



 **MISSIONS**
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH AMARILLO

THE JOURNAL

Stories from the missions and ministry of First Baptist Church Amarillo

Unlikely

A Faithful Legacy Enables
11th & Polk Ministry Center

Mothers On Mission

Community and Care Found
Through MOMs

Partnership Missions

Relief Work Makes an
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Unlikely

A Faithful Legacy Provides for the Future

Howie Batson

Unlikely. There is nothing about Helen Roller's story that made her a likely candidate to make a major gift for the founding of a new ministry center in the heart of downtown Amarillo. We do, however, have a God who majors in making the unlikely a certainty.

Helen was born May 26, 1925, but was orphaned at age eight after the death of her daddy. On August 7, 1933, the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Rev. G. L. Yates, placed her in his car – Helen didn't even know what was happening; she didn't know where she was going – and drove her to Buckner Orphans Home in Dallas, where she would

remain as a resident until she was 18 years of age.

At Buckner, she remembered the barrack-type conditions, where all the kids had a little cot, but no closet, no clothes of their own. The dresses were doled out on a daily basis, piled upon a chair for first-come, first-served taking. At first, as an orphaned child, she felt like nobody really loved or cared for her. But she soon found a friend in Jesus. She said, "I found more than a friend; I found a Savior." The orphan discovered that she was loved, she did have a father – the Father of her faith, the one relationship that would shape the rest of her days.



**Helen Roller was an
“all nations” kind of
disciple maker.**

As she was aging out of the orphanage program at age 18, she felt a calling to be a nurse. She entered the Cadet Nursing Program at Parkland School of Nursing in Dallas. The Navy paid for her education in exchange for service after graduation. By contract, she committed to stay in the U.S. Navy for the duration of the war plus six months. But she served for more than 22 years! While in the armed forces, she received several decorations, including the National Defense Service Medal with Star, the United Nations Service Medal, the Korean Service Medal, the Navy Occupation of Japan, the Vietnam Service Medal, and the U.S., Vietnam, and Navy Unit Citations. And through the years, Helen rose to the rank of Commander.

Sometimes Helen did put on her commanding exterior, that “I’m not going to let you get too close” persona. But deep down inside, she loved her friends and her church family. Toward the last few years of her life, I would just say it: “Helen, I love you.” I wanted her to hear those words from her pastor, unfiltered.

After retirement from the Navy on July 1, 1971, Helen realized retirement would be, for her, just a transfer to a new field, and this time it would be a mission field. During Foreign Mission Week at Glorieta in 1971, Helen felt called to contact the Foreign Mission Board to see where they needed nurses. And from January 1972 to March 1994, she loved, served, and cared for people in Ethiopia, Rhodesia, Korea, Colombia, Australia, Ghana, Italy, Thailand, Brazil, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, Burundi, Russia, and Belarus. She served in refugee camps, orphanages, feeding clinics, and hospitals of the simplest sort. And then she went to the Home Mission Board and served in Texas (River Ministry), Wisconsin, Arizona, and New Mexico.

Having retired from the military after nearly 23 years of service, having retired again after more than two decades on the foreign mission field, Helen spent the next 16 years as a volunteer at St. Anthony's/BSA Hospice. She also helped organize the Buchanan Street Chapel Community Center (now the Perkins Community Center) and volunteered at Ware Living Center and Park Place Towers. And in her spare time, she started the Christian Women's Job Corps Program at First Baptist Church. And, of course, she was here every time we opened the church doors for worship.

Through her love for missions and service, Helen was able to visit all 50 states and 45 foreign countries. What does the Great Commission say? "Go, therefore, to all nations, teaching them, baptizing them..." Helen Roller was an "all nations" kind of disciple maker.

What made Helen Roller especially unique on her adventurous journey through life – from an eight-year-old orphan to the United States Navy and, finally, to the mission field – is that Helen traveled light. Yes, I mean, literally, she traveled light.

Early on in my ministry as pastor at First Baptist

Church, Helen had been at Glorieta Baptist Retreat Center for three weeks in a row for Music Week, WMU Week, and Missions Week. I was headed back from Glorieta after her last week, and Helen asked if she could ride back with me. As she was getting in my car, I said, "Miss Roller, let me go get your suitcase." All she had in her hand was something no bigger than a briefcase. Helen said, "This is my luggage," as if she was surprised at my inquiry. I'd just been at Glorieta for the weekend, and I had two suitcases! I said, "Helen, you've been up here for three weeks. How can that be your suitcase?" She said, "I wash. Make do. Don't need any more than this." It was one of those moments – and I had many of them with Helen – when I realized I needed to hush up and hear what Helen had to say.

Unlikely. That an eight-year-old, who pulled her clothes from a laundry pile in the orphanage, would one day be the major donor to create a new ministries center in the heart of downtown Amarillo seems awfully unlikely. But traveling light, not just to Glorieta, but through all of life, Helen lived off meager means, saving and investing wisely.

With Helen's generosity, First Baptist Church of Amarillo is now opening a brand new ministries



The original Truitt Buick (1948) building at 11th & Polk announces a grand opening with a showroom of cars and the First Baptist Church bell tower in view.

center at 11th and Polk that will serve a variety of ministry and missions needs in what was once the Poole Buick Dealership and then Bill Vaughan Imports. From this space, MGs, Jaguars, and even Rolls Royce automobiles were once bought, sold, and traded. Local car dealer Pete Vaughan remembers running around his dad's import dealership as a grade school kid – sweeping the floors and playing hide and seek in the parts department. But now, the building that once served as different dealerships and an auto repair shop will be a state-of-the-art ministry center reaching our community with the care of Christ. This impressive ministry center would not have been possible without Helen designating First Baptist Church as a major recipient of her estate. Helen died just like she lived – serving others!

The possibilities and opportunities for this ministry center to make a difference are countless. For starters, the ministry center will serve

“The possibilities and opportunities for this ministry center to make a difference are countless.”

Formal
OPENING!
TRUITT BUICK CO.

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modern home
11th and Polk**



Here is the modern new Buick Sales and Service Headquarters in Annapolis.

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BUICKS completely restyled 1949 Super and Roadmaster models feature lower, wider and rounder bodies that provide greater visibility through use of 22 1/2" bar-vent more glass. Highlighting the new post-war BUICK styling are flowing, full length fenders with functional chrome embossed "vesti-pants" for cooling the engine compartment, full round curved windshield and rear window, one-piece, wrap-around bumpers and spacious leg-pace compartments. Over-all length of Super and Roadmaster models is reduced 3 inches to facilitate parking and storage. Buick's Super and Roadmaster models present more than 100 mechanical improvements, including replaceable connecting rod bearings, self-adjusting hydraulic valve lifters, a new larger heater, and new door checks and hold-downs that provide easier opening and more positive hold-open for doors.



Dynaflow Drive, Buick's unique "no-vibration" transmission, is standard on Roadmaster models and optional on Super series cars. Don't fail to see the new line of Buicks on display now at TRUITT BUICK CO. at 11th and Polk Street.



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as a hub for our automobile give-away ministry, a place where members and friends of First Baptist Church can donate their used cars (in any condition). These cars will then be transformed to provide life-changing travel for someone who desperately needs a set of wheels.

In another nook of the ministry center, you'll find technically gifted members of First Baptist Church refurbishing old computers (again donated by the friends and family of First Baptist Church) in order to give someone access to all the resources that a computer places at our fingertips. Already, First Baptist Church has made a major donation of over 40 computers to Bonton Farms in South Dallas.

And in a larger garage portion of what was once the mechanic's shop of a car dealership, you'll find bicycles lined up in a row, like soldiers standing at attention. These bikes will soon be gifted to kids who would otherwise not have one.

As you move past the automobile, bicycle, and computer ministries, you arrive at an expansive worship and educational space that has been completely remodeled – contemporary windows, men's and women's bathrooms, and kitchen and childcare facilities. This missions center will serve countless needs for First Baptist. Remodeled and rebirthed to be a state-of-the-art facility, this room will soon find itself teeming with one or more mission





congregations, missions education groups gathering on Polk Street, and even a Sunday School party or two. Through a wall of windows, those attending events at the new 11th and Polk Ministries Center can peer out to the very center of our city. Additionally, rumors in the community are rumbling that a major city attraction, a fountain, will be built right across from the new 11th and Polk Ministry Center.

And none of it – absolutely none of it – would have been possible without Helen Roller who loved First Baptist Church, missions, and ministry. Helen lived her life not for the moment, but for all eternity. Even after her death, Helen’s faithfulness continues to impact both First Baptist Church and the Kingdom of God. How exciting for First Baptist Church – empowered by Helen’s generosity – to restore a historic building in the heart of our city for decades of ministry endeavors. Well done, Helen, thou good and faithful servant. You have left a legacy.



11th & Polk Ministry Center



Mothers On Mission Community and Care Found Through MOMs

TREVOR BROWN

When Tanya Alloway and her family moved to Amarillo in 2006, First Baptist Church was in the process of starting a Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) program. Having served in leadership in a previous group, she jumped at the opportunity to get one started here.

MOPS groups are gatherings of moms coming together for community and friendship, helping moms in their mothering, Christian faith, and leadership. The goal of MOPS is to meet moms where they are, walk beside them in motherhood and provide opportunities to encounter Jesus. They gather twice a month on Wednesday mornings for meetings organized by a steering



team who meet separately for prayer and monthly planning. Each table of 7-8 women functions as a small group within the gathering and has a designated table leader.

In that first year, dozens of mothers gathered for the bimonthly meetings. In the years since, the group has steadily grown and even branched out on its own, choosing to steer its own content and curriculum. To do so, it shifted to a new name: Mothers On Mission (MOMs).

“We have moms from varying

backgrounds come together and unite in motherhood,” Alloway shared. “No matter their background, family dynamics, or where they have moved from, MOMs provides a safe place for mothers to come together and create friendships and life-long friends.”

For some, this community is a lifeline, a network of peers that supports and encourages them in difficult days. For others, it’s a source of spiritual nourishment in an otherwise draining week. For many, it’s been an open door into a larger

sense of belonging at First Baptist Church.

A Community of Care

For Erin Sherrill and her family, the challenges of one unexpected day still sum up her experience with MOMs. In the midst of one meeting, she fielded calls about sudden endings and new beginnings in her family’s foster care journey.

“I was in a MOMs meeting when I got the call that we were being placed with our oldest son,” Sherrill shared.



MOMs bimonthly gatherings, pictured here, include breakfast, fellowship, Bible study and discussion, crafts, games, service projects, outside speakers, and prayer.

“Just minutes earlier, I had received a call that the baby boy I had cared for the last 13 months would be going home the following day. Grief and joy swam simultaneously in my mind when my MOMs table stopped our activity for that day and prayed for my family. Then, they executed a plan to drop diapers, dinner at my home, and even did my dishes that night. I still have very vivid memories of these friends I had made sitting in the floor celebrating the lives of the boys in my care. I am forever grateful for the love, support, and friendship gained [...] I encourage all new mamas to get plugged in, because it is such a life-giving organization.”

Finding More Family

For moms like Robbie Whitfield, connections at MOMs were a big part of finding a church family.

“I was invited to MOMs by my friend, Jessica Cary, who was the coordinator at the time,” Whitfield explained. “She brought John and me a meal after our first child was born and invited me to come check it out.”

“My family has always been active in our church home,” Robbie continued. “but after a few years of MOMs, the community of people we did life with were all from connections made at MOMs with families who were members of FBC. Being welcomed into the MOMs group was such an impactful extension of FBC, that when we found ourselves looking for a new church home, we already felt welcomed into this church family.”

“The heart of MOMs is a true reflection of the heart of FBC, meeting the tangible needs of young moms and families, while also meeting them with the love of Christ. God used the relationships

“Being welcomed into the MOMs group was such an impactful extension of FBC, that when we found ourselves looking for a new church home, we already felt welcomed into this church family.”

MOMS

MOTHERS ON MISSION

I developed at MOMs to strengthen my faith and encouraged me toward godly motherhood when I was at my most vulnerable. God would bring His word to my mind through words spoken from my mentor mom at just the right moment. God would provide encouragement through the modeling of faithful, godly parenting of my peers at a playdate on an especially challenging day.”

Erin Sherrill echoed the same: “It was this MOMs group that first supported me as a foster parent, by praying for us and our children, sending meals and loving us through the journey. MOMs was the open door for our family to become a part of the FBC Amarillo Family. Because of the sweet relationships I made with the women in the MOMs organization and the wonderful and loving childcare my children were experiencing, we felt like FBC was the best place to call our church home, and it has completely changed our lives and the lives of our children.”



Reflecting on the significance of the ministry happening through this ministry to and with moms, Robbie Whitfield added: “MOMs is a wonderful way to get involved in the mission of Christ through FBC. Supporting the MOMs group by providing childcare or becoming a

mentor mom is a way to have a direct impact on the community while also welcoming new families into our church.

“As I look around the sanctuary each Sunday morning, it is becoming more and more common to spot families that have become members here

because our church invested in their families through MOMs and invited them to be a part of what God is doing at FBC. God is using MOMs to grow our church family. God is using MOMs to set young mothers on a path of Gospel-centered parenting from the very beginning.”



How You Can Serve MOMs

The biggest need for volunteers in this program comes in the form of childcare workers. A regular waiting list to join typically forms as our care capacity is met. If you'd be available to help this ministry grow by serving on a childcare team on Wednesday mornings, contact the church office.

2023 MISSION TRIPS

Phoenix (High School) | March 11 - 17

CO Springs (College) | March 11 - 17

Hungary | June 21 - July 2

Lebanon | July 7 - 16

Costa Rica | July 17 - 23

Zambia | July 27 - August 6

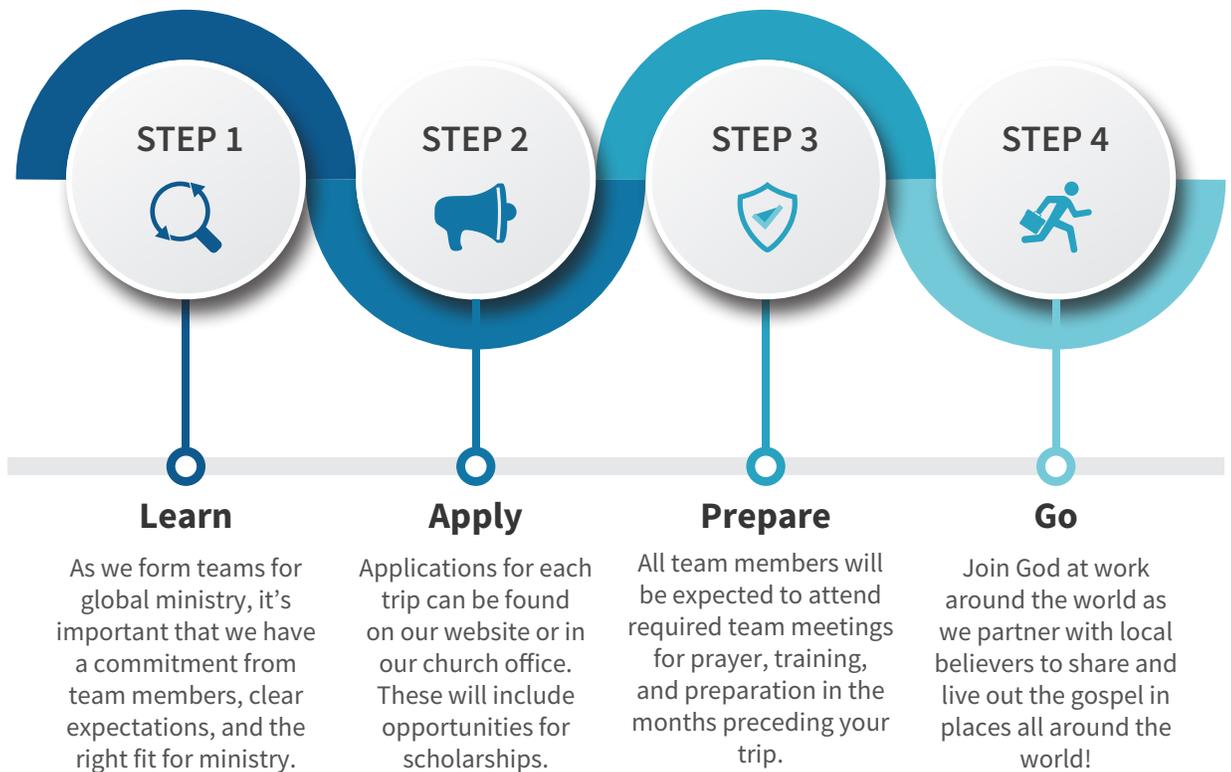


firstamarillo.org/2023trips

How To Go

First Baptist Church is grateful to join the work of God all around the world through our partners in ministry, learning from one another and sharing the love of Jesus Christ together. These trips are made possible and effective through the faithful giving and continual prayers of our people. Begin praying about how God can use you through the many opportunities to serve.

If you're considering going, we would encourage you to talk with a staff member or trip leader. You can learn more about each trip on our website. If you're expecting to be a part of an international trip, you should acquire a passport and follow these simple steps:





Partnership Missions

Relief Work Makes an Impact in Ukraine

Texas Baptist Men aids in movement of love, generosity in Poland as country opens arms to Ukrainians

TEXAS BAPTISTS

With little more than the clothes on their backs, hundreds of Ukrainian women and children waited hours in line to cross into Poland as part of the largest movement of people in Europe since World War II. They shuffled their feet quietly, even apprehensively, toward an unknown future in an unfamiliar country.

They were stunned when they arrived. Volunteers taped Ukrainian flags in their car windows and signs in Ukrainian reading “free rides to shelter.” The drivers took the refugees to the Baptist

church in Chelm, only a few kilometers up the road where people from around the world – Poland, Latvia, England and the United States, to name a few – were offering a place of safety and security for a few hours, few days, or as long as they needed it.

Families sat in stunned silence in an impromptu reception area where church volunteers told the refugees the church had free food, drinks, showers, and places to sleep. The congregation even had a children's area where they could play with bubbles or watch educational videos projected on a screen.

Baptists around the world send help and hope

“What we’re seeing is a movement of love and generosity across this nation. Poles are opening their doors and arms to Ukrainians. They are taking them into their churches. They are taking them into their homes. They are feeding them. They are caring for them,” said Marek Glodek, president of the Baptist Union of Poland.

“This is what Jesus calls His believers to do all the time. Polish Christians are taking the teachings of Jesus seriously and living them out each day during this situation.”

More than 60 percent of the 110 Poland Baptist churches responded to the needs of Ukrainian refugees, many of them in dramatic and

radical ways. At a warehouse in Chelm, donations for Ukrainians are coming in as fast as they are going out to Ukraine and to shelters across Poland. The deliveries continued even after Russia intensified attacks on the western portion of Ukraine. In north Poland, church members installed new insulation, air conditioning, heating, electrical lines, and beds in an old summer camp to revitalize it to house refugees. Before the work was complete, they were housing 46 Ukrainians – all from one family. It can now house 60 more.

The work is tough, but it must be done. “You just do it because it’s the right thing to do,” said Lukas, who is leading the camp effort.

Near the Belarus border, a church is providing shelter for about 50 people and sending supplies into Ukraine despite increased Russian aggression. The effort is led in part by Natasha and Sergei, Ukrainians who came to Poland 10 years ago. “We didn’t know why we were moving to Ukraine,” Sergei said. “We knew it couldn’t just be about money. Now we know.”

Natasha calls her parents, who remain in Ukraine, twice a day to find out if they’re still alive. After hearing their voices for a little while, she goes to work helping her countrymen. Between collecting and organizing supplies and registering people in the shelter, she moves quickly and calmly throughout the day.

“I see dread in their faces. I see their pain. I see tears in their eyes. I see the fear for their family they left behind. But I also see how much they feel secure here. When I hug them, they shiver with the happiness of being safe,” she said.

“I feel like I’ve done so, so little. I could have done so much more. But I try to do everything so they know we’ve done everything we can.”

With Baptists in Poland, Romania, Hungary and Moldova taking center stage, Baptists from around the world are playing supportive roles by donating supplies, providing additional funding, praying, and volunteering. People speak English, Latvian, Russian, Polish, Icelandic, Ukrainian and more in the shelter.



Texas Baptist Men provide ongoing support

Texas Baptist Men (TBM) alone committed \$300,000 (in 2022) throughout the region to Ukrainian, Polish and Romanian Baptists, enough to support five shelters for six months. TBM has a team in Poland and has sent larger volunteer teams to serve in the Chelm church shelter near the Ukraine border.

“More than 1.5 million Ukrainians have sought safety in Poland,” said Mickey Lenamon, TBM executive director/CEO. “Baptists worldwide have joined together to meet their needs. TBM is honored to be part of that, whether it is through funding, sorting and loading donations in-country, setting up beds, or even doing the little things that are needed like cleaning floors and toilets. We see what believers throughout the region are doing and are seeking to do likewise: follow Christ daily and share His love.”

The crisis will have a long-lasting impact in the region. Families are divided as fathers and brothers fight for their country. Many Ukrainians wonder if they will ever return home or if there is anything to return to.

Until they decide, Baptists across Poland are providing a place for them.

“The faces of Ukrainians arriving in Poland have the look of total despair, but I see the love of God poured out by the Polish people and see hope and comfort shining through,” said Gary Finley, part of a TBM team serving in Poland.

This article originally appeared in Texas Baptist News. Contributions from First Baptist Church Amarillo, among others, made possible the work of TBM and others shared here.



RESPONDING TO NEEDS THROUGH GLOBAL PARTNERS

In 2022, through generous gifts to our FBC Partnership Missions Fund, First Baptist Church Amarillo was able to respond immediately to the crisis in Ukraine by sending support to the region through the direct efforts of both the Texas Baptist Men and the Texas Baptist Hunger Offering.

Holiday Bible Club in Chivhu

IMB Missionaries Lead Team in Zimbabwe



For IMB missionaries, Daniel and Sky Scott, serving in Africa has been a way of life. The opportunity to serve alongside members of First Baptist Amarillo (Sky’s home church), has often been a summer blessing. While teams have connected with them during residential assignments in Zambia and South Africa, the summer of 2022 presented an opportunity to partner for ministry in nearby Zimbabwe.



Above: Camp participants displaying face paint and crafts.
Below: Sky Scott teaches a Bible story.

With the children of Chivhu, Zimbabwe, on summer break, the team - consisting of three FBC members, the Scott family, and several local partners - provided a Holiday Bible Club, which averaged 50-60 kids each day. The week provided a host of meaningful activities and life-changing lessons. Additionally, the team was able to participate in daily evangelism and several discipleship classes.

“We led them in Bible stories, crafts, and games,” shared Bob Hewett, speaking about the children’s ministry. “Cherry Peach painted the kids’ faces, sharing the Gospel as she did each one.”

“We were blessed to lead 37 people to faith in Jesus,” Bob continued. “Charles (a local missionary partner) was careful to get contact information from these folks so he can do follow-up.”



Bob Hewett (bottom left), Cherry Peach (top right), and Misti Chancelor (right), pose with friends and missionary partners in Zimbabwe, including the Scott family.

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Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name;
Make known among the nations what he has done.
Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.

Psalm 105:1-2



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Amarillo

www.firstamarillo.org