

Stories of Shared Ministry: Prayer Shawls

by Norma Stuck

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In 2005 Anne Howard introduced our congregation to Prayer Shawl ministry. For me this was a perfect way to participate in a quiet and yet effective shared ministry. Those were busy years for me, and the Prayer Shawl ministry fit into my schedule. I could do it on my own time, have a sacred moment, knit while waiting in doctor appointments, and come up with a product that could be shared with someone who needed support on a difficult journey. Knitting a shawl, blessing it in church, and giving it as a tool of prayer and comfort created an amazing effect on me as a new knitter. There was great enthusiasm for this new way to serve. Betty Bickel was our effective leader setting the standard that we can teach those who want to join and encouraged participants to take time in producing the shawls.

Today the prayer shawl ministry remains quiet, but the prayer shawl cupboard has shawls waiting for members of the parish to select and share with a family member or friend who is sick or in need of comfort. The knitting pool ebbs and flows according to busy schedules. There is no pressure to get something done immediately, but to encourage the sacredness of preparing a shawl that will eventually be loved and cherished. It is amazing to me that a completed shawl will appear when it has been needed.

Feedback from recipients has added much joy in knowing that a simple gift of love came from Trinity. Some of the comments communicated are: "Thank you for the warmth and mystical care the shawl has given me." "I feel like I am wrapped in hugs." "When I get a chill or am feeling ill, I get out that soft warm prayer shawl. Thank you."

One of my favorite stories is about a Trinity member who started chemo, lost her hair and was cold all the time. A blessed prayer shawl was delivered by the priest, and she found the loving shawl a source of warmth renewing her strength. Today she is healthy and active again. She reminds me that the prayer shawl hangs close by when she needs comfort. That is the kind of power our hands and heart can communicate through this shared ministry.

The adventure of taking up the needles or crochet hooks in prayer is a meditative practice that keeps me going forward. Someone somewhere needs encouragement, and I can do that much each day toward relieving pain and giving hope. If you knit or crochet, consider turning ordinary yarn into an extraordinary gift. I am available to help people get started or to provide yarn.

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