

Panama Missions

OPERATION CHRISTMAS JOY

2026 LEADER'S GUIDE

INTRODUCTION: Operation Christmas Joy provides shoebox gifts, gift bags, and school backpacks loaded with small toys, personal care items, school supplies, religious materials and candy for needy children in Panama every December. In some settings, mothers are given "care bags." Many of the gifts include a Bible story book or a New Testament. Each gift is also accompanied by a teaching tract with contact information for local churches of Christ. Other items sent include clothing, flip flops, stuffed animals, and church supplies. This guidebook will explain how you can participate. There are pretty specific guidelines about how to prepare and send your gifts. It is very important that you study these guidelines and follow them closely. A mission team from the U.S. travels to Panama in December to join forces with native Christians to distribute the gifts in schools, churches, and remote Indian villages.



OPERATION CHRISTMAS JOY CONTACT DIRECTORY

Operation Christmas Joy Coordinator

Betsy Brady
15523 US Highway 31
Hope Hull, AL 36043
Home: 334-288-2458
Cell: 334-315-1648

EMAIL: grammybrady@bellsouth.net

Assistant— Elenore Conley
Cell: 909-815-7773

BOTH WELCOME TEXT MESSAGES

Oversight Eldership
Salem Church of Christ
Honoraville, Alabama

OCJ Shipping Address:

Att: Betsy Brady
15523 US Highway 31
Hope Hull, AL 36043
334-315-1648

Panama Missions Director:

Larry Brady
P.O. Box 451
Hope Hull, AL 36043
Home: 334-288-2458
Cell: 334-303-4850

panmission@bellsouth.net

WEBSITE: panamamissions.net

Please let Betsy Brady know if you are planning to participate in Operation Christmas Joy.

2026 DEADLINE FOR GIFTS IN MONTGOMERY: FRI., OCTOBER 23 (
Except for those on the Truck Route, which will be October 15-16)

OPERATION CHRISTMAS JOY CHECKLIST FOR LEADERS

1. **Getting Shoeboxes.** Please start early to purchase your shoeboxes because they can be difficult to find at the last minute.

The **Dollar Tree** 5.2 quart shoe boxes are now \$1.75 each. These are called **Essential Plastic Storage Boxes with Lids, SKU 163097**. If the store does not have enough you can order at dollartree.com and have delivered to the store. Allow up to two weeks.



The **Walmart: 6 qt. Sterlite Storage Containers with Gray Lids** are a better choice as they are larger, cheaper and more durable. They come with "titanium" colored lids or white lids. In the store you can find them in sets of 10 for \$10.98 and on Walmart.com you can order either the sets of 10 or a case of 40 for \$44.66 delivered to your home. (White lids, case of 36)

2. **preparing the shoeboxes to hand out.** If you hand out shoeboxes for individuals to fill, be sure give each person a copy of the "Step by Step Shoebox Guide." If you have pre-decided how many of each age you want to prepare, then it is a good idea to put an age/sex label on the outside of each shoebox to remind the participants. A label will also have to be added to each final, wrapped gift. Our shipping boxes will hold **9 DollarTree shoebox gifts** or **8 of the larger 6 quart boxes** from Walmart or other stores.

3. **Making candy bags.** Each shoebox gift is to include a small Ziploc bag of hard wrapped candy (snack size is good) — preferably a **variety of candy**. The best way to have appropriate candy bags is to designate a person or a group to buy the candy in bulk and to assemble the candy bags to be included with all of the gifts. When individuals are left to include their own candy bags, the problems can be these: all of one kind of candy, candy that will melt, too much or not enough candy. **Do not include sugar free.** *Another idea: Ask each participant to donate some candy. Compile all of the donated candy and make up the candy bags out of an assortment.*



4. **Including religious materials.** Each year you will be provided with a special religious tract in Spanish that should be included with each gift. An original will be provided to you so that you can make copies. The tract can also be downloaded from the website: www.panamamissions.net. **Make sure to use the current year's tract.** If you also purchase some of the suggested religious materials (New Testaments, story books or coloring books), ordering instructions are on p. 5. Storybooks and coloring books can be folded to fit in the box.

5. **Setting deadlines.** Be sure to set a deadline for filled boxes to be returned to you that allows enough time for the final steps. There will always be "stragglers." All gifts are due in Montgomery by Oct. 23 unless they are picked up by the truck on Oct. 15-16.

6. **Checking and correcting gifts.** The most important task of the OCJ leaders is to check the gifts before they are wrapped and labeled. Sometimes folks get confused and mix items from different age groups and include items that are not appropriate for the age. Some gifts may be "skimpy" and need some help. Occasionally there are broken toys and items that are inappropriate or even dangerous. Some gifts are filled so full that you will need to "un-package" items or even remove a few so that the lid will close. You may need to secure some boxes with a rubber band before wrapping, but please don't use shipping tape as the children can't get it off.



7. **Wrapping and Labeling gifts.** Each gift should be wrapped in Christmas paper. A label indicating the age/sex must be attached to one of the ends. A well-wrapped gift will hold up much better in shipping than one poorly wrapped.

Tip: Pre-cut your paper to just the correct size so that gifts can be wrapped with little waste, and no extra cutting. Also office style tape dispensers are much easier to work with. Wrapping duties should be given to the most capable helpers — not young children.

8. Packing gifts into shipping boxes. We have **shipping boxes** available in Montgomery. We send everything in our custom made shipping boxes, which helps us load the container more efficiently. (We are happy to supply the shipping boxes to anyone who can pick them up in Montgomery. Sometimes we can drop them off to you if we have someone coming your way. Otherwise, your gifts will be shifted **Dollar Tree 5.2 qt. shoeboxes, you can easily get 9 shoeboxes in the new shipping boxes. If you use Walmart 6 qt. boxes, only 8 will fit, but that is ok.**



9. Continue to try to fill shipping boxes with the same age/sex when possible. Indicate on the outside of the box what age/sex is included. If you do not have eight or nine of the same age/sex, please indicate on the outside of the box that it is "mixed" and we will repack them in Montgomery with others. **PLEASE CONTACT BETSY BRADY WHEN YOU ARE READY TO BRING YOUR GIFTS TO MONTGOMERY TO FIND OUT THE DROP OFF LOCATION.** The **SHIPPING ADDRESS** is on page 1.

10. Paying for shipping. Shipping charges (\$5 for shoe boxes & diaper bags; \$2 for gift bags and stockings) should be sent separately to Betsy Brady at the P.O. Box 451 Hope Hull, AL 36043 address (see page 1). Please send a check made out to PANAMA MISSIONS (No cash, please). **Do not send money or checks inside shoe boxes or shipping boxes.**

Please include the REPORT form with your check.

11. Gift bags have become an important part of this program because of some hard to reach locations. We can get 20 gift bags in one shipping box, even when the gift bags are quite full. **We need your help** to make the gift bags more consistent. Please consult the instructions on the following page.

12. Sewing dresses continues to be a popular part of this project. We can use sizes 2-12. We encourage you to be creative. Little girls in Panama like to look special, just like in the U.S. If you can, send panties to go with the new dresses. Please include each dress or outfit in a one gallon zip bag. Write the size on the bag where it can be easily read. **See new guidelines for sending clothing, p 7.**

13. Ready-made clothing for boys and girls. We take all of the new and used **summer weight** clothing for boys and girls that you send. Make up as many sets as you can (shorts/shirt/underwear or dress/underwear) in zip lock bags with the size indicated. We are no longer sending clothing or gifts for teenagers. **NO ADULT CLOTHING, UNLESS NEW.** **See guidelines for sending clothing, p 7.**

15. Stuffed animals: We love to give out stuffed animals in Panama. **Your help is needed.** Please sanitize (wash) if possible. Sort by **small, medium and large (NO EXTRA LARGE OR LIFE SIZE)** and send to us in **13 gal. trash bags** sorted by the size. Mark the size on the outside with a heavy marker. **Tie bags with a bow so we can open them. NO BAGS LARGER THAN 13 GAL.**

16. Other items always needed: small toys, baby clothing and other baby items, school and Sunday school supplies, flip flops, etc. Over-the-counter medicines are always needed at the Sanson Clinic of Hope — but are never to be included in gift packages.



OVER THE COUNTER MEDICINES

Ibuprofen • Triple antibiotic ointment • Anti-itch cream •
 Anti-fungal cream • Adult and children's vitamins • Toothbrushes/toothpaste
 Children's (non aspirin) fever and pain reliever, liquid or tablet • Children's decongestant
 medicine Tablet form of Pepto-Bismol or store brand equivalent • Head lice medication

GUIDELINES FOR GIFT BAGS

There continues to be a need for a large number of gift bags which are easier to transport to remote, hard-to-reach villages.

Could you make some gifts bags with your "left over" stuff, even if you have to **buy a few extra things** to make it work? Or could you just purpose to make 10 or more gift bags? That would be great!

IMPORTANT—Please only make as many bags as you can fill full and correctly. If you still have left over items, send them to us and we will use them to make more gift bags.

IMPORTANT:

1. **Use gallon zip lock, preferably with the double lock strips.**
2. **Put a label** on each bag indicating the age group and sex, i.e. YOUNGER BOY, OLDER GIRL, etc.
3. **In every gift include:** toothbrush, toothpaste, candy, several toys and gift items and the Spanish Tract

Please put a copy of the SPANISH TRACT in each gift bag.

PREPARE AND SORT BY THESE 2 AGE GROUPS:

YOUNGER BOY

(These would be for 2-7 years.)

Toothbrush	Toothbrush
Toothpaste (small/med.)	Toothpaste (Small/med)
Small plastic toys/bubbles	Small Plastic Toys/bubbles
Small ball	Crayons
Stuffed animal	Stuffed animal or doll
Comb	Brush/Hair Accessories
Story book in Spanish	Story book in Spanish
Wrapped Hard Candy	Wrapped Hard Candy

YOUNGER GIRL

OLDER BOY (8-12 YRS)

Toothbrush
Toothpaste (small/med.)
Pens/pencils/erasers
Crayons/Markers
Small toys/stuffed animal
Comb/hotel shampoo/deodorant
sunglasses
Bubbles /jump rope
Pencils/sharpener
Small Notepad/Spanish N.T.
Small Flashlight
Wrapped Hard Candy

OLDER GIRL

Toothbrush
Toothpaste (Small/med)
pens/pencils/erasers
Crayons/Markers
Small toys/stuffed animal
Lip gloss/hotel shampoo/nail polish
Hair accessories/jewelry/sunglasses
Bubbles/jump rope
Pencils/sharpener
Small Notepad/Spanish N.T.
Jump Rope
Wrapped Hard Candy



**USE 1 GALLON ZIP LOCK BAGS
DOUBLE ZIPPER TYPE IS BEST**

MORE SUGGESTIONS:

- Don't include marbles or any "heavy" items.
- Don't include coloring books that make it hard to keep the bag zipped.
- Small clothing items are fine, even flip flops if the bag can be zipped.

**WE ARE NO LONGER MAKING GIFT BAGS
FOR TEENAGERS**

YOU MAY THINK OF OTHER SUITABLE ITEMS. YOU DON'T NEED TO INCLUDE ALL OF THESE THINGS — JUST WHAT YOU CAN. **PLEASE INCLUDE THE SPANISH TRACT.**

SHIPPING FOR EACH GIFT BAG IS \$2.00.

2026 DEADLINE FOR GIFTSIN MONTGOMERY:

FRIDAY, OCTOBER23, 2026

(October 15-16 for gifts picked up on the truck route.)

SPANISH MATERIALS FOR SHOEBOXES

Try to decide in advance if Spanish materials are to be ordered and included with your shoebox gifts. Oftentimes, the church will pay for these materials — or a few generous individuals will provide the funds.

HOW TO ORDER SPANISH MATERIALS:

(This company will send samples on request and will bill a church.
They are also very helpful when you phone.)

Worldwide Spanish Literature Ministry

P.O. Box 4650 ~ Wichita Falls, Texas 76308
Phone: 940-692-4933 Catalog Online: www.spanliterature.com

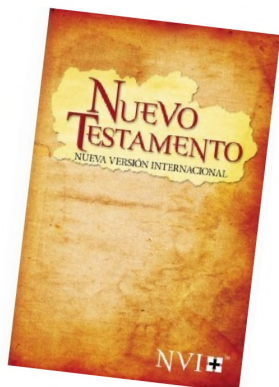
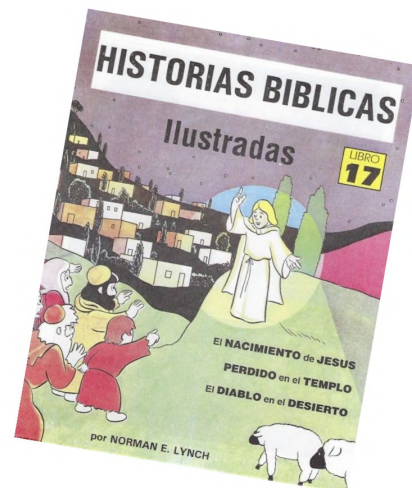
These are items that have been used by many groups:

Item # 0679 - LIBERTAD – Libertad en Cristo (Freedom in Christ) Bilingual study of Jesus' life for children in cartoon form.

Items# 0507 (.94) & 0721 are coloring books about the life of Jesus.

The following are Old and New Testament stories in cartoon form — I suggest ordering several different stories so that there will be many stories in "circulation" that can be shared.

- #0173** (The Birth of Jesus; Lost in the Temple; The Devil in the Desert)
- #0174** (The First Disciples; Miracle at Cana; The Well at Samaria; Riot at Nazareth; The Great Catch)
- #0175** (The Great Healer; Sermon on the Mount; A Roman's Faith; The Road to Nain; #0176 (Perilous Journey; Jairus' Daughter; The Feeding of the 5000; Fear in the Night; Miracle on the Mountain)
- #0177** (The Sinful Woman; The Blind Man; The Good Samaritan; Mary, Martha and Lazarus; Stories Jesus Told)
- #0178** (Ten Sick Men; The Beggar at Jericho; The Triumphal Entry; More Stories Jesus Told)
- #0179** (The Last Supper; Death on the Cross; The Final Triumph)
- #0180** (The Early Church; The Perils of Paul)
- #0717** (Creation; Adam and Eve; Noah and the Ark)
- #0718** (The Tower of Babel; Abraham, Isaac and Rebecca)
- #0719** (Isaac's Wells; The Perils of Jacob)
- #0720** (Joseph and his Brothers)
- #0742** (The Story of David; Saul and Jonathan)
- #0743** (The Perils of David; The Wisdom of Solomon)
- #0744** (Elijah and Elisha)
- #0753** (Moses in the wilds)
- #0761** (Moses in Egypt)
- #0778** (Joshua, God's Great General; The Early Judges)
- #0779** (Gideon and His 300; The Mighty Samson)
- #0784** (The Story of Ruth, Samuel and Saul)
- #0801** (Isaiah, Micah, Josiah, Jeremiah)
- #0821** (From Rehoboam to Joash, Jonah, Amos)
- #0822** (The Return from Exile, Esther saves Her People)
- #0825** (The Perils of Daniel)



BEST SOURCE FOR BIBLES & NEW TESTAMENTS

CHURCH SOURCE is a good resource for Spanish Bibles and New Testaments.

The website is www.ChurchSource.com

In the search bar type: Spanish New Testaments

The Spanish New Testament most often selected is an NIV Paperback:

Item: Nuevo Testamento NVI (several cover designs)

Sometimes there are sales, discount coupons and sometimes free shipping.

HOW TO ORDER:

Website: churchsource.com (online with credit card)

1-800-727-3480

Operation Christmas Joy

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED!

Two problems we are seeing when we give out the gifts in Panama:

1. **SKIMPY GIFTS** - When one child receives a “skimpy gift” while his/her friends open well-filled shoe boxes, there are disappointments and jealousies, even tears. (we would rather have fewer gifts than skimpy gifts.)

2. **POORLY WRAPPED GIFTS** that don't make the trip very well.



A well-wrapped gift.



A happy child with a well-filled shoe box gift.

Please read this entire 2025 OCJ Guidebook for full details and updates.

NOTE AGE GROUPS:

0-12 MONTHS

12-24 MONTHS

2-4 YEARS

5-7 YEARS

8-10 YEARS

11-13 YEARS

(We are no longer sending gifts for teenagers. See the “Step by Step Shoebox Guide” for updated gift suggestions.)

Children
Comparing
Gifts.



PLEASE CONTACT ME WITH YOUR QUESTIONS:

Betsy Brady, Coordinator

grammybrady@bellsouth.net

Cell: 334-315-1648 (call or text)

Home: 334-288-2458 (Leave message if I don't answer.)

GUIDELINES FOR DONATING CLOTHING FOR OPERATION CHRISTMAS JOY

Because of the large volume of new and used children's clothing we are receiving for Panama, we feel that new guidelines are necessary to enable us to efficiently deal with such a blessing for the children of Panama. Currently the volume of clothing - as wonderful as it is - requires more hours for sorting and packaging for shipment than our small volunteer crew in Montgomery can handle. WE NEED YOUR HELP!

WHAT YOU CAN SEND:

1. Home sewn dresses for girls and shorts for boys. If you are sewing shorts, please provide a shirt to go with each one. Provide underwear if you can. Each dress or shorts/shirt should be in a zip lock bag with the size well marked on the outside of the bag.



Zip bag labeled: Boy-Nino Sz. 4

2. New store-bought clothing for boys and girls. Each dress or shorts/shirt set should be in a zip lock bag with the size written on the bag.

3. Used clothing, clean (no stains), summer weight (no winter clothing, please). Long sleeves and pants are o.k. as long as not winter weight. When sending shorts and tops, please make up as many "sets" as you can and put each set in a zip lock bag with the size clearly written on the bag. Adding underwear is always a plus.

HOW TO DECIDE WHAT IS WORTH SENDING: If you would not want your children or grand children to wear these clothes; if there are stains, holes, missing parts, etc., please do not send.

WHAT SIZES TO SEND: Infant through size 12. (No teen clothes are needed.)

HOW TO PACKAGE YOUR CLOTHING:

Sort everything by size/sex: 0-3 mo.; 3-6 mo.; 6-9 mo; 12 mo.; 18 & 24 mo. together; 2T; 3T; 4-5 together; 6; 7; 8; 10; 12.



Use a separate bag for each different age/sex and indicate the number.

- Use "grocery type" shopping bags for a small number of the same size and sex or 13 gal. bags for larger numbers (see pictures).
 - Write the number/sex/size on each bag as shown in the photos.
 - Use as many bags as it takes to send your clothing sorted like this. Tie the bags.
 - Put all of your bags in one or more 13 GALLON garbage and tag the bag or bags with the name of your church.
- NO BAGS LARGER THAN 13 GALLON.**

PLEASE CONTACT ME WITH YOUR QUESTIONS:

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Cell: 334-315-1648 (call or text)

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Use 13 gal. drawstring bags for larger numbers of clothing of the same size/age/sex.

Tie strings in a bow so we can open and reclose bag.

