



WELCOME TO OUR

# *Spring Newsletter*

## **MYSTERY KNITALONGS**



From now on, each booklet will focus on a single theme, taking a closer look at the stories, ideas, and communities that inspire us — exploring how they started, how they work, and where they are today.

Our first theme is *Mystery Knitalong* — a creative concept that began as a simple, playful challenge and has since grown into a worldwide phenomenon, connecting knitters through shared surprises and stitches.

In this issue, we'll uncover its origins, explain how it works, and see how it became a global movement.

Let's unravel the mystery together.



## **MYSTERY KNITALONGS – CONTEMPLATIVE KNITTING DURING LENT AND ADVENT**

### **So what exactly is a Lent or Advent mystery knitalong?**

The idea is to knit a mystery pattern over the course of Lent or Advent with some reflections or Bible verses for you to think about as you knit a few rows each day. Sometimes (though not always) the reflections even tie in with what is being knitted!

So you start out knowing only that you will be knitting a scarf, say, and how much yarn you need for the project, but with no idea what the finished design will be like. Each week you are sent the 'clues' for the next 7 days of knitting.

### **How did this idea get started?**

A keen knitter at Victoria Methodist Church had come across the concept of mystery knitalongs in the knitting community and in conversation with a friend, thought that this would be an ideal project for Lent. The first couple of years saw around 20 people taking part – mostly Vic members with a few family and friends joining in, too – and different people contributing patterns and reflections.

Part-way through our second knitalong in 2020, the first lockdown started. The daily knitting and a little WhatsApp group within which we could share pictures and experiences was a wonderful escape and a chance to rebalance each day.

One participant commented "I'm sure I speak for everyone in saying what a comfort this process has been, in a time that has been more strange and difficult than any of us could have imagined when we started this."

## I heard this went global?

By 2022 we were about to start our third Knitalong when someone had the spur-of-the-moment idea of advertising it on a national Methodist Facebook group. Within days we were inundated with people wanting to join in and quickly had to set up a dedicated email address and mailing list to deal with the hundreds of requests for the pattern and reflections.

Since then we have grown to be a global community reaching from New Zealand to California and Sweden to South Africa who use knitting to reflect on our faith and journey with God during Lent and Advent. We have a Facebook group with nearly 2000 members and our mailing list has over 1,700 people on it. But there may be many more who simply download the documents from our website.

## So what sorts of things have you been knitting?

Over the years we have knitted several scarves, a cushion cover, a triangular shawl and a little blanket. This year it is a shoulder wrap.

We have a wonderful team of people at Vic and beyond who each write a week's worth of daily reflections and we are finding that they are used not only by knitters, but many others, too. We have a couple of admin fairies to prepare the documents, keep track of the mailing list and manage the Facebook Group.

Meanwhile, our chief pattern designer is already coming up with ideas for next year's knitalong! And by the summer, she will have got a dedicated (global) team of test knitters on the case to catch any mistakes.



## And you provide all of this for free?

It is really important to us, that this is free, so that as many people can join in as possible. Some knitting needles and a few balls of wool from the charity shop is all you need to get going. And we try to keep the knitting accessible to beginners, too. When people have told us that we run all of this more professionally than many paid-for knitalongs, we've been really chuffed.

However, it is getting to the point where it is no longer feasible to keep up this level of work on an entirely voluntary basis. So the team are now exploring a number of different funding avenues to make sure that this remains a free and accessible resource to all.



## What do the participants make of it all?

Each year we receive wonderful testimonies of how the knitting and reflections have been a comfort and support to people who have been ill, housebound or grieving. Often the knitting has acted as a conversation starter and got people talking about their faith with others. In some places it has strengthened and grown local communities or allowed older, less mobile members of a church who sometimes felt left out to take the lead. And many have expressed how much they enjoy the sense of connectedness with other knitters across the world while also drawing strength from the quiet times of contemplation.

The metaphor of the knitting itself, trusting the design, even when you don't know where it is leading or living with the mistakes and letting go of perfectionism, is appreciated by participants every year. We are always very touched when others share these stories with us and so grateful for what this combination of knitting and reflecting is enabling God to do in people's lives.

What started out as a small activity among friends at a single church has grown into a global ministry we could never have imagined.



## How can we find out more or sign up ourselves?

Simply go to the Vic website where you can sign up to the mailing list and have a look at our previous projects:  
<https://www.vic-methodist-bristol.org.uk/knitalongs/>