

DRESS AN ANGEL

The parents of babies who die prematurely are struggling to cope, and in our small way, we try to make a difference. These babies are too small to dress in newborn clothing (thus, the need for a tiny gown). In the Guild, we call these gowns angel gowns, because they are meant to dress a little angel.

We try to include a bonnet with each burial gown, since many of these infants have had their heads shaved for monitors, IV's, and such. A simple burial gown in size A is included for preemies (less than three pounds). We have used batiste, broadcloth, satins, eyelet and lace fabrics for burial gowns. Indeed, any attractive fabric is perfect, and you can embellish the gown as your heart guides you. There are no absolutes on this. Comfort is obviously not an issue. Most of gowns we make are white or ivory, but pastels, tea-dyed, champagne, or soft colors would also work fine. Instructions for a simple bonnet will follow. Typically, the same fabric is used for the bonnet as for the gown, to form a matched set.

Bonnets

Note that all seams are $\frac{1}{4}$ inch unless otherwise indicated.

Start with an eight-inch by eight-inch square of fabric. Turn and topstitch two edges ($\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch turned) opposite one another. Fold the square in half (right sides together) with the unfinished edges together. Stitch closed along the unfinished edge with a length of ruffled lace or piping enclosed in the seam (the ruffles tucked inside toward center). Turn right side out and press, (ruffle or lace should now stick out one edge) add a row of stitching one-half inch from the fold and another row one-half inch from the "front" (ruffled) seam to form casings for ribbons. Thread pretty ribbon through each casing and draw the fold side tight to form the back of the bonnet (tie a bow). The ribbon in front will tie under the infant's chin, so it needs long tails.

Gown

Note that all seams $\frac{1}{4}$ inch unless otherwise noted.

Turn under the hem of the sleeves and topstitch. If you do not plan to gather the bottom (like a sack), hem the bottom of the front and back gown body pieces. Cut a slit in the center of the back from neck to about 4 or 5 inches down (to allow fitting over child's head). You may "finish" that slit (turn and topstitch) if you want, or you can even fashion a facing, or just leave it.

Sew sleeves to front (right sides together) along curved lines. Then sew back to sleeves along curved lines. You now have a large neck opening all along the top of the joined pieces.

Turn neck under $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and press. Turn again another $\frac{3}{8}$ inch or so and form a casing. Topstitch near the first fold to form a casing for the neck ribbon to gather the neck.

Turn gown wrong side out and stitch underarms from sleeve hem all the way to gown hem. If you planned a sack gown (gathered bottom) turn the bottom under twice to form a casing and stitch. Thread pretty ribbons through the neck casing (and hem casing for a sack style). Leave the ribbon ends long enough to tie a nice bow.

Questions ?? Call Tracy Barta at 733-0058 (please do not call after 9 p.m.)

Thank you so much.

The bereavement counselor at St. Vincent says, "God cannot bless you enough" for this work.