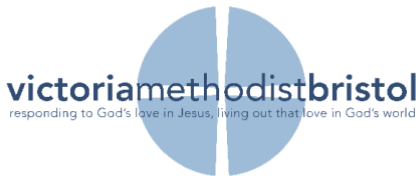

LENT KNIT-ALONG 2025

WEEK 4



Pattern by Lyn Lloyd-Jones
Reflections by Pete Honeyball

Introduction

Grateful thanks this week go to Pete Honeyball for writing the accompanying reflections for week four of the Lent Knitalong.

Pete is a Local Preacher in the Vale of Aylesbury Circuit. The guitar accompanies him on every outing and he feels undressed without it. Resigned to the fact that he has missed the opportunity to play with the Shadows, he is trying to convince the circuit that hymns do sound good on six strings. Pete also happens to be Lyn's Dad.

Sunday, 23 March

Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

— 1 Peter 1:13

Preparation never was my strong point!

Preparing for a Bible Study many years ago, I sat down to read the notes and found that I needed a cross as a centrepiece – I hadn't got one so I had to make one. No problem, the Bible Study didn't start for another half hour yet!

I found a small square of wood. That will be a good base.

Another offcut provided the upright and crossbeam.

I chopped a quick mortice into the base, the same section as the upright, and cut a cross-halving joint in the upright and arm and glued them with quick-setting glue.

A very rough job, but it fulfilled the requirements, in fact it provided a talking point and many questions; it was a rough job, but for the original purpose, would sandpaper and polish have made it any better?

Shops and churches churn out crosses for tourists, all neatly polished and boxed, but aren't they just sanitising the whole concept? Those Roman soldiers just outside Jerusalem all those years ago would not have considered using sandpaper or polish, would they?

I thought I would make another cross, this time taking more time and care and hopefully ending up with an object of beauty, rather than an instrument of torture.

This time I am going to make a Celtic Cross – a bit more up-market!

A cross is such a simple thing, some made of wood or stone

A thing of beauty intricately worked with razor-sharp tools and artist's eye

Yet in the hands of men, corrupted to just another tool of pain

Bring back the joy, the beauty and the wonder

That hides within those outstretched arms – return to love again

Monday, 24 March

Everything in this world needs good foundations, whether it is a cross, a building, a chair-making factory or our faith. It all needs to be grounded on a firm foundation.

For my firm foundation, I fancy a nice, firm base about six inches square (15 cms in modern money!) with plain square edges and perhaps a nice curl running through the grain of the wood.

I have just had a thought. Many years ago, in 1981 I think it was, we had a new pulpit in our chapel. Quite a splendid affair, it replaced one that had served for probably the best part of a century and had begun showing signs of its age. I have a house full of items that are too good to be thrown out because they will come in useful one day, and I seem to remember thinking that some of the wood from the old pulpit was too good to throw away or serve as firewood.

Sure enough, there, lurking quietly at the back of my garage in amongst odd squares of plywood and spare drainpipe, were several lengths of well-seasoned oak that looked as if they had been lifted straight from a church pulpit.

The wood that had been the pulpit shelf still had a strip of wood at the bottom to stop the sermon notes from falling on the floor, so that was a bit of a giveaway.

One of the pieces was crying out to be used for the base. It was exactly the right size and had a lovely grain running across from corner to corner.

It is important that the base is solid – because what we build now in Christ's name will be added to by those who come after us. We must leave them a firm foundation.

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

— 1 Corinthians 3:10

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Tuesday, 25 March

According to Google, the cross the Romans used would have been about 9–12 feet high. It would have been dropped into a hole in the ground to keep it upright.

My cross was going to be slightly smaller – at just about a foot high, but the mounting would be similar.

Back to the wood at the back of the garage and yes, there was a choice of pieces for the upright. I chose a piece that was a square section about an inch and a half wide by one inch deep, again with lovely grain showing in the wood.

Over the years I have made quite a lot of the furniture in our house: our double bed (still in one piece after fifty-four years! – I didn't think that I would last that long, let alone the bed!), dining table (same!), numerous bookcases and stereo shelves. One bookcase in the lounge is over four feet wide and seven feet high (no idea how I managed to lift it now!), and of course a couple of violins (one of which my favourite daughter is still trying to saw in half!).

But it is a year or two (?) since I last picked up a saw for anything other than firewood or trimming a hedge. I had trouble finding any chisels/hammer in the garage (the one that is filled with useful stuff that one day....) but eventually they surfaced.

I cut the upright to length and cleaned up the ends, then worked out the centre of the base and drew around the outline of the upright to mark out a mortice.

When I was happy with the size and position out came the mallet and a large mortice chisel.

After drilling a couple of holes in the base to relieve some of the work, I gently, very carefully chopped out the hole for the upright, constantly checking that the hole was square and vertical and clean along the edges.

I kept trying the upright in the mortice to make sure I was happy with the position and look of the work. When I was happy with it, I stood back and viewed it from all angles and decided that all was good so far.

It is important that the upright is exactly that – upright, because it is not just for show, although it will be on display and if it is not square it will detract from the finished article. When I started work with 'Post Office Telephones' in 1963 as an apprentice, my first experience of work was digging holes and putting poles up. Quite an easy job in theory, but

it is not that easy to get a pole upright and looking upright. Sometimes we had to attach a 'stay wire' to the pole to pull it away from the direction of the force of the wires that would pull it over, sometimes we had to dig another hole alongside the pole and put a strut – like half a pole in length - in at an angle to push the pole upright – we had strict instructions on every step of the process, even to the extent of ensuring that the pole looked neat! Amos would have been pleased!

This is what he showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. 8 And the Lord said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line."

— Amos 7:7

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Wednesday, 26 March

Cross arms

We cannot really be sure exactly what the crosses that the Romans used were like. There are several possible different designs that could have been used. One arm, two arms, even three arms appear on different designs and of course none of the original crosses seem to have survived the two thousand year interval.

To put it bluntly, I think the minimum amount of effort would be put into constructing what is basically a scaffold. There would be very little point in making it a thing of beauty, considering the purpose for which it is built. The Roman soldiers were not going to receive any Design Centre awards. So, my cross is going to be the standard 'Christian' cross, the shape that we are all used to seeing.

Another trip to the back of the garage to check my stock of bits and pieces that will come in useful one day – yes, there is the remnant of the length of wood that provided the upright. Now it is easy to centre the arm on the cross, but how far up the cross should the arm be, and how long?

According to the 'Net', the arms and upright should be about a 1:3 ratio, one third of the height and fitted one third of the way from the top of the upright.

Out with the tenon saw again for a cross-halving joint, in the middle of the horizontal arm, and one third of the way down from the top of the upright.

It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ,

— Galatians 6:12

i.e. they want to look good, hedging their bets like an insurance policy – a foot in both camps.

The four arms of the Celtic cross are sometimes thought to be representative of the four elements of the earth: Fire, Earth, Air and Water, and as representation of our mind, soul, body and heart.

In the Eastern Church the cross is represented slightly differently, having three arms. The top arm holds Pilate's description of Jesus as the King of the Jews, and the bottom short, usually slanted arm, is the footrest that the feet rested on.

We are beginning to see a recognisable shape now. I am pleased with the progress. The arms look good and seem to be in the right position on the upright.

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Thursday, 27 March

The Celtic Cross normally has a circle around the intersection of the arms and the upright. There are many different thoughts on what the circle represents. There are various claims that the circle is a representation of knowledge, a sign of compassion, or a Celtic symbol for infinite love.

The circle has no beginning and no end and it is symbolic of God's endless love for his people. Yet more would see this circle as representing the halo of Christ the Divine. Another school of thought suggests that the circle of the Celtic Cross is a symbol of eternity, demonstrating God's endless love as shown through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The circle symbolizes the great mystery of how through the crucifixion and resurrection, Christ continues to offer the hope of salvation to the faithful throughout all time.

So, as a Celtic Cross usually has a circle in the centre, my cross will also have a circle in the middle at the intersection of the upright and arms.

I shall cut out what is basically a washer from the same wood I have used for the rest of the cross, and then cut it into four equal pieces.

Back to the mini version of Aladdin's cave at the back of the garage to find a suitable piece of wood for the circle. Bit more of a search this time, but eventually the 'perfect' offcut comes to light, again the same wood as the rest of the cross, but slightly larger to enable the circle to be cut out.

Which way shall I run the grain? It might look good on the diagonal?

After drawing a couple of circles showing the grain running across in various directions, I decided that it would look good if the grain was on the diagonal.

In one of my boxes of things that will be useful one day I found a reel of double-sided sticky tape with a hollow centre – three inches diameter on the outside and one and a half inches on the inner circle – just right for my circle.

Using the tape as a template, I drew on the wood and cut it out with a coping saw, then using the same saw, I cut out the middle circle and tidied up the edges.

Cut into four sections, the circle really does (although I say it myself) look good, and the diagonal idea has worked well (although I had to cut a second washer out to get all four arcs with diagonal grain. Try it, you end up with two horizontal grains? – the best laid plans etc...). All good so far!

The cross is a uniting influence –

On the cross Christ did away with our hatred for each other. He also made peace between us and God by uniting Jews and Gentiles in one body.

— Ephesians 2:16

Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to each other, that circle of endless love bonding us all together – friends and enemies, slave and free, clean and unclean.

It is important that the circle is exactly that – a perfect circle, because if it really is showing us God's love for us, then it must be complete love, unbroken.

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Friday, 28 March

Some of the crosses I have looked at for inspiration have the most wonderful intricate carving on them, lots of animals and birds, especially doves. But apart from the fact that I am not a wood carver and I would ruin the finished article, I have a yearning for the simple lines of a plain circle, which I suppose sums up my faith, simple belief – I have never been accused of being a great theologian. Just a plain, simple belief in the love of Christ from

which everything else follows. I often wonder where our church would be now if down through the ages instead of arguing over the minute details of our faith, we had just stuck to the main feature – the love of God as revealed in Jesus. If only we had stuck to one body of fellowship and not lots of splinter groups that we justify by calling them denominations!

I was brought up as a Roman Catholic, but got lured into Methodism at the age of thirteen by a table tennis table and five a side football held on a Friday evening, otherwise known as Aylesbury Methodist Youth Club. (Not that it influenced me, but there were more girls there too!)

I particularly enjoyed Methodist five a side football and I modelled myself on Jimmy Greaves!

So that probably explains my eclectic taste in church buildings. I feel at home in gorgeous cathedrals or simple Prim' chapels, I love all the icons, but am happy with just a plain, white wall. I love the Mass in Latin, but in the pulpit, I am also happy with extempore prayer.

I really loved going to Iona with our Church a few years back. It's a place surrounded with awe and mystery, and saturated with the presence of God. And interestingly enough I could feel God's presence not only in the wonderful Abbey but also just as strongly in the small shrines that inhabit the island. God is present in the grandeur and also in the almost Puritan simplicity of a small stone building with a wooden cross adorning the end wall above a simple table where all are welcome.

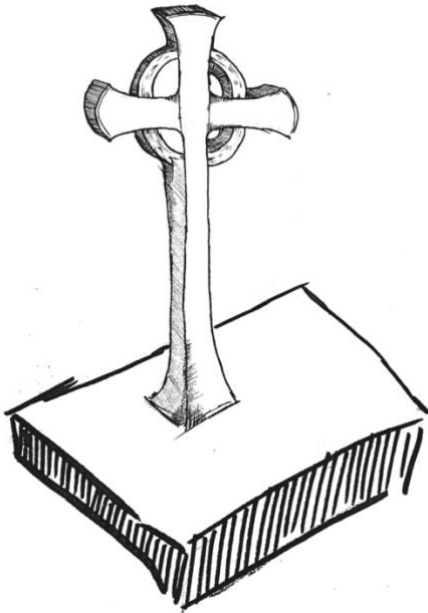
Back to the carving – a plain circle, no wrinkles, bumps, or odd symbols - is perfect.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

— 1 Corinthians 1:18

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Saturday, 29 March



There – done!
Now what am I going to do with it?
What is this cross?
What have I made?
Object of adoration or idol?

The cross is not just an **object** to be viewed and worshipped or discussed like an **object** of art. The cross is many things. It is first and foremost a machine of inhuman cruelty, a device for inflicting misery and suffering, and yet seen through the love of Christ it is transformed. It becomes an indispensable tool in our tool box to work for love, it becomes an enabler, a source of power and healing.

And we are told that we are to carry our cross around with us and employ it in our fight against evil.

And whoever does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple.

— Luke 14:27

My mother had a collection of crosses amongst which I have two clear favourites. The first cross is about six inches long with a dark wooden body enclosed in a silver-looking outer case with the body of Jesus nailed onto it. It is a gorgeous cross with a ring at the top to wear around the neck, but a bit heavy for every day. My firm favourite is my mother's rosary, made from what looks like mother of pearl with a chain holding all the prayer beads – according to similar pictures on the internet, it is probably French which would figure as she may have got them from my grandmother on Father's side, who made lots of trip to Lourdes. The cross itself, beautifully shaped, again with the body of our Lord on, has the last third broken off. It has broken where the nails pierce the upright to hold the feet. When they hammered this nail in, they pierced more than his feet. It somehow seems apt to me that the upright has broken at this point, I think it reflects the suffering involved. I love to think that my mother would have spent time running the beads through her hands as she went through the prayers to Mary.

Our acts impact on others. We cannot act in isolation.

*Standing near the **cross** of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.*

— John 19:25

When a child suffers, it impacts on other family members too. None of us can exist or act in isolation. Whatever we do impacts somehow on those around us.

As Mary stood at the foot of that cross, with her son just out of reach, the pain must have been unbearable and I am sure as God witnessed the scene below, he shared in that pain.

It is important that we understand that the cross is more than just a symbol of suffering, it is also if you like, both a part of the problem and an important part of the solution. Mankind tried its hardest to fight God's will by using the cross to destroy his only son, yet God used that same cross to show clearly how powerless the forces of evil are when placed up against the saving grace of God.

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Drawing by Zi Lloyd-Jones

Compiled by Vicky Davies