

# Tips and Patterns for Making a Quilt for Church

## Part 1: Making the Quilt Top

*Created For Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church, Ashburn, VA, Needlework Group*

Realizing that most of you all have a lot of talent in needlework and many of you have also excellent sewing skills, but that few of you have made specialized utility quilts such as those needed for the church to wrap members with love and prayers when facing either a hardship or a special joy, I thought I would pull together some tips and patterns for our group.

I did some solid research prior to this among the international quilting community. I belong to a number of major quilt organizations and put out a plea for help in designing the best quilts for people facing hard times, illness, life in a wheelchair, or rejoicing in special times, such as the birth of a baby or a wedding. I received some excellent pointers and suggestions from all over the world. This manual incorporates these pointers and some special things you can do for each type of quilt suggested by some of the respondents.

Some of the respondents to my research were wheelchair bound themselves, and many make charity and baby quilts at a constant pace. So I took all their points and designed a couple of basic, fast to make, quilt patterns for our group using my design software.

### **Size:**

It may be surprising to find that lap quilts, baby quilts, and quilts for the wheelchair bound are all approximately the same size and have many similar characteristics. The wheelchair quilt question was particularly challenging to figure out, and I got lots of sound assistance from quilting caregivers and the wheelchair bound quilters themselves. The size 36 x 36 often suggested in magazines and blogs was considered by my experts to be too small. It was also considered alright for a newborn, but they noted that a baby outgrows it very quickly. The small size isn't long enough to keep one's legs warm as a lap quilt. The ideal size for all three of these types of quilt work out close to the same:

Width: 40 to 45 inches

Length: 45 to 50 inches (the 50 inch length was preferred by several of my men respondents or their caregivers)

### **Other Considerations:**

Speed and ease of making is important for our purposes. In this, though, it is important to remember that recipients are likely to be looking at their quilts a lot, washing them a lot, and generally giving them a lot of wear.

1. Use a simple pattern, but pay attention to the overall finished look. Just a bunch of random pieces put together with no thought as to how they look together is not a good look.
2. Prewash the fabrics before cutting to remove all chemicals, excess dyes, and preshrink.
3. Pre-steam iron the batting (don't put your iron on the batting, just hover the iron above and steam it, or spritz it with water lightly and hover your iron over it. Lay more or less flat and allow to dry before use. Or you can spritz it with water and run it for a few minutes in your dryer.
4. It does not matter as much if the borders are wavy, the quilt blocks don't quite line up, or the quilting is not the best as it does that the quilt will stay together, the fabrics are durable and comfortable to be around, and the overall quilt is pleasing to look at. So this is a wonderful place to perfect your quilt making, or try a new method of quilting.
5. Wash your finished quilt in cold or warm (not hot) water with a mild detergent like Woolight and dry flat and square.
6. Crosswise the grain on fabric has more stretch than lengthwise grain, which is why I specify cutting the bindings cross-wise. Unless you have curves in your quilt edge, you do not need to use bias binding, which is more problematic to work with.

### **Supplies:**

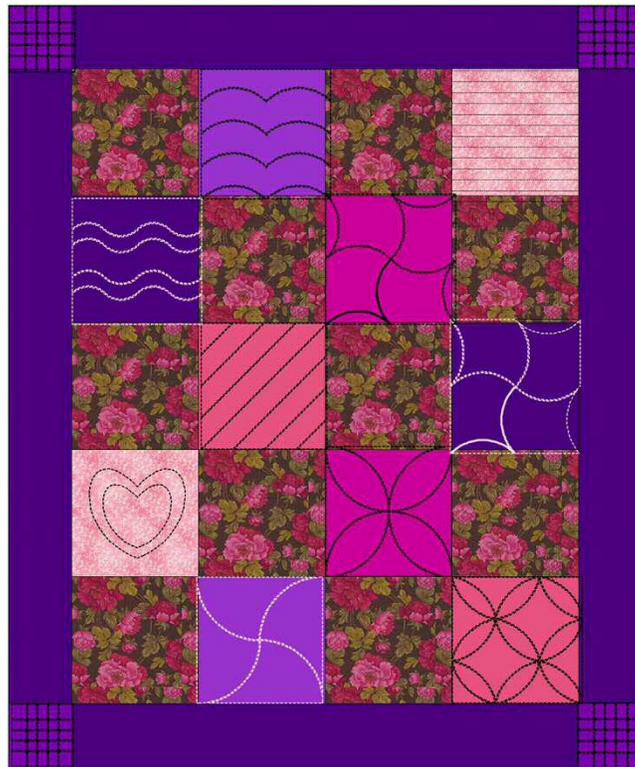
Good supplies make a big difference in your quilting experience and frustration level. At a minimum you will need:

- A. Rotary cutter (45mm), rotary cutting mat, and ruler (I recommend one at least 24 inches long and 5 inches wide), scissors;
- B. Blue painter's tape, fabric basting spray and/or quilters safety pins,
- C. Sewing machine with ¼" presser foot
- D. Needles: I use either a sharp #90/14 needle or a topstitching # 90/14 needle for generic quilt making. The threads pass through the larger eye without a problem. For precision piecing, I usually use thin thread and a #70 sharp or jeans needle, but this is not necessary for these simple quilts. There are other needles I use for more advanced quilting and applique projects. I buy my needles online from Superior Threads or Nancy's Notions.
- E. Hand sewing needles and thimble.

Other supplies that you might consider:

- A. For safety, Fons and Porter online has a Klutz glove to protect your hand that holds the ruler from the very sharp rotary cutter. Pay careful attention as you cut, especially if you don't have one of these. If you are using a high speed machine, you may also consider safety glasses.
- B. A walking foot for your machine can be very helpful even if you have someone else quilt it. Some machines have a dual feed mechanism, which can be helpful and probably eliminates the need for a walking foot for this type of quilt. Use of these mechanisms helps to eliminate shifting of the top and bottom.
- C. If you want to free motion quilt your quilt, a darning/free motion foot is required, and your machine needs to be able to drop its feed dogs or have some method for covering them.
- D. For free motion quilting a slick mat (Supreme Slider or Sew Slip) makes quilting much easier. (While this sticks to the machine's table, I also tape it down with blue painter's tape for extra security).
- E. Spray Starch: Whatever is available at your local supermarket works fine

- F. Temporary Fabric basting spray and large safety pins if you are going to quilt it yourself.
- G. Iron and Ironing Board. I often use a small travel iron (mine is Rowenta) and a square of wood covered with batting and canvas and stapled on the back.
- H. For wheelchair quilt, purchase 1 ½ yds ribbon to make ties for upper corners to tie the quilt to the wheelchair.



Pattern 1: Simple squares with border

Size: 40" x 48"

Fabric:

(44" width fabric):

- A. ¾ yards printed cotton quilting fabric;
- B. ¾ yards solid fabric or variety of smaller pieces (or fabrics that "read" solid or coordinate with the first fabric);
- C. ¾ yards border fabric and binding;
- D. ¼ yard border corner fabric;

- E. 1 ½ yards for backing; 1 crib-sized 80/20 or 70/30 cotton/poly quilt batting.
- F. Matching threads. Quality is a must. Polyester works best for most machine quilting steps. Cotton works well for most hand stitching. I recommend Superior Threads Bottom Line 60 weight or So Fine 50 weight (available online) or Gutterman 50 weight available at most local stores. I strongly recommend you do NOT use inexpensive cut-rate threads. They fluff, they mess up the inside of your machine, they tangle, they shred, and generally do not give a good experience.

### Cutting out the quilt top:

Prewash and press fabric with spray starch.

Cut ten 8 ½” squares from A

Cut ten 8 ½” squares from B

Cut four 4 ½” squares from D

Cut two 4 ½” by 40 ½” rectangles, and two 4 ½” by 32 ½” from C

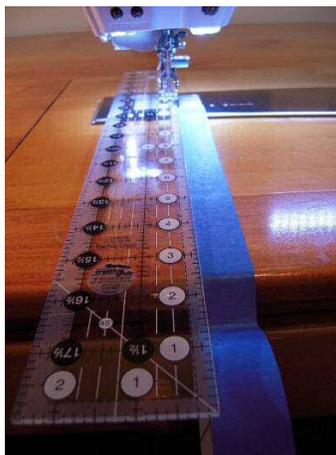
Cut five 2 ½” strips running completely crosswise the grain from D

Cut one 42 x 50 inch piece from E

Cut one 42 x 50 inch piece of batting...I recommend 80/20 or 70/30 cotton/poly blend batting.

Prepare your machine by cleaning and oiling and putting in a new needle.

**TIP:** Set up your machine using your ruler and some blue painters tape, mark a ¼” stitching line from your needle:



Arrange your blocks in pleasing arrangement of 4 blocks across and five down and stitch with  $\frac{1}{4}$ " seams. Press seams toward printed fabric which allows the blocks to interlock when you sew them in rows and make it easy to match the corners. Sew by rows, paying attention if you have a directional print to keep them all going the same way. Then sew the rows together, pinning at the corners.



Sew the  $4\frac{1}{2} \times 32\frac{1}{2}$ " border strips to each end of the quilt top. Sew the small corner blocks to each end of the longer border pieces, and then sew the longer border pieces to each side of the quilt, matching the corner blocks to the border strips already sewn in place. This took me 4 hours from start to finish.





### Pattern 2: Strip Pieced Quilt (Good for precuts)

Size 38" x 48"

Fabric (44 inch quilting cotton):

One fabric roll, sometimes called jelly roll, which usually has enough strips for two of these quilt tops minus the borders and binding. These are 2 ½ inch strips cut crosswise a 42 or 44 inch fabric.

Or ¼ yd of five coordinating fabrics for the stripes.

1 ½ yds border fabric

¼ yd fabric for binding

1 ½ yds for backing

1 crib-sized 80/20 or 70/30 cotton/poly batting

Matching threads (see pattern 1 for suggested types)

Prewash, spray starch and iron all fabrics. Note: Fabric rolls can be prewashed (by hand) but are troublesome, so you may wish only to steam them for preshrinking unless they are likely to fade and wash only after the quilt is completed. Reds, dark reddish browns, and purples are the worst faders.

Cut fifteen strips  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " x  $40\frac{1}{2}$ " or select fifteen strips from your fabric roll.

Cut 2 border pieces  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " x  $30\frac{1}{2}$ "

Cut 2 border pieces  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " x  $48\frac{1}{2}$ "

Cut 5  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " binding pieces a complete crosswise of the 42 inch fabric

Cut the backing fabric and batting 40" x 50"

Arrange strips in three groups of five or one group of fifteen strips in pleasing progression from left to right.

Set up sewing machine as described in pattern 1 and stitch strips together with  $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam. Press all seams to one side. Stitch the shorter border pieces to the top and bottom with  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch seams. Stitch the longer border pieces to the sides with  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch seams. Steam press the top.

**Possible Changes:** If you wish to make this 40" x 50" increase the border widths to 5  $\frac{1}{2}$ " (sews to 5 inches). Simple...no changes in the fabric yardage for this.



Pattern 3: Central Big Block (good for interesting large prints or preprinted panels)

Size 40" x 46"

**Yardage:**

- $\frac{3}{4}$  yd interesting large print for central block OR panel 24  $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide by 30  $\frac{1}{2}$ " for finished 24 x 30" size. Note that panels that are a little narrow or short, can be adjusted by sewing strips of coordinating fabrics around the edge.
- 6  $\frac{1}{4}$ yd pieces or one package of 10 inch precut fabric (sometimes called "layer cakes") or 18 scraps of sufficient size for 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ " blocks.

Prewash fabrics and press with spray starch.

Cut one central panel 24  $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 30  $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Cut 18 8  $\frac{1}{2}$ " coordinating blocks

Arrange in pleasing manner as shown above.

Set up machine as shown in pattern 1 and stitch the 2 sets of 3 blocks together for the top and bottom, and stitch to panel. Stitch 2 sets of 6 blocks together for the sides, and stitch to quilt. Steam press and the quilt top is complete.

**TIP:** If your panel piece is larger, make the blocks smaller, but evenly sized around the panel. If your panel piece simply does not fit this design, get in touch with me.