

The idea of a prayer shawl was first introduced to the Belmont Baptist WMU ladies in early 2008 by Shirley Mochel who had received a prayer shawl herself from a friend. With the assistance of many of the WMU ladies, a prayer shawl ministry was begun at Belmont in May 2008 with the first prayer shawls being blessed and given to Kathy Fields and Gerald Jenkins, Martha Lynch's brother. Since the beginning of our prayer shawl ministry we have blessed more than 350 shawls.

In December 2008, Belmont was contacted by a national organization called "Prayer Shawls 4 Fallen Soldiers", PS4FS for short, to see if Belmont would be willing to assist in providing prayer shawls in Virginia to families who had lost a loved one in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. We accepted the task of not only making shawls for the families of our fallen soldiers but also took on the task of hand delivering shawls whenever possible to the families in Virginia. It has been a very humble experience to meet and talk with the families of these fallen soldiers. Prayer shawls from Belmont have also made their way to other states around the country when there was not a knitter or crocheter in the state to provide a shawl. Belmont is one of several hundred groups helping to provide prayer shawls all over the United States in memory of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. As you will see today, we have three PS4FS shawls on the alter today that will be going to Georgia this week to a wife, mother-in-law and 9 month old daughter of a soldier that was killed on September 9, 2009 from injuries sustained in a black hawk helicopter crash. Here is a thank you note that was received this week from a mother of a soldier that was delivered a prayer shawl on New Year's Day this year in Dry Fork, Virginia:

Thank you so much for the wonderful surprise prayer shawl. I felt so blessed that you and your church group would reach out to me during this very sad time. I have used the shawl at night and have thought of all the kind people that had a hand in it. God bless you all. Jordan would be happy to know so many have honored his memory and have helped his mama get through this. I still ache for him. Thanks you again.

..... Susan (Amos)

In March of 2009, we blessed our first baby prayer shawl for Abigail Grace Rodgers who was born premature at UVA hospital and who will be celebrating her first birthday shortly and we will celebrate it with her by hosting a blood drive in her honor next Sunday following the worship service. From this one baby prayer shawl, God has blessed Belmont and we have had the privilege to partner with the UVA Hospital NICU as well as another NICU Unit in North Carolina to provide additional baby prayer shawls and hats for these special babies.

In August 2009, the prayer shawl ministry was once again lead by God to assist in caring for our military families and that was to provide prayer shawls to a palliative care unit in Portsmouth, Virginia. The following note was received requesting shawls,

I am a staff member at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth on the Hematology/Oncology unit. On our unit we have rooms to accommodate palliative care-end of life patients. The goal is not to cure, but to provide comfort and maintain the highest possible quality of life for as long as life remains. Well-rounded palliative care programs also address mental health and spiritual needs. The focus is not on death, but on compassionate

specialized care for the living. When a person makes the decision to be placed on palliative care orders we provide them with a box containing items of comfort. One of those items is the "Prayer Shawls" or "Comfort Shawls". We are currently running short of supply for the Prayer Shawls and are hopeful that your organization might be able to donate a few to our unit. The Shawls always provide warmth and comfort to our patient and a gift of memories for the family when the patient has moved on. Thank you for your time and consideration. . . . LTJG Shawna GROVER

In September 2009, the Deacons planned a worship service to honor the men and women who serve our community and risk their lives daily as police, fire and rescue personnel. The prayer shawl ministry ladies made and blessed over 100 pocket prayer shawls to be distributed in this service.

The left over prayer pocket prayer shawls that were made out of red, white and blue yarn from the police, fire and rescue service were delivered to the Naval Medical Center Portsmouth along with several standard size shawls. I was able to personally meet Shawna and to visit the Palliative Care Unit at the hospital and she expressed her heartfelt thanks to Belmont for the shawls as well as for the prayers for our service men and women who will receive them.

In October 2009, a request came from the PS4FS asking whether we could assist in a new program entitled "The Dover Project" as another way to provide prayer shawls for fallen military personnel. The Chaplain from the Dover Air Base has requested prayer shawls to distribute to families who choose to attend the arrival of their loved one's casket from overseas. The prayer shawls are distributed to the families prior to them going out onto the tarmac to receive their loved ones and it is the hope of Chaplain Sorensen that the prayer shawls will have a direct impact, helping to sooth and heal some very raw wounds these families must be feeling. Just this week I received a notice that this program is being expanded to now include Marine and Navy personnel that are returning to the states as well.

On November 7, 2009, Shirley Haley and I (along with Willie, Alvin and Howard Sprouse) had the opportunity to gather with 250 prayer shawl knitters and crotchetier (this included 2 men – one young and one older that knitted) from all over the country in Hartford, Connecticut for a prayer shawl workshop. It was a a blessing to attend this event and we were able to not only meet the two ladies that actually wrote the book on Prayer Shawl Ministry but we were able to meet Cozette Haggerty who began the PS4FS Ministry. I still wear the yarn that she blessed and tied on my wrist at the event. We are in hopes that more of our ladies and men will be able to join us this year for the event as the Prayer Shawl Ministry celebrates their 10 year anniversary.

I would like to personally thank each and every person that has supported the prayer shawl ministry at Belmont in any way, whether through your talents of knitting and crocheting, your prayers, your blessings of the shawls each month or your monetary contributions towards the purchase of yarn for our ladies. These are all important ways for each of you to be involved in this ministry. If you have a loved one, friend or even a stranger that you would like to have a prayer shawl made for, please do not hesitate to share those names with Shirley Haley or myself. As a reminder, we will be blessing shawls after the service today so please join us at the front of the sanctuary following the benediction.