

"The Womb of God"

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48" x 58"

About a year after my husband Rich and I were married, we started trying to have a baby. I began hand piecing a “Grandmother’s Fan” baby quilt in anticipation of the blessed event. But each time I got pregnant, I had a miscarriage and lost the baby. As the blood of life oozed out of me, I would sit and hand piece furiously as if in doing so, I might save that little life inside of me. Full of hope “for the next time”, I continued to work on the sweet little baby quilt after each loss. In all, I lost 4 babies.

Somewhere along the way, I got quite angry with God. I loudly confronted God as to why God could create an entire universe, and yet not assist us as we tried to birth one little baby. The answer I received as I faithfully engaged God astounded me. It dawned on me that our Creator was hurting by the events also. As I cried, God cried. As I grieved, God grieved. As I screamed, God screamed.

And then I realized God has Her own “miscarriages”. God has miscarriages of justice, miscarriages of peace, miscarriages of commitment, miscarriages of reconciliation, miscarriages of compassion, miscarriages of communication....

It dawned on me that my sweet little “Grandmother’s Fan” baby quilt could not be “cutesy”. It was obvious that my resulting quilt must reflect my feelings and experiences. I began to set the individual squares going in all directions, symbolizing my troubled feelings. I ended up with 4 half circles, indicating the 4 babies I had lost. (One of the half circles is almost hidden, symbolizing the fact that I did not open up and share with others my loss at the time.)

Upon closer scrutiny, one will see that this is a very Trinitarian quilt. The grapevine, heavy with ripe grapes, symbolizes Jesus and his love that encompasses all of me. The 3 doves symbolize the Holy Spirit available in all areas of my life to sustain me. The “Grandmother’s Fan” squares are enclosed in an egg shape binding, symbolizing God’s “womb” from which our Creator brings forth new life. Irises symbolize God’s presence in my life.

There is one iris in my quilt whose colors and value so closely match the surrounding “Grandmother’s Fan” block, that it is almost hidden, unless one

looks closely for it. That reminds me that God is always present for us, even when we don't readily recognize it.

There are six irises made from commercial fabric that have floral prints on them. Those irises symbolize the distant past and were the first irises to be made. They symbolize my four babies I lost (plus me and my husband.) I was tempted to discard or at least, cover over most of those flowers with the irises that were placed in the foreground. The later irises are made from batiks and hand dyed fabrics and are visually more pleasing to me. But to hide those first flowers would have been like hiding and covering over my painful past. Instead, I chose to keep the first flowers in plain view with other more beautiful flowers coming after them.

Even the lining fabric has meaning for me. When I was pregnant with Ashley, I had a friend make several "prego" dresses for me out of bright floral fabrics. For some reason, I kept one of the fabrics and never had it made up into a maternity outfit. I sensed that I might want it for something else later. You guessed it - I used it on the back of this quilt for the lining!

I worked on this quilt for about 13 years. It has been a source of hope, healing, meditation, peace, and reconciliation surrounding the loss of my 4 babies. Over the years there have been times when I was so overcome by grief that I could not work on the quilt for months at a time. For years, I remembered my losses without as much emotional or spiritual pain, but still I did not complete the project. That is because I am now quite busy with our 3 very active, very healthy daughters!

And then on September 11, 2001 an earth shattering event occurred that highly motivated me to finally complete my quilt.... Once again I was reminded of God's "miscarriages" of peace, reconciliation, and understanding.... Once again I was reminded that God grieves, cries, and hopes with all of us....