

March 16, 2020

The Good News Quilt

We will not let this pandemic get the best of us! Quilters have a strong history of stitching through any kind of crisis, so we are well equipped to manage, stay hopeful, and have a finished product at the end.

Each week I will give you the next part of the pattern - so yes, it's a bit of a mystery. But the color scheme is very simple and can be done from your stash. You are welcome to come into the shop to select your fabrics, of course. We are a safe space here. But this quilt gives you a good excuse to cut up parts from your stash.

We also have an AccuQuilt die cutter that will cut the right size squares for part of this project.

Sew (clever, huh) here we go!

Total fabric yardage needed:
1 1/4 yards of background, preferably whitish.
1 1/4 yards of colors (we'll get back to this)
1 1/2 yards of another background, preferably whitish
1 1/2 yards of colors (we'll get back to this)
2 1/4 yards border

Size of quilt 75 X 84 (you can make it larger, but you will have to adjust fabric requirements, of course)

Step one: Find your fabrics! For background, you can choose 2 different white on whites, 1 1/4 yards of one white and 1 1/2 yards of a different yet compatible white. You can also choose 3 yards of various whites from your scraps, all different but all compatible. Not to confuse you further, you can choose compatible styles of 1 1/4 yards white on whites and different compatible white on whites for the 1 1/2 yards. I will be very clear, in the instructions, which whites go where. And I'll give pictures. You can add some black on whites (or blue on white, etc) for this part, if you wish, just make sure the visual aspect of the background is primarily white.

For your colors: The brighter, the better. We're not going to make this quilt in somber colors. You can if you wish (the quilt will come out just fine) but we need cheering up and bright colors are what the doctors (quilt ones) are ordering. My suggestion: Pull a pile of bright colors from your stash. If you don't have a stash of bright colors, come in. We've got lots of brightly colored fat quarters. This quilt will look best if your bright colors are tone on tone, meaning, don't choose various brightly colored flying pigs on a multicolored background.

For both the whites and the colors, if you are using up scraps, the minimum size you need is 5" X 5". That's the only hint I'll give.

See you next week For part 2.

And Stay tuned for the Knit Along Project. As soon as I get the "rules" figured out, I'll send an email. For now, think of this project as a stash buster as well: One main color and lots of bits of all sorts of other colors. I think it's going to be fun.

Keep Me Sane Scarf

Because of the coronavirus we are in a constant bad news and even scarier bad news cycle. It's driving me crazy so I need to keep my fingers busy at night. What better way than to knit a "Keep Me Sane" scarf. I will post pictures as my scarf progresses and if you send me pictures of your scarf, I will post those as well.

This scarf is based on the concept developed by Stacey Duke, called the Crackerjack scarf. This scarf, which is a free Ravlery download, is designed to help you follow the ups and downs of your favorite sports team. With the baseball season not coming up, the idea would be to make a list of goals for your team: wins, losses, away games, home games, players (like favorite pitchers), homeruns, etc. For this kind of scarf, you choose your teams colors, have a variety of versions of the colors and assign a color to a goal: each home run gets 2 rows of dark blue; each time fav pitcher pitches he gets 2 rows of light blue; each time your team delivers a shut out, 4 rows of gold. You get the picture. The scarf becomes a scorecard for the season.

We're going to do things a little differently. Choose a base color (grey, white, green, blue) that will represent all the good news related to covid-19 you will hear over the next weeks & months. Then scraps of all different colors of yarns will represent all the bad news related to the virus. When you hear good news, you knit 2 rows in your good news color. When you hear bad news, you knit a half row in your scrap colors. You can assign certain colors for certain categories of the news: School closes, border closes, world leader contracts, etc. Remember that good news can include 1) more tests available, 2) no new cases reported, 3) everyone got off the cruise ship, etc.

At the beginning of the scarf, you'll have a lot of scrap colors, because there will be more bad than good news. So I suggest you use as many colors as possible, which is why bad news is assigned only ½ row and not a full row. But at the end of the scarf, your base color will be predominant, meaning no more fear, no more cases, back to whatever normal will look like then.

You get to choose what you consider to be good vs bad news. For example, the Washington Post today put out a story that had breaking bad news at 6:10, 5:50, 5:47, 5:43, 5:42, 5:36, 5:35, and 5:16. I'm sure the story could have gone on longer. So for the scarf, that equals 8 half rows of colors to represent 8 different bad news stories. Let me know what your "scorecard" is and I will share ideas of what to count & what not to count with everyone--especially what the good news items are. We have to stay positive.

The scarf will be colorful, just like the pictures of covid-19. It may also be impossibly long, so judge for yourself what needs to be knitted for bad news. Feel free to add fancy, bulky or furry yard to the project. If a particularly bad piece of news erupts, knit a half row in a bulkier yarn, creating dimension for the scarf.

To get you started, I am suggesting that you knit the scarf in the round, using needles and yarn appropriate to each other. For sport or DK weight yard, size 4-6 circular needles 16", and cast on 100 stitches, joining in the round. You can cast on less, but anything less than 80-90 will be hard to work on 16" circulars. If you go up in weight to worsted, 60-80 cast on would be plenty, and size 8-10 needles will work. Gauge is not critical here. Use needles appropriate to the yarn and cast on an even number of stitches sufficient to allow you to comfortably knit in the round on 16" circulars. Cast on with your good news color and knit several rows before you head off into bad news colors. Place a marker at the halfway mark on the row (50 if casting on 100, 40 if casting on 80, etc).

Because the scarf is all knit in the round, when you are finished, the scarf will be a tube than it will be blocked flat and the two ends will be closed using fringe.

No two scarves will look alike, because we will all choose different bad news/good news. You are in charge of what is good, bad, how many bad/good news per hour, per day, per week you want to count. You could even add a neutral color to represent "time out from all the chaos."

When this is over, we will have a scarf party and show off what we knitted.

If you do not have yarn for the project, I suggest going to Yarn Scout in Montana. Sharon Anhalt is the owner and she has many wonderful yarns to choose from. She was diagnosed with cancer in November or December and closed her store front temporarily. But she continues her online business and will ship. Yarn Scout has become my go to yarn store because she has plenty of things to choose from and good sales.

In the coming weeks.....

Around the Block will stay open with regular business hours and will continue to hold classes, with a few exceptions. If you are unsure whether your class will still be held, please give us a call. The number of people who attend class is always limited and we have plenty of space to spread out, so I am not worried about holding classes.

Block of the Month in April will still be held, but instead of holding one class, we will have 3: People whose last name begins with A-H can come at 10:30; I-P at 1:30; and Q-T at 3:30. If the timing does not work for you, you may come at any of the sessions. Again, we have plenty of room and we can spread out.

However, if you are coughing, ill or have recently traveled outside of the US, please be respectful of your fellow quilters and stay at home.

If you need supplies and cannot come to the shop, we are here for you! We can mail supplies, provide for curbside pickups and we may be able to deliver-it may not be until after the shop closes, but we can figure something out.

Please support the small businesses in town as much as you can during the coming weeks. Without your support, our small businesses will be in jeopardy. We will do everything we can at Around the Block to support your quilting passions and we greatly appreciate your business!

Join the fun and come feel the difference of quality fabrics.

Happy quilting!

Sincerely,

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