



Blackwork Journey Blog



technique
at Sashiko



Happy stitching!
Liz

pictures

Spring is coming!



The last few weeks have been very difficult for people in every country, town and village worldwide and much of our lives as we know it, is on hold for the coming months.

School exams have been cancelled, schools closed and older people of which I am one, restricted to home. Contact with friends and family is very limited and this is where the internet and technology are proving their worth.

Whether it is contacting my son and his family in San Francisco, or my daughter in the Dales of Yorkshire or keeping an eye on older members of the local community, being able to access Facetime, the internet, Skype, e-mails or the telephone helps to make us feel less isolated.

This is a time when all members of the stitching community should come together and support each other, especially if you are at risk, alone and isolated. Blackwork Journey is trying to play its part through the website and Facebook groups.

I will be posting a free working project on the main Facebook group:

Blackwork Journey - Elizabeth Almond Designs

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/blackworkjourneydesigns/>

This will be a simple stitching project that everyone can join in as it does not need much fabric or many threads. I am sure if you are a regular needlewoman, you will already have the materials in your stash, so if you want to join me please go to the closed Facebook group. If you enjoy working the project there are 19 more designs in **EB0014 Stitching for Relaxation**.

Over 350 people have joined in March bringing the number of members across the groups to 9,000 worldwide from Alaska, to Lithuania and Japan. Language is no barrier thanks to Google translate and I love to hear from you and see the work you are doing on Blackwork Journey designs.

New e-book EB0014 Stitching for Relaxation

Bearing in mind the current situation worldwide and the fact that so many people are in lockdown, I have bought forward EB0014 Stitching for Relaxation which can be found in E-Books on the Blackwork Journey website.

This 26 page e-book consists of 19 different sashiko patterns and a selection of different projects from the simple - cards, pictures and cushions to larger projects such as a tablecloth or lap quilt.

Different colour schemes are included. Every sashiko pattern could be used or just repeat your favourite ones. The projects can be hand stitched or joined by machine. Work at your own pace whilst listening to some music and just enjoy creating your own heirloom.



Blackwork Journey
Stitching for Relaxation
E - Book 14

KEEP CALM AND STITCH

Explore a new technique
19 different Sashiko patterns included

Make a tablecloth, lap quilt, cushion, cards or pictures

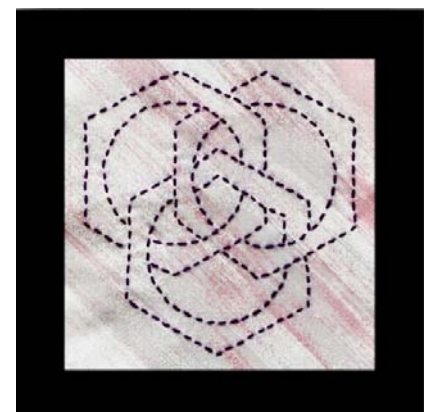
EB0014Stitching for Relaxation

The e-book can be downloaded onto your computer, i-pad or other device. The charts can also be printed off. The e-book remains on the computer to save on ink and paper. I have a folder on my computer where I save all my e-books so I can find them easily. Use your imagination to see what else you can create

Since we are doing our bit to use what we have before we buy more materials, this type of project is useful.

‘Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can’

Arthur Ashe



New charts for April and May

When I first started Blackwork Journey in 2008, I really thought that I might run out of ideas. However, the site took off, I started writing for magazines and books and one thing led to another. In 2020 I can honestly say that I have never been lost for ideas or projects. I love teaching and have met so many interesting people through a shared love of needlework and visited and taught in so many countries as a direct result of the website. While many of my courses have been cancelled because of the Coronavirus pandemic, I am still able to reach out to groups through the website and the associated groups. The classes will be rearranged for 2021, but until then I am busy planning for the future.

I enjoy designing new charts for the website and usually get my best ideas in the middle of the night. I find it quite exciting so find suitable fabrics, pick out the colours chart and stitch the design and then present the ideas to you. When I receive pictures of the work that you have completed, or you post entries on the Facebook groups and I see the way the designs have been interpreted, it encourages me to be more creative and stretch my boundaries even further!



PR0059 Japanese Autumn

This design is the latest one of the Japanese Seasons series which can be found in 'Projects' of the website.

This design combines the techniques of blackwork and Hiragumi manji tsunagi, a Japanese sashiko pattern with textured embroidery stitches in a free style design maple leaf design worked on evenweave fabric.

Japanese maple is a woody plant native to Japan, on Honshu, Hokkaido and Kyushyu islands. There are many maple species in Japan and have been cultivated in Japanese Garden for centuries.



People from all over the world travel to Japan to see the maple trees in the fall for their spectacular foliage. The maple tree symbolises peace, abundant blessings, serenity, beauty, the arrival of autumn and are a sign of patience and survival.

To watch the colours change over the mountains in Japan is as spectacular as watching the Fall in North America.

PR0060 Orchid Sashiko



Combine the technique of Sashiko with the beauty of embroidered orchids to create this free style design worked on linen, calico or cotton.

The delicate, exotic and graceful orchid represents love, luxury, beauty and strength. In ancient Greece orchids were associated with virility. Greek women believed that if the father of their unborn child ate large, new orchid tubers, the baby would be a boy. If the mother ate small orchid tubers, she would give birth to a girl. The traditional sashiko design is Asanoha, also known as hemp leaf. This is an easy pattern to create and is suitable for backgrounds.

What is sashiko?

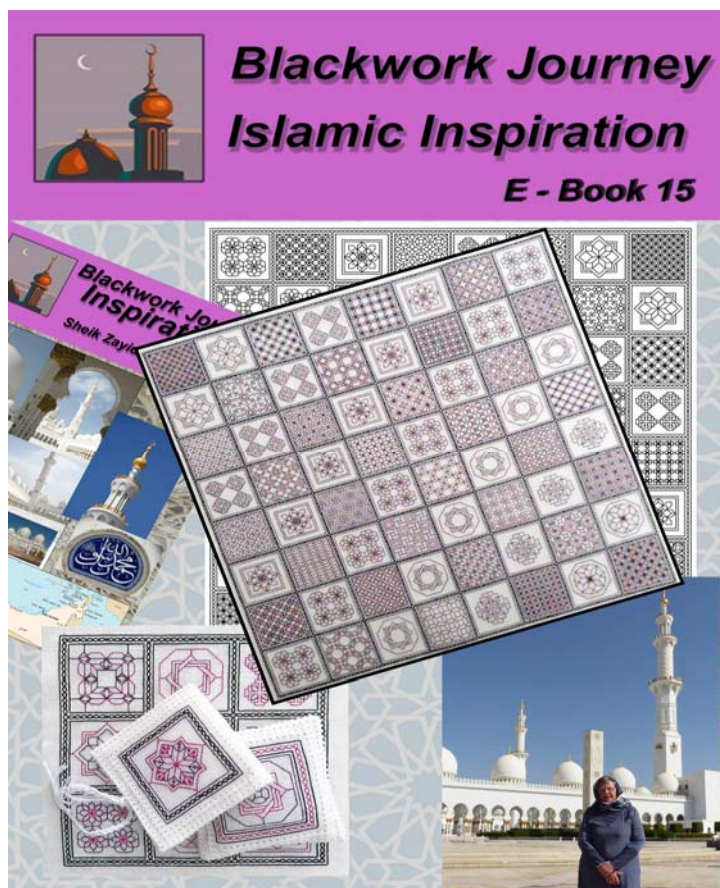
Sashiko literally means "little stabs" or "little pierce" and is a form of decorative functional embroidery from Japan that started out of practical need during the Edo era (1615-1868).

Traditionally, it was used to reinforce, or repair worn places or tears with patches, making the piece ultimately stronger and warmer. Nowadays, this running stitch technique is used for purely decorative purposes in quilting and embroidery. The geometric patterns in straight or curved lines are easily recognised. The white cotton thread on the traditional indigo blue cloth gives sashiko its distinctive appearance, though decorative items sometimes use red thread.

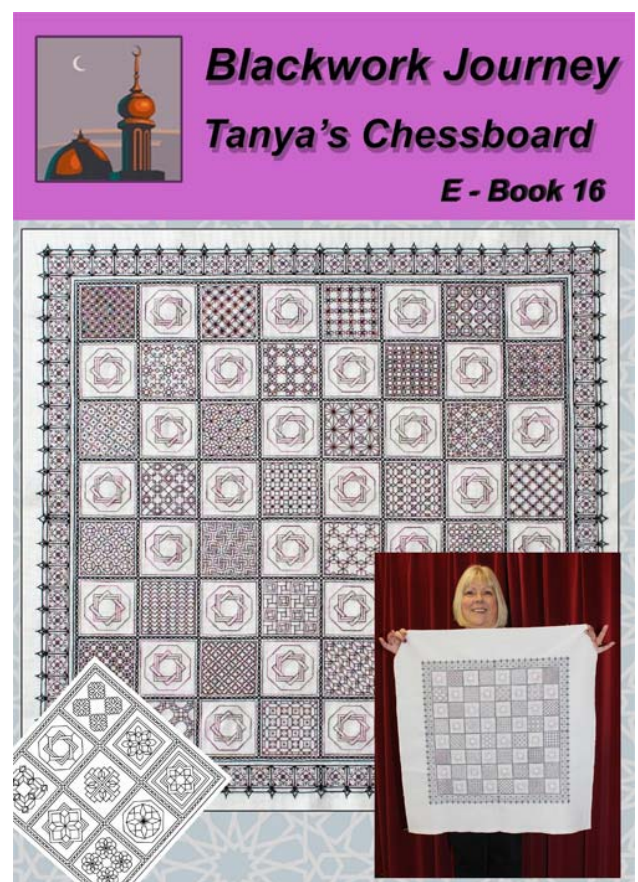
It is more well-known than Japanese kogin embroidery which also uses running stitch.

In the pipeline for May 2020

There are a number of blackwork and pulled thread work embroideries being stitched at the moment, and I have two new blackwork e-books coming on line in May



EB0015 Islamic Inspiration, and



EB0016 Tanya's Chessboard

Both designs can be worked in Aida, or evenweave fabric. Tanya's chessboard has a wide border.

Low cost framing

Framing finished pieces can be expensive, but there are ways in which projects can be mounted at a reasonable cost and still look attractive.

I embroidered **CH0336 Revolution** some time ago, but never framed the finished embroidery. Having some time on my hands I thought I would see if I could present it in a different way.

Materials:

Two 8 inch diameter circles of mounting card or stiff card (Use a plate to draw the circles is a compass is not available)

Two 8 inch circles of fine wadding (optional)

One nine inch circle of backing fabric

Cord for hanging

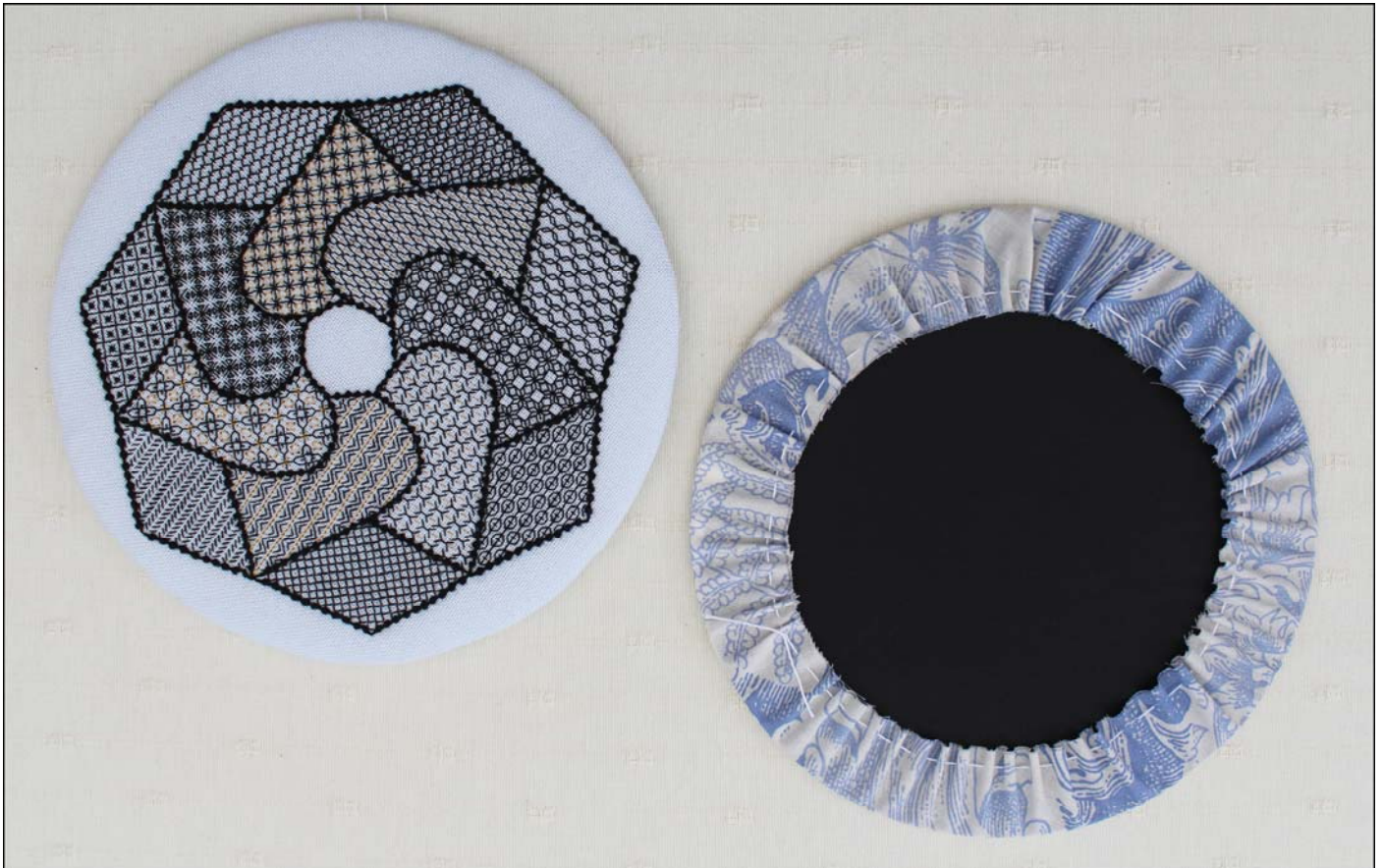
Glue

Strong thread

Needle.

Method:

1. Cut out the embroidery and the backing fabric. (9 inch diameter circles)
2. Glue a thin layer of wadding to the back of both card pieces.



3. Using a strong thread work a row of running stitches round each piece of fabric. Draw the thread tight over the circle and tie off firmly.

4. Stitch a cord to the back piece for the hanger. Use ribbon, cord or plait a cord using floss.
5. Place the two sides together and slip stitch them closed.



Slip stitch

A cord or beads could be stitched around the circle if desired as shown in PR0054 Heart



You can also display your embroidery or craft project around the home in a flexi hoop. They are available in a variety of colours and sizes.

Mounting the embroidery is carried out in the same way as mounting embroidery over card two circles. When the two pieces have been slip stitched together to hoop is rolled onto the inner mount.

Plastic flexi frame





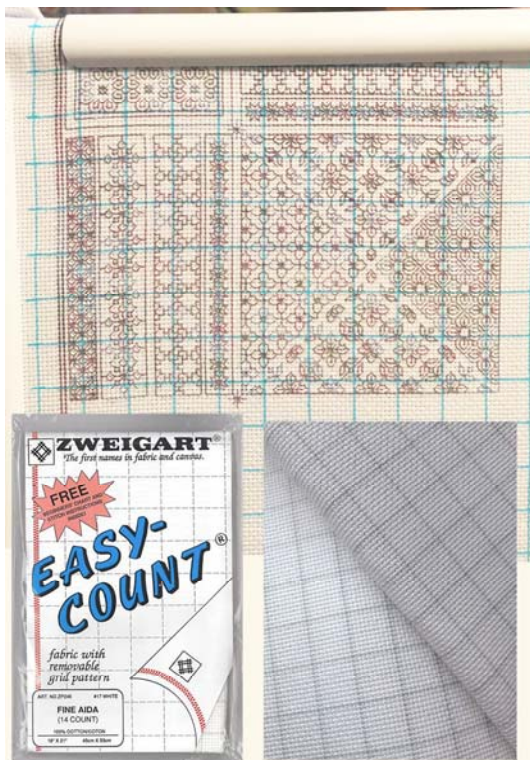
To study frame further go to 'Techniques' TQ0002 Frames which gives information about the different frames available.



CH0365 Keep Calm

When I designed these three patterns I did not realise what a difficult situation we would be facing with Coronavirus so it seems appropriate to add it here!

I was asked by a reader if I could add a chart 'Keep Calm and Garden' which I did recently and I will send a copy of the new design along with the chart to anyone who orders CH0365.



Reader's Work

Gridding cross stitch fabric

I have received a number of photographs this month which I am sure you would enjoy but a piece that caught my eye is being worked by Alicia Melton Rogers on Aida blockweave fabric.

Alicia has drawn a grid onto the fabric using a water-soluble pen to make the counting easier. However, if you want to buy easy count gridded fabric several companies manufacture it.

Zweigart Easy Count. This very useful fabric has water soluble line markings every 10 threads of fabric. When you've stitched your design just wash the fabric and the lines vanish (make sure your threads are colourfast before using them if you're using hand-dyed floss).

It is available for 16, 18 and 20 count fabrics.

Alicia's work in progress

Dare to Bare!



I love the way that Eileen Gilbert has posted not just the front of CH0334 Shooting Star but has had the courage to post a picture of the back of her work. It is so important that the back of the work is neat when working with darker coloured floss. All the ends should be trimmed off so that they do not show through on the front of the work when it is mounted.

If in doubt hold the work up to the light and look at it carefully. Even small ends will show up so trim them carefully!



Working on dark fabric is never easy and Carol Coyle's CH0053 Wandering Star is an excellent example of how effective it can be.

Work under a good light or daylight, use an i-pad or white cloth across your knees to show up the holes and choose a fabric that you can see to work on!

Good magnifying light/lenses and specialist reading glasses will also help.



Debbie's work in progress



Debbie Stewart is using really dramatic coloured threads on her version of EB0002 'Save the Stitches'. The tiny motifs and the frame make a contrast with the coloured fillers enabling each section to stand out.

Deciding what to do with the finished embroidery is just as important as the actual stitching. Embroidery showed be viewed and used so I was delighted when Chris sent me a picture of her Tiny Treasures table runner. Not only was it a beautiful embroidery but the finishing off with it's carefully stitched border was a joy to see.

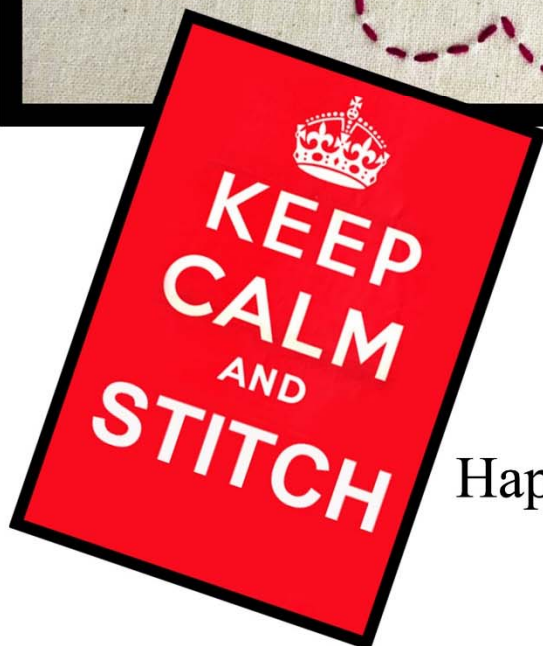
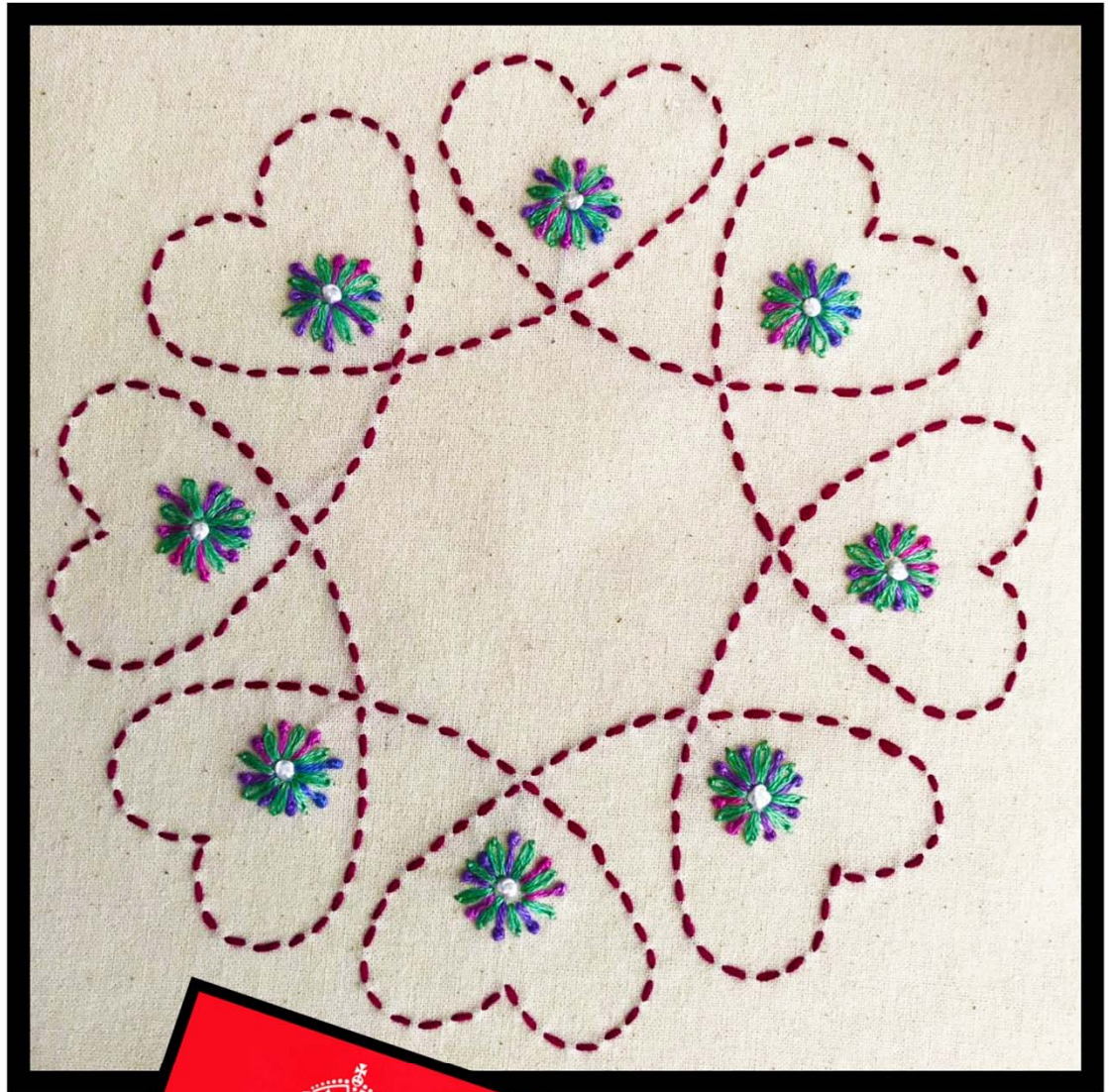
*Chris Veideman's table runner
EB0013 Tiny Treasures Rectangle*

Happy stitching,

Liz

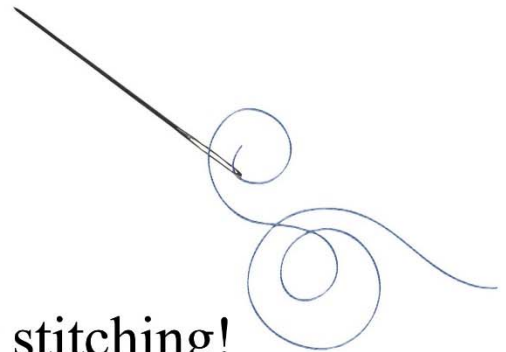
MINI PROJECT 1 FLORAL HEARTS

Blackwork Journey – Designs by Elizabeth Almond



Happy stitching!

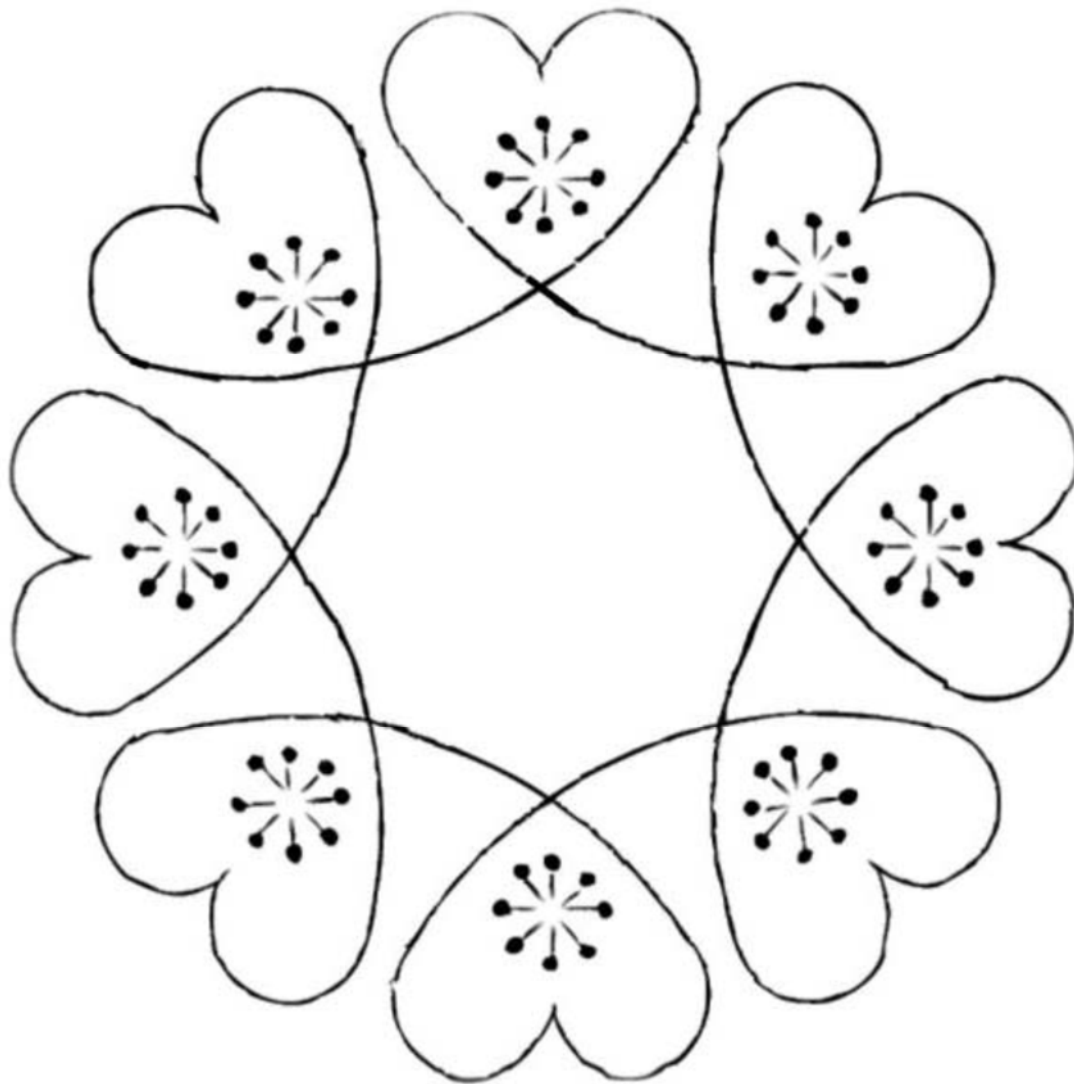
Liz



Mini Project 1 Floral Hearts

In these uncertain times small projects can reduce stress and occupy the mind. This design can be worked on a 9 inch square of fabric, and then used to make different projects.

Alternative stitches can be used depending on the effect required and the use of the piece. Let's start with a simple sashiko design and embroidered flowers. Use fabric and threads you already have.



Materials and equipment:

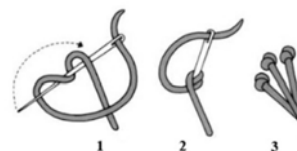
9 inch square of fabric, embroidery floss, crewel needle (a needle with a sharp point), small embroidery ring, strong thread, two 7 inch card circles, HB pencil or water-soluble pen

Stitches: Heart outlines – sashiko running stitch, 3 strands floss Flowers – knots on stalks, 3 strands lazy daisy stitch, 3 strands, Colonial or French knots, 3 strands

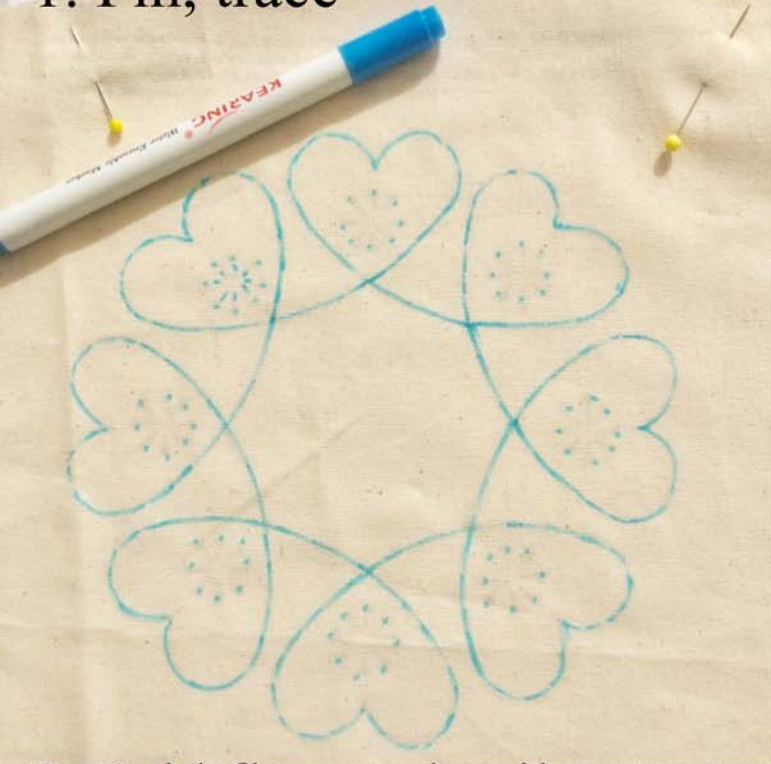
Method:

1. Trace the design onto a square of fabric using a water-soluble pen or a pencil.
2. Work the hearts first. Keep the stitches even. Work several stitches on the needle at any one time. To start your stitching leave a tail at the back and work the tail into the stitching at the back after some stitches have been worked. Where the lines meet do NOT cross over them but leave the junction clear where the stitches meet. Only pick up a small amount of fabric between each stitch. To finish weave the tail in.
3. Work knots on stalks, or straight stitches and add a bead at each point.
4. Place the finished embroidery face down on a soft towel and press lightly.

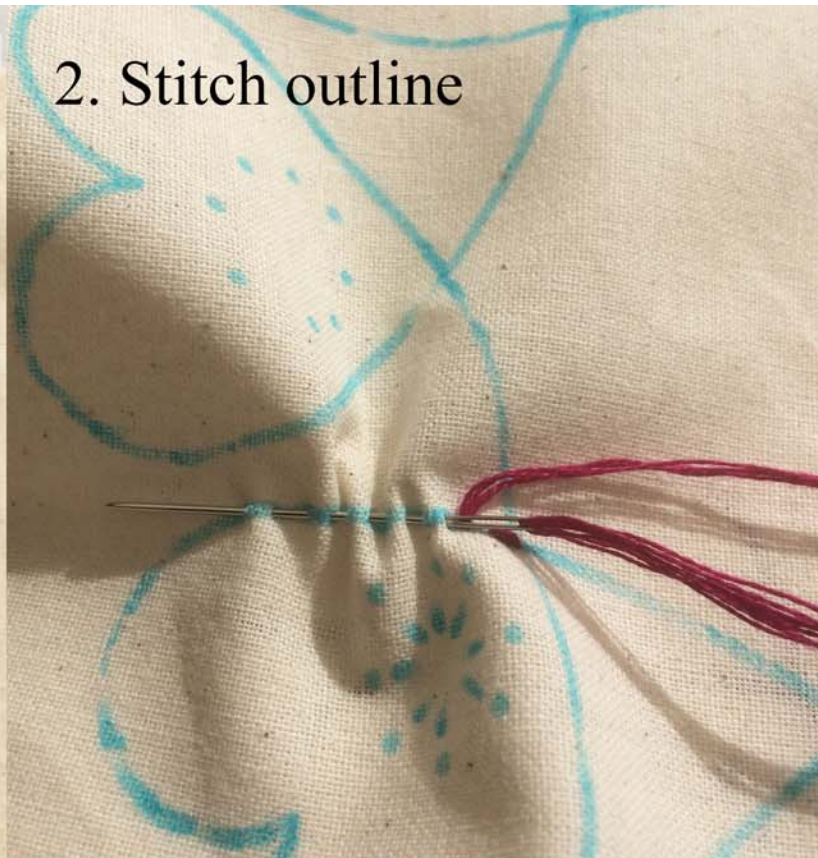
Knots on stalks



1. Pin, trace



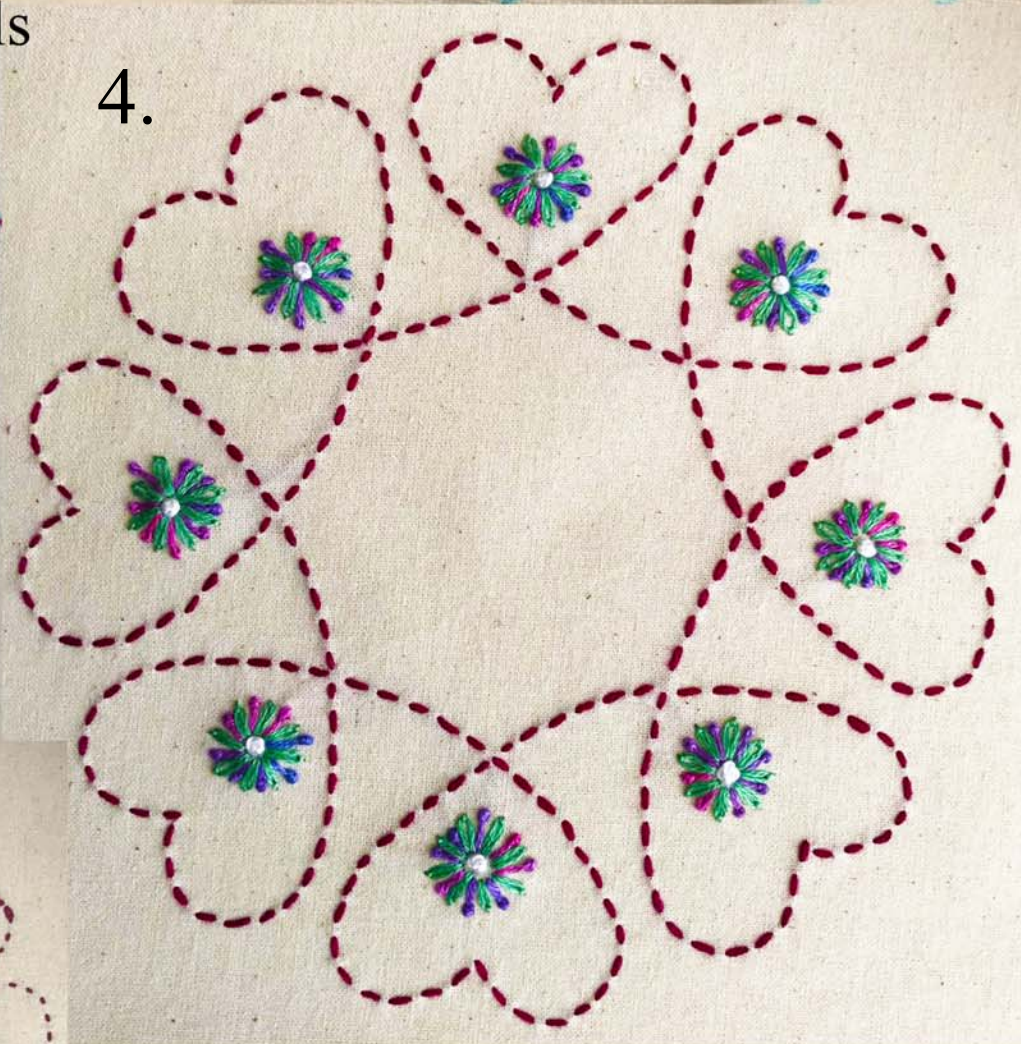
2. Stitch outline



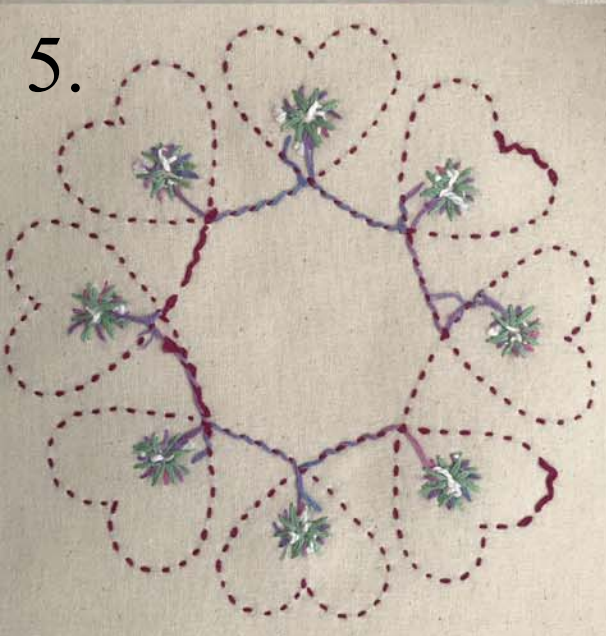
3. Add flower details



4.



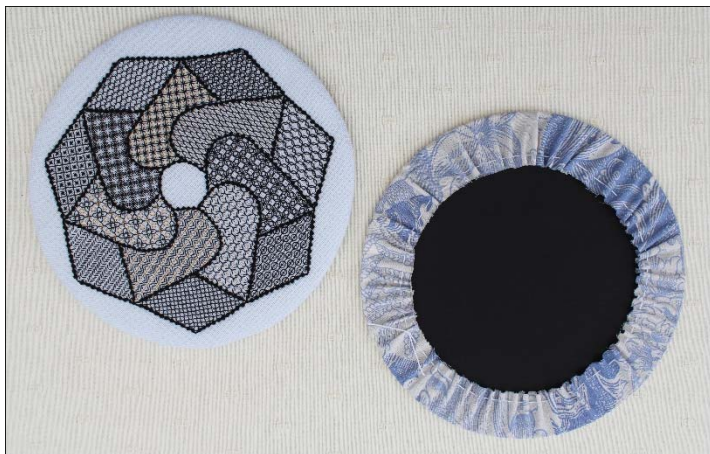
5.



4. Front finished embroidery

5. Back of work

Hearts and Flowers



Making up:

If you decide to mount your embroidery over card circles follow the instructions.

1. Cut out the embroidery and the backing fabric. (8 inch diameter circles)
2. Glue a thin layer of wadding to the back of both card pieces.

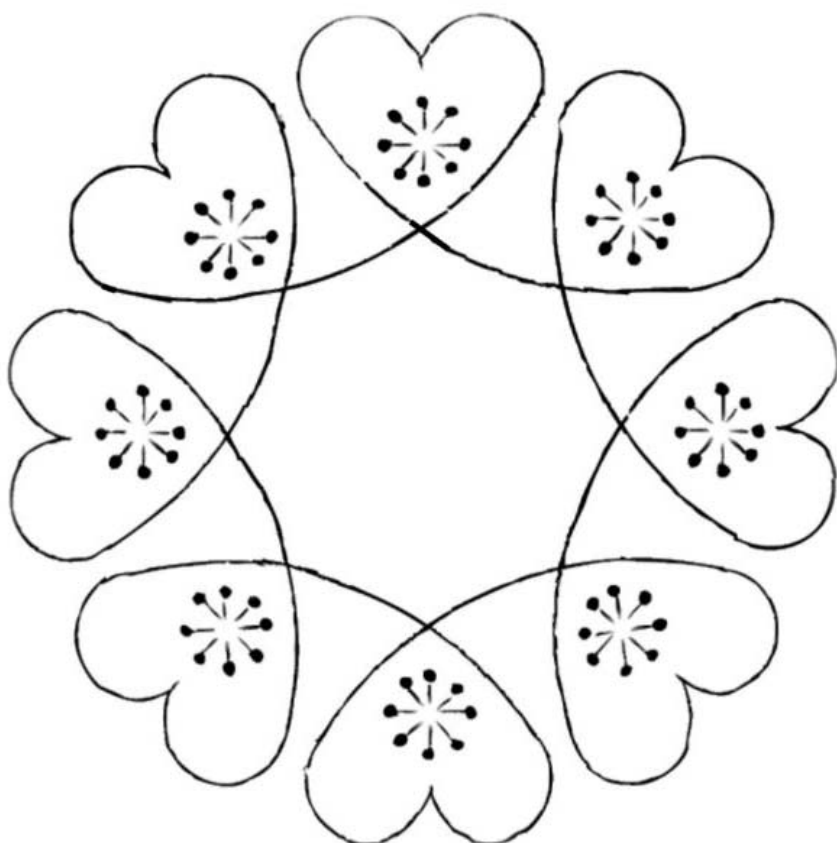
CH0336 Revolution 'Charts' was mounted this way

www.blackworkjourney.co.uk

3. Using a strong thread work a row of running stitches round each piece of fabric. Draw the thread tight over the circle and tie off firmly.
4. Stitch a cord to the back piece for the hanger. Use ribbon, cord or plait a cord using floss.
5. Place the two sides together and slip stitch them closed.



Slip stitch



This small design would be suitable for a card or small picture

The larger design could be the first square of a quilt. The material square cut would be 9 x 9 inches. The finished size of the square would be 8 x 8 inches

If you did stitch this design would be please post a picture for the Facebook group.

Happy stitching and stay safe,

Liz

