every house you have something to eat, give presents and enjoy time with the people you love. The special food people eat on Christmas is chicken and rice. (Chicken is expensive in Zimbabwe, so it's a special treat!)

One of the ways people celebrate is by putting speakers outside their house and loudly playing their favorite music. Sounds like a fun way to celebrate to me! They also like to sing Christmas carols during the church service, and in all the services leading up to Christmas Day. Sometimes they have candlelight services in city parks where they sing carols too.

Kids believe that Santa Claus brings them presents on Christmas morning. Then they can show their friends what they got at the different parties that day! And sometimes, Santa arrives at big stores in a fire engine. I've never heard of anything like that before! It's pretty cool to see how different countries celebrate Christmas, isn't it?

Fun Facts:

- 🌍 Christmas cards in Zimbabwe sometimes have African pictures on them (like wild animals), but most share traditional snowy landscapes from colder parts of the world.
- 🌍 Everyone wears their best clothes on Christmas. Sometimes the only new clothes families get each year is for Christmas Day!



Let's make a Christmas card!

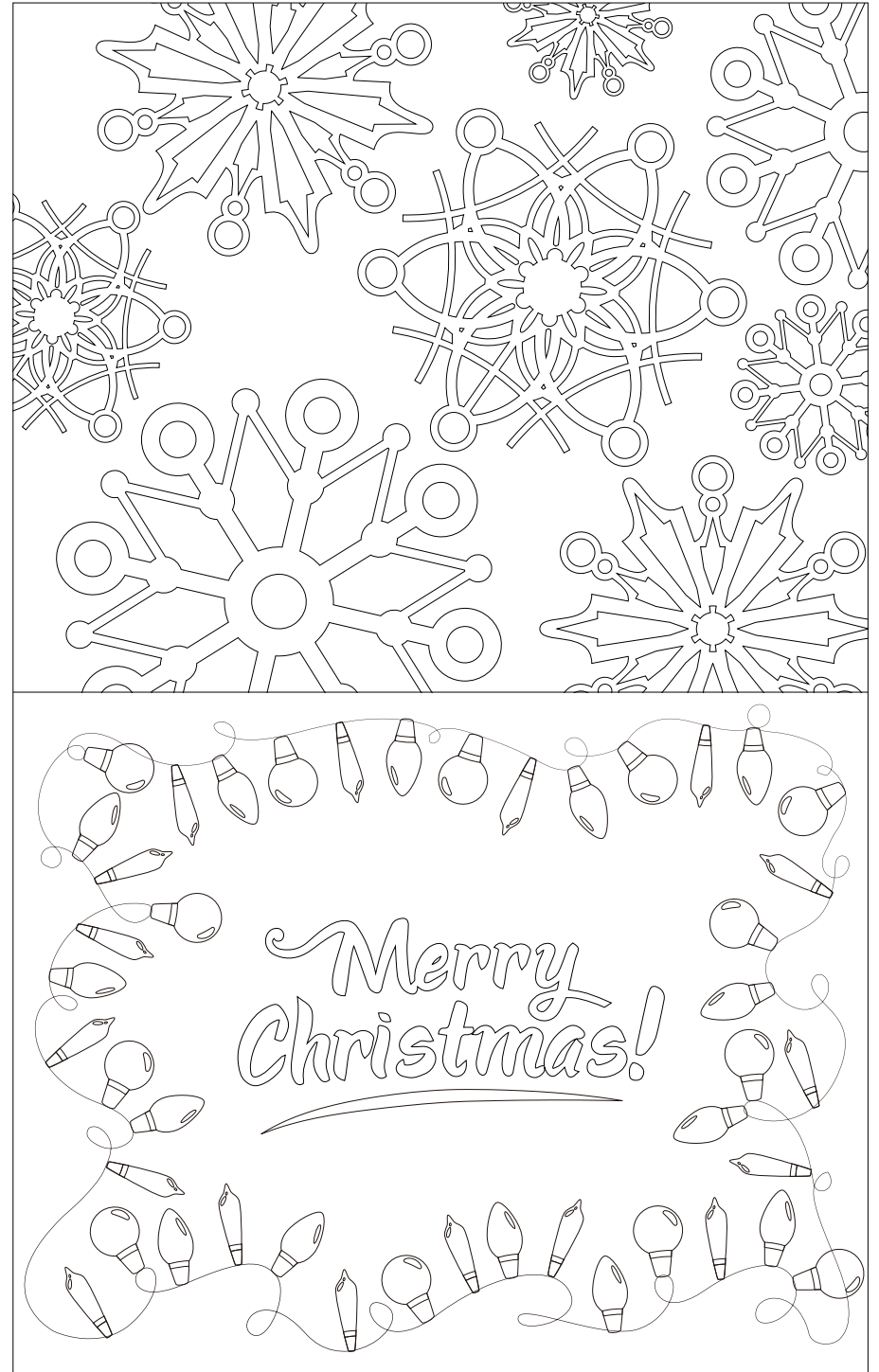
Christmas cards are a popular part of the holiday season. People often send them to friends and families with a picture of their family or even an update on what happened this last year. But Christmas cards can also be used to encourage someone during the holidays. Let's color in this Christmas card, then write a note and give it to someone you know. Maybe a teacher or elderly neighbor, or even the cashier at the grocery store!

Supplies:

- ✓ Pencils, markers or crayons

Instructions:

1. Color the card
2. Cut out the card
3. Fold in half
4. Give away!



Day 11 – Portugal



Just like Brazil, Portugal's main language is Portuguese. Do you remember what "Merry Christmas" is in Portuguese? That's right, it's **Feliz Natal!**

Like many countries around the world, kids believe that Father Christmas (or *Pai Natal*) brings presents on Christmas Eve and leaves them under the tree or in their shoes by the fireplace. But, unlike many countries, some people also say that the presents are brought by baby Jesus instead!

The traditional Christmas meal, called *consoada*, is eaten on Christmas Eve. People usually eat codfish with green vegetables and boiled potatoes, and then shellfish, wild meats and other expensive foods. For dessert there's always *Bolo Rei* (or King's Cake) which is filled with candied fruits and nuts, and people often eat *rabanadas* too, which is like French toast. Yum!

After they eat, people go to church for Mass. During the service, an image of baby Jesus is brought out and people line up to kiss it. Then they put baby Jesus in the nativity scene (called the *presépio*). After the service is done, people go home and open their presents.

Before they go to Mass, parents secretly put the baby Jesus in the nativity scene in their houses, and put the gifts under the Christmas tree. That way Jesus will be in his manger when they get home! Kids run to check

the nativity as soon as they get home, because if there's no baby Jesus in the manger, then there are no presents to open!

The nativity scene is an important part of Christmas Eve. Kids are responsible for collecting the materials for the *presépio* and helping the adults set it up. Some families only show Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus, while others make them fancier and include animals like cows and camels, and maybe even some snow.



Fun Facts:

- 🌐 In some parts of Portugal, it's still tradition to burn a tree overnight in the churchyard. This large bonfire is a place to meet friends and neighbors and wish them Merry Christmas!
- 🌐 On New Year's Eve, people go around singing. It's called *Janeiras*, and it's a lot like Christmas caroling, with people traveling in groups as they go from house to house.

Let's make rabanadas!

If you like French toast, then you're going to like rabanadas! It's like a fancy version of French toast, but with cinnamon sugar too. Yum!

Ingredients:

- ✓ 1 cup sugar
- ✓ 2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
- ✓ 4 eggs
- ✓ 2 cups milk (2% is good)
- ✓ Oil for frying
- ✓ 1 loaf French bread, cut into 1-inch slices

Here's how you make it:

1. In a small bowl, mix sugar and cinnamon until blended.
2. In a large shallow dish, whisk eggs and milk. Then dip both sides of the bread in the egg mixture, soaking lightly.
3. In a pan or electric skillet, heat 1 inch of oil until it pops and has small bubbles rising to the surface.

4. Remove bread from the egg mixture and allow excess liquid to drain. Then fry each piece of toast for 2-3 minutes on each side or until it's golden brown. Drain it on paper towels.
5. Dip warm rabanadas in the cinnamon sugar mix so that it's coated on all sides. Eat it while it's warm!



Day 12 – India



शुभ क्रिसिमस! That's "Merry Christmas" in Hindi, one of the main languages spoken in India (there are 448 total languages spoken there!). It looks like this if it's written in the same alphabet English uses: **Subh krisamas.**

Most people in India aren't Christians (only about 2 percent), but with a population of over 1 billion people, that means there's still around 25 million Christians. That sounds like a lot, even though it's only a small part of the entire population of the country.

Midnight Mass is an important part of Christmas. Churches are often decorated with poinsettia flowers and candles for the service. Afterward, there's a huge feast with lots of foods (mostly different kinds of curries, which are a popular part of Indian culture), and then people give each other presents. People believe that Santa Claus, who is also called Father Christmas (or Christmas Baba in Hindi), delivers presents to kids from a horse and cart.

In one part of India, there are a lot of Christmas traditions that came from Portugal. People like to go carol singing the week before Christmas, and they often have a nativity scene made of clay figures. On Christmas Eve, people hang giant paper lanterns in the shape of stars between the houses. It looks like the stars are floating above you in the sky!

Fun Facts

- 🌍 Instead of having a traditional Christmas tree, people often decorate a banana or mango tree (or whatever tree they can find!). And sometimes they use mango leaves to decorate their homes. Cool!
- 🌍 In South India, Christians light clay lamps on the rooftops and walls of their houses. They do this to show their neighbors and friends that they believe Jesus is the light of the world.



Let's make a paper star lantern!

It's pretty cool that a paper star lantern is used as a Christmas decoration around India. After all, it was a star that appeared in the sky as a sign to the world that Jesus was born! Let's make our own paper star lantern as a reminder about the true meaning of Christmas. You'll probably need your mom or dad (or even an older sibling) to help you with the hot glue gun.

Supplies:

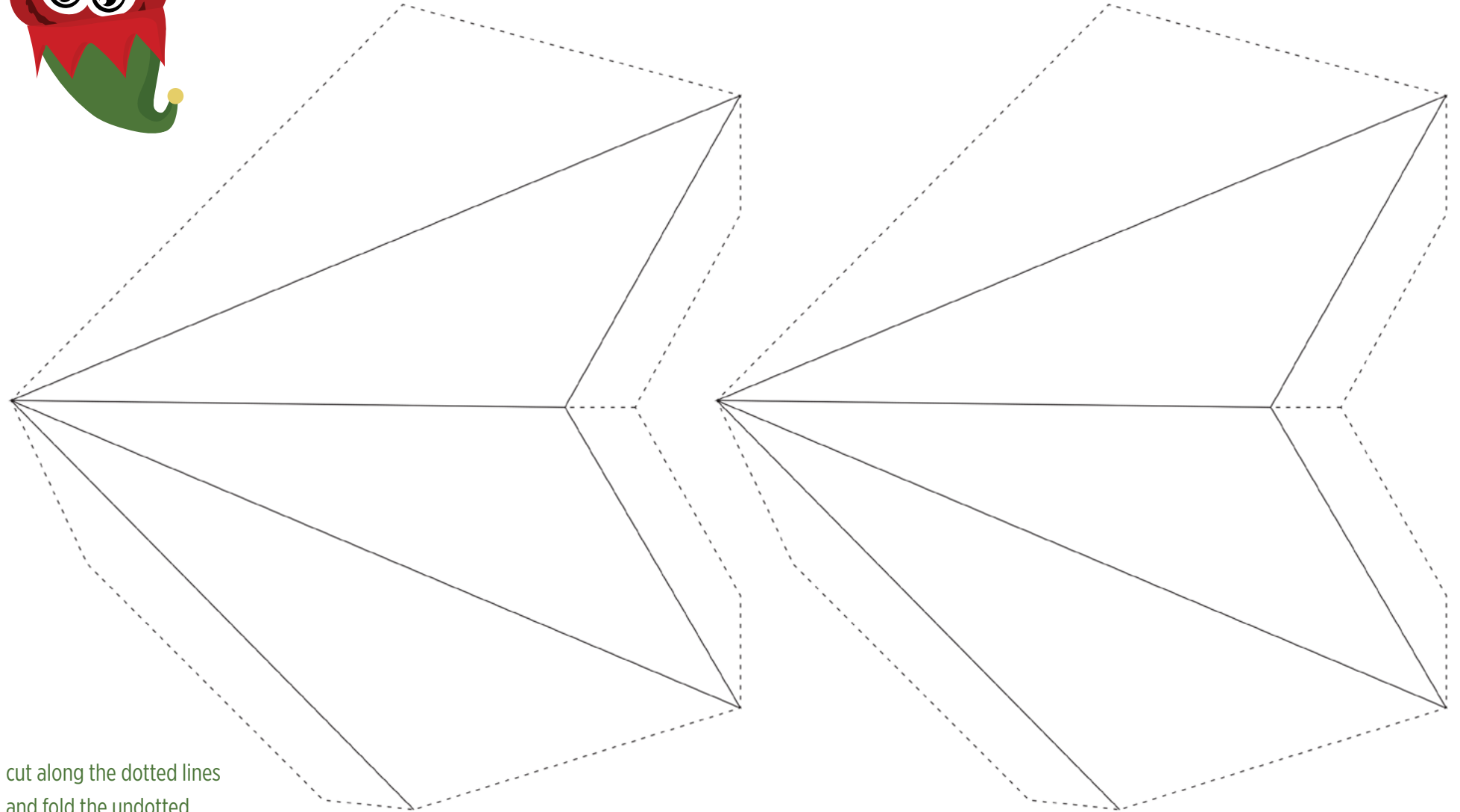
- ✓ Colored cardstock
- ✓ Star template
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Hot glue gun
- ✓ Hole punch
- ✓ Glitter (optional)
- ✓ Markers or pencils (optional)
- ✓ String, ribbon or yarn

Here's how you make it:

1. Choose what color you want your star to be (or you can color a piece of white cardstock, if you want!).
2. Cut out the star template.
3. Use the star template and trace it five different times. You're going to need five pieces to make the star!
4. Cut out the traced pieces.

5. Use a hole punch to make holes all over the five pieces of paper.
6. If you want, you can make each piece pretty by coloring on it or adding glitter.
7. Then fold the star pieces with the top flaps up and long folds down. Glue each star arm into a cone shape.
8. Glue tabs of first star arm on the inside of the second star arm. Repeat this until all five star arms are connected.
9. When you're done, you can either use a hole punch in the top of one arm to tie a ribbon or string through it, or you could tape it in place on the back. Now you're ready to hang your paper star lantern!





cut along the dotted lines
and fold the undotted

Well, kids, we've traveled around the world and visited 12 different countries, and we've learned a lot about how they celebrate Christmas along the way! Mack and I have loved traveling with you, and we're so excited that you decided to come with us.

But before you go, we wanted to remind you one more time about the reason why we celebrate Christmas — Jesus is born! That's the whole reason why this holiday even exists. As you enjoy the excitement of Christmas, like the carols, decorations, beautiful lights, special foods and the gifts that we give or receive, it's good to stop and remember that Christmas is all about Jesus Christ!

Mack and I want to encourage you and your family to take some time during this busy season to stop and read the Christmas story. After all, Jesus' birth fulfilled a promise that God has been making to the world since the very beginning! Because of Jesus' birth and ultimately his death on the cross, we can live with God in heaven if we choose to believe in him and ask him into our hearts. And that's the most wonderful gift of all!

So grab your Bibles and read these different passages that tell the Christmas story:

🌐 Luke 1:5-38

🌐 Matthew 1:18-25

🌐 Luke 2:1-20

After you're done, pray together and thank God for loving us so much that he sent his Son, Jesus.

We hope that you've enjoyed traveling with us, and maybe you'll even want to keep coming on our adventures around the world! You can sign up to receive two emails a month with new activities at

wycliffe.org/kids.

There are so many different countries to explore and people to meet. But for now, Merry Christmas!

**Merry
Christmas!**

