

Video: DIY Gift Ideas

Let's be honest: Christmas gifts aren't easy in a recession. Here are videos of some practical ways to make your gifts both creative and economical.

Make homemade jams/preserves
{youtubejw}FLI7xRxqL_g{/youtubejw}
Make homemade play dough
{youtubejw}FDiS8KqMH8w{/youtubejw}
Make homemade Rudolf Christmas cookies
{youtubejw}fMyD7XIBntE{/youtubejw}

The Bible's Archeological Evidence

Atheists scoff at the idea. Some people deny it. But there is archeological evidence of the validity of the Bible. Watch a video montage of proof below.

[{youtube}4e20Cq5yob4{/youtube}](#)

Lord, Save My Family

As a Christian, it's difficult to relish in thoughts about heaven when you know your husband, children or other family members are not saved. But if you will commit to earnest prayer for your loved ones, the Holy Spirit will move on the heart of every person and give them an opportunity to come to faith in Christ. But don't take my word for it. Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.'" To receive prayer for your family, [click here to listen to podcast.](#)

Court Seeks Help to Link Murders in Turkey to 'Deep State'

✘ Judges and prosecutors in the trial regarding the murder of three Christians in Malatya, Turkey, on Friday renewed their request for help from the Istanbul High Criminal Court as reports mounted linking the slayings to top gendarmerie officials.

The Malatya court judges overseeing hearings on the murders of Turkish Christians Necati Aydin and Ugur Yuksel and German Christian Tilmann Geske requested that the Istanbul criminal court establish whether the case was linked to the controversial cabal of military, political and other influential figures, *Ergenekon*, which has allegedly been trying to overthrow the government by upsetting Turkey's peace.

(Photo: Christians Necati Aydin, Tilmann Geske and Ugur Yuksel were murdered in Turkey in 2007.)

For the last two and a half years prosecuting lawyers have established the case that Emre Gunaydin, Salih Gurler, Cuma Ozdemir, Hamit Ceker and Abuzer Yildirim, who were caught at the murder scene on April 18, 2007, were not acting independently but were incited by Turkey's "deep state," an expression of which is *Ergenekon*.

Seven months ago the Malatya court requested from prosecutors on the *Ergenekon* case at the Istanbul high court to examine whether the two cases were connected. They have not received a reply yet.

The court and various mainstream media have received informant letters with specific names linking the murders to top gendarmerie officials. Last month a Turkish newspaper received a list of payments the gendarmerie made to informants to physically follow and collect information on Christians in Malatya.

Phone trees also show calls made from the murderers to two alleged "middle-men," Huseyin Yelki and Bulent Varol Aral, gendarmerie officials and other nationalist figures in Malatya.

"We are expecting the Istanbul prosecutor to make a careful investigation and give us a response and attest to the connections the court has found," said prosecuting attorney Erdal Dogan on Friday during a press briefing. "The actions of these men who are on trial were not independent, and from the beginning we believed they were organized by *Ergenekon*. Our theories have become more concrete, and we are expecting the Istanbul prosecutor to investigate these closely, establish the connections and give us a response."

Lawyers said that informant letters, testimonies and other evidence have only confirmed their original suspicions. The most striking of these is that the local gendarmerie forces

were following activities of Christians in Malatya in the months leading up to the murders and afterwards yet did not stop the young men from stabbing and slashing the three Christians to death.

“If you have been watching a small, tiny group so closely,” said lawyer Orhan Kemal Cengiz, “how could it be possible that you disregard this murder? This is a legitimate question which requires ordinary intelligence.”

Last month the head of Istanbul police intelligence, Ramazan Akyurek, was demoted amid allegations that he had neglected to investigate three Christian murder cases between 2006 and 2007. When Turkish news reporters asked Dogan whether prosecutors would make a request to investigate whether Akyurek played a greater part in the murders, he said that it was not out of the question.

The five young suspects were apprehended after Zirve Publishing Co. workers went to the publishing house to find out why the three Christian men were not answering their phones. Finding the door of the office locked and getting no answer, they called police. In a report prepared by Akyurek’s department, his staff claimed that the murderers were apprehended thanks to phone tapping – which attorney Dogan said is a lie.

“According to a report, they said that they had been listening to the murderers’ phones and following them, and that that’s how they found and arrested them,” said Dogan. “You know this is a lie. The five men were arrested haphazardly. We know that. We also know that the gendarmerie was in fact listening to their conversations, but there’s something interesting here: On the one hand they are listening to the criminals’ phones, but on the other they couldn’t thwart the crime.”

Prosecuting lawyers said that this makes both Akyurek’s department and the gendarmerie guilty of being accomplices to

the crime, and that they should be tried along with the five young men.

“They should stand trial for not thwarting a crime and failing to perform their duties,” said Dogan. “They [gendarmarie and the police intelligence security] should be tried under Article 8 of the penal code as accomplices because they are connected. This is not a question of removing someone from his position. They should stand trial with the men who are now on trial.”

Frustration

The lawyers expressed frustration at being able to see the bigger picture yet not having enough evidence to proceed, as well as with having to wait on the Istanbul prosecutor for more evidence.

“It is crystal clear,” said attorney Cengiz. “There is a much bigger agenda and much more complex connections. We convinced everyone, but we cannot do this beyond reasonable doubt; we can’t prove it. We are blocked, actually.”

Cengiz explained that as lawyers for the victims’ families, they are not in a position to collect evidence.

“We are heavily dependent on what the prosecutor is doing, and unfortunately they are not able to do much,” he said.

Cengiz said that although the case was complicated and the Malatya judges resisted their arguments at the outset of the hearings, now they agree with the prosecuting lawyers that there is a broader network behind the murders.

“Now they are very clear – they know what happened and what kind of connections there are, etcetera, but they are fighting against a dragon,” said Cengiz. “So they desperately sent this request to the prosecutor in Istanbul, hoping that it will be the Istanbul prosecutor who will create these links rather

than them. It should be vice versa because they have all these details, but they are not ready for this confrontation.”

Cengiz explained that while the Malatya court has a better understanding of the case than the Istanbul prosecutors, the advantage of the Istanbul High Criminal Court is that it has the backing of the Justice Ministry and is better positioned to take on the powers that may be behind this and other murders.

“They can’t take the responsibility because this is just a tiny court in the remote part of Turkey, so how can they confront the reality?” he said.

The next hearing is set for Dec. 25, and prosecutors expect that by then the 13th Istanbul High Criminal Court will have sent an answer about connections of the murders to *Ergenekon*. They are also expecting the prosecuting judge to demand all five of the young men be charged with “three times life imprisonment,” plus additional years for organizing the crime.

“In our estimation, until now in a bizarre way the accused are acting like they have been given assurances that they will be forgiven and will get off the hook,” Dogan commented on the comfortable demeanor of the five men in court and their denial that others were behind the murders. “In the last months we see a continuation of the attempts to wreak havoc and chaos and overthrow the government. So we think whoever is giving confidence to these guys is affecting them. It is obvious to us that there is a group actively doing this. That means they are still trying to create chaos.”

Last week *Ergenekon* prosecutors found a hit-list consisting of 10 prominent representatives of minority groups as well as subscribers to Armenian weekly newspaper *Agos*, whose editor-in-chief was murdered three months before the Christians in Malatya. Cengiz explained that *Ergenekon* members are obsessed with purging Turkey of non-Muslim elements and non-Turkish

minorities, which they see as a threat to the state.

“They were trying to create chaos in Turkey, and of course they were trying to send a clear message to members of non-Muslim groups that they are not wanted in Turkey,” said Cengiz of the way the three Christians in Malatya were murdered. “They did it in a horrendous, barbaric way. This was also part of the message. Everything was planned but not by them, by other people. They are just puppets.”

Further Evidence of Cabal

This week Turkish news magazine *Yeni Aktuel* published a five-page article with pictures chronicling the “anti-terrorist” activities of a counter-guerilla team leader identified only by his initials, K.T.

In the article, K.T. described how for years he and his team pursued and killed members of the outlawed Kurdish Worker’s Party (PKK). Anti-guerilla activities in Turkey are paramilitary efforts managed by the “deep state.”

In K.T.’s account, he claimed that during his time in Malatya he met with members of an ultra-nationalist group who talked about murdering Hrant Dink, editor of *Argos*. Also during that time, members of the group spoke about how those who distributed Bibles in Malatya had to be “punished.”

One of the members of this group was a high school teacher called “O.” The teacher said that he arranged to be out of town before the Malatya murders, because police were following him and he wanted to make sure that they could not connect him to the Malatya murders.

Christian Sisters Released From Iranian Prison

✘ Two sisters jailed in Iran for more than eight months after refusing to renounce their Christian faith were released Wednesday.

Maryam Rustampoor, 27, and Marzieh Amirizadeh Esmaeilabad, 30, were arrested March 5 on charges of “acting against state security” and “taking part in illegal gatherings.”

With Jesus on the Road to Saspán

In a tiny village on a mountain in Guatemala, I gained a better understanding of how Jesus paved the way for us to know the Father.

Like so many other poor communities in Guatemala, the village of Saspán is way off the beaten path. To get there you first must travel on a two-lane highway from Chiquimula, then turn onto a one-lane dirt road that winds precariously for two miles up a mountain. The scenery is spectacular, but if you look too long you might drive right off the side of a cliff. It's best to wait until you arrive at the top to enjoy the view.

I went to Saspán last Monday with my friend Oto, a pastor who was born in this village, and Roque, a Puerto Rican minister who leads a church in Pennsylvania. We came to preach at Iglesia Cristiana Nueva Visión (Christian Church of New

Vision), one of two growing evangelical churches in this town of 1,000 families. The church's pastor is Oto's sister, Gisela, an energetic young woman who has a particular concern for the children in this isolated community, many of whom lack education and proper nutrition.

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The Speed of the Spirit

James 1:19-2:17 This passage in James talks about the speed we need to set to cruise in the Spirit. We have a cruise setting on our car. When we set it at the right speed, we are able to take our foot off the gas peddle and the car will continue at the right speed. James tells us exactly what speed we should set our hearing, speaking and anger to allow the Spirit to go forward at a great cruise level as we travel the road of life. He says, "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (James 1:19-20).

D.C. Elections Board Denies Petition for Marriage Vote

✘ The District of Columbia Board of Elections and Ethics today rejected a petition for a citizens' initiative seeking to define marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

The Stand4MarriageDC Coalition in September filed the Marriage Initiative of 2009, which would have allowed traditional marriage supporters to gather signatures to get an initiative on the district ballot.

In its decision, the two-member board ruled that the initiative would violate the Human Rights Act (HRA) because the city council in May passed a measure recognizing same-sex marriages performed elsewhere.

"If passed, the Initiative would, in contravention of the HRA,

strip same-sex couples of the rights and responsibilities of marriages currently recognized in the District," the elections board wrote in its decision.

Attorneys with Stand4MarriageDC argued that the District of Columbia Court of Appeals ruled in *Dean v. District of Columbia* that denying same-sex marriage licenses did not violate the HRA. "'Marriage' requires persons of opposite sex; there cannot be discrimination against a same-sex marriage if, by independent statutory definition extended to the [HRA], there can be no such thing," the appeals court had ruled.

But the elections board found that though same-sex marriage is not explicitly mentioned in the HRA, the act "must be read broadly to eliminate the many proscribed forms of discrimination in the district."

The board previously denied a referendum petition seeking to repeal the Jury and Marriage Amendment Act of 2009, which recognized same-sex marriages performed elsewhere. At that time, the board ruled that the referendum would violate the HRA but said the coalition could "avail themselves of the initiative process."

In its decision today, the board said, "Stating that a party may avail themselves of the initiative process is not the equivalent of asserting that the party is entitled to actually have the initiative appear on the ballot."

Traditional marriage supporters called the board's decision undemocratic.

"This board is charged with the responsibility of protecting, not denying, the right of the citizens to vote and to engage in the legislative process guaranteed to them," said Cleta Mitchell, one of the attorneys representing the coalition.

Bishop Harry Jackson, chairman of Stand4MarriageDC, called the decision "outrageous" and "a slap in the face of every


resident of the District of Columbia.”

“To deny the people their fundamental right to vote on such an important issue as the definition of marriage in our society is simply appalling,” Jackson said.

Stand4MarriageDC said it would appeal to the federal courts and Congress for the right of Washington, D.C., residents to vote on the definition of marriage.

The marriage initiative was partly an attempt to block a homosexual marriage bill introduced into the city council last month. The measure has the support of at least 10 of the 13 council members and is to be voted on in December. An amendment that would have allowed individuals to decline to provide services for same-sex weddings was rejected in committee last week.

Grass-roots Personhood Movement Gains Momentum

 A grass-roots organization seeking to pass state amendments defining a fertilized egg as a person is building momentum nationwide as the group marks its first anniversary this month.

Personhood USA has groups formed in more than 30 states, with several poised to introduce legislation or ballot initiatives in 2010. Founder Cal Zastrow, a longtime pro-life activist and licensed Assemblies of God minister, said the success of marriage amendments motivated him to lobby for personhood initiatives.

“We’ve got a lot of churches that won’t get involved in street

ministry, they won't get involved in crisis pregnancy centers, they won't get involved in voting, but some of them will circulate a petition," he said.

The personhood effort stems from a statement Justice Harry Blackmun made in the Supreme Court's 1973 ruling on *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion. Responding to the argument that a fetus is a person under the 14th Amendment, Blackmun wrote, "If this suggestion of personhood is established [Jane Roe's] case, of course, collapses, for the fetus' right to life would then be guaranteed specifically by the amendment."

Previous efforts to define an unborn child as a person have been unsuccessful, including a 1983 bill that failed in Congress by just 18 votes. Since then, pro-life groups have worked to restrict abortion through parental consent laws or ultrasound requirements.

Zastrow says such laws regulate murder. "We come along and say: "No, those are persons. Churches, our culture and our laws must protect all innocent persons,'" Zastrow said. "A person's a human being at their biological beginning. It just resonates with people. They get it, they understand it, and they get fired up for it."

Colorado residents didn't exactly get it last year when Personhood USA launched its unofficial first ballot initiative. Amendment 48 lost by a wide margin, gaining just 27 percent of the vote.

Gualberto Garcia Jones, who is leading an effort to put a personhood amendment on Colorado's 2010 ballot, said the 2008 campaign succeeded at educating his state about the humanity of the unborn. "The purpose is to reach out to the people," he said. "We had over half a million people in Colorado who voted in favor of granting full legal rights to all human beings."

Zastrow says a poll taken before the 2008 election showed just 9 percent of Colorado residents believed a human being was a

person at conception and should be protected. That support had tripled by Election Day.

Despite its grass-roots popularity, some pro-life groups are wary of the personhood strategy. The Florida Catholic Conference, which represents the state's bishops, refused to support a personhood petition effort launched in Florida this fall. Focus on the Family Action has also opted not to support the Personhood campaign.

Rather than overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the groups worry that a personhood amendment brought before the wrong Supreme Court could lead to a strengthening of the nation's abortion laws. "If you have the right court that's amenable to changing the current policy on abortion, you could have a parental notice bill that could be used to overturn *Roe*," said Carrie Gordon Earll, senior director of issue analysis for Focus on the Family Action.

"Before the wrong court, a more pro-abortion court, a personhood amendment could instigate a ruling that would say we're going to elevate abortion to even a higher level," she added. "And there are members of the court who have written of their intention to do just that when the opportunity presents."

Zastrow takes a different view. "My philosophy is, these are people," he said. "And I like the three-word quote from the civil rights movement: 'Wait means never.'"

He and other personhood advocates say a Supreme Court ruling against a personhood amendment would spur grass-roots supporters to greater activism, much like the 1857 *Dred Scott* decision that denied African-Americans citizenship stirred Northern opposition to slavery.

"[The Supreme Court] made a lot of people mad, and there was a lot of social tension, and it was actually the social tension that was brought about which created the 13th and the 14th

amendments,” said Personhood co-founder Keith Mason.

He says current restrictions haven't reduced abortion by a large measure. Statistics released last year found that abortion had dipped to an all-time low of 1.2 million in 2005 from a peak of 1.6 million in 1990.

“There are miniscule restrictions on [abortion] that actually don't save the life of one child,” Mason said. “It's really bad, and I don't see how it could get much worse. It is so bad that anything that we do to actually fight on the issue is going to improve it.”

Although Focus does not endorse the personhood strategy, Earll said her organization supports its goal. “The question of when life begins is important, and having that debate in the public square is a good thing,” she said.