

Peter Bankson: Crochet, Poetry, and Prayer

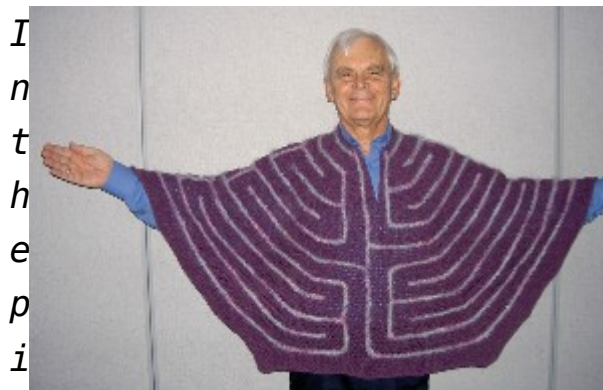


Tree of Life

Peter has been part of Seekers Church since 1976. While his work over the years has focused on serving non-profit organizations, part of his being has lived in artistic expression: crochet, photography, poetry, and prayer. Here are a few ideas and images of the energy that flows through him. Here he is wearing a chasuble (stole) he crocheted in wool and mohair in the pattern of an 11-level labyrinth.

He writes, "While my work over the years has focused on serving non-profit organizations, part of his being has lived in artistic expression: crochet, photography, poetry, and prayer. Here are a few ideas and images of the energy that flows through me."

Crochet



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ture I'm wearing a chasuble

crocheted in wool and mohair in the pattern of an 11-level labyrinth.

I think crochet is an interesting metaphor for creation, a tactile experience of emergent order. I am fascinated by the way crocheted fiber speaks to me of community, how stitches gather together in a dancing ruffle and take on a shape that is more than their own; and how they only reveal their inner selves when stretched to their limits." For more than 50 years I've been exploring the way fiber behaves – when it is knotted and when it is stretched. And I know there is much more to be done. The fiber has asked for more than I have given. Here are a few samples of my exploration with fiber.



Christ on the Cross

This small figure of Christ on the Cross often appears on the large wooden cross above our altar table during the season of Lent. The interesting challenge I gave myself here was to make the entire figure from one unbroken strand of yarn. The face that appears in the torso was given, not planned.



Number Theory by

Hand

I call this small exhibit "Number Theory by Hand." The pieces, crocheted in wool on steel hoops, begin with six stitches in the first row and increases row by row. The first is six on six for 10 rows, and the last is 12 on six for 10 rows. They study the effects of sustained rates of growth over ten generations. They might apply to populations, or savings, or garbage in a landfill.



Dayspring Coffee
Mug with
Milkweed foam

This six-inch version of the coffee mugs at the Dayspring Silent Retreat Center is filled with milkweed seeds to represent latte foam. Since a weekend silent retreat, usually at Dayspring, is part of our spiritual journey, I hoped the mug would help remind us of insights from earlier retreats.



19-61

I call these paired hoops "19-61," in recognition of the year I left school for my first career. They're crocheted in wool on 18-inch hoops, and speak to me of the cycle of life.



No
Mustard,
Please

I made this wool baseball and six-foot bat in 1998 while Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire were chasing each other for the major league homerun record.

The bat and ball go along with this wool hotdog, the graduation project I crocheted at the end of the only art class I've ever taken, a semester at the Smithsonian while I was working for a master's degree in public policy. This piece, called "No Mustard Please," works as a prayer mat for informal retreat.



Photography

I started taking pictures to record what was going on around me, but a lot of what draws me to photography is the joy and wonder of diversity. I am convinced that a love of diversity must be very close to the heart of God, since there is so much of it in life. If we are made in the image of God and if each of us is different – what does that say about God?

Here are two images from South Sandy Beach on Matinicus Island, about 20 miles off the coast of Maine. Twice a day the rising tide mixes and smooths the sand, which consists of different colored grains of different density. Then and the tide recedes, rainwater caught by the bedrock washes the sand out in ever-diverse patterns, guided by the strength of the groundwater current and the density of each unique grain of sand. Each tide creates a community of dancing patterns that are similar, yet unique.



Poetry

For a long time I've been doing poetry every now and then. Most of the time I find poems rather than write them. That is, there will be poetry-barren months, and then some idea or image pushes words into my head. As an introvert who grew studied to be a techie nerd then spent two decades as a soldier, I felt like I never fit in. Here's a poem that found me while I was serving in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

I Do Not Fit

I do not fit. I never have.
But then, it may not be my call
to find some pleasant spot
where all the inputs and the processes of life
seem known, unchanging
and immutable.

For life is change for me.
To grow means being different tomorrow
than I am today.

And every living thing that stops its growth
begins the quiet process of decay.

I see them all about me,
these comfortable, decaying souls,
who know exactly what tomorrow brings —
more of today.

I often long to share their lot.
Yet somewhere deep inside
there is a Spirit pushing, drawing,
leading me to look
where I have never looked before;
to ask the questions that I know
will stir things up;
to feel the anger, joy and pain
of new realities.

I have some friends who care about me very much,
who share my anger and my joy
as I share theirs.

They don't fit in. They never will.
And my relationship to them
will never be the same tomorrow as it is today.

Office of the Secretary of Defense
ca 1978

ide to constrain myself in some particular way with a structure like a limerick, or one like "Seekers' Palindrome," that reads in both directions. Then, part of the discovery is finding things that will be lively and still fit inside the chosen structure. But then a lot of life is like that: finding things that are lively and still fit inside existing structures. This one describes how I saw Seekers Church about 30 years ago. Like most poems that arrive through me, this one sprouted one day about a year after I began to serve as a

Pointed Poetry

In our community
 The life of Christ,
 That sense of Immanent Creation,
 Is the vision bringing us
 Together in one body.

Seekers,
 Looking for the Holy Spirit here,
 An inner voice that guides,
 Becoming church that celebrates diversity;

An image of the world
 United by
 A common understanding.

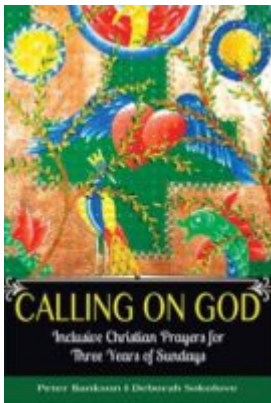
The love of God
 Calls forth our gifts and pains,
 The brick and mortar of the future.

The brick and mortar of the future
 Calls forth our gifts and pains-
 The love of God.

A common understanding,
 United by
 An image of the world
 Becoming church that celebrates diversity.

An inner voice that guides,
 Looking for the Holy Spirit here.

Seekers
 Together in one body
 Is the vision bringing us
 That sense of Immanent Creation,
 The life of Christ
 In our community.



Prayer

I've been serving as liturgist during worship pretty regularly since about 1983. Our tradition at Seekers Church is that the liturgist brings their own prayers for opening the service and the bidding prayers of praise and thanksgiving, petition and intercession. These prayers are drawn from the season, weekly scripture, and the life of the community, When I'm writing

prayers, sometimes I need something to remind me of the infinite diversity of how we can see the Creator of all reality. So, I created a "God Image Generator" that offers over 25 million different images. Seekers put a link to it on the website at the bottom of the front page.
<https://www.seekerschurch.org/25-million-names-of-god/>

Because we follow the common lectionary, the scriptures repeat in a three-year cycle. so I developed a pattern of saving the prayers as a resource for the future.

Several years ago, Deborah Sokolove, who also presides regularly at worship and was serving on the faculty of Wesley Seminary, asked me if I might be able to help fill in some blanks in a book she was writing. Deborah had a contract to write a prayer book based on worship at Seekers Church and the Revised Common Lectionary. Her deadline was approaching but she still had a lot of Sundays that needed prayers. It turned out that in my collection I had something to offer for all but about half a dozen of the Sundays she was missing. So once again it turned out that what I'd been doing for other reasons could once again help fill in the gaps. You can order *Calling on God: Inclusive Christian Prayers for Three Years of Sundays* (with Deborah Sokolove.) Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths, 2014, [directly from the publisher.](#)