

PURE RELIGION

Hands That Serve

Sometimes the banner of the kingdom of God is proudly borne by hands strong, bold, and tireless. At other times, that banner is quietly held aloft by serene and often-weary hands, hands that are weak or worn or tired.

At 72, Joyce Robinson's hands are not as strong as they used to be. Afflicted with arthritis, Sister Robinson now uses a walker or a cane wherever she goes. Things that used to be easy for her are now often extremely painful. "There are a lot of things I can't do anymore," she says. But she tries not to dwell on that. Instead, she likes to think about the things she can do.

In 1999 the Presiding Bishopric, in response to the growing crisis facing Kosovar refugees, distributed a letter suggesting that any who wished to help could make quilts and send them to the Latter-day Saint Humanitarian Center for distribution. Sister Robinson didn't feel that she could move well enough to make a quilt. But she could—providing she held her hands just right—crochet.

And so began a routine that would last not for a few weeks or a few months, but for four years. Each evening, Sister Robinson prepares dinner for herself and her husband and then sits down and begins to crochet. She starts around 7:00 in the evening and continues to crochet late into the night. She has spent thousands upon thousands of hours with crochet hooks in her hands, making afghans that have provided comfort to hundreds of people throughout the world.

"I make three or so every month," Sister Robinson says. "Over the last four years, I've made 202."

The afghans have been distributed to homeless shelters near her home in Shelton, Washington; given to unwed mothers; and sent to the LDS Humanitarian Center in Salt Lake City.

"I don't run out of yarn very often," she says. "Members of the Church have heard about what I'm doing, and they bring bags overflowing with new yarn." As word of her efforts spread, people from as far away as 40 miles send her yarn—all colors of yarn. And from this yarn she crochets comfort, love, and hope.

"It makes me feel good to know I'm helping someone else," she says. "I put my love into every one that I make. I hope that wherever they end up, someone will feel not only a little warmer and a little more comfortable, but a little more loved as well."

Sometimes it is the hands that are most weary and worn that provide the finest examples of selfless love for others. And hundreds of men, women, and children throughout the world, whose shoulders are draped with a colorful, handmade afghan, crocheted by the hands of a 72-year-old member of the Church from Shelton, Washington, may be the first to agree.

