

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY CRAFT BOOK



SIMPLE CANDLE HOLDERS



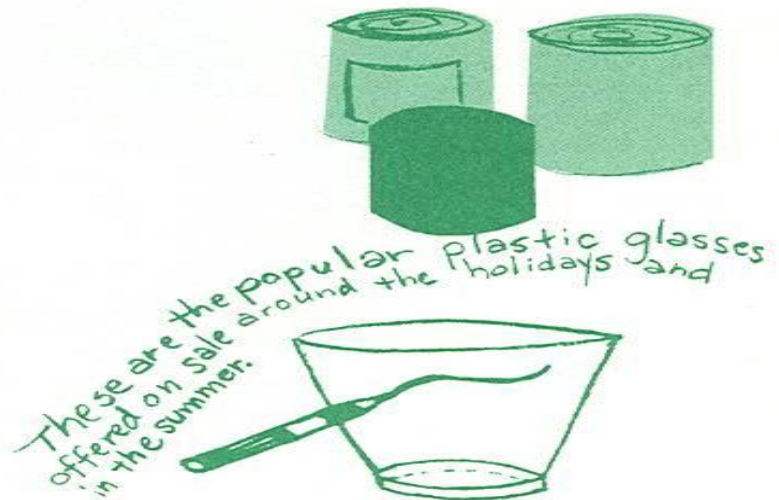
Burton Everist

SIMPLE CANDLE HOLDERS

These two simple candleholders are both made with items that people usually throw away: plastic party glasses and tin cans. I like reusing throwaways, and made a point to do so long before the urgent ecological crisis developed and people began to "recycle" waste. Then, and now, I saw it as simple stewardship and as a reminder of one element of our salvation: rescue and restoration. Rev. Karl Lutze, Director of the Lutheran Human Relations Association and Professor of Religion at Valparaiso University, used to offer the example of pawning and redeeming an old unworking clock: it includes putting the clock back in working condition.

STAINED PLASTIC CANDLE HOLDERS

As I mentioned in the introduction, this recycling craft developed on-the-spot at a youth gathering. I was on the spot because I was responsible, simultaneously, for three major activities: a film festival (late evenings), television "broadcasting" on the hotel TV system (later evenings), and three "Art in the Service of the Gospel" workshops (afternoon and early evenings). There were many details I had to get ready. Although it was well below freezing in our late December New England climate, my tin cans did not have enough time to freeze (see tin can candleholders) and I ran out of the backup plastic milk cartons, which were working out quite well until the last one was used up. Between my second and third workshop's, I accidentally marked (with a felt-tip marker) the side of one of the clear plastic drinking glasses which was provided in every hotel room. Not only did the marking stay on the plastic, it interacted chemically with the plastic, merging with it — much to my amazement!



As C.S. Lewis says, "Accidents don't just happen." Our workshops at Simple Gifts (the title of the conference) were called gift shops, but I thought that I was supposed to be the one doing the giving! Once more I learned the reality our Lord proclaimed: "Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap." (Luke 6:38).

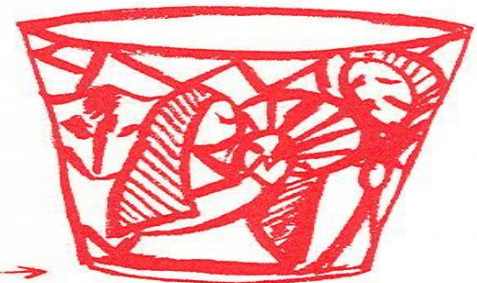
So... HERE'S HOW YOU CAN DO IT!

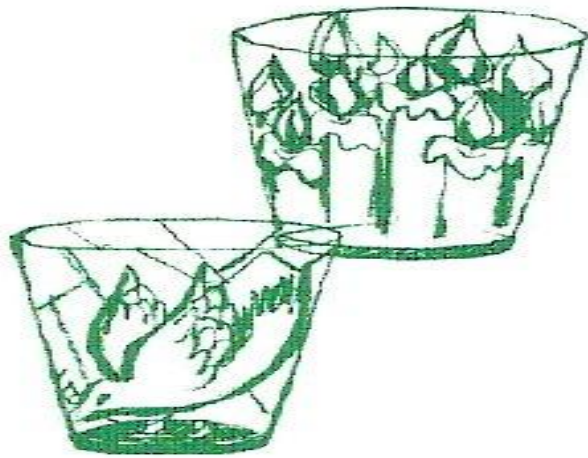


With a set of permanent felt-tip markers (see note for specific brands, not all seem to work the same way), and any of the plastic drinking glasses (see note for suggestions of brands), you can have a lovely container into which you may set a candle held in a small glass container. **YOU MUST USE A GLASS CONTAINER INSIDE THE PLASTIC GLASS, OR YOU MAY CAUSE A VERY HOT FIRE!**

Burn the candle for short periods of time only!

You may wish to draw a design lightly upon the plastic glass with a water-base marker first (the nonpermanent kind of marker), or you may just plunge right in and mark away with your permanent marker. Either way is fine. You may use stained glass windows from church or from a book, or Christmas or other greeting cards for ideas, or you may wish to make up your own, as did Rosemary!





If you are using the stained-glass effect, start with your black outline and fill in with colors later. You might want to practice on the bottom of the plastic glass, you can cover it all over later with black if you wish. You will do your design on the *outside* of the glass. (You can color the inside, too. It will make the colors deeper.)

You will notice that the permanent marker will etch a pattern on the plastic. You may wish to use a set pattern, or simply etch randomly at your whim. (One girl at SIMPLE GIFTS created the effect of a dove's feathers, and a young man added to the feeling of candles on his design

It's as simple as that! You might want a good ventilation while you are doing this craft — some markers have a strong odor.

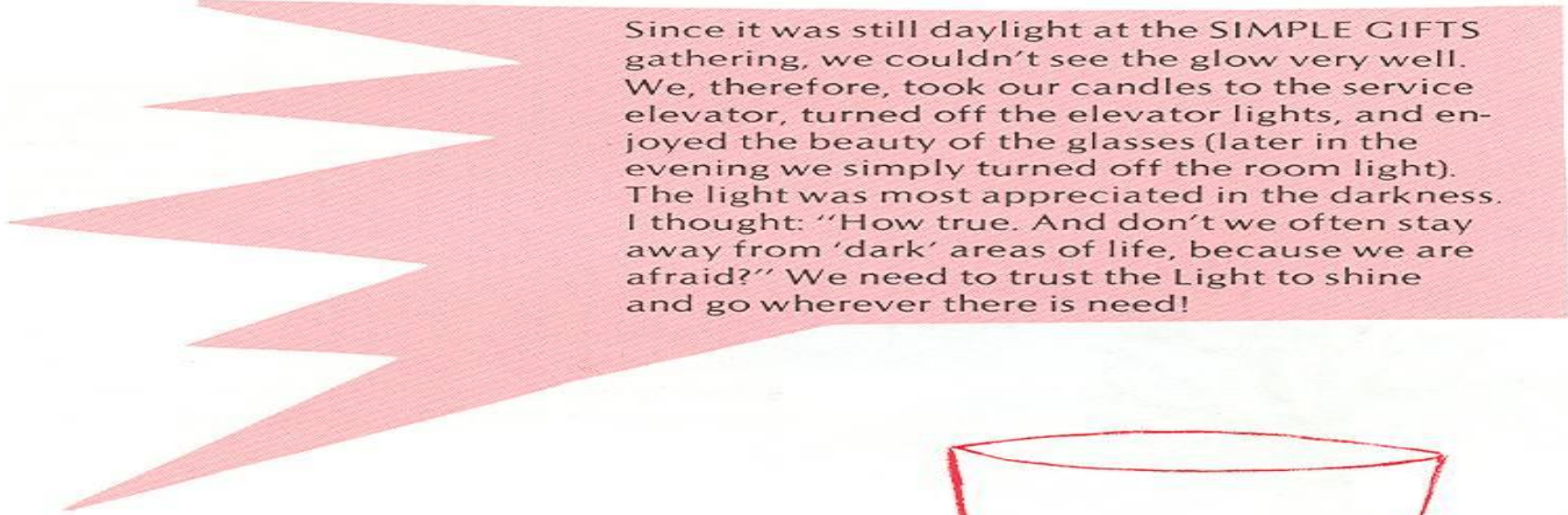
In summary: take permanent felt-tip markers, draw upon the outside of the plastic glasses, and behold the results, immediate and bright!

Set a small glass (clear) into the plastic glass, set a small candle inside it, and carefully light the candle with a long match or a candlelighter. Darken the room, and enjoy the candle's glow.

It reminds me of a child's definition of the saints:
"Saints are the people the light shines through."

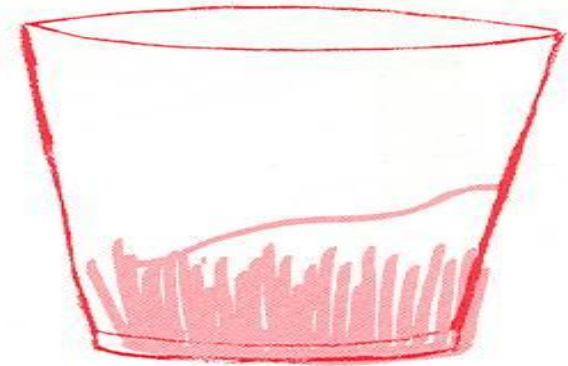
So we are, by the grace of God!






Since it was still daylight at the SIMPLE GIFTS gathering, we couldn't see the glow very well. We, therefore, took our candles to the service elevator, turned off the elevator lights, and enjoyed the beauty of the glasses (later in the evening we simply turned off the room light). The light was most appreciated in the darkness. I thought: "How true. And don't we often stay away from 'dark' areas of life, because we are afraid?" We need to trust the Light to shine and go wherever there is need!

For my candleholder I think I'll do a spring scene, suggesting new life, growth in the joy of God's creation. Green grass along the bottom, with a gentle rolling hill on one side. Straight up and down strokes, laid one upon the other, make good grass.



I'm leaving room for some flower beds, much like the violets that carpet our spring garden. Little purple dots sprinkled all through the grass really brighten it up. And some vivid yellow dots for the jonquils (and dandelions) clustered in little groups.





Along the ridge of one side that same yellow in a close row betokens the lively forsythia hedges that announce springtime in our neighborhood. On the hillside I'm growing a tree or two, a flowering cherry, deep pink in color. At the foot of the tree a sprinkling of colors suggests tulips.

A rich blue sky, spaced with some gracious clouds and highlighted with a yellow/red/golden glowing sun. A few quick dashes with a black pen suggest returning geese on their way home.



And I can't resist a word of joy:
"Hooray for God!"
(That's a literal translation for
"Hallelujah!")

TIN CAN CANDLEHOLDERS

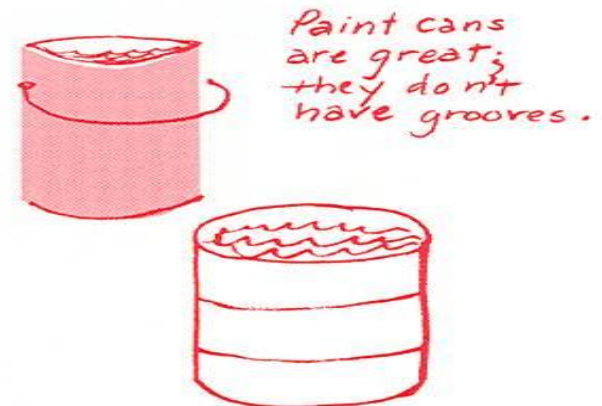


Electric lights are convenient, fairly reliable, and inexpensive. But dull! Yes, they can be dressed up with fancy shades and molded shapes, and even an appearance of motion. But they lack warmth and the surprise of flickering shadows randomly cast by dancing flames. Although reading by candlelight is not desirable, family worship and singing around a candle-lit table can be enriching and memorable. Also, it compels us to depend more upon our memory than upon books, and encourages us to memorize our songs and prayers. Since books can be taken from us (or not be around when we need them), any way in which we are led to learn by heart is worth practicing!

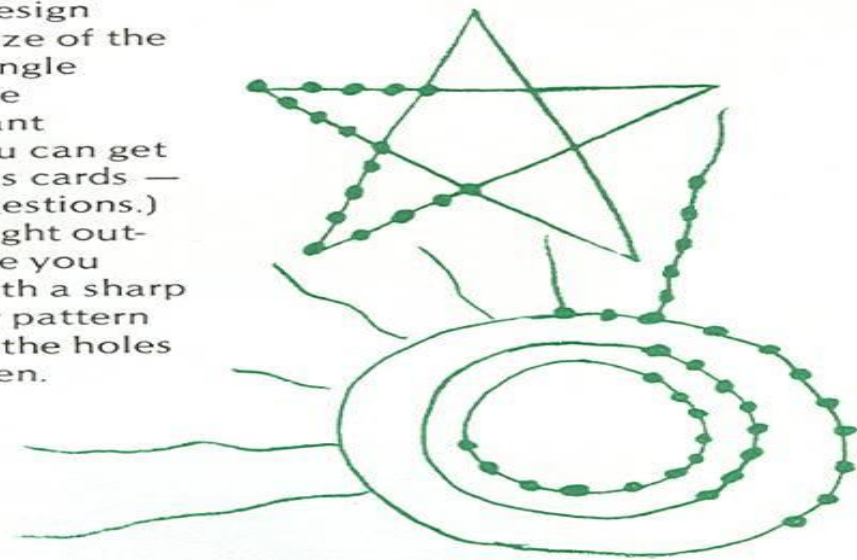
Not only candles, but also candleholders can assist our worship. In this chapter, recycled tin cans become lovely and meaningful candleholders for occasions both inside and outside the house. The Spanish enjoy candlelight processions, and, somewhere in the past, created these tin can candleholders for carrying the candles without danger of their going out in the wind.

Making the holders is simple and requires few tools: a hammer and a variety of nails, nothing more (except water for freezing). You may wish to create your designs ahead of time with pencil and paper, but that *is* an option.

You do need to begin your preparations *ahead* of time — at least two days before you plan to make your holder (not counting your saving of the tin cans). You will pour water nearly to the top of each tin can and set it to freeze (outside in the winter, in a freezer in the summer). Let it freeze for *two* days, or the core of the ice will not remain hard enough for the next step, and will collapse . . . and so will the can.



If you wish to do a pencil-and-paper design ahead of time, cut your paper to the size of the tin can, and lay it out as the flat rectangle it will be. Draw lightly an outline of the shape you want: a star, a cross, a radiant sun . . . any simple outline will do. (You can get ideas from symbol books and Christmas cards — see the bibliography for resource suggestions.) At regularly spaced points along the light outlines draw darker dots of whatever size you like. Punch through these carefully with a sharp nail to make definite holes. Tape your pattern around the tin can, and mark through the holes with the nail or a permanent felt-tip pen.



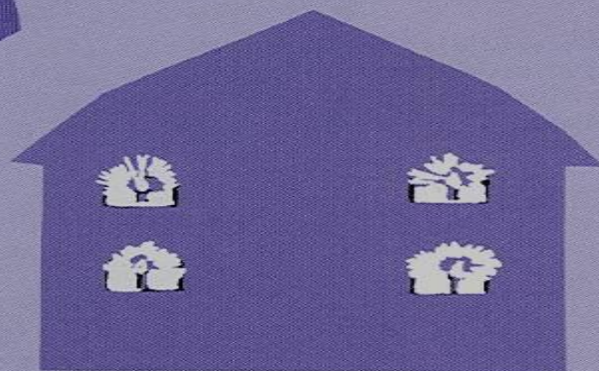
Placing the tin can (still full of ice) on a plastic cloth with a pad of newspaper under the cloth, hammer through the can with whatever size nail you prefer. Sturdy nails work best for this, and a firm, proper stroke with the hammer is the best way. Don't "choke up" on the hammer, but instead, hold the hammer at the bottom of the handle and take a complete swing (rather than "chopping" with it). Pierce through the can until you have the size hole you intended for your design, but don't be too particular if there are variations. They add interest. It is not a good idea to place the holes too close to each other, unless they are very small. For your first work keep your design simple with few holes, and progress to more difficult designs later.



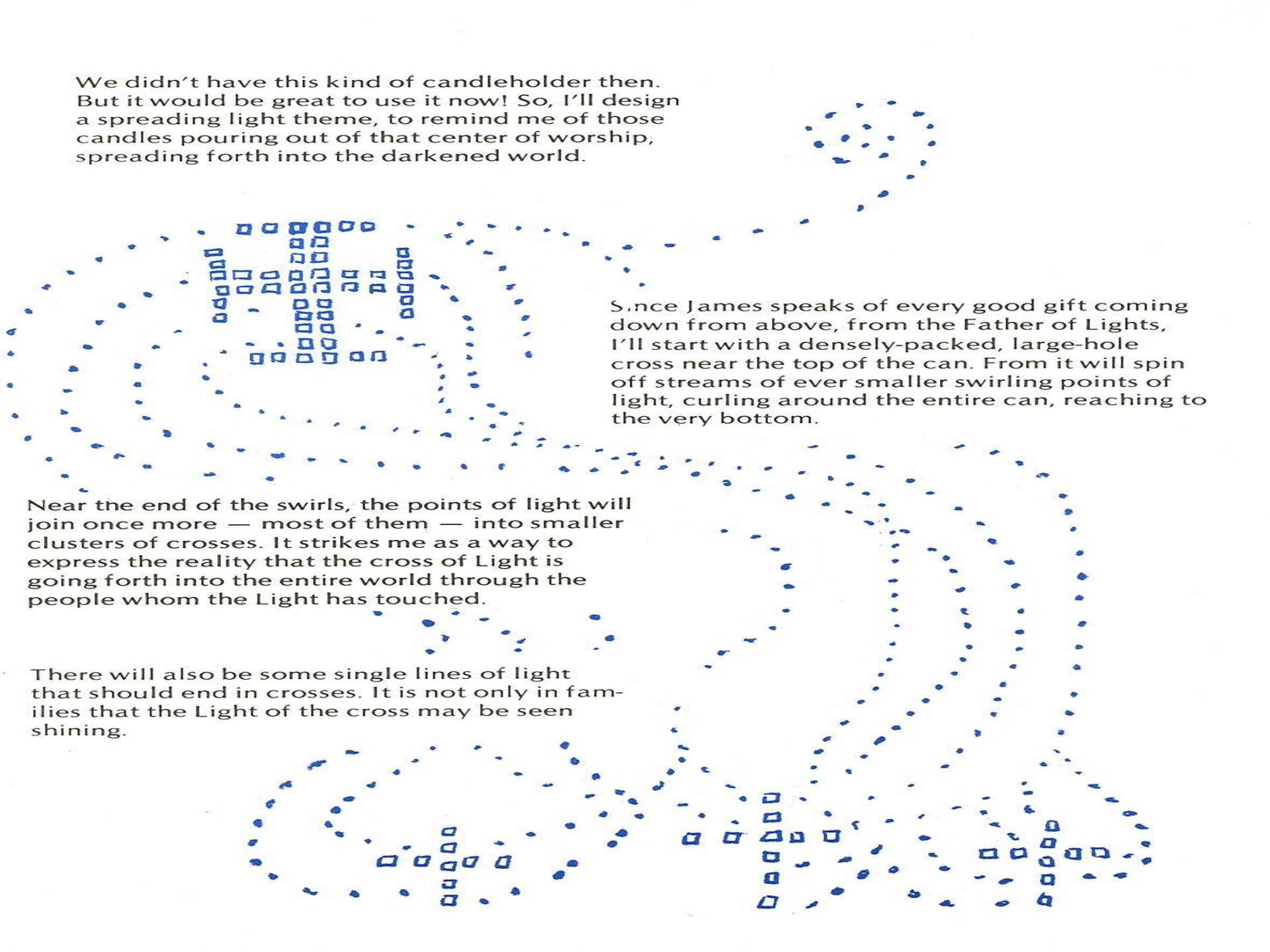
When I was a child in Mason City, Iowa, the church to which I belonged held the familiar candlelighting ceremony each Christmas. But this congregation added one element: each of us was encouraged to keep our candles lit on our way home. It was a memorable way of teaching that Christ, the Light of the world, has made us the bearers of His Light.



We all tried carefully to shield our little candles from the wind.



We didn't have this kind of candleholder then. But it would be great to use it now! So, I'll design a spreading light theme, to remind me of those candles pouring out of that center of worship, spreading forth into the darkened world.



Since James speaks of every good gift coming down from above, from the Father of Lights, I'll start with a densely-packed, large-hole cross near the top of the can. From it will spin off streams of ever smaller swirling points of light, curling around the entire can, reaching to the very bottom.

Near the end of the swirls, the points of light will join once more — most of them — into smaller clusters of crosses. It strikes me as a way to express the reality that the cross of Light is going forth into the entire world through the people whom the Light has touched.

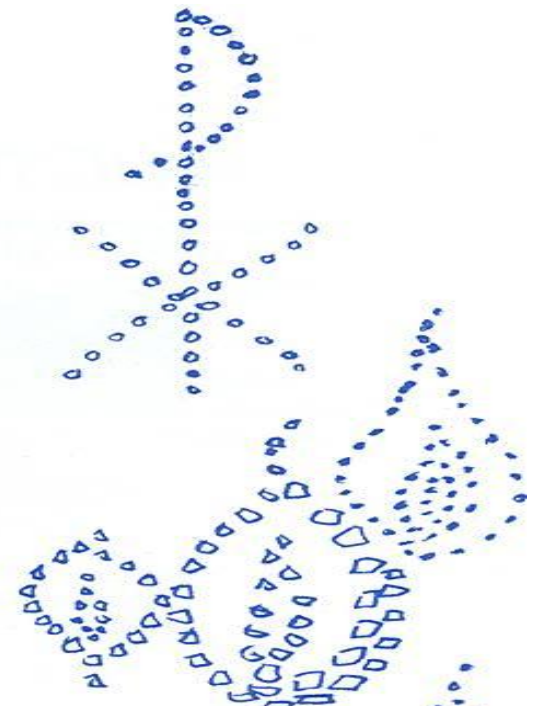
There will also be some single lines of light that should end in crosses. It is not only in families that the Light of the cross may be seen shining.

Some may wonder at the choice of the cross for a Christmas candleholder. In part, I guess I am reacting to the reason given for not showing the film *Jesus of Nazareth* at Christmas time when it was first produced: "People don't want to think about the crucifixion at Christmas."

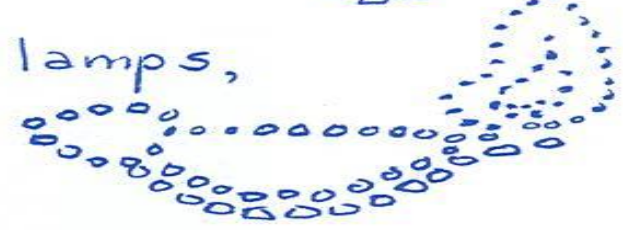
But there is another symbol for me. It is the cross that gives Christmas all its meaning. It is the cross that gives us the ability to see Christ as the Light of the world. The first celebration of Christians was not Christmas, but Easter.

Some other symbols of light:

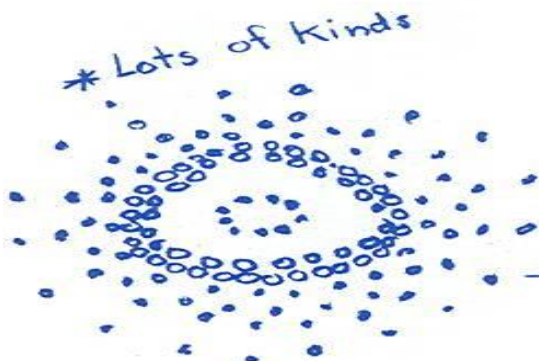
Pentecost flames,



The Virgin's lamps,



The sun,*



The moon (crescent),



and The stars,

