

Shawl Ministry

FAQs

You've recently joined this wonderful ministry and find that you are stumped with a technique or would still like a few tips. As always our group sessions bring forward some good questions and we thought it would be appropriate to share the questions and the responses for the good of the group.

Q. What types of yarns work best and why?

A. We try to stick with the yarns listed in the packet...some yarns vary in pliability, which will affect your outcome, as will as your knitting tension. We suggest that you use yarn that is soft, fairly thick, lightweight (no wool or wool blends...Texas temperatures!) and has some texture to it. When you knit with this type of yarn on size **13** needles, or crochet with a size **M, N** or **P** hook, the shawl has an airy open look. The reason that we look for yarn with texture is because thinner, smoother yarns create shawls with gaping holes when knit with these size needles or hooks. Shawls knit with thicker, textured yarn will be warm but not heavy, comfortable but not overbearing. We are recommending Lion's Brand HOMESPUN or Bernat Boucle...see pattern packet for other suggested yarns. Some individuals have been using the Light and Lofty by Red Heart and Hobby Lobby's Yarn Bee Fleece Lite ...if this is your yarn of choice we suggest you use a size **15** needle or **P** hook. Also if you are using the Bernat Boucle', you will need less yarn for crocheting...it only takes 3 skeins to crochet and for knitting, a possible 2 skeins, depending on how long you make your fringe.

Q. My fringe is sometimes uneven after tying it on and still seems to fray after tying a knot...any suggestions?

A. Try laying your shawl on a table. Comb through fringe lightly with fingers to untangle and smooth. ALWAYS...Trim any long or uneven strands. Some yarns do have a tendency to fray, yet make beautiful lightweight shawls. Try knotting closer to the end of each strand.

Q. Can we vary the pattern or size of the shawl?

- A.** It is probably best that we utilize the standard length or size of the shawl because most of the shawls we will be using will be for adults and we want to make sure we get the full impact of God’s loving arms wrapped all the way around the recipient. As for the size of the shawls, we suggest you follow the sizing listed in the pattern packet. Most shawls average **27” x 64”** before adding fringe. This is a shawl...NOT an afghan...so the measurements are about half the size of an afghan.

As for the pattern, we would like to stick with this pattern. The 3-stitch-seed stitch pattern or the pattern used for crochet are a reflection of planting peace, healing, love, comfort and hope as well as symbolizing the Trinity.

As more and more shawl groups are forming... there are other pattern options available now but we believe the **original pattern** has become our **“signature” shawl**. Other patterns, while beautiful in and of themselves, usually require more skeins of yarn as well as, they do not have the same symbolic meaning as mentioned earlier. The original pattern reflects a simple, humble meditative model of the Trinity. Every time a shawl is given, the recipients of this “divine” work seem to always be captured with amazement in the exceptional beauty and thoughtful blessings and prayers woven within this simple gift. It also provides an opportunity for all shawl recipients to receive the same uniquely patterned shawl...thus...a **“signature” shawl**.

Something to consider while working on your shawl...

A shawl could be considered something ordinary...knitting or crocheting...so ordinary...yet, by placing Christ at the center of our work, something once thought to be ordinary, becomes extraordinary. Each time we pick up our needles or hooks and submit to the pattern and yarns, we allow God to become more present in us through the contemplative work of our hands. By decreasing to self—in laying aside who *we* are and what *our* abilities are—our work becomes more about God and less about us. Each time we create a shawl with this in mind, we humble ourselves before God so that His love may shine forth in the work that we do.

“You have to look with a different set of eyes if you want to see beyond the ordinary.”—Paula D’Arcy

Q. I can never seem to remember when I start a new row, whether or not I'm knitting or purling...do you have any suggestions.

A. If you cast on **57** stitches you will always start with a **K3**. Remember that you will be creating a **seed-stitch** NOT a **ribbed stitched**.

Q. I've noticed that you have shown others a different way of attaching the next skein or ball by using a darning needle...how is that done.

A. Knots can come loose...creating a hole in your shawl. Consider this alternative to tying a knot. This method weaves the new end into the old with a darning needle. This eliminates knots and having to weave in all those ends (a tedious process at best, yet purely an individual decision). To begin this process; clip the ends of both pieces of yarn. Thread the darning needle with a strand from the new skein. Beginning near the end of the skein you are finishing, hold the yarn taut and insert the needle. Take tiny stitches in a slightly spiral fashion, maintaining firm and even tension. When you have woven through about three inches, pull gently to test the yarn. It should hold. If it slips or pulls out, continue to take tiny stitches through the old yarn or start again. The result should be a joined piece of yarn that is smooth and slightly thicker than a single strand; it disappears easily into the fabric of the shawl. Take care as you knit the joint. Once you have knit the joint into the shawl, you can clip the ends that have frayed in the knitting process (generally quite short). This process works with thin or thick, smooth or nubby yarns.

Q. How do I create a selvage edge on a shawl?

A. Creating a selvage edge for the **knitted** version (crocheting seems to create a selvage during the process of crocheting) can be created when you begin each row, by slipping the first stitch **purlwise**; the yarn will be in front of your work. **Carry the yarn to the back, K2**, and continue with the pattern to the end of the row. This creates a smoother finish for the sides of your shawl. Either way, selvage edge or not...it's up to each individual.

Q. Do you recommend a certain length for the fringe?

A. Fringe is an individual decision. It can be long or short. You can put a piece of fringe through every stitch, or you can skip several stitches. Decide how long you want the fringe. Because the fringe is doubled when you fasten it to the shawl, you must cut the fringe twice the desired length. For 6” fringe, each strand must be 12” long, for 12” fringe, cut pieces 24” and so on. Tassel fringe is made by placing four strands together and folding in half, creating a total of eight strands in a tassel and then inserting through every third stitch with a crochet hook or rug hook.

Q. Is there an easy way to cut the fringe?

A. Try wrapping around a piece of cardboard the desired length of fringe. For each rotation, (back and front of board or around in a circle) count off the number times you desired for the number of strands per side. **Cut off only one end.** Example: If you are using tassel style fringe you will have approx. **19 tassels per side...**and using **4 strands per tassel** would equal approx. **76 strands per end.**

Q. Do you pray while you are knitting the shawls?

A. Take some time to consider how the glory of God is bound in every beautiful knot, knit, purl or chain stitch per shawl. It’s a fabric filled with seeds of love. It’s been said that within every knotted strand of fringe lies a reminder that each of us is a stitch in the fabric of the world. Unraveling lives are knit back together one shawl at a time. But keep in mind...each person is going to approach this in different ways – prayerful reflection, quiet meditation, joyful song – but it is the very act of doing for others that binds God’s love into each and every thread. Try to vary your working atmosphere...some have told us they make shawls while waiting for their kids to finish an extra-curricular activity or sometimes while waiting at a doctor’s appointment. Knitting or crocheting publicly can open up conversation while waiting. People want to know what you are making and when you explain, this ministry becomes an outreach stretched in a whole new direction!

Q. Can we share our materials with other churches/religions?

A. Actually we already have been doing this! Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Shawl Ministry continued to spread like wildfire (flames of the Holy Spirit!) throughout Plano, the Diocese, the State of Texas, United States and the world? But *our* unique Shawl Ministry logo is exclusive to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and we want to limit its use to our Parish to help identify us. We hold the copywrite/registration of our logo. (Note: The daughter of one of our members designed our logo and if you look closely, it represents a woman with head bent forward in prayer.)

Q. What about choosing colors for the shawls we're making? Can I give a shawl and if so...how do I know what color is right for the shawl receiver?

A. We like to suggest that you let the Holy Spirit guide you in your selection of yarn color...then let your imagination soar with the Spirit!

As for presenting a Shawl...While most of our shawls go through "shawl central" for distribution...meaning they are divided up and given to our priests to present as well as, various Seton Outreach ministries, area hospitals, hospice, Rachel Vineyard Retreats...but if you know someone in need of a shawl you may certainly give a shawl to them. Please let us know if you do present a shawl. We like to keep a record of who, where and when our shawls go out. The shawl registry serves as a prayer chain...we pray for all shawl recipients. The shawl registry also helps us know who may have already received a shawl so that we don't duplicate shawls. Also...keep in mind that the shawls are a great way for our parish priests and/or our parish community to make a connection with someone who may be ill...therefore, notifying us helps make a connection with a shawl.

Lessons in Shawl Colors...

Sometimes we find ourselves standing before a sea of shawls and wondering about what would be a perfect color to create or give. We would like to suggest that all of us prayerfully consider letting go of our own personal color preferences so that our likes and dislikes don't get in the way of how God might use a shawl. Allowing ourselves to step aside and let Him work through the shawls. HIS vision goes well beyond the color and into the soul. There are absolutely NO limits to what God can do!

Q. I can't make the monthly meetings, is that a problem?

A. Not a problem! This is a ministry that allows you to knit or crochet according to your own schedule. For those unable to attend the monthly meetings, we try to keep you informed through emails. (Make sure we have your current email address). The monthly emails will update you on the shawls that have gone out and the responses received from the recipients as well as, a few tips of encouragement. Your completed shawl may be dropped off at the Faith Formation Center's office. If you would like to pick up more yarn at that time, please let us know at least 24 to 48 hours prior to leaving your shawl in the FFC office so that we can arrange to have yarn ready at that time.

Q. I won't be able to make this month's meeting...is it possible to pick up yarn during the month?

A. If you can't make a meeting and need yarn...you may either purchase LionBrand HOMESPUN from area craft stores or check to see yarn availability with us...(4 skeins for crocheting or 3 skeins for knitting). Our yarn closet is locked and NOT open on a daily basis. You may contact us by email at circleofyarn@hotmail.com and we'll make every effort to fulfill your request but please allow at least 24 to 48 hour notice for yarn or other items. This helps us keep track and maintain our inventory. We'll notify you once your items are available and ready to be picked up in the office of the Faith Formation Center during their office hours of 9 to 5. Thank you for your consideration.

Q. How is the Shawl Ministry funded?

A. By the provision and providence of God! When we began in February 2004, everyone provided their own yarn...and some still do. As the shawls began to go forth and lives were touched...hearts were moved to help in other ways. God simply begin to knit it all together. We do receive a limited amount of financial help from Seton and the rest is provided by individual benefactors that have received a shawl, given a shawl, made a shawl or in some other way heard about us and were touched by this ministry of compassion. We send forth thanks and praise as we continue to pray for financial assistance and

trust that our Lord will continue to assist. Scripture says...*“Do not worry about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus....God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus...Glory be to God.”* (Philippians 4:6-7, 19-20)

Q. How long are the meetings, how often do you meet and what takes place during the meetings?

A. We meet once a month, on the second Tuesday. We gather to pray, knit, crochet, share, laugh and learn from each other. These organized monthly meetings will be from **7 pm to 9 pm**. Anyone needing help can get assistance during this meeting time. We update you on the shawls that have gone out and the responses received from the recipients. We tie on and knot fringe. Once the shawls are completed they are then gathered. Fabric labels are sewn on to identify our Parish with our ministry logo. Then they are taken to one of our parish priests to receive a final blessing before they are wrapped and sent on their way. The shawls are distributed by our parish priests, various outreach ministries of our parish, area hospitals, hospice, Rachel’s Vineyard, etc. Shawls have also gone out to comfort many beyond our parish walls...into the community we live and across the world.

Q. Are there other ways to stay in touch with what is happening in this ministry?

A. Yes! Make sure you have signed up for our monthly email newsletters and check out the Shawl Ministry section on the parish website at www.setonparish.org
You may also go to the original Shawl Ministry website at www.shawlministry.com

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If you are looking for more answers about our group...you may submit your questions or tips to circleofyarn@hotmail.com