



Quilters Founder  
Beth Simnitt, now  
95 and in a  
nursing home.

## SERVING THE HOMELESS ONE QUILT AT A TIME

Liz Johnson | Editor

**February 2023**

**Lexington United  
Methodist Church**

*Where We Seek, Serve  
and Share Christ*

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*Members of My Brother's Keeper Ugly Quilt Group took a moment from sewing to pose for a photo in the Covenant Room where their stock is kept and where they're able to spread out the materials. From left, are Janet Cado, Mable Hawkins, Mary Glor, Nancy Oles, Virginia Winningham, Marcia Hicklin, Sharol McMullin and Susan Small. Not pictured is Rose Seitz. (Photo by Liz Johnson)*

Some of the first people I met on my first day as administrative assistant at Lexington UMC were the delightful quilting ladies. I was astounded by their dedication to the mission of making sleeping bags for the homeless and impressed by their skills. At 1 p.m. every Monday, these women meet and begin sewing the sleeping bags. They're all quiet and unassuming, and unwavering in their commitment to their mission and service to others.

### A ministry was born

An idea bloomed in the 1980s after LUMC member Beth Simnitt, top inset photo, read an article in Interpreter Magazine about a couple who were making sleeping bags for the homeless in New York City. The couple were using donations of fabrics, old blankets, etc., to make the sleeping bags.

When Lexington UMC had a rummage sale with blankets and ribbons left over, Beth couldn't see it all going to a landfill. With the idea of making sleeping bags for the homeless on her mind, she pitched the idea to her Sunday School class in hopes of putting together a group of quilters.

Having been a seamstress for many years, Beth had a large quantity of unused fabric to add to the leftover rummage sale blankets and ribbons. She also offered to chair the mission and ... My Brothers Keeper was launched.

According to Janet Cado, the quilting group began gathering around the late 1980s in the old Lexington UMC church. With no specific room assignment, the ladies would set up the tables and work areas in the fellowship hall of the church. Once the new location opened, the Covenant Room was dedicated for the quilter's to use. Now, all these years later, the ladies still meet every Monday at 1 p.m. here at the church.

### What about the design?

It was determined that the sleeping bags had to be made "ugly" because the homeless would otherwise sell them. The quilters have the design down pat and can make a number of sleeping bags fairly quickly.

Most of the quilters ladies have been lifelong sewers. Quilter Mary Glor said she

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makes quilts, sews, crochets, knits and does embroidery.

Mable Hawkins said she has always sewed for her girls. "It's my time away from home," she added with a grin.

Quilter Virginia Winningham said, "you have to like to sew to do this."

Everything donated to the quilters is put to use, including coats and blankets.

A rolled up ugly sleeping bag to the homeless isn't the only item included in the donation. The quilters also add: three pairs of socks, a current Upper Room devotional, a personal note with scripture on it, toiletry items such as a toothbrush, toothpaste, lotion, shampoo, conditioner, soap, etc., a hoodie, pillow case, a scarf, and are tied with a tie.

And these ladies are resourceful. Janet Cado said that they'll make use of whatever is donated. Old electric blankets can even be donated. "We strip the wiring out," she said in referring to how they make use of the electric blanket.

Janet also said that whatever scraps are left over from the sleeping bags, they'll put to good use for something else. "I make dog beds from the leftover pieces," she added.

### More than 2,000 sleeping bags made

In 2022, Janet said they made 117 sleeping bags. They generally average 100 to 125 a year, however, in 2016 they made 191 and in 2018 they made 144.

According to a *Lexington News* article from 2006, the quilters had completed 500 of the hand-sewn sleeping bags by October 30 of that year.

A 2011 article in the same newspaper reported that by September 9 of that year, the quilters had made 1,000 sleeping bags for the homeless.

With 15 yards of material going into the making of each sleeping bag, that's 15 yards not going to the landfill. To put it into a better perspective, in making 117 sleeping bags in 2022, the quilters kept 1,755 yards of material out of the landfills.

### Where do the sleeping bags go?

Over the years, the quilters have donated to a number of shelters and organizations.

The sleeping bags were originally donated to Restart, a homeless mission for men and women in Kansas City. After Restart changed



The quilting group mainly works in the Covenant Room where they have tables set up to spread out the fabric, storage, records, etc. They're here at the church by 1 p.m. on Mondays. The group is open to anyone interested in working in this ministry and/or enjoys sewing.

owners, the new ownership decided to accept donations from other missions.

Nevertheless, the quilters found plenty of other places to donate the sleeping bags. "Whomever needs them," said Janet.

Some of the places who have received the sleeping bags include: HCC here in Lexington, City Union Mission, shelters in Independence and a homeless camp in Blue Springs, just to name a

few. In 2019, the LUMC Youth Group took 65 on a mission trip to Branson to donate to the charity Jesus Was Homeless.

### How to donate

Our quilters always need more donations to keep making the sleeping bags, as well as for the additional items packed with them.

Donations can be left at the church office, or swing by the church between 1 and 3 p.m. on a Monday and donate directly to these hard-working ladies.

**Items in need:** blankets, bedspreads, drapes,



Each sleeping bag has items rolled up into it: a pillowcase, toiletries, Upper Room devotional, socks, a hoodie, scarf, a handwritten card and is tied with a tie and/or ribbon. Donations of fabric and roll-up items are needed and welcome. They can be turned into the church office, Monday—Thursday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

mattress pads, old electric blankets, socks, ribbons, toiletries (ideally ... hotel-sized toiletries) such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, lotion, soap, shampoo, conditioner, hoodies, T-shirts, pillowcases and old greeting cards with a blank back that can be used for a custom message and scripture for each sleeping bag recipient.

### A roll-up prayer:

*"Lord take the work of our hands and bless it and in Thy Name, let the person that receives this gift know that he is loved."* - AMEN

# MORE THAN A BUSINESS MEETING

Rob Allen | Pastor

How things have changed. When I first became involved in the business of the local church, I remember a group of us gathering, mumbling and complaining that we had to go to another meeting. All of us recognized that the “business” we were about to undertake was necessary but still, it was work. Don’t get me wrong, the very first one of these events I remember there was a potluck or carry-in dinner which made the work OK. Soon though, the idea of individual church gatherings became too time-consuming for the district offices; territories expanded, greater demand was placed on the superintendents and soon they became regional gatherings at a hub church. Gone were the potlucks, but there were still snacks and there new faces and new people to talk with.

Those regional gatherings have continued to expand to the experience that we know today in which the district now offers two gatherings to conduct the annual business of the church. This is the business in which the local officials are voted upon, the pastor’s salary package approved for the coming year and various other reports are submitted and accepted. There is still coffee and some snacks, but I will share that there are two exciting opportunities now offered that would not have been available in days of old.

First, the United Methodist Church is a connectional entity. Whether we want to admit it or not, we are a giant family and these gatherings are akin to a family reunion. Sure, we may try to avoid our “unique” uncle, but there is always a cousin or that amazing aunt we want

to catch up with, right? In this time we have the chance to see folks we haven’t seen in months (or maybe even years), and there is a joy that fills the space shown in the hugs, the smiles and the laughter escaping from the hearts of those present.

The other exciting part is that we are offered a message of hope, of direction, of inspiration and of truth. During this year’s gathering, District Superintendent, the Reverend David Gilmore, reflected – powerfully I might add – on our need to get dirty, to move out of the sanctuaries and reclaim our (the Church’s) patch of dirt. As Jesus went, we need to go and offer the **Good News of Jesus Christ** to the largest growing denomination in each of our communities, the “Nones” and “Dones.” This reaching out, becoming the hands and the feet and the heart – the very Body of Christ – in our community is, and will be, the focus of the Northwest District of the Missouri Annual Conference, led by Reverend Gilmore. We will be held accountable. We will be asked how and where we are going and how we plan on getting dirty.

I am grateful for those of you who made the trip West to be a part of this gathering. I give thanks that this gathering was “**More Than A Business Meeting**,” and I give thanks for each of you and for the communities I have the opportunity to serve. Let us join together and do something we never thought we’d be able to do – that is, go out and get a little dirty in our Sunday clothes.

*May God’s blessings result upon each of you,*

Pastor Rob

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**SUNDAY WORSHIP: 10:45 a.m.**

**Mondays, 1 p.m.: Quilters meet.**

**Wednesdays: 9 a.m.—Exercise class**

**5 p.m.: Choir Rehearsal**

**6 to 7:30 p.m.: Children’s Ministry**

**6:30 to 8:30 p.m.: Youth Group on**

**Saturday, Feb. 4, 8 a.m.: Men’s Group meets at McDonald’s in Lexington**

**Friday, Feb. 10, Noon: Women’s Group meets for a carry-in lunch & Baby Shower for Lauren Negrete & infant Isabella**

**Sunday, Feb. 12, after worship: Super Bowl Party in Family Life Center: includes a meal of subs, nachos, etc., and fun activities**

**Monday, Feb. 13, 8 to 11 a.m.: Harvesters distributes**

**Wednesday, Feb. 22: Ash Wednesday service at LUMC. Time to be determined**

**Thursday, Feb. 23, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.: Commodities distribute in LUMC parking lot**

**Saturday, Feb. 25, 9 to 11 a.m.: Baby Grace distributes in FLC**



## SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:30 A.M. SUNDAYS

We’re talking about “Equipped for Life” by Rosekidz! Join us at 9:30 and bring a friend!

- 02/01 Tucker Herbst
- 02/06 Valerie Laddusaw
- 02/07 Debbie Hatfield
- 02/08 Heather Tayloe
- 02/09 Buddy Black
- 02/11 Seth Seitz & Byron Tretter
- 02/13 Lindsay Reynolds
- 02/17 Susan Worthington

Lexington United Methodist Church  
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First  
Class  
Stamp

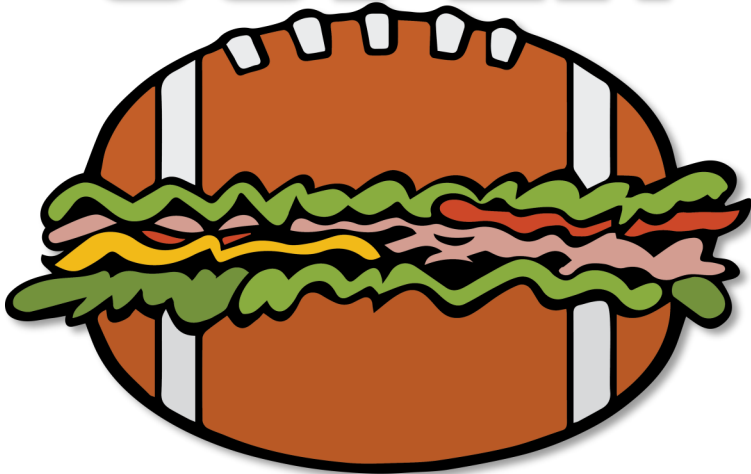
WORSHIP: Sundays 10:45 a.m.

Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.

ONLINE: [lexmoumc.org](http://lexmoumc.org)

## **Super Bowl Party, Sunday, February 12**

# SUPER



# PARTY

**KICK OFF THE BALLGAME FUN**

Immediately following the  
worship service in the  
Family Life Center.

Subs, Nachos, beverage and  
more. Plus, lots of fun  
activities.