Joseph Gets a New Staff

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When stowing away my large nativity scene this year, I noticed that Joseph's staff, which had previously broken and been repaired, had re-broken. I initially tried re-gluing it, but it's made of resin, and even Goop didn't seem to make a permanent repair. I knew it wouldn't hold up with another re-glue, so I'd have to figure out a different intervention.





I decided to re-build the staff completely, starting with a wire core cut from a coat hanger.

I drilled a hole through the centre of his hand where the previous staff had been, and made it large enough to take the wire, then drilled a small hole in the base to anchor the wire end.



Once the wire was glued in position, the next step was to build up the staff using an air-dry clay.

I started from the bottom and added clay gradually all the way to the top of the staff.





Once I had built the staff, I let it dry for a couple of days, then filled in any cracks with additional clay and dried it again. I made it with a deliberately rough texture, to give it the look of a tree branch.



When the clay had dried completely, I wrapped Joseph's body in plastic wrap so I wouldn't get paint on his clothes. You can see that I've already started painting the staff.

To get the look of a a tree branch with bark still on it, I used acrylic paints in black, tan, medium brown, red-brown, and white. For a more realistic look, I streaked these colors together rather than mixing them. I finished with a coat of matte Mod Podge to protect the paint.

Here you can see the final result – I'm super pleased with how it turned out.

The staff is firmly anchored in position, and because of its solid wire core, I know it will be much sturdier than the original staff was.

