

The Salvation Army Western Territory

Northwest Division

Centralia Corps

Craft: **“The Victorian Top Hat”** by Captain Gin Pack

Flourishing in the (grinding) season

There are so many things I love about the Christmas season. For me, it feels like an all-senses adventure; there are beautiful sights to see, smells to breathe in, special treats that bring us back to special memories. Nearly everywhere you go, little whispers of Christmas carols play in the background, and there is certainly no shortage of things to do during the grinding season of Christmas in The Salvation Army.

Merriam Webster defines flourishing as to *“grow or develop in a healthy or vigorous way, especially as the result of a particularly favorable environment”*. Sometimes during what we longingly call the “busy season” may feel like we are just grinding along, surviving and not flourishing.

However, I have often found that even if the season feels like we could not jam one more thing into the schedule, the one thing that is like a balm to a tired, existing, toy sorting, kettle counting, bell ringing soul, is the gift of time with a friend or two. If you have a regular group that meets through all seasons, this is a fantastic opportunity to find a place to flourish even in the busiest of seasons.

The wonderful thing about this project, is not only is it budget minded, but it allows for a time of fellowship and creative freedom, it also is wonderful display piece as a center of a table or even just around to add a little décor to your space. This project is also an excellent opportunity to gather supplies and spend intentional time with one another and all it requires is a little preplanning.

The supplies you will need are:

- #10 can
- A larger ceramic plate or a plate charger, or any other item such as foam board or wood cut into a circle that is about 50% greater than the mouth of the can
- Black matte spray paint
- Inexpensive embellishments such as Christmas tree picks, pinecones, sparkly snowflakes, I often find the perfect ones at dollar tree or other similar stores.
- Wide ribbon
- Hot glue

- An additional item I really love, and I think it brings a beautiful element to it is a product called “*SnowTex*”. I purchase mine from Amazon, but it can be found in local stores as well. It adds a snow texture to any medium you’re working with.

My husband and I have been blessed to serve in our community where we serve a hot meal a few times a week. Because of this, we often find ourselves with those large #10 cans. If you do not have access to these cans, feel free to check in with local restaurants, places who do serve community meals or head to your local stores. Many of them carry certain items in those big cans. You will want to collect as many cans as you have people or as many as you need for festive decorations and centerpieces.

Once you have collected the cans, make sure they are clean, the label is off, and any excess adhesive or buildup has been removed. Once they are dry, take your plate, making sure it is clean and free of debris. Then glue the can to the plate using hot glue or something like E6000 and then spray paint. Once the paint is dry, it’s time to decorate!

I prefer the look of the Victorian top hat with a large ribbon at the base of the hat, felt or other textured material is a nice touch. After the ribbon is glued into place, the rest is really up to you how you want to decorate it. I tend to prefer a “theme.” Some really easy but beautiful ones are:

- woodland (use berries, twigs, pinecones, and a little bit of the snow-tex),
- frosty (use a little glitter either in white or blue and attach glittery snowflakes),
- or even something like a pre-purchased little church ornament can make it look spectacular. It really is that easy and your hat can be as unique as you!

Corrie ten Boom said: “*If the devil can’t make us bad, he will make us busy.*” If that quote does not cut a little too deep and meet me toe to toe. I, myself am so guilty of waking up, a day full ahead of me and before I know it, I am headed back to bed having only checked off half of my list and offering my meager offering to the Lord of a whispered prayer before I drift off to sleep only to lather, rinse, repeat.

My sweet sisters, the Lord delights in you! Psalm 149:4 says, “*For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.*” Take this very sacred time when the whole world is grinding along. God calls us to flourish and delight in Him, to be intentional and mostly bask in the gift of creation as you too, create something masterful. I have always found that some of the most beautiful moments have been when I have planned ahead, and then let creativity develop. I pray that in this season, you do not just get swept away with all that there needs to be done but that God calls to you flourish.