

The Conscientious Knitter

November 2008

Exploring Community, Social Justice, Environmental Respect and Spirituality through Knitting.
"We Get the Point"

Conscientious Sweater Patterns

At the recent Yarn Exchange (see column opposite) there were several requests for "easy" or "quick" sweater patterns. There's no question why these would be useful: there are several social justice opportunities that make great use of such items, including our own Purling for Puriang. In the interest of assisting knitters who would like to make such sweaters, we list here several sources for free patterns found on the internet.

Please note that some programs ask for specific fiber types (e.g., Warm Woolies requests wool or wool blends), and it's often a good idea to try your sweater on a real person before donating it to make sure there is plenty of room under the arms and in the length.

- www.dailynitter.com/patternsdetail
- <http://www.lionbrand.com/patterns/kim-easy.html>
- http://knitting.about.com/od/sweaterpatterns/Free_Knitting_Patterns_Knitting_Sweater_Patterns.htm
- <http://www.warmwoolies.org/patterns.html>
- http://www.fortheloveofyarn.com/Issues/07Winter/patterns/winter07_kimono.shtml
- <http://www.dailygideposts.com/giveaways/ClassicT-Top.pdf>



Knitting for Soldiers
Eastman Johnson, 1861

Yarn Exchange Report

Those of you who made it to our meeting this month know that we have a lot of yarn. In fact, you know that old nursery rhyme about the black sheep's wool? Well, we have thee or four times that. Thanks to Laureen Branting's organizational skills and everyone else pitching in, it is now neatly organized by color and stored in shower A.

What good is all this yarn? It's not good at all unless it's put to use! To aid in this effort the Conscientious Knitters held a Yarn Exchange in conjunction with UUCF's Holiday Bazaar. Those who came to the Program Building were offered as much yarn as they'd like to take home, or the opportunity to drop off unused skeins. Last year we had more drop offs than pick

ups, but this year, happily, it was the reverse. About a dozen people took home anywhere from two to ten skeins. These included a very excited young woman who said she had just taken up knitting after a long hiatus, and was happy to feed the habit for free. Another customer was a man whose daughter was an enthusiastic crocheter, and because he had no experience in that department he chose several skeins while consulting on his cell phone.

In addition to two people who dropped off yarn and the twelve people or so who took home yarn, many others who stopped by the Yarn Exchange table learned more about the Conscientious Knitters and expressed an interest in attending meetings or making projects. Others received advice on local yarn stores, sweater patterns and area classes and workshops.

All in all, the 2008 Yarn Exchange was a big success. Please note, however, that while we gave away quite a bit of yarn, we have still more! Should you need some, simply drop by the second Monday of the month, or e-mail Ann Richards at Ann@BassetLane.com

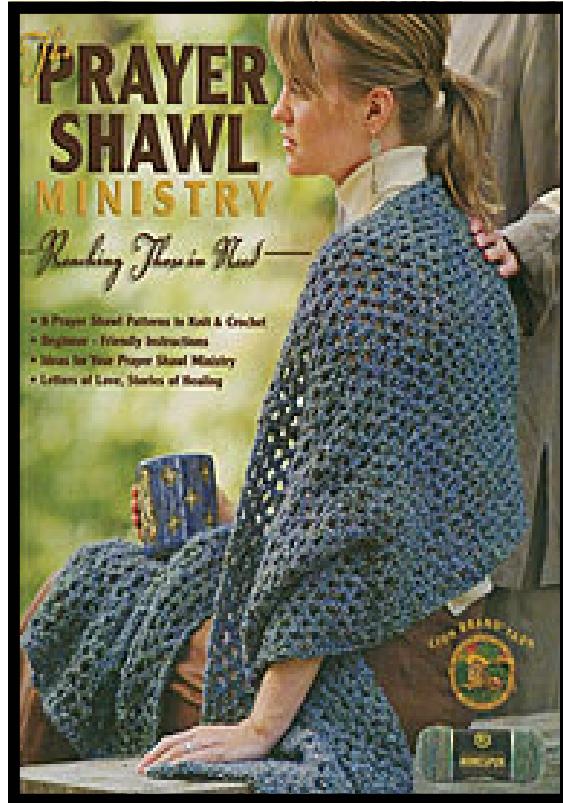
Knitting in the Spirit: The Prayer Shawl Ministry

The Prayer Shawl Ministry: Healing Those in Need
Leisure Arts, Inc., 2005

Sometime last year, I learned that the founders of the Prayer Shawl Ministry were working on a book. The moment I found out about it, I looked forward to buying it. The work that Janet Bristow and Victoria Cole-Gallo have done has been exciting, pragmatic, and well respected. Their web site is full of inspiring and helpful information, and I know of a number of Prayer Shawl Ministries locally that grew up in the wake of this movement.

All of this makes Lion Brand's *The Prayer Shawl Ministry: Healing Those in Need* just that much more disappointing. I grabbed the book when I saw it on the rack, thinking "Yay! They've completed their publication!" In fact, what I picked up was a \$6.95 advertisement for Lion Brand yarn.

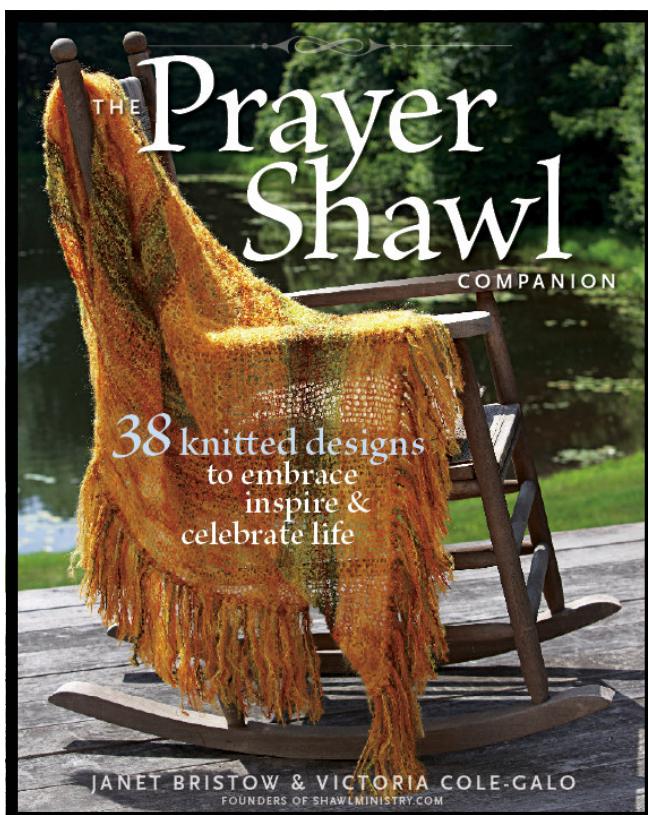
Looking through the table of contents, it seemed there was much to commend it: an article about a church with an active shawl ministry, the meanings of colors to assist in designing a shawl, useful prayers, both knit and crochet patterns, letters to Lion Brand, and general knitting instructions. If you look at those color choices, you realize they're all in the Lion Brand Homespun line.



In the letters, you'll read "Almost all of our shawls have been made from your wonderful Homespun variety. Nothing in the world is softer," "We have only used Lion Brand Homespun Yarn, and the shawls turn out so soft you just want to curl up with one" and even, "We use Lion Brand Homespun...Shawl recipients always comment on how soft and warm the yarn is, like God's love for us all!" Yes. It really compares God's love and Lion Brand Homespun.

So is there any redeeming quality to this book? I turned to the prayer section, and read "...that we may be children of our Father in heaven, and true disciples of Jesus Christ" and "Almighty and Everlasting God who created us for yourself..." and for a baby, "Guide this precious child onto the path that leads to You." After Christian prayer after prayer, I was gratified to see a Jewish prayer, but that was it. Thirteen prayers invoking Jesus Christ, and one Jewish prayer. Some of them were quite lovely, but the beliefs expressed in the book were extraordinarily narrow.

Something wasn't right, so I went back to the Prayer Shawl Ministry web site. Sure enough, the book that Bristow and Cole-Gallo wrote was called *The Prayer Shawl Companion* published by Taunton in September of this year (pictured at left). What I had in fact picked up, was one of two books put out by Lion Brand that promotes the Prayer Shawl Ministry.



House Keeping

But no where in the text was the Ministry's web site mentioned. It was hard to escape the thought that Lion Brand was using a good-hearted, humanitarian effort to comfort others rather blatantly as a way to sell yarn. The whole thing seemed mean-spirited and crass.

Don't get me wrong. I love Lion Brand yarn. I buy it frequently at craft stores for baby projects, and other items I want to be able to wash. I especially like their Woolease wool blend line, and have used their bulky yarns repeatedly. I must say, my experience has taught me that Lion Brand pills a lot with use, and that because it is a boucle and has a bumpy texture, it is not always a good choice for beginners. That said, my concern is not with the yarn~as I said I buy it myself~but with the commercial and insensitive way that Lion used the Prayer Shawl movement.

Closing the book I had two thoughts. One was, I'm going to go get *The Prayer Shawl Companion* at my next opportunity. Then I thought I wouldn't be so eager to buy Lion Brand yarn in the future. I suspect this was not what they intended when they published their book.

Auction Action: We're On!



In keeping with our annual tradition, the Conscientious Knitters will again be contributing to UUCF's auction fundraiser. This year's auction is going to be held on Valentine's Day, with the theme of *Can Buy Me Love*. The Knitters are particularly excited about this year's project in conjunction with the Caring Committee. We will be making chemo caps, baby items such as blankets, and prayer shawls for those with chronic illness. Volunteers are needed to create samples which will be displayed on the night of the auction, giving bidders a chance to sponsor the items. The Caring Committee will then distribute the items to deserving congregants. These gifts will truly be from UUCF, having been hand made by members, sponsored by members, and distributed by members. So, here's what we need:

- A volunteer who will help coordinate knitters after the auction.
- Volunteers to knit samples before February 14
- Knitters who would be willing to make one or more items during the year. (We're shooting for about a dozen shawls, a dozen hats, and baby item numbers TBD.)
- A Caring Committee Liaison for the project.

Are you game? Do you have questions? If so, let Ann Richards know at an up-coming meeting, or e-mail her at Ann@BassetLane.com, or call her at 703-476-5810.

Much of November's meeting was taken up by sorting, winding and storing our excessive yarn stash in beloved shower A. Thanks for everyone who helped out with this rather chaotic effort. This is the kick-off to a whole series of house keeping efforts we hope to make over the next month or two. Here's what we announced at the November meeting:

- **Don't forget 2008-09 dues!** It's \$10 for the year. Money can go to our trusty treasurer, Wini Atlas, who can be reached at 703-938-5640.
- We're trying to catch up with all the sweaters sent to Puriang. We want to make sure everyone who has donated a sweater gets a thank you letter that can then be used for tax purposes. **If you've donated a sweater within the last year (any time in 2008) please e-mail that information to Laureen Branting at brantinl@hotmail.com**, or call her at 703-707-9832.
- In order to avoid the confusion that made the above announcement necessary, we are asking that **donated sweaters have the name and address of the knitter pinned to them**. Yes, we're still collecting them, (our long term goal is 300!) we just want to make sure we keep records of what has been done.



Conscientious Knitters pitch in to sort and wind the yarn stash used for social justice projects.

- Joanne Walker reminds us that much of our yarn windfall comes from Nature's Yarns, the newest yarn store in Fairfax County. Conscientious Knitters who need natural fiber yarns or are looking for specific yarn for a project are encouraged to shop there by way of thank you. Stop in and see them at

**Natures Yarns,
Jermantown Shopping Center,
11212 Lee Hwy, Fairfax, VA 22030.
Phone: 703-273-3596.
E-Mail: NaturesYarnsinc.com**

Conscientious Calendar

 Monday, December 8 Regular Conscientious Knitter drop-in meeting. 7:30 p.m. UUCF Program Building. For more information contact Ann Richards at Ann@BassetLane.com.

 Monday, January 12 Regular Conscientious Knitter drop-in meeting. 7:30 p.m. UUCF Program Building. For more information contact Ann Richards at Ann@BassetLane.com.

 Monday, February 14 UUCF Annual Auction: *Can Buy Me Love*. Conscientious Knitters will be auctioning off items to be distributed to deserving congregation members by the Caring Committee.

Knitter's Notes

- For more information about Conscientious Knitting programs, contact Ann Richards at Ann@BassetLane.com
- For more information about UUCF Adult Religious Exploration, check out the web site at www.uucf.org.
- Want to register for Conscientious Knitters '08-'09? Dues are \$10 for drop-in sessions, workshops and social justice knitting opportunities. Call treasurer Wini Atlas at 703-938-5640, or come by a drop-in meeting on the second Monday of the month.
- For back issues of The Conscientious Knitter and an article index, check out www.conscientiousknitters.com.

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