

## Prayer Shawl Ministry



Are you looking for a ministry of prayer and care for others? You might consider a unique way to serve as “the hands ... of Christ, reaching out as He did” (our parish ministry statement). Prayer is a conversation with God, sometimes participating publicly with others (as we do in liturgies and prayer services) and sometimes privately. Prayer can effect change in our lives, assure us that we are not alone, and deepen our relationship with God.

The Prayer Shawl Ministry is a special way to reach out with love and care to others who are hurting, to comfort those in need of healing, to console those who are grieving, to bring hope to those in despair or in transition, to thank someone in a special way, to celebrate a significant milestone, or to provide for someone in need of a special blessing. Not to be confused with *tallits*, the traditional prayer shawls worn in synagogues, the shawls created within a prayer ministry are made as handcrafted gifts for other people. Sometimes the crafter has a specific person in mind as a garment is created; at other times, the recipient is known only to God as the crafter works and prays. Most often, these gifts of care are shawls or lap blankets; however, some groups opt to make other items such as helmet liners for soldiers; baby or child blankets for *Project Linus*; preemie caps; mittens, scarves and hats for nearby or faraway missions; hats for cancer patients; or caps, blankets & booties for the *Save Abandoned Babies* project. In this ministry, those who will eventually wear the garments are not the only ones upon whom blessings are petitioned: we also pray for those who create, transport, sell and transform the yarn as well as for those who tend to the material and spiritual needs of others.

While working with yarn may be *the* handicraft du jour, the repetitive action of knitting or crocheting helps us to slow down our racing minds and the frantic pace of our day. It provides opportunity for contemplation and a sense of stillness in our often-chaotic lives. Once the pattern's directions become a part of us, time seems to shift and distractions drift away. Into the stillness God can enter in and begin to help us connect our woven fibers to the various people we know who are ill, grieving, walking a difficult road, or about to celebrate a milestone event ... and we begin to create for them. As we add row upon row, we can pray specifically for the garment's recipient, naming him or her before God, and asking God to wrap the recipient in unconditional, compassionate love. Even if the recipient is not known to the crafter, as the garment is finished it is filled with prayer for that individual. While praying for someone we don't know is a different experience than intercessory prayers offered for a specific individual, praying for a stranger helps us to learn to trust the truth that God works through us when we care for friends and strangers alike.

St. Patrick's Prayer Shawl Ministry meets on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays at 1:30 PM in the Narthex of the New Church. Whether you are handy with knitting needles or crochet hooks (or would like to learn), whether you're at a beginning level or are more advanced in following a yarn pattern, you're welcome to join us. If you cannot attend the informal sessions of crafting, friendship and prayer, you are welcome to use the instructions on the next page in order to participate from home.



If you would like to provide financial support for this ministry, please direct your check to the rectory: make your check payable to St. Patrick Church and write 'shawl ministry' in the memo section. Your donation helps us purchase sufficient quantities of yarn necessary for our work when donations of skeins are low.

If you have any questions, please contact our coordinator, Diane Oster at 847.501-0523

## Prayer Shawl Ministry FAQ

**What are the measurements of a finished garment?** The easy answer is “let the yarn tell you.” Generally, rectangular shawls should be about 20 – 24” wide by 60 – 70” long (in other words - from the nape of the neck to just below the waist to gauge the width measurement; from outstretched arms’ fingertip to fingertip for the length measurement). Lap blankets can be shorter and wider. Lovely triangular-shaped patterns are available. A blanket created for a recipient who needs a wheelchair for mobility should be without fringe; a circular or fan-shaped form could be considered. Fleece fabric blankets should be a single layer of fabric, and may be cut with fringed edge or finished by sewing machine (see instructions available on *Project Linus* websites below). *Project Linus* blankets should have the following dimensions:

Baby 36” X 36”

Toddler 36” X 43”

Pre-teen 40” X 60”

Teen 50” X 72”

**What kind of yarn and how much of it do I need?** The skein’s label should provide fiber content and cleaning instructions. Some people are sensitive to animal source fibers, so acrylic or cotton may be a better choice for charity knitting or crocheting. If the recipient is known to the crafter, a more luxurious fiber such as wool, silk, linen or alpaca would be a generous gift. *Project Linus* blankets must be either acrylic or cotton. Helmet liners for service personnel must be a soft 100% wool. On average, knitted ladies shawls take approximately 600 - 800 yards of bulky yarn, 900 – 1500 yards of worsted weight, and well over 1200 yards for lace weight yarns. Most often, crocheting completes garments faster, but uses up more yarn (as compared to knitting). Blankets for *Project Linus* and those living in an adult care situation should be “machine wash & dry,” but other garments can be either machine or hand washed. Keep in mind that fibromyalgia patients appreciate a lighter-weight garment.

**What size knitting needles or crochet hook do I need?** Again, your selection is based upon the yarn. Bulky yarns usually require size 11 or 13 knitting needles, or a size ‘M’ or larger hook; worsted weight yarns generally require size 7 or 8 needles or a ‘G’ or ‘H’ hook; lace weight may require size 3 - 7 needles. Check the skein label for the manufacturer’s recommendation, and make a sample swatch to assess the gauge you want before beginning the pattern (this is especially important for helmet liners). If you want a lacier look for a shawl or want to extend the yarn farther, use a size or two larger than the label recommends when you make your sample swatch, and see if it’s the look you want.

**What color should I choose?** If the recipient is known, you may choose the person’s favorite color. You may also choose from lists of colors and the basic attributes associated with them. Click on ‘symbolism’ and then ‘color’ on the shawl ministry website listed below, or use a yarn that appeals to you and will feel comfortable in your hands as you work with it. This website also includes a listing of colors commonly used in the sale of pins, bracelets and car magnets to promote awareness for specific causes (i.e. pink for breast cancer awareness, blue for child protection issues, etc). Helmet liner colors are restricted to black, charcoal, brown, tan or olive.

**Is there a specific pattern I need to follow?** No. You may use any pattern you like appropriate for the intended use, but not too difficult that its intricacies keep you from incorporating prayer as you work. Remember that the process is meant to provide the crafter with opportunities to converse with God, especially as regards the needs of the shawl recipient (whether known to the crafter or not) and to incorporate those prayers into the created work. If you don’t have a stitch pattern in mind, there are several available on the shawl ministry website as well as other online sources (such as yarn manufacturers or distributors) that may be downloaded for little or no cost. Easier patterns provide opportunity when it is time to pray, and can also be put on ‘automatic pilot’ for those who want to knit or crochet while watching television, waiting at the doctor’s office or pickup time, or listening to music, podcast, or audiobook. Craft stores offer free patterns in their yarn sections. Afghan, sweater, and scarf patterns can be adapted. Note that most knitting patterns benefit from using a 3 - 6 stitch border pattern (seed or garter stitch) to prevent curling and enhance the drape of the finished garment.

**Where do I turn in my completed garment?** Completed shawls, blankets and garments can be given to one of the members of the shawl ministry, to one of our deacons or our pastor, to one of our Ministers of Care, or placed in a protective bag in the designated PSM basket in the Narthex. We also welcome donations of hand-crafted helmet liners; preemie caps; hats for cancer patients (some of the newer eyelash yarns are great for this purpose); and sets of hats, booties & blankets for the ‘Save Abandoned Babies’ program or our friends in Peru (or our Sharing Parish in Chicago!). Some shawl ministry groups also create ‘prayer scarves’ for veterans or for high school and college students as a reminder of God’s unconditional love for them, no matter where they are in their faith journey. Our crafted garments receive a final blessing from our pastor or one of our deacons, and then are passed on to someone in need.

*As a faith community we are the hands and feet of Christ,  
reaching out as he did.*

This flyer was created with the guidance of information available at:

[www.shawlministry.com](http://www.shawlministry.com) , [www.friendshipshawl.org](http://www.friendshipshawl.org) , [www.TKGA.com](http://www.TKGA.com) , [www.projectlinus.org](http://www.projectlinus.org) ,  
[www.projectlinuschicago.webs.com](http://www.projectlinuschicago.webs.com) , <http://knitting.about.com/od/hatpatterns/a/helmetliner.htm>  
[www.nationalww2museum.org/education/for-general-public/knit-your-bit.html](http://www.nationalww2museum.org/education/for-general-public/knit-your-bit.html)

