

Knitting: A Metaphor for Belonging

Imagine joining a knitting group. Does anyone go to a knitting group and ask if the knitters believe in knitting or what they hold to be true about knitting? Do people ask for a knitting doctrinal statement? Indeed, if you start knitting by reading a book about knitting or a history of knitting or a theory of knitting, you will very likely never knit.

If you want to knit, you find someone who knits to teach you. Go to the local yarn shop and find out when there is a knitting class. Sit in a circle where others will talk to you, show you how to hold the needles, guide your hands, and share their patterns with you. The first step in becoming a knitter is forming a relationship with knitters. The next step is to learn by doing and practice. After you knit for a while, after you have made scarves and hats and mittens, then you start forming ideas about knitting.

You might come to think that the experience of knitting makes you a better person, more spiritual, or able to concentrate, gives you a sense of service to others, allow you to demonstrate love and care. You think about what you are doing, how you might do it better. You develop your own way of knitting, your own theory of the craft. You might invent a dazzling new pattern, a new way to make a stitch; you might write a knitting book or become a knitting teacher. In knitting, the process is exactly the reverse of that in church: belonging to a knitting group leads to behaving as a knitter, which leads to believing things about knitting.

Relationships lead to craft, which leads to experiential belief.

— Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, p. 203

Questions for Reflection: Imagine what your congregation might look like if it functioned as described above.

- How might the priorities of the congregation's ministries shift?
- What would congregation members, neighbors and visitors experience when sharing their lives with your congregation?