

At Oakwood UMC, Lubbock Texas, we have an amazing group of ladies involved in the Prayers & Squares Ministry. Prayers and Squares is an outreach organization that gives the gift of prayer combined with a hand-tied quilt gift. Oakwood's prayer and quilt chapter started in May 2017.

The following paragraphs are borrowed from [PrayerQuilt.org](http://PrayerQuilt.org).

### **What is Prayers & Squares?**

Prayers & Squares is an interfaith outreach organization that combines the gift of prayer with the gift of a hand-tied quilt. Unlike many other groups that make quilts for charitable causes, the purpose of Prayers & Squares is not to make and distribute quilts, but to promote prayer through the use of quilts. Our motto is: "It's not about the quilt; it's all about the prayers."

### **Member Chapters agree to follow these "Three Commandments" of Prayers & Squares:**

1. Remember the Prayers & Squares motto: "It's not about the quilt, it's all about the prayers." The purpose of your ministry must be to promote an active prayer life among the participants, not just to make and give away quilts. Strive to involve as many people as possible in your prayer efforts.
2. You must ASK before you give the gift of a prayer quilt; surprises are not appropriate. Ask if the person to receive the quilt will accept your gift of prayer. Ask what they would like you to pray for. Ask what information about their situation may be shared with others.
3. Do not accept any form of payment for a prayer quilt; it is a gift of love and prayer which cannot be bought or sold. Those who request or receive prayer quilts must not be made to feel obligated to Prayers & Squares in any way.

Some of these points may seem obvious to you. Who would try to put a price tag on a prayer quilt? But you may wonder about the second point. Often people would prefer to surprise someone with the gift of a prayer quilt. That's the way gifts are usually given, right? But we have found through experience that a surprise prayer quilt may be an inappropriate gift in some cases.

Of course, we agree that everyone could benefit from the gift of prayer, but stop to consider how this particular gift is made. The recipient might not be comfortable being a "prayer focus" for a congregation or any large group of people. There is also the question of confidentiality. How much information would that person like to have shared about their situation? For that matter, do we really know how that person would like to have us pray for them? We not only ask for permission before making the prayer quilt, we also ask what prayers they would like us to offer on their behalf.

### **Each Knot Represents a Prayer**

The idea behind these prayer quilts is simple. A heavy thread is used to take stitches through the quilt layers, and the ends are left free to be tied with a square knot. As each knot is tied, a silent prayer is offered for someone in need - someone who has asked us to pray for them. The quilt is then given to that person. What makes each quilt unique is not the pattern, color, or workmanship, but the fact that prayer is symbolically tied into each one. These "comforters" are a statement of faith, and a testimony to our belief in God and in the power of prayer.

Prayers & Squares began in 1992 at Hope United Methodist Church in San Diego, California. The history of the organization includes the touching story about the first prayer quilt, made for 2-year-old Kody.

The organization now consists of thousands of individual chapters in thirteen countries. Each chapter has agreed to follow three basic rules, which we refer to as the "Three Commandments of Prayers & Squares". Prayers & Squares chapters have made, prayed over, and given out many quilts

- each a gift of love. They have been made for people with medical, emotional or spiritual concerns, difficult family situations, personal crisis or grief.

### **The History of Prayers & Squares**

Kody in 1992 and in 1996. A few ladies started an informal quilting group in 1992 at Hope United Methodist Church in Ranch Bernardo, California, with no other purpose than to have fun making quilts together. Then, a group member's 2-year-old grandson ended up in a coma following heart surgery. His doctors were very pessimistic about Kody's chances for recovery. The ladies decided to make a quilt in vivid primary colors. There was no time to quilt it, so it was tied with perle cotton thread as silent prayers were said for Kody. "There must be a prayer tied in with each knot" someone remarked. The group's first prayer quilt was rushed to the hospital that night.

### **The Birth of a Ministry**

During Kody's long hospital stay in 1992, the parents of other children were asking where they could get prayer quilts for their sick little ones. The quilting ladies realized they had more work to do! In order to involve as many people as possible in the prayer process, they began to bring the quilts to Sunday services and invited the entire congregation to participate in praying and tying the knots. As a result, more prayer quilt requests came in. What had begun as a small project had grown into an active outreach Ministry at Hope UMC.

From Oakwood United Methodist Church, Lumberton, Texas