

## Weaving a Church by Mary Van Duzer

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Weaving is a hobby of mine. Recently I picked up a project that I had started in Texas, before we moved to California.

When weaving, you don't "whip out" a project in a few hours. Everything must be planned before a single strand of yarn is woven. While still in Texas, I had determined the size and color of what I was going to make, had purchased 1680 yards of yarn and cut it into 420 pieces, each 4 yards in length.

As I now wound the warp on the loom and threaded the heddles & reed, I thought of the similarities between what I was doing and starting a new church. Just as I had to first plan and prepare, so, too, a new church needs carefully planning. For many years, the people of the Pacific Southwest District Mission Council evaluated the place and time to begin a new mission in the Coachella Valley. Funds and staff were needed; many prayers were lifted up to God. Their prayerful desire came in advance of our arrival here to the valley to begin the work. When God's time was right, the project began to unfold.

The loom must be prepared for weaving. I take much care to place each of the 420 strands of yarn in its proper place. Each strand is essential to create a strong, well-woven piece of cloth. If one strand is out of place or missing, it can impact the rest of the project.

It's the same for a new church. Each person is essential to create a strong church. If a person is left out, it can impact the character of the church or possibly weaken another believer's faith.

Just as a missing string must be put in place for the weaving to turn out, so we must look for those who might be lost or broken so their lives can be made whole and strong again. We are part of the body of Christ and when one part is hurting, the rest of the body is impacted. I Corinthians 12: 26-27 says, "*If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*" Each person is important in the Body of Christ.

The yarn is now threaded on the loom and it's almost time to weave. But first the warp is tightened, putting the yarn under tension and I must check to see if any strand is wound too tight or loose. An improperly threaded strand could break. Though I'd love to start weaving, I first do any needed fixes or repairs because I want the weaving to turn out.

Sometimes when tension comes and we are alone, we can be broken and lose our way. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says: "*Though **one** may be overpowered, **two** can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*" Beginning a new church is not primarily

about a building or programs. It is about relationships. It is about finding those whose lives may be under tension without the hope we have in Christ. We must be on the lookout for those who don't know Christ as their Savior. If we find someone who's lost or broken, we need to make it a priority to introduce them to our Jesus who loves and forgives.

I'm not a seasoned weaver, so as I get to what I call the "moment of truth," it can create anxiety. I wonder if my many hours of work will bring what I expected back in the planning stages. And as we prepare for worship services to begin at our new church, we may wonder: will things turn out as we expect? Having started two other churches with my husband, I know there can be some anxious times. The big question is always the same: "Will anyone come?" Only God knows who will come, but I always pray He will bring someone who needs to be there. A warm smile, a simple hug or a good laugh – what a precious gift we have when we fellowship together. Otherwise, when I'm alone, Satan easily plays on my anxious moments.

There's one way in which weaving is not like our church. I can plan, setup and weave the project by myself, but this church can't happen without each person playing a role in it. Just having a pastor or youth director on staff won't make this church happen. It takes each and every one of us to be involved. Don't assume someone else will show up to help with a task or give a gift. Don't assume it's only the pastor's job to invite people to our activities. Every one is needed! And in case you don't think anyone notices, let me assure you – we do! Your help, your prayers, your encouragement is a tremendous source of strength!

As we look forward to our first public services in October, it will be exciting to see the lives God has woven into our paths and into our church family. I anxiously look forward to the new church God weaves here into the Coachella Valley. New friends, a new church family. I can hardly wait! Oh, and if you are by the church office sometime, stop by and find out if my weaving turned out as planned. ■