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Athelstone Uniting Church #75

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Text: 2 Cor 9:1-15 NIV



Let's pray

Thank you Generous God for the Word you have for us this morning.
Open our hearts to hear what you have to say to us
then nudge us to action in the power of your Spirit.
Amen

recap

Throughout this month our theme is "Generous!"
This is a time to celebrate how extravagantly generous our God is and to 'count our blessings'!
We have so much to be thankful for.

I've talked about the Giving nature of God
and how we respond in our generosity to others.
I've talked about how we respond with gladness and thanksgiving as a response to grace –
the love of God freely and generously given in Christ.

Last week I talked about how we don't always feel glad – that life has its challenges that can
knock us about
And that we are called to be there for one another -
– shining a light into our dark places just when we need it most, sometimes with a smile, or a
phone call, or a meal, or simply asking 'How are you?' And really listening when we reply.

I quoted Psalm 23 to help us remember that our Lord, our shepherd, walks beside us even in
the darkest valleys of life

That the Lord's presence gives us courage to continue on
And that the Lord blesses us with good things and our cup overflows
The Lord's presence is with us all the days of our life

Our gladness can be transformational when others are feeling anxious - we have the capacity to bring joy - because of the joy we have, through Christ.

Dreams

Last week we prayed about how God is calling us to share our generosity with others and what dreams God is placing in our hearts for us to act on next.

I shared the Uniting Church's vision for a just Australia:

We see a nation where each person and all creation can flourish and enjoy abundant life.

The Uniting Church in Australia believes the whole world is God's good creation.

Each person is made in God's image and is deeply loved by God. In Jesus, God is completing the reconciliation and renewal of the whole creation.

then some of you wrote your dreams up on Post It notes - which I've kept there as a reminder and encouragement

Here are some of the dreams you wrote:

- I dream of a society which is generous to those who are struggling
- I dream of a world, a community, a people where love and compassion wins over self-absorption
- Away with self importance and in with peace and happiness
- Sew seeds of compassion until a wave of love flows through the community

And some specific dreams:

- To identify new leaders and volunteers to support our activities
- A young adults pop up café service once every 2 months
- Make a community garden and give away produce

Wonderful visions for the future!

And some challenges:

- Dream the dream, share the dream with loved ones, then live the dream
- A dream is given to us for a reason. Share it - act upon it. Don't let it wither and die.

I will be bringing these dreams to church council to consider at our planning day coming up next month

Colors

When we start dreaming, the brightest colours can fill our head – like the songline from A Million Dreams from The Greatest Showman.

And that's what today is about - how our dreams can bring colour to our world - in sharing the blessings we have received through God's grace.

Extra yarn



The story Extra Yarn began in a very colorless, cold, stark world

Annabelle found a box filled with yarn of every colour

Like God's grace, this yarn just kept on giving.

And Annabelle was able to use her gift of knitting to bring colour and warmth to her neighbourhood.

She was mocked yet she kept on giving

people noticed. People were transformed. People without exception.



Her gift kept on giving – bringing colour to people, then to animals – and other things in God's world.

News spread about this remarkable girl who never ran out of yarn.

When the archduke came and offered a ridiculous amount of money for Annabelle's box of yarn, she politely declined.

Her box was stolen but the yarn wasn't meant for that arch duke – who just wanted it for himself.

The yarn was meant to be shared.

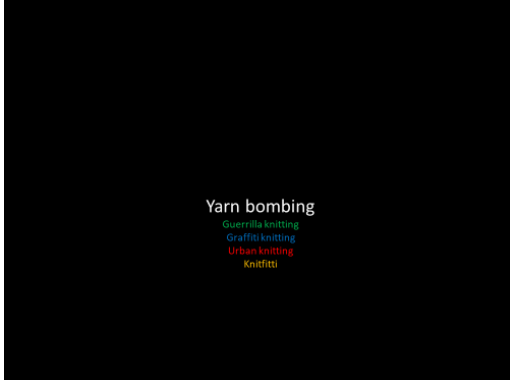
And the gift returned to Annabelle so she could keep on giving, keep on bringing transformation using her gift to bring colour and warmth to the world around her.

A wonderful story of generosity and sharing.

The kind actions of one person brought transformation to an entire community through generosity and determination

Yarn bombing

This reminds me so much of the phenomenon of Yarn bombing



Yarn bombing also known as Guerrilla knitting, Graffiti knitting, Urban knitting or Knitfitti! is the activity of covering objects or structures in public places with decorative knitted or crocheted material, as a form of street art.

We have examples of it in our wirra and on the posts by our Entry way.

"yarn bombing has become increasingly popular as a way to brighten up our surroundings"



These installations are meant to be temporary and not to be destructive.

Whether it's wrapping a bike rack in colorful wool, knitting a cozy for a stop sign or covering a tree trunk in crochet, yarn bombing brings warmth and whimsy to things that have neither. In other words: It makes people smile. It is a blessing

The concept of yarn bombing is thought to have originated in the United States in 2005 when Texan shop owner, Magda Sayeg, unhappy with the bland landscape around her, decided on a whim to knit up a doorknob cosy for the shop. It attracted attention from passersby, inspiring

Sayeg to venture further with the idea of covering objects with yarn, ultimately leading her to establish the yarn bombing crew, Knitta Please.



While Sayeg's foray into yarn bombing was accidental, she spurred on a global community of yarn bombers, with yarn bombing crews founded across Europe, North America and Australasia.



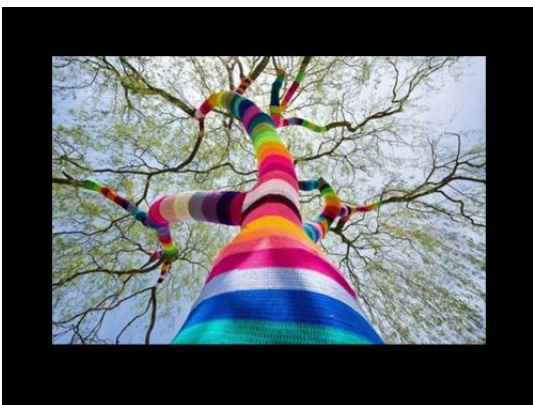
Yarn bombing can be small and subtle or can be massive community projects
Yarn bombing can be a form of peaceful protest



They can beautify public spaces – reclaiming sterile urban environments and giving them a personal touch



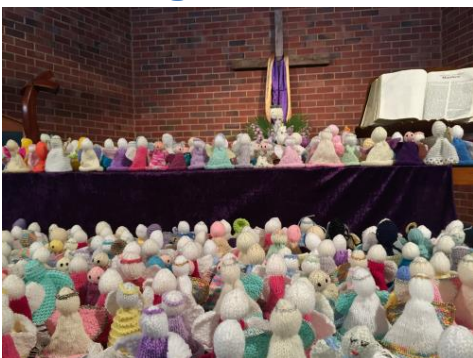
Some installations remain for a while, while others are taken down and remade into blankets for the homeless



yarnbombing, Sayeg said , helps people "stop and smell the roses. You're desensitized by your surroundings, and then you add knitting, and you kinda look at it. You look at it differently."

Here at our church, we have drawn attention to our space with the splashes of knitted colour through yarn bombing in the wirra

Knitted angels



As a congregation, we knitted hundreds of angels which we sent out into the community as blessings of love and hope last Christmas. And I hope we'll repeat this coming Christmas!



Threads

Through Threads we have brought colour and warmth to our world by knitting, crocheting and stitching clothes and toys which are about to head over to Syria for children living in refugee camps and orphanages – displaced by war.

There are other ways we can each bring transformation to people and communities around us. Each one of us can engage in small acts of kindness, blessing others as we have been blessed. Lets add colour to our world.



Bible reading

And let's do it out of a sense of wanting to pass on the blessing we have received because of God's abundant grace

Paul encourages us to give generously. When we begin by celebrating what and how much God has done for us and given to us – then our passion for generous giving to others flows freely.

God is the source of grace and abundance and is able to increase and multiply every act of grace and giving that we pass on to others

This applies to all things: all things at all times having all we need so that we may abound in every good work and bless others.

We give with no strings attached. Just grace.

And as God's grace reaches out to more and more people through us giving cheerfully, more and more people will respond in thanksgiving to God.

As recipients of God's grace, we are all called to share in this ministry of generosity.

Blessed to be a blessing.

Ian Adams writes:

I would love to see the mission of Christ's people increasingly focus on blessings. Blessing works.

I don't fully understand how or why, he says, it just does! Perhaps in part because in blessing we are stepping consciously into the flow of God's ever creating goodness! Perhaps too because the act of blessing changes us – both blesser and receiver. We begin to perceive ourselves and the world in a different way. Blessing is linked to the possibility of abundance. Jesus spoke of his coming to bring abundant life. Whenever the people of Jesus come tenderly offering abundance in their hands and blessing on their lips the world of deficit, cuts, and shortages may begin to change for good.

Whenever the people of Jesus come tenderly offering abundance in their hands and blessing on their lips the world of competing ideologies, tribes, nations and religions will begin to find more reasons to connect than disconnect.

Whenever the people of Jesus come tenderly offering abundance in their hands and blessing on their lips your street, your school, and your work will begin to find their healing.

So how even with limited resources, can you offer blessing and carry abundance? ¹

As we live gladly and generously blessing others, serving, sharing life and hospitality, so the opportunities come to invite people to experience community of belonging. In this experience of a welcoming community those who are curious or even sceptical can begin to explore the person, teaching and call of Jesus. And as their sense of being at home or belonging grows, so belief forms and commitment comes. ²

So how can you be a blessing to others this week?

There have been lots of examples of knitted gifts of kindness

But what if you aren't a knitter?

Here are some more ideas:

Run video

¹ Ian Adams: *Give me a drink*

² Andrew Roberts: *Holy Habits*



So many small actions that can make a big difference to those who received. All given with a smile and no strings attached. Lovely!

I encourage you to consider trying to do at least one act of kindness for someone else this week!

At messy church last week, we joined in the 1000 hearts project. The 1000 hearts project is a kindness project which began in 2016, making pocket hearts to bring comfort and hope to anyone who needs it

At messy church we made 2 colourful felt hearts each. We encouraged those who made hearts to keep one for themselves – being kind to yourself is as important as being kind to others - and then give one away

And so this morning, we are going to do something similar.

I have these ready-made felted wool hearts.

And I have enough for each of you to receive two – one for yourself and one to take with you and to give to someone you know who is in need of comfort and hope. That's your first act of kindness prepared for you!

During the next song, I'll be coming around giving you 2 each.

So let's add colour to our world this week, passing on the blessings we have received from God to others and let's transform our world one small act of kindness at a time.

Amen