



Maj. Gordon Hilbun (far right) shows a jacket to the police chief of Iraq's Anbar Province.

Feb. 21 Morristown churches send 100 jackets to Iraqi police officers

When Dorinda Hilbun asked her son, a U.S. Marine stationed in Iraq, what he needed from her church, he said he was fine.

He did have one request, however. He wanted 100 jackets that all looked alike – for the Iraqi policemen he was assigned to train.

Dorinda Hilbun brought the request back to Grant's Chapel United Methodist Church, where it was quickly forwarded to the Jefferson County Cluster United Methodist Men. The men took it on as a project, and on Feb. 1, 100 navy blue wind-breakers were shipped to Maj. Gordon Hilbun in the Anbar Province.

The Jefferson County Cluster United Methodist Men is comprised of members of Grant's Chapel, George Street, Chestnut Grove, and Ebenezer United Methodist churches in Morristown District. Shady Grove and First Dandridge also gave money to purchase the jackets.

"This project involved a lot of people, and each person played a very important role in the success of this project," explained the Rev. Ginger Isom, pastor at Grant's Chapel and George Street. Isom and her husband, Greg, are district directors of missions.

The group started collecting donations in December, Isom said. They made arrangements with a Sevierville company to purchase the large quantity of identical jackets. The order was split into sizes large and extra-large, at a cost of \$1,375.

"We wanted to make sure the jackets were large enough so the men could wear a sweater under them if they wish," Isom said. "Everybody got involved ... The kids really had a great time putting the labels on," she said.

Each jacket contained a label which read, "A gift to you from ... " with the name of a donor inserted. Labels also included the word, "Salaam," which means "peace" in Arabic. Children at George Street

UMC put the labels in the jackets on a Wednesday evening. The jackets were then taken to Grant's Chapel UMC where they were prayed over by the congregation before being shipped to Iraq.

"The congregation prayed over each jacket and for each man who would receive a jacket," Isom said. "Labels were used to enable a personal connection with each man who receives a jacket."

According to Isom, several United Methodist Men groups in the Morristown district hope to continue to assist military troops. "Whether it be more jackets for other police trainees in other areas, or other things that are needed, this has opened the door," she said.

Three weeks after the 13 boxes were shipped to Iraq, Maj. Hilbun sent an e-mail to his mother's congregation, announcing that the jackets had arrived. He wrote: "Know that your patriotism and sacrifice from shores far from here are appreciated as our Iraqi partners view you as fellow compatriots making our world a better, safer place one act at a time."

– *Kathy Barnes-Hemsworth*

March 5 District Roundup

BIG STONE GAP: Three years ago, Hale's Chapel UMC created a dance praise team. "Nevaeh" is comprised of six dancers ages eight to 13, with instructor Danielle Anderson and assistant Pam Mack. The group has traveled to Holston View UMC as well as local AME Zion churches -- and are willing to visit other churches, too. (Contact Contrinia Payne at 423-384-4957 or Pastor Steve Templeton at 276-452-4873 for more information.) On March 9, Nevaeh will visit Tate's Chapel UMC in Morristown District, where Bishop James Swanson will also preach. "These girls work very hard to present Biblical truth through the medium of dance," reports Liz Wood, Hale's Chapel lay leader and proud grandmother of two dancers. "By the way, take a backward look at the name, Nevaeh."

CLEVELAND: Bachman Academy is a Christian nonprofit boarding school for students with learning challenges. Pleasant Grove UMC is located near the school in McDonald, Tenn. Until recently, Pleasant Grove might have as few as four people attending worship. But within the last months, as many as 25 to 30 students from Bachman have started worshipping at Pleasant Grove. On every other Friday, a group of four to six students also come to the church to help remove old carpet, paint, rake, or perform other tasks as part of the school's community outreach program. "The congregation is blessed to have this continued relationship with the academy," reports Pastor J.W. Burgess.

KINGSFORT: On Feb. 25, Community UMC celebrated the groundbreaking for an addition that will include four new classrooms. Located less than a half-mile from First Broad Street UMC, Community

is nestled in a low-income neighborhood. A Tuesday-night supper ministry at Community has won the hearts of children and the dedication of other Kingsport churches and volunteers. An anonymous donor at First Broad Street financed the building addition, and other donations have provided the plans and heavy equipment. Holston's Volunteer Labor Team will coordinate the construction effort. Volunteers: Call the First Broad Street Missions office at (423) 224-1531.

MORRISTOWN: Liberty Hill UMC has organized a small, nonprofit bookstore with resources provided free or at reduced prices for local or lay pastors. "We are also interested in donations of books, or we have some funds available to purchase books from retiring ministers," says Pastor Terry Schnell. Call Liberty Hill at (423) 581-2587.

OAK RIDGE: Three years ago, Betsy Switzer visited Frazer UMC in Alabama, and learned of a "Cross in My Yard" project that she brought home to her church in Lenoir City, Tenn. Central UMC's evangelism team adopted the project, constructing about 200 four-foot crosses of rough-hewn lumber. They purchased fabric in purple, black, and white to make accompanying scarves. About three weeks before Easter, church members are invited to take a cross home, with instructions for rotating the scarves: Purple at first, black for Maundy Thursday, and white on Easter. To date, as many as 100 crosses are now scattered around Loudon County, says Switzer. "The only connection to our church is through individual inquiries of those who display the crosses. We have given some to folks outside our congregation who have seen them and inquired. Our purpose is to be a witness to our faith in our community." To find out more, e-mail betsy_switzer@centralmethodist.com.

TAZEWELL: Leaders at First Richlands UMC were touched when a member with cancer expressed this concern: Her wheelchair required her to come in through the side door, which has rough, uneven concrete. The side entrance leads into the front of the sanctuary, requiring a wheelchair-bound worshipper to take a visible ride to the back of the sanctuary. The congregation decided to start a project that would place an architecturally pleasing ramp at the front entrance, while repairing the bumpy concrete at the side entrance. The \$12,000 project was begun with a \$500 grant from Holston Conference, followed by another donation from a church member who recently injured his neck and had to use a walker. "He and his wife wanted to contribute because they said they know from experience how important it is to enter the front of the church," says Pastor David Brannock. "We want to send the message that everyone is welcome, and truly, our front doors are open to all."

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