

*Based on Psalm 139:1-18. God as a Knitter/Weaver/Seamstress*

I have heard through the grapevine a general sense that our worship and spiritual life here at SPC has been feeling a little bit “heavy.” Not in a negative way, *per se*. It is essential, after all, for the church to speak profoundly and prophetically to the culture of the day. Which, for us these past many weeks and even months, has included a deep dive into social justice issues of local and national and global urgency. Hence the theme for this season of *Covenanting Resilience*.

Resilience, however, does not come, as the SPC grapevine rightly insists, only by telling the truth about the world as it is and holding up a vision for the world as it should - and could - be. Resilience also comes - and in fact perhaps more successfully comes - by cultivating practices of compassion, skill, and endurance to sustain us through the transition of the world as it is to the world as it should and could be.

One of those practices, as evidenced in our liturgical art today, is the practice of knitting.

*Properly practiced*, says the author Elizabeth Zimmerman, *knitting soothes the troubled spirit, and it doesn't hurt the untroubled spirit either. Knitting is a comfort to the soul*, agrees, the author Jan Karon. *It is regular. It is repetitious. And, in the end, it amounts to something.*

*Knitting is the perfect metaphor for life*, the author Gabbbo De La Parra points out. *You might spend months knitting something, but you could probably unravel the whole thing in less than an hour.* On a more mystical note, reflects the actor Michael McKean, *I watch my wife knitting, and it's like watching close-up magic to me.*

Magic is the word I also would use, as a non-knitter myself. Not just from watching those who *knit one, pearl two*, which is about all I know about the subject. Magic is also what we experience from the gift of someone else's knitting, most especially in the gift of a prayer shawl, wrapped around the shoulders as a comforting and caring great big divine HUG.

Which somehow miraculously lightens the weight of the world settling far too heavily on all of our shoulders. Protecting us, it seems, with a gentle barrier from *the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune* that distract us from our path.

The prayer shawl reminds us we are knit together in communion with God and community with one another. It is a gift for every time and every occasion - joyful and sorrowful. It is a gift for every season and circumstance of life - chosen or unchosen. It is a gift for when we are weeping or when we are celebrating. As a ministry of this congregation, prayer shawls are shared with the newly baptized, with those who are sick and even dying, with those who are facing challenges, and with those who simply ask for one.

Someone prayed while knitting our prayer shawls. The practice of knitting, itself, became an act of prayer for them, as the rhythmic motion of the needles quieted their minds. And they prayed for the one who would receive the shawl, often without even knowing who that person would be.

Talk about covenanting resilience! That is exactly what our prayer shawl ministry has done for SPC these many years, week in, week out, knitting us together in communion with God and community with one another. No wonder the psalmist picks up on the image of God as a knitter/seamstress/weaver in our Lesson today.

In a hymn that pours out the journey of the spirit seeking coherence in the midst of chaos, the psalmist finds the courage to keep going in a season of existential dread. Wrapped up in divine compassion, the psalmist finds comfort in the promise that steadfast, never-quitting, never-failing, always constant LOVE companions him wherever he goes.

The great majesty of God the psalmist finds in creation cannot eclipse the intimate presence of grace gently and lovingly wrapping the yarn of the psalmist's existence around the divine fingers, *reverently and wonderfully* co-creating the beauty that IS US, even through the chaos that is within us and around us.

In a nod to the heaviness, I do need to acknowledge how this psalm lands in light of our state's recently enacted laws restricting access to abortion care. The heartfelt refrain of the psalmist reciting *you knit me together in my mother's womb* has been lifted woefully out of context to validate those laws.

This psalm is emphatically not a treatise on systematic theology or ethics around pregnancy. It is a spiritually driven invitation to covenant our way through the chaos in our culture in communion with God and community with one another, trusting always, at the end of the day, God is still with us, and we are still with God.

So let us wrap ourselves up in the knitting grace of our creator, on this Prayer Shawl Sunday, knowing how deeply we are loved, and commit ourselves to become Living Prayer Shawls wherever we go, as the grace of God goes with us.