

## Knitting 202—Felted Mittens

In Knitting 202, the class will learn how to knit in the round, how to graft stitches together, and how the fulling process works. It is a three week class.

Mittens are fun and quick projects, and they make people happy, both to knit and to receive. Participants can choose to make a pair for an older child, a woman or a man. The three Bible studies revolve around theme of hands: God's hands, Jesus' hands, and our hands.

By the end of the third session, the students will have completed only one mitten, so they'll have to make its partner and full them after the class has concluded.

## Knitting 202—Felted Mittens

### *Week One*

This week the students will learn how to knit in the round. The pattern is written for three double-pointed needles. But you can explain to them that a person can also knit in the round using four DP's, or using two circular needles. When I make out a supply list, I tell them they can use either DP's or circulars. Some students will use one method, and some the other. It's good for them to know there's more than one way to skin a cat!

Get them started on knitting in the round. This first week, they'll knit as far as the thumb gusset. The second class starts from there. They will need stitch markers for next week's class.

The theme for this week's Bible study centers on the hands of God, and it utilizes Psalm 95.

### I. God's Hands?

**Question:** So, does God have hands?

We can't really say so, and yet for us to wrap our minds around God, we need to picture God in human terms.

The Bible, actually, speaks quite a bit about the "Hand of God." **Questions:** Why would we want to describe God with hands? What do hands do? Why would they be applicable to God? (Our hands make us productive. We make things with our hands. God is the prime mover, and so hands become a chief symbol for the activity of God).

### II. The Whole World in His Hands

Psalm 95 was probably used as people came to the temple in Jerusalem to worship. It's something of a call to worship. Each of the two sections before us begins with an invitation to come and worship, and then we're told why God is worthy of our praise. The invitations begin with "O Come!" and the reason why we should begins with "For...."

*Have someone read Psalm 95:1–5.*

We get two hands in this section. The first time we encounter God's hand comes in verse four:

"In his hand are the depths of the earth;  
the heights of the mountains are his also."

Notice the bigness! **Question:** How much can you hold in *your* hands? How many eggs can you hold safely in one hand?

But look what God can carry! From the lows to the highs, and everything in between. It's

everything....God holds *everything* in God's hand!

Now, we know in our heads that the whole world is in God's hands. But still, sometimes people will say, "It's in God's hands." **Question:** When do people say something like that? (When a situation is out of their control, when it's not in *their* hands)

This is tough! When we say "It's in God's hands," we're not saying that God will magically make it all better.

What we're making here is a statement of faith. We're saying that, come what may, all things are in God's hands. Both the mountain top highs of our life, and the rock bottom lows, we're commending them all into God's great hands, trusting that the one who holds the world will *carry us through*.

### III. Creative God

We get another handy reason for praising God in verse five:

"The sea is his, for he made it,  
and the dry land, which his hands have formed."

So.....we've got the wet things, and the dry things.....that pretty much covers it all, huh? So we're told that God has made everything. We're given this picture of God acting something like a potter. God forms the earth with God's hands.

Picture a child playing in a sand box. You know how they push that sand around with their hands. They form hills and pat them smooth. They scoop out deep channels with their fingers. This is how God is pictured.

*Bring in a plate or a vase made by a potter, one where you can see the ridges of the potter's fingers left in the clay.* When the potter made that piece, her hands had to touch every surface. Nothing on that pottery escaped the potter's hand!

So this is a very intimate picture we see of God. God's hand has touched all of creation, and brought it into being.

### IV. The Shepherd's Hand

So God's hands carry us through the highs and lows of life. And God's hands have intimately shaped us and all things. In the second stanza of our psalm we learn something else about God's hands (*have someone read Ps. 95:6–7a*).

Okay, in ancient Israel, the shepherd was the primary metaphor for a king. **Question:** What would a shepherd's hands mean for the sheep? (Protection, direction, security)

These were the qualities Israel understood a good king would have. But the psalmist isn't applying

these qualities to the King of Israel. He's applying these to God! And this is going to lead us into next week's Bible Study, when we look at the hands of the One we call the Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus.

## Felted Mittens—Week One

### Psalm 95:1\_7a

O come, let us sing to the Lord;  
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

<sup>2</sup> Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;  
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

<sup>3</sup> For the Lord is a great God,  
and a great King above all gods.

<sup>4</sup> **In his hand** are the depths of the earth;  
the heights of the mountains are his also.

<sup>5</sup> The sea is his, for he made it,  
and the dry land, which **his hands** have formed.

<sup>6</sup> O come, let us worship and bow down,  
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

<sup>7</sup> For he is our God,  
and we are the people of his pasture,  
and **the sheep of his hand**.

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## *Week Two*

This week's class begins with the thumb gusset. Teach them how to "make one," creating a stitch from the yarn strand in between the stitches from the round below. The difference between a left twisting and right twisting increase is subtle, and will be lost in the felting process, but this is a good project for them to practice on and learn some of these subtleties, which help to transform an average knitting project into one of excellence.

As they finish the gusset, lead the class through putting the thumb stitches on a holder or piece of yarn, and teach them how to cast new stitches onto the needle in the middle of a project (I like the Backward Loop Cast On). For the rest of the class, they'll just continue knitting in the round up the length of the hand.

Make sure to walk them through the two different decrease methods for the top of the mitten, and how SSK creates a left leaning decrease while K2tog creates a right leaning decrease. Again, this subtle difference won't appear on the mittens once they're felted, but this makes it an ideal project for them to practice all these new skills on.

For their homework, they should knit up to the top of the hand (to the point where they have 10 sts remaining, five on each of two needles). Next week's class will begin with the grafting of these stitches together. They will need their yarn needle for next week's class.

This week's Bible study focuses on the hands of Jesus and will utilize the post-resurrection story of the Road to Emmaus.

### I. A Bible Tour

Last week we looked at the hands of God, and this week we look at the hands of Jesus. So before we zero in on our Bible reading, let's take a quick tour through the life of Jesus, and focus on his hands.

**A. Baby Hands** — We begin in Bethlehem with his birth. Imagine just after he's born. Mary and Joseph are in the cattle stall, nestled in the straw, and there's that newly born Jesus, still wet with amniotic fluid. **Question:** When Mary and Joseph look at him and hold him, what do you suppose they're doing with his hands? (Counting his fingers, making sure all his parts are there, kissing his hands, kissing him all over)

Little baby hands are so amazing! The fine, tiny finger bones, the perfect little nails. All the parts of a human hand, but incredibly small. And just ponder what those hands are going to do throughout

the course of Jesus' life!

**B. Childhood Hands** — So Jesus grows up in Nazareth. And Joseph is a carpenter. **Question:** So what do you suppose Jesus' little boy hands are doing? (Learning the skills of carpentry—how to use a hammer and saw; they have slivers, hammers bang his fingers and thumbs; he's becoming adept at the skills of the trade.

**C. Jesus' Ministry** — Okay, now let's consider Jesus' ministry. **Question:** What sort of things did he do with his hands? Possible responses:

- Touching the untouchable: the dead, lepers, children, "sinful" women.  
    Consider what they accomplish: Heal, bring life, fully accept  
    Consider the power of touch
- Rebuking the storm  
    Consider the power in his hands; no mere human hands could turn the events of nature
- Cleansing of the temple  
    Uprooting tables, forming a whip out of cords  
    What do they see happening in his hands here?

**D. Jesus' Arrest and Death** — Then we come to the end of his ministry, when he is arrested and crucified. The soldiers will mock him by placing a reed in his right hand, like a kingly staff. And then they'll slap his face with the reed. And then he'll have to carry the heavy, rough-hewn cross through town towards the execution site. And when he gets there, the soldiers are going to nail his hands to that cross.

And here on the cross is where we see the full power of his healing hands. What we see is the healing power of forgiveness, and only wounded hands can convey that.

We seek to hurt him, but his wounded hands bring healing forgiveness.

We seek to destroy him, and his hands give us life.

And when we seek to shun him, his hands hold nothing but acceptance for us.

## II. Hands for Us

*Hand out Bible study sheets.* So now our tour of Jesus' hands take us to his resurrected hands. And here is where we see his hands reaching out and touching us even today.

This is an excerpt from the story of the Road to Emmaus. It's Easter afternoon, and these two disciples are walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Along the way, they run into this stranger. *We* know this stranger is Jesus, but *they* don't. And all along the road to Emmaus, Jesus explains to them why the Messiah had to die.

So then they arrive at Emmaus, and this is where our story continues. *Have someone read the text.*

**Question:** What is Jesus doing with his hands in this story? (He blesses and breaks the bread)  
This is when the risen Lord is made known to them. What he's doing with his hands reveals the resurrected Lord in their midst. And he is made known to us in this same way! When we celebrate the Lord's supper, he is both the host and the meal. The hands that absorbed in all our sin and brokenness on the cross and gave us healing forgiveness in return are the same hands that preside at this meal. Whenever we gather to share in that meal, the risen Jesus (that is, the one who has conquered sin and death) is made known to us in the breaking of the bread. He is in our presence, just as he was in the presence of the two disciples in Emmaus.

There's a communion hymn in the Lutheran Book of Worship that expresses this very sentiment (LBW #209):

We meet, as in that Upper Room they met.  
Thou at the table, blessing, yet dost stand.  
"This is my body"; so thou givest yet;  
*Faith still receives the cup as from thy hand.*

It is the hand of Jesus that gives us this meal. **Question:** Now, when we celebrate this meal in worship, whose hands give you the bread and the wine? (The hands of the pastor and/or lay distributor)

And here we make our connection with next week's theme, Our Hands. We see that our hands become the hands of Christ in this world.



## Felted Mittens—Week Two

Luke 24:28\_35

.....As they came near the village to which they were going, (Jesus) walked ahead as if he were going on. <sup>29</sup> But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” <sup>33</sup> That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. <sup>34</sup> They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” <sup>35</sup> Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

# Knitting 202—Felted Mittens

## *Week Three*

This week the class will learn three things: how to graft stitches together, how the felting process works, and how to pick up stitches for the thumb.

Have a pair of mittens made up and ready to felt. I like to bring in a “guest presenter” and let them teach the felting process (a guest presenter adds the exotic touch of an “expert.” Have some fun!). This also allows the guest lecturer to oversee the felting process and frees you up to continue teaching the class while the mittens felt. We’re fortunate to have a washing machine at our church, and so we can felt the mittens during the class time. If you don’t have access to a machine in your class setting, you’ll just have to tell them about the felting process. But if you can felt the mittens in your class time, it adds a nice dramatic flair!

While the mittens are felting, teach the class about the Kitchner Method. Certainly, on a project like this one, you wouldn’t need to graft the stitches together. But I added this feature so that the class has a chance to become acquainted with the concept of grafting. And if their tension is a little goofy, it will all “come out in the wash.” This makes it the perfect project for them to practice the Kitchner Method.

After they’ve grafted the top of the mitten, tell them how to pick up the reserved stitches from the palm, and teach them how to pick up the five extra stitches from the surrounding area. Three of these five stitches will come from the cast on stitches. Pick up one extra stitch from either side of these three cast on stitches. These side stitches prevent those irritating little holes from emerging on either side of the thumb. The class can then work on their thumb until it’s time for the Bible study.

Today’s Bible Study will focus on Our Hands, and it looks at the story of St. Paul regaining his sight from Acts 9.

## I. Agents of Grace

Last week we looked at the hands of Jesus. He became known to the two disciples at Emmaus in the breaking of the bread. And when we celebrate communion, the hands of Jesus preside over our meal, too. He is made known to us in the breaking of the bread. But our hands also participate in that meal’s distribution!

God uses our hands as agents of God’s grace! So in our final Bible study, we look at Our Hands. *Hand out the Bible study.*

## II. The Setting

St. Paul's relationship with Christianity began as a very different thing. He was known as Saul, and he was a persecutor of the church. He understood the Church to be an ugly stain on the purity of Jewish faith. And so he did everything in his power to wipe it out. He even went so far as to gain permission to round up these false believers in Damascus and bring them back to Jerusalem, to face the music. So he was on his way to Damascus when he was struck down by a vision of Jesus. He heard a voice ask him, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?" When he got up, he was blind, and he had to be led by the hand into Damascus.

For three days he was blind. He didn't eat a thing. Here's where our reading begins. *Have someone read Acts 9:10–19.*

### III. Healing Touch

So here's a touch of irony: Saul has been struck blind, but while he's blind, he's having visions!

Meanwhile, Jesus speaks to a man named Ananias in a vision. He directs him to go to Saul and heal him. We don't know much about Ananias. **Question:** What do we know about him? (He's a disciple)

And that's all we need to know! He is a disciple of Jesus. And Jesus is going to work through him. **Question:** What does God tell Ananias to do? (Go to a certain house and lay his hands on Saul). So Ananias is instructed to *use his hands*. God is going to work healing through Ananias' touch!

Now, God could have healed Saul just as easily as God struck him blind. But God chooses to work divine healing through the hands of Ananias. And this tells us something about divine healing. In its fullness, healing pulls us into community.

Our hands become agents of God's healing. **Question:** When have you seen God's healing come through the hands of another person?

Ananias *touched* Saul. Touch brings inclusion. Saul stood outside that Christian community. But with a touch, Ananias turns an enemy into a brother.

We are all disciples of Jesus, too. And Jesus can use our hands. Our hands can bring divine healing into the world. With our touch, we can become agents of God's healing in a sorrowful, broken world. That's an awesome realization! God can use your hands!

So I want to end tonight with a prayer of blessing for your hands. *Instruct the class to hold their hands up to receive a blessing.*

Almighty and merciful God, you formed our hands in our mother's womb. You have given our hands power, and power beyond just the strength of our sinews and bones. For you have empowered our hands to be agents of your grace in this world. And so we ask: In the comings and goings of our daily path, bless our hands towards your kingdom's goals. May they be instruments of your compassionate touch. May they gently guide the lost and despairing. May they shape tomorrow with your hope. We pray this in the name of your Son, our Lord, whose risen hands bear the mark of your love. Amen.

## Felted Mittens—Week Three

### Acts 9:10\_19

Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." <sup>11</sup> The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, <sup>12</sup> and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and **lay his hands on him** so that he might regain his sight." <sup>13</sup> But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; <sup>14</sup> and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." <sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; <sup>16</sup> I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." <sup>17</sup> So Ananias went and entered the house. **He laid his hands on Saul** and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." <sup>18</sup> And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, <sup>19</sup> and after taking some food, he regained his strength.