

Lent knitalong 2024 - introductory information

Welcome to our Lent 2024 Mystery Knitalong!

This year we will be making a shawl (which will double up as a triangular lap blanket if you're not a shawl person!) It will be perfect to wear to church on Easter morning, or can be gifted as a prayer shawl.

This document will provide all the information you will need in advance, plus a swatch pattern you can knit to check you're happy with your chosen yarns/needle size and that the gauge/fabric looks good.

The knitting pattern and accompanying reflections will be sent out in weekly documents. These can be emailed to you directly (if you are not already on the mailing list, please email Helen at learning@vic-methodist-bristol.org.uk). The documents will also be uploaded in the dedicated Facebook group ('Victoria Methodist Bristol Knitalongs'), which you are very welcome to join!

The Lent reflections have kindly been written by eight Ministers and local preachers; big thanks to Clare, Andrew, Vicky, John, Ruth, Pete, Christine and Patrick!

RELEASE DATES

The first email will be sent out on Monday 12th February, and we'll cast on together on Ash Wednesday (14th February).

Thereafter, the documents will be released on Fridays, ready for the following week.

(NB If you will be printing these documents out for other knitters/distributing on to a large group you can sign up to receive all the documents a day or two ahead to allow you extra time to do this: email Lyn at lljcomposition@googlemail.com).

FACEBOOK

Users of Facebook are also welcome to join the dedicated group ['Victoria Methodist Bristol Knitalongs'](#) where the patterns and reflections will also be shared, and knitters can share progress, ask technical knitty questions and discuss thoughts on the reflections.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED TO TAKE PART:

YARN/NEEDLES

This project uses DK weight yarn in two solid colours: a lighter main colour ('yarn A') and a darker contrast colour ('yarn B'). You can pick any two colours you like, but the shawl will look particularly lovely in two complimentary shades, e.g., light

pink/dark pink, cream/a darker colour... Think spring shades! (Or autumnal for those in the Southern Hemisphere!)

The approximate amounts of yarn you'll need are as follows:

Main colour/yarn A: 340 - 380 metres of DK weight yarn.

Contrast colour/yarn B: 175 - 220 metres of DK weight yarn.

Alternatively, knitters can choose to work the project in a single colour throughout, in which case they'll need approximately 500 - 620 metres of DK weight yarn.

It is recommended that knitters use whichever size of needle they would usually use when working with DK yarn, or a size smaller, e.g., 3.75mm. (Knitting the swatch below will enable you to check the best needle size for your yarn).

Towards the end of the project, you'll be working with over 400 stitches on your needles, so will need a circular needle with a cable length of around 100cm (**NB** the project is not knitted in the round; the circular needle is just needed for its length, due to the volume of stitches!) Knitters might prefer to start the project on shorter straight needles and switch when things become unruly!

STITCH MARKERS

Additionally, the project uses 18 stitch markers - these are optional, but will make counting much easier in the later rows.

They needn't be anything fancy—small loops of scrap yarn or tiny loom bands/hair bands will work just as well as shop bought stitch markers.

YARN/NEEDLE KITS

No Frills Knitting in Bristol are kindly offering their wonderful kits again for the Lent Knitalong.

The kits are available in two different yarn choices (and were used by the test knitters) each with a variety of colour combinations chosen by us:

The Marble kits cost £32 (plus p&p) and include 6 balls of World of Wool Marble DK yarn (a luxurious blend of 80% wool/20% silk):

www.nofrillsknitting.co.uk/products/lent-knit-along-starter-kit-2024-world-of-wool-marble

The Recreate kits cost £17 (plus p&p) and include 3 balls of Stylecraft Recreate DK yarn (a lovely blend of 3 different recycled fibres - 40% wool, 30% acrylic and 30% polyester):

www.nofrillsknitting.co.uk/products/lent-knit-along-2024-starter-pack-stylecraft-recreate-dk

All kits also contain a 3.75 cm circular knitting needle (100 cm length), and there is the option to add stitch markers and a

tapestry needle for weaving in ends if you need those additionally.

The kits are, as always, great value, and were really popular last year; limited quantities will be available in each set of colours, so do order early if you're interested!

THE KNITTING ITSELF!

The shawl pattern has been designed to be accessible to knitters of all abilities. You'll need to be able to do the following:

- cast on and off
- work the basic knit and purl stitches
- work basic lace stitches: YO, K2tog and SSK (see [STITCHES](#) below)

Knitters can, of course, work at their own pace, but the pattern will be laid out in daily chunks, along with a reflection each day; if knitters complete the knitting allocated to each day they will finish the shawl on Good Friday so it can be blocked in time to wear or gift on Easter day. The amount of knitting will vary slightly each day but should take an average knitter 20 - 30 minutes to complete.

If knitters struggle to 'keep up' but would still like to finish by Easter, or would like a smaller shawl, there are a couple of

opportunities to end the shawl at an earlier point - these will be explained in week six.

GAUGE

Gauge is not crucial in this project; more important is that you like the tension/appearance of the finished, blocked fabric. The swatch below will enable you to practise the stitches and check that you are using the best needle size. Once you have blocked the swatch, if the fabric seems quite stiff you could try knitting it again with a larger needle size; if the fabric feels too loose, you could try sizing down. **NB** the yarn required for the swatch is not included in the suggested yardages given above for the main project, so knitters are advised to keep their finished swatches handy, just in case they are running short of yarn later on and need to unravel the swatches to reuse the yarn!

BLOCKING

It is highly recommended that you block your shawl when it is finished (the actual knitting will finish on Good Friday, giving you two days to block and dry the shawl to have it ready for Easter day). This will encourage the knitting to sit properly, open out the lace motifs and generally neaten everything out.

If you haven't done this before, you can find videos on YouTube or follow the instructions below and try it with your finished swatch:

Let the swatch soak in warm water (you can add a little wool wash if you like) for half an hour or more. When the swatch is completely saturated, gently press the excess water out and lay it somewhere to dry (on a blocking mat/piece of foam/towel/whatever you've got to hand...) Pull the knitting into a square shape (it will measure approximately 17.5 - 19 centimetres square) and secure with blocking pins if you've got any.

When the swatch is completely dry, unpin and sew in the ends.

STITCHES

K = knit

P = purl

st = stitch/stitches

YO = yarn over

K2tog = knit two stitches together

SSK = slip two stitches individually knitwise, then knit them together through the back loop

pm = place a stitch marker

sm = slip stitch marker

rm = remove stitch marker

K2tog, SSK and YO are the lace stitches which create the holes used to form the motifs; these are only worked on the front (knit) side, i.e., on odd numbered rows.

To work a YO ('yarn over') bring the yarn from the back of the right needle to the front and then work the next stitch. This will form an extra stitch on the right needle as you continue (it might look a bit slanted, compared to your other stitches) and will turn into a little lace hole once you work the next row.

In working a YO, you are effectively creating an additional stitch, so to keep the stitch count the same, each YO is usually preceded or followed by a K2tog or SSK; each of which decrease one stitch.

- To work a K2tog ('knit two together'), you need to knit the next 2 stitches together by inserting the right needle knit-wise into the next 2 stitches on the left needle, i.e., by putting the right needle into the second stitch along on the left needle from the left, catching both stitches and knitting them together.
- To work an SSK (slip, slip, knit through back loop), you need to slip the first stitch on the left needle knit-wise (i.e., insert the right needle from the front left and slip it over to the right needle) without working it, and repeat this with the next stitch. You then need to knit these two stitches through the

back loop, by inserting the left needle into these two slipped stitches from the left (the working yarn will be at the back of the right needle) and knitting them together.

SWATCH PATTERN

(**NB** It is not essential to work this swatch but we do recommend that you knit it so you can practise the stitches which will be used in the shawl, and to check your gauge and that the two coloured yarns work well together and don't run/bleed into each other when washed at the end of the knitting.)

Cast on 39 stitches with yarn B. (The stitch count stays the same throughout the swatch; odd numbered rows will be the front/knit side of the swatch, and even numbered rows will be the back/purl side).

Set up row: (Yarn B) knit all stitches.

Row 1. Knit all stitches.

Row 2. Knit all stitches.

Row 3. Knit all stitches.

Row 4. Knit all stitches.

Before row 5, change to yarn A (the easiest way to do this is to cut yarn B, leaving a tail of about 10-15 cm—this can be woven in at the end—and attach yarn A, knotting it firmly).

NB two stitch markers are placed on row 5: when directed place each marker onto the right needle when instructed and continue knitting as normal. On subsequent rows you will see the instruction to move these across when you come to them (slip marker = 'sm') - simply slip the marker from the left to the right needle when told to!

Row 5. (Yarn A) K12, pm, K15, pm, K12.

Row 6. K4, P8, sm, P15, sm, P8, K4.

Row 7. K12, sm, K15, sm, K12.

Row 8. K4, P8, sm, P15, sm, P8, K4.

Row 9. K8, YO, K2tog, K2, sm, K7, P1, K7, sm, K3, YO, K2tog, K7.

Row 10. K4, P8, sm, P6, K1, P1, K1, P6, sm, P8, K4.

Row 11. K6, SSK, YO, K1, YO, K2tog, K1, sm, K5, P1, K3, P1, K5, sm, K1, SSK, YO, K1, YO, K2tog, K6.

Row 12. K4, P8, sm, P4, K1, P5, K1, P4, sm, P8, K4.

Row 13. K8, YO, K2tog, K2, sm, K3, P1, K7, P1, K3, sm, K3, YO, K2tog, K7.

Row 14. K4, P8, sm, P2, K1, P9, K1, P2, sm, P8, K4.

Row 15. K12, sm, K1, P1, K11, P1, K1, sm, K12.

Row 16. K4, P8, sm, (K1, P6) x 2, K1, sm, P8, K4.

Row 17. K11, P1, sm, K6, P1, K1, P1, K6, sm, P1, K11.

- Row 18. K4, P6, K1, P1, sm, P5, K1, P3, K1, P5, sm, P1, K1, P6, K4.
- Row 19. K9, P1, K2, sm, K4, P1, K5, P1, K4, sm, K2, P1, K9.
- Row 20. K4, P4, K1, P3, sm, P3, K1, P7, K1, P3, sm, P3, K1, P4, K4.
- Row 21. K7, P1, K4, sm, K2, P1, K9, P1, K2, sm, K4, P1, K7.
- Row 22. K4, P2, K1, P5, sm, P1, (K1, P5) x 2, K1, P1, sm, P5, K1, P2, K4.
- Row 23. K5, P1, K6, sm, P1, K13, P1, sm, K6, P1, K5.
- Row 24. K5, P6, K1, sm, P7, K1, P7, sm, K1, P6, K5.
- Row 25. K10, P1, K1, sm, K15, sm, K1, P1, K10.
- Row 26. K4, P5, K1, P2, sm, P7, K1, P7, sm, P2, K1, P5, K4.
- Row 27. K8, P1, K3, sm, K15, sm, K3, P1, K8.
- Row 28. K4, P3, K1, P4, sm, P4, K7, P4, sm, P4, K1, P3, K4.
- Row 29. K6, P1, K5, sm, K15, sm, K5, P1, K6.
- Row 30. K4, P1, K1, P6, sm, P7, K1, P7, sm, P6, K1, P1, K4.
- Row 31. K6, P1, K5, sm, K15, sm, K5, P1, K6.
- Row 32. K4, P3, K1, P4, sm, P7, K1, P7, sm, P4, K1, P3, K4.
- Row 33. K8, P1, K3, sm, K15, sm, K3, P1, K8.
- Row 34. K4, P5, K1, P2, sm, P7, K1, P7, sm, P2, K1, P5, K4.
- Row 35. K10, P1, K1, sm, K15, sm, K1, P1, K10.
- Row 36. K5, P6, K1, sm, P7, K1, P7, sm, K1, P6, K5.

- Row 37. K5, P1, K6, sm, P1, K13, P1, sm, K6, P1, K5.
- Row 38. K4, P2, K1, P5, sm, P1, K1, P5, K1, P5, K1, P1, sm, P5, K1, P2, K4.
- Row 39. K7, P1, K4, sm, K2, P1, K9, P1, K2, sm, K4, P1, K7.
- Row 40. K4, P4, K1, P3, sm, P3, K1, P7, K1, P3, sm, P3, K1, P4, K4.
- Row 41. K9, P1, K2, sm, K4, P1, K5, P1, K4, sm, K2, P1, K9.
- Row 42. K4, P6, K1, P1, sm, P5, K1, P3, K1, P5, sm, P1, K1, P6, K4.
- Row 43. K11, P1, sm, K6, P1, K1, P1, K6, sm, P1, K11.
- Row 44. K4, P8, sm, (K1, P6) x 2, K1, sm, P8, K4.
- Row 45. K12, sm, K1, P1, K11, P1, K1, sm, K12.
- Row 46. K4, P8, sm, P2, K1, P9, K1, P2, sm, P8, K4.
- Row 47. K8, YO, K2tog, K2, sm, K3, P1, K7, P1, K3, sm, K3, YO, K2tog, K7.
- Row 48. K4, P8, sm, P4, K1, P5, K1, P4, sm, P8, K4.
- Row 49. K6, SSK, YO, K1, YO, K2tog, K1, sm, K5, P1, K3, P1, K5, sm, K1, SSK, YO, K1, YO, K2tog, K6.
- Row 50. K4, P8, sm, P6, K1, P1, K1, P6, sm, P8, K4.
- Row 51. K8, YO, K2tog, K2, sm, K7, P1, K7, sm, K3, YO, K2tog, K7.
- Row 52. K4, P8, sm, P15, sm, P8, K4.
- Row 53. K12, sm, K15, sm, K12.

NB: both stitch markers are removed on row 54.

Row 54. K4, P8, rm, P15, rm, P8, K4.

Before row 55, change to yarn B.

Row 55. (Yarn B) Knit all stitches.

Row 56. Knit all stitches.

Row 57. Knit all stitches.

Row 58. Knit all stitches.

Row 59. Knit all stitches.

Cast off all stitches loosely, and block the swatch as described above. Once dry, unpin and see if you like the finished fabric; re-knit the swatch with a different needle size if necessary (see section on GAUGE).

REFLECTION

Thanks to Clare Champion-Smith for her lovely reflection below, which she has written to accompany this swatch pattern. Clare is a local preacher in the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit and a member of the congregation at Vic.



Knitting and Lent

The English word Lent is a shortened form of the old English word *Lencten* meaning spring season.¹

In the northern hemisphere, Lent is a time when days are lengthening and as the light returns and days get warmer, so green shoots appear, buds swell, and birds become more active and noisier. We are aware of the pulse of nature—strong and irresistible.



For Christians in the southern hemisphere, Lent will see shortening days, trees in the full glory of autumn colour, berries and seeds in plentiful supply to feed animals and birds as they fatten themselves to survive winter cold. And, of course, seeds to lie still and dormant but ready to start the great cycle of nature again when the grip of winter subsides. Autumn has a sense of purpose and preparation.

¹ See <https://www.etymonline.com/word/Lent> and <https://www.merriam-webster.com/news-trend-watch/the-history-of-lent-20170301>

Lent is a period of purpose and preparation and a time of Christian tradition. Many people use it as a spiritual pilgrimage—a simplification of life, a time to reflect on the life of Jesus and the power (and vulnerability!) of God’s love. As we travel through Lent, using the devotional material that comes with the knitting instructions or not, take time and create space to notice change, to marvel at the beauty and intricacy of creation and to wonder at the interconnectedness of all life.

God of love,

You are with us as we journey through Lent. May we find space to notice, to feel rhythm in life and to know hope in our connectedness to each other. Amen

We hope you will enjoy the discipline and outcome of the knitting, find challenge and hope in the reflections and feel inspired by being part of a global group.

Blessings on us all

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