

ANNA'S

A soft, painterly illustration in pastel and oil-like textures. Two hands, rendered in warm, earthy tones of orange, red, and brown, are shown in the process of crocheting. The hands are positioned centrally, with the right hand holding a pink thread and a silver crochet hook. Below the hands, a vibrant pink heart is being formed, with a textured, knitted appearance. The background is a mix of light blues, pinks, and whites, with some darker, more textured areas suggesting a surface or fabric. The overall mood is gentle and intimate.

As Anna
and I
talked
and crocheted
week after week,
I realized that
our hearts were
being knit together
because she loved,
accepted, and
understood me.



Afghans

BY LISA HARDMAN

What was originally a short-term Personal Progress goal turned into a long-term friendship.

Running my hand over the tight, even stitches of Anna's crocheted blankets still brings back those unhurried afternoons of my youth spent in her sparsely furnished apartment. Over 20 years have passed, but whenever I wrap one of Anna's afghans around me, I am once again enveloped in the warmth of her friendship.

My relationship with Anna began when I was a Mia Maid. My father, a member of the bishopric, went out of his way every Sunday to greet the widows in our ward by shaking their hands as they came into the chapel. He exhibited a special love for the elderly and taught me, through his example, to notice and nurture them.

One day my father introduced me to Anna, a widow in her 70s. At the prompting of my parents, I began to sit with her at church. At first, I felt awkward and unsure. What could we possibly talk about? What could we possibly have in common? Making friends with an elderly woman was new to me, but I felt that reaching out to Anna was what the Savior wanted me to do.

With time I became more comfortable approaching Anna at church. She would always listen attentively as I told her about my school and family activities. Seeing her face light up when I spoke to her made me realize how much she appreciated having someone care about her. In return, I looked forward to the grandmotherly affection she never failed to shower upon me. At times I slipped my hand into her wrinkled palm and she would squeeze it tenderly. Eventually I began to visit her weekly, bringing cookies or other things I thought she might enjoy.

One afternoon I asked Anna about the multi-colored

afghans draped over the back of her couch. With her ailing knees, crocheting was one of the few activities she could engage in during her hours of solitude. Her gnarled, arthritic hands were always busy making cheerful blankets for family, friends, or ward members. When I asked Anna if she would be willing to teach me her unique pattern, she was surprised that I would even show interest in her hobby. Week after week my mother would drop me off at Anna's apartment where the two of us would sit together, talking and crocheting.

Over the span of many years our friendship developed. What began as a Personal Progress goal evolved into a remarkable friendship. My nonjudgmental friend always offered me a warm heart and a listening ear. Our weekly visits gave Anna something to look forward to and broke up the monotony of her isolation and solitude. But visiting Anna did something for me, too. For one hour each week, the world didn't revolve around me. Anna gave me the opportunity to focus on someone else's needs, and she helped me to see that no matter what our age or circumstances, we are all children of our Heavenly Father.

This concept of fellowship and serving one another is expressed in Colossians 2:2, where it describes how "[our] hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding." I learned about those riches during the years of adolescence because Anna loved, accepted, and understood me. Our hearts were "knit together in love" through a process that only the Spirit could orchestrate. Although Anna's blankets were lovingly crocheted so long ago, they continue to remind me of the gentle and humble woman who made them and the lessons she taught me. **NE**

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