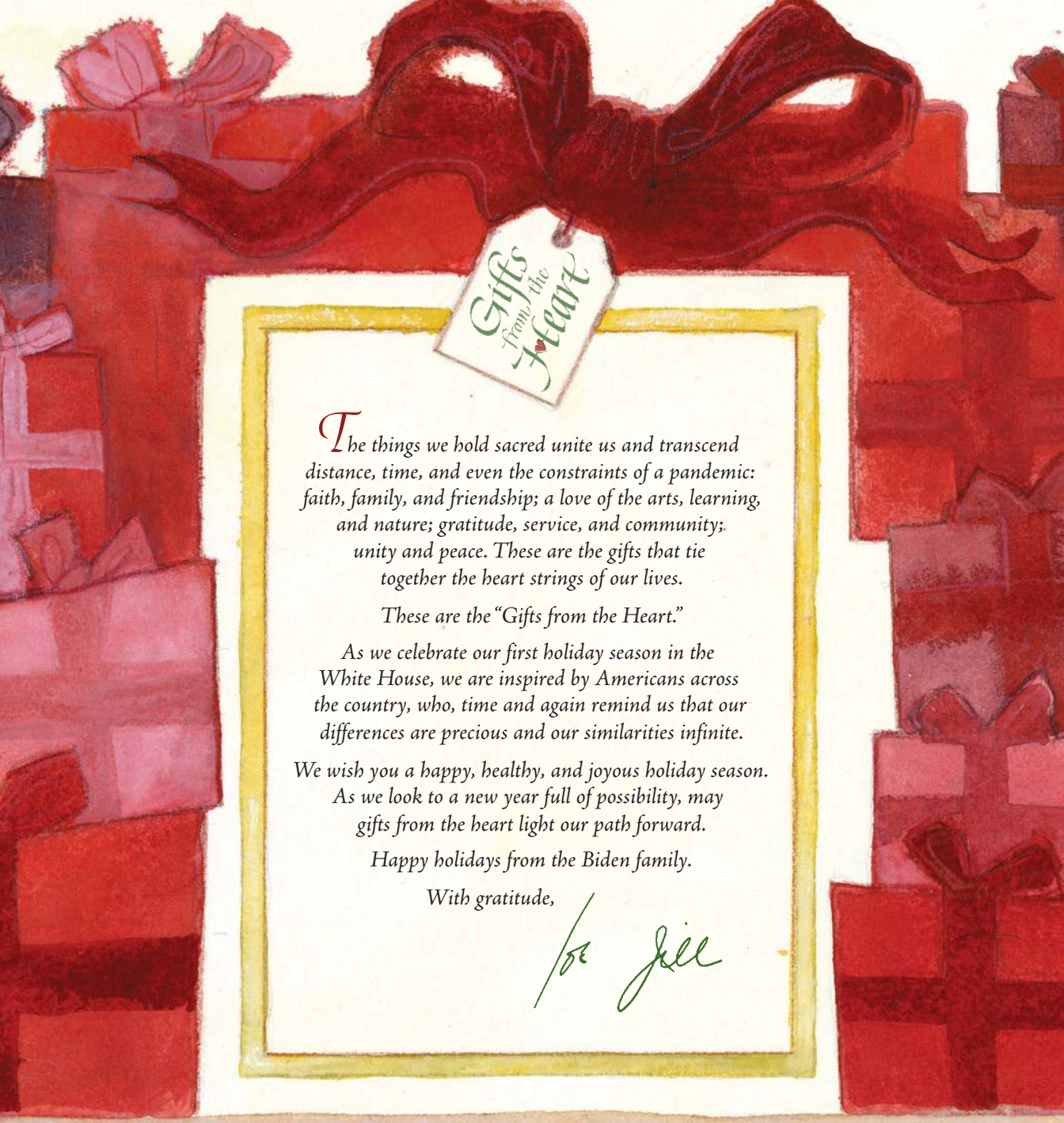
Holidays at the White House 2021



The things we hold sacred unite us and transcend distance, time, and even the constraints of a pandemic: faith, family, and friendship; a love of the arts, learning, and nature; gratitude, service, and community; unity and peace. These are the gifts that tie together the heart strings of our lives.

These are the "Gifts from the Heart."

As we celebrate our first holiday season in the White House, we are inspired by Americans across the country, who, time and again remind us that our differences are precious and our similarities infinite.

We wish you a happy, healthy, and joyous holiday season. As we look to a new year full of possibility, may gifts from the heart light our path forward.

Happy holidays from the Biden family.

With gratitude,

Joe Jill

East Colonnade & East Landing

We begin our 2021 White House holiday decor honoring the *Gift of Service*. This year has been defined by uncommon acts of compassion, bravery, and selflessness by so many, and we celebrate their service and sacrifice.

Throughout the East Colonnade, iridescent doves and shooting stars illuminate the hallway, representing the peace and light brought to us all by the service of frontline workers and first responders during the pandemic. Poinsettias punctuate the glowing topiaries opposite the windows to the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden, dedicated by First Lady Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson in 1965. The East Wing of the White House was expanded to its current form in 1942 and includes the Office of the First Lady.

The Gold Star Tree honors the heroic men and women of our Nation's military, who have laid down their lives for our country, and the families who carry on their legacies.

Gold Star Tree

Library

Throughout the past year especially, we have all appreciated the *Gift of Learning*. Educators found ways to connect with students in new and innovative ways, pushing through the challenges of the pandemic. America's students and families needed champions like never before, and they found their heroes in educators.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt dedicated this room to serve as the White House Library in 1935. This space now holds approximately 2,700 volumes of books focusing primarily on American history and literature.

This year, stacks of books as well as butterflies and birds made of recycled newspapers decorate the Library, reminding us that, with the *Gift of Learning*, we can soar to places we never imagined and rise to meet any challenge.

Vermeil Room

To celebrate the *Gift of the Visual Arts*, the Vermeil (French for "gilded silver") Room glows with bright, bold, colorful paint brushes and paint swatches, representing the diverse American artists whose talents bring delight to all. From historic portraits to graphic art displays, from light installations to marble sculptures, from wood carvings to children's handprint art, the visual arts bring us joy, calm our minds, and inspire our imaginations.

On the walls of this room are the portraits of First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy and First Lady Lou Henry Hoover.

Sixty years ago, Mrs. Kennedy founded the White House Historical Association, to protect, preserve, and provide public access to the rich history of America's Executive Mansion. Through educational efforts and programming, the People's House is shared far beyond the White House gates.

China Room

This holiday, as you gather hand-in-hand and heart-to-heart around the dinner table, we hope the China Room inspires you to share healing laughs, comforting meals, and warm memories with loved ones, extending the *Gift of Friendship and Sharing*. Wrapping the branches of the room's Christmas tree are garlands of intertwined hands symbolizing friendship, fellowship, and merriment.

The China Room, which was formalized by First Lady Edith Wilson in 1917, houses tableware used by past presidential families. Each set reflects the presidents and first ladies who selected their designs and recalls the State Dinners and celebratory meals that have brought together world leaders and diplomats.

East Room

We are restoring the soul of this Nation with love and understanding, with care and compassion, and most of all, with gratitude. The East Room celebrates the *Gift of Gratitude*, symbolized by small acts of kindness and handwritten notes full of grateful reflection. Whether it is penning a thank you card, sending a sweet text with a heart emoji, or dropping off muffins on a neighbor's front porch, these expressions of gratitude heal our hearts and bring us together.

Designed to be the largest room in the White House, the East Room has hosted public receptions, ceremonies, bill signings, and other memorable occasions.

This room also features the most iconic White House artifact: Gilbert Stuart's portrait of George Washington, which First Lady Dolley Madison helped save in 1814 when the White House was about to be set aflame during the War of 1812.

It was George Washington who, when bidding farewell to the officers of the victorious Continental Army, described himself as having "a heart full of love and gratitude" for those who served with him in the cause of freedom.

Since 1967, the Neapolitan crèche, with over 40 figurines from the eighteenth century, has been displayed here every holiday season.

Gift of Nature

Green Room

The Green Room honors the *Gift of Nature*. We can always find respite, tranquility, and restoration in the bounty of nature. The beauty of the sunrise and the constancy of the tides remind us that the world always moves forward and takes us with it. Hope renews with each new day.

Arranged in the windows of the room are purple trees accented with natural orchids. Lush foliage and sprays of greenery are draped along the fireplace mantel. Once Thomas Jefferson's dining room, the Green Room houses Henry Ossawa Tanner's *Sand Dunes at Sunset, Atlantic City,* using actual sand to illustrate the windswept beaches of our coasts.

Blue Room

The Blue Room, featuring the Official White House Christmas Tree, celebrates the *Gift of Peace and Unity*. Cascading down the tree, peace doves carry a shimmering banner embossed with the names of each state and territory of the United States, reminding us all of the importance of unity and national harmony.

Beginning in the Eisenhower Administration, a large Christmas tree has been consistently featured in the Blue Room. The centerpiece of the holiday season, an 18½ foot Fraser fir from Jefferson, North Carolina, stands floor to ceiling and fills the oval room. Every year, the room's chandelier is removed to accommodate the Christmas tree's full height. This year's tree was presented by Rusty and Beau Estes of Peak Farms, who were named 2021 Grand Champion Grower in the annual National Christmas Tree Association's National Christmas Tree contest—their third time winning this award.

To learn how to make your own peace dove to share with your loved ones, please see the craft page at the end of this booklet.

Red Room

The Red Room captures the joy and wonder of the holiday season by celebrating the *Gift of the Performing Arts*. Brass instruments hang from the mantel against the rich, red, silk wall coverings. Ballet slippers, tap shoes, and musical notes dance around the tree like sugarplum fairies.

The performing arts have taken on new meaning in recent years, the advent of social media has empowered incredible artists and performers to share their talent with the world from their own living rooms. When theatres and concert halls shut down during the pandemic, new apps and digital platforms allowed us all to join together virtually, keeping us connected with performers in joy, laughter, and awe when we needed it most.

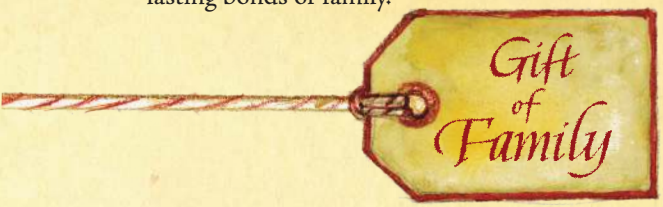
In the Red Room, two cranberry topiaries are on display, a tradition which began in 1975.

State Dining Room

The State Dining Room celebrates the cherished *Gift of Family*—those we are born into, those we choose, and those we create. The pandemic kept many of us apart, yet it also reminded us that our time together is so precious.

Just below the family stockings, an engraving in the fireplace mantel reads, "I Pray Heaven To Bestow The Best of Blessings Upon This House…."

The words from this blessing were taken from a letter written by President John Adams to his wife, Abigail, dated November 2, 1800. These words are now known as the White House blessing. This year, the Christmas trees in the State Dining Room glisten with ornaments featuring photographs of First Families, past and present. Each family who made this house a home reminds us all of the enduring love and lasting bonds of family.



THE GINGERBREAD WHITE HOUSE

Situated on the eagle pier table in the State Dining Room is the official 2021 Gingerbread White House. This year's gingerbread display is inspired by our gratitude and admiration for our Nation's frontline workers who kept our country running through the global pandemic, often at great risk to themselves and their families.

The display includes eight detailed replicas of community buildings representing frontline workers. To complete the finishing touches, the White House pastry team used 55 sheets of baked gingerbread, 120 pounds of pastillage, 35 pounds of chocolate, and 25 pounds of royal icing.

Gift of Faith

Grand Foyer and Cross Hall

The Grand Foyer and Cross Hall of the White House celebrate the *Gift of Faith and Community*. With the strength of faith and love of community, we are comforted and reassured that we are never alone.

Floating candles symbolize the light we carry out into the world. The hallway alcoves and tree displays depict wintry scenes of life within our towns and cities, reflecting the solace of faith, the lasting bonds of community, and the perseverance of the American spirit. Just like the shooting stars in the night sky, we are encouraged by the brightness of tomorrow and the hope it can bring.

As you celebrate this holiday season, join us in taking a few moments to pause and reflect on these intangible *Gifts from the Heart* and the many blessings bestowed upon us all.

and Community

Holiday Recipe

CREAM PUFFS:

¼ cup whole milk
¼ cup water
1 teaspoon granulated sugar
1 teaspoon local honey
⅛ teaspoon salt
½ cup + 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour, sifted
2 eggs

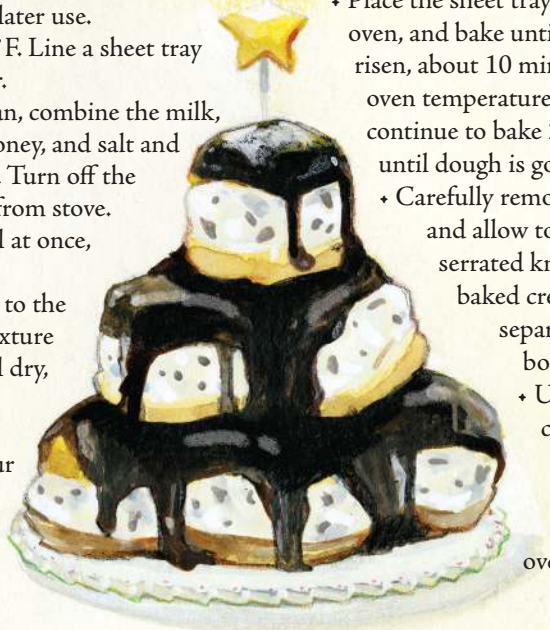
EGG WASH:

1 egg
1 teaspoon water
Pinch of salt

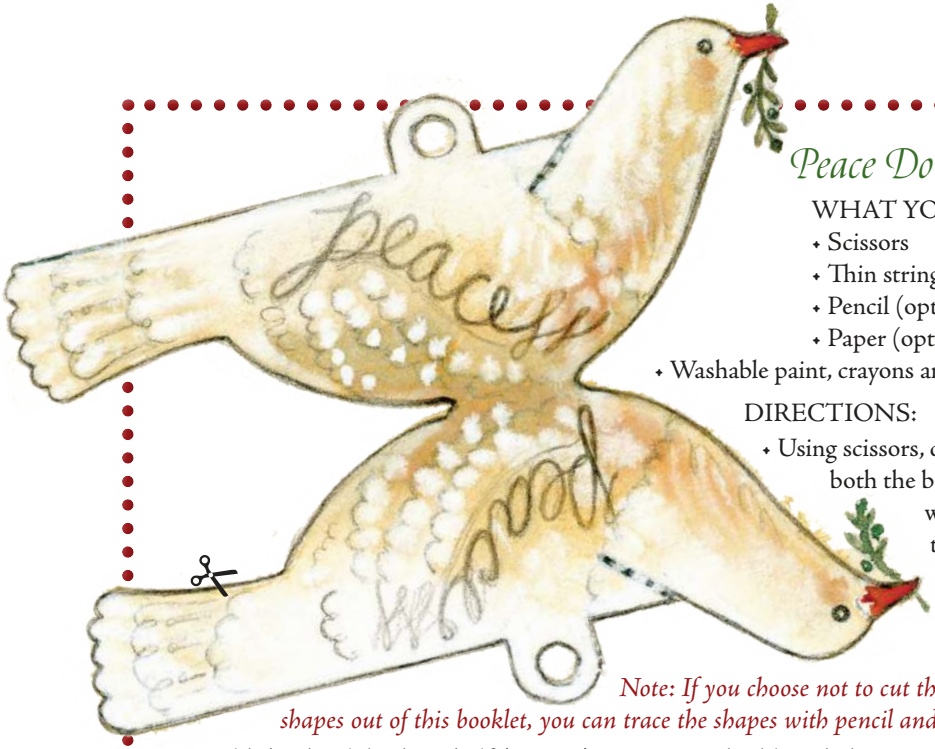
Yields about 35 miniature 1½ inch cream puffs

DIRECTIONS:

- In a small bowl, using a fork, whisk together the egg, water, and salt. Pour through a fine strainer. Set aside for later use.
- Preheat oven to 385˚F. Line a sheet tray with parchment paper.
- In a medium saucepan, combine the milk, water, butter, sugar, honey, and salt and stir. Bring all to a boil. Turn off the heat and remove pan from stove. Add the sifted flour all at once, stirring quickly.
- Return the saucepan to the stove and cook the mixture on medium heat, until dry, about one minute.
- Remove the mixture from the heat and pour into a stand-up mixer with a paddle attachment.
- With the machine on medium speed, add the eggs one at a time. Once all of the eggs are added, turn off the machine; remove the paddle attachment and using a rubber spatula, scrape the bottom and sides of the mixing bowl.
- Transfer the cooked dough into a pastry bag fitted with a plain piping tip. Pipe the desired shape—about 1½-inch rounds.
- Evenly brush the surface of the piped rounds with the egg wash.
- Using a fork dipped in the egg wash, make an impression on top of the piped circles.
- Place the sheet tray into the preheated oven, and bake until the rounds have risen, about 10 minutes. Lower the oven temperature to 325˚F and continue to bake 25-45 minutes, until dough is golden.
- Carefully remove from the oven and allow to cool. Using a serrated knife, slice the baked cream puff in half to separate the top and bottom portion.
- Use your favorite chocolate chip ice cream as the filling, and drizzle chocolate sauce over the cream puffs.



Enjoy this treat from the White House pastry shop!



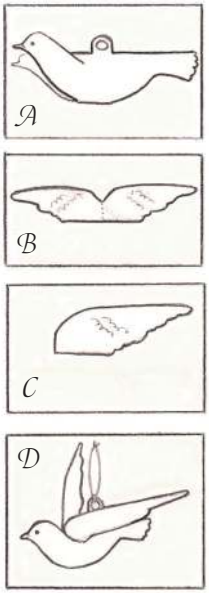
Peace Dove Ornament

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Scissors
- Thin string or ribbon
- Pencil (optional)
- Paper (optional)
- Washable paint, crayons and markers (optional)

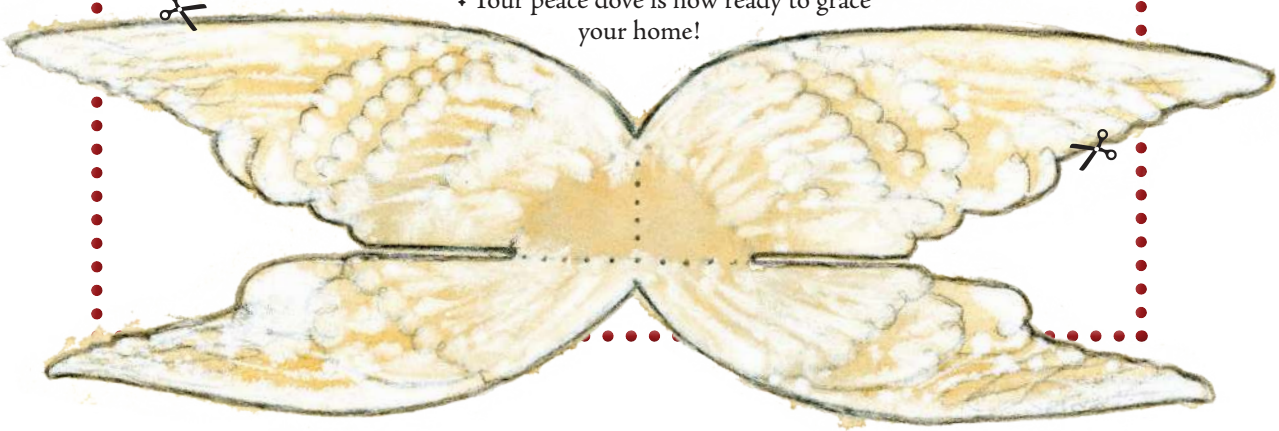
DIRECTIONS:

- Using scissors, cut out both the body and wings of the dove.



Note: If you choose not to cut the dove shapes out of this booklet, you can trace the shapes with pencil and paper.

- Fold the dove's body in half (Step A), to create a double-sided image. Using scissors, cut along the dotted line behind the neck of the dove to create a slit.
- Fold the dove's wings longways along the dotted line (Step B).
- Fold the wings again in half along the dotted line (Step C).
- Slide the wings into the slit behind the dove's neck (Step D).
- Punch a hole at the top of the ornament, then thread a string or ribbon through the hole and tie a knot to hang.
- If you like, feel free to personalize your peace dove with optional paint, glitter, crayons, or markers!
- Your peace dove is now ready to grace your home!



By the numbers...

- There are 41 Christmas trees throughout the White House.
- Approximately 6,000 feet of ribbon, over 300 candles, and over 10,000 ornaments were used this year to decorate the White House.
- Over 78,750 holiday lights decorate the trees, garlands, wreaths, and displays in the White House.
- Twenty-five classic wreaths adorn the north and south facades of the White House.
- It takes over 100 dedicated volunteers working a full week to decorate the inside and outside of the White House.

The President and Dr. Biden thank the Executive Residence staff and the team of over 100 volunteers who dedicated their time, energy, and talents to transform the White House for the holiday season. Your hard work and creativity made this possible. To Amy June Bates for her creative illustrations throughout this booklet that beautifully capture "Gifts from the Heart," thank you.

We invite you to share your experience using:
#WHChristmas
#WHHolidays

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