



# THE JOURNAL

Stories from the missions and ministry of First Baptist Church Amarillo

## Fostering Hope

Moving Closer to Foster Care

## Computer Ministry

FBC Donations Empower  
Sharing Hope

## Stories of Service

Spring Break & Summer Teams  
Share Reflections

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# Moving Closer to Foster Care

**TREVOR BROWN**

In the last speech he would give, Martin Luther King, Jr. famously alluded to the parable of the Good Samaritan:

“The first question which the Priest and Levite asked was, ‘If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?’ The Samaritan reversed the question: ‘If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?’”

It’s doubtful that any of us have had to ask this question about a man on the road to Jericho. All of us, though, have had to choose which of these questions to ask. We have all stood in view

of broken people and difficult situations, forced to contemplate whether or not to move closer. When it comes to the state of the child welfare system, the Church has the same question to answer: Move on or move closer?

Author and activist Jason Johnson writes, “The irony of perspective is that for some on the outside looking in, foster care seems too risky to do; yet for those on the inside - having deeply felt the complexities of beauty and brokenness and joy and sorrow - the risks that come with *not* doing it are simply too great to ignore.”

From the context of Jesus’ first telling of the parable to the time of MLK, God’s people have heard the call to consider the needs of others, even before their own. For Jesus, the choice of the Samaritan to stop and render aid, provide care, sacrifice for the good of another, was not only the answer to the question “Who is my neighbor?” It was also an illustration of what is required of those who wish to inherit eternal life.

## **The God Who Draws Near**

God has always desired to be a God-with-us. His nearness to



humankind is evident from the moment of creation. Even when this relationship is fractured by sin, God is committed to His redemptive purpose of drawing as near as possible to us. In other words, He refuses to simply pass by or move on.

His presence was close from the start. He led His people by cloud and fire (Exodus 13:21) to find their way when they were lost. When God could not get people to move any closer, He came to them.

With specific instructions for Moses, the tabernacle of the Lord became a tangible place for His glory to dwell. At the sacrifices of Aaron, the glory of the Lord appeared before all of the people (Leviticus 9:23-24). In the temple of Solomon, that same presence moved in and filled that house (2 Chronicles 7:1). But a new temple was coming, the prophets would say, and in that day God's Spirit and glory would come to live among us all. John called Jesus "the radiance

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**“From the start, followers of Jesus discovered that their love of God and neighbor meant that they had to move toward hard places.”**

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of the glory of God” (John 1:14). He was, like never before, God-with-us.

Yet, Jesus makes sure to tell the disciples that when He leaves, God will be closer still. In their moment of need – in our moment of need – Jesus was not primarily concerned with what would happen to Him. He asked, instead, what will happen to them? This is the love that led Him to the cross.

Jesus tells the disciples that the Holy Spirit will come to them when He's gone. It must have been hard to imagine that God could move any closer than right there with them. What could be closer? They would later learn that by believing in Jesus, God would come to live inside of them, forever (John 14:15-31).

The story of God's presence, the life of Jesus, and the gift of the Holy Spirit reveal much to us about who God is and who we are called to be. God chooses to enter into our brokenness and allow Himself to be broken by it, so that we don't have to be broken any more. At every turn, God sees the plight of His people and is determined to move closer. This is what He did for us. He invites us to do the same for others.

### **The People Who Move Closer**

For centuries, faithful Christians have answered this call in a myriad of ways. Refusing to simply “pass by,”

God's people have moved toward the broken people and difficult places in our world, again and again. This is, after all, the pattern set by the life of God Himself.

In his book, *The Rise of Christianity*, sociologist Rodney Stark offers analysis of how Christianity rapidly flourished in the ancient world. He argues that "the primary means of its growth was through the united and motivated efforts of the growing numbers of Christian believers, who invited their friends, relatives, and neighbors to share the 'good news.'"

Stark describes many advantages that this closely-knit network of believers offered to the surrounding world:

"To cities filled with the homeless and the impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachments. To cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity. And to cities faced with epidemics, fires, and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective nursing services."

From the start, followers of Jesus discovered that their love of God and neighbor meant that they had to move toward hard places. This distinguishing characteristic of God is a distinctive characteristic of who we are, too. It was not just what they did. In light of the gospel, it's who we are.

Jason Johnson writes that, "The world around us tells us to avoid, isolate, and insulate ourselves from anything that's potentially hard, uncomfortable, or dangerous. We're indoctrinated in all forms to set up the kind of life where we can live the rest of our days pretending like hard places and broken people

don't exist around us - in our city, around the world or even across the street. Make things as easy and comfortable as possible. At all costs. [...]

"Fear keeps a lot of good people away from a lot of great kids and families - and ultimately deprives

## FOSTERING HOPE Care Closet

Did you know that the FBC Care Closet meets the vast majority of CarePortal Needs in our area?

Every week, diligent volunteers work to collect items, organize space, respond to requests, and deliver goods. You can join the team of people who meet these immediate needs. Contact [fosteringhopeamarillo@gmail.com](mailto:fosteringhopeamarillo@gmail.com)!

### CarePortal: How it Works

**STEP 1: A CHILD OR FAMILY IN NEED REQUIRES HELP FROM A CHILD-SERVING PROFESSIONAL**



**STEP 2: THE CHILD-SERVING PROFESSIONAL VETS AND TYPES NEEDS INTO CAREPORTAL**

**STEP 3: CAREPORTAL ALERTS NEARBY CHURCHES AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO NEEDS**



**STEP 4: CHURCHES AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS PARTNER TO ENSURE THAT THE CHILD AND FAMILY IS HELPED**

everyone of the beauty that can only be found when we move toward those unique places of uncertainty and necessity - where we're not sure how this whole thing is going to play out, but we're absolutely certain that we have to do something about it. We simply can't not. This isn't to say you should be careless and foolish. It is to say, however, that you should deeply and realistically assess the costs you will incur if you do foster, but never to the neglect of considering what it will cost these kids if you don't."

That is the difference between the two who passed by and the Samaritan who stopped and moved closer. One asked the question from the proper perspective.

The church today has a tremendous responsibility to remain engaged in the child welfare crisis. There are numerous ways to get involved, such as assisting with the needs of kinship care, supporting aged out youth, or becoming a part of the village of support needed by foster families. However, the need for open and capable foster homes remains at the center.

When Jesus asked which one was a neighbor, the expert in the law answered, "The one who showed mercy toward him."

Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

## DID YOU KNOW?

When children are removed from their home by Child Protective Services (CPS), they are placed into **Substitute Care**. CPS's goal is to place children close to home in family settings until they can safely reunite with their family, achieve permanency with their relatives, or achieve permanency through non-relative adoption.

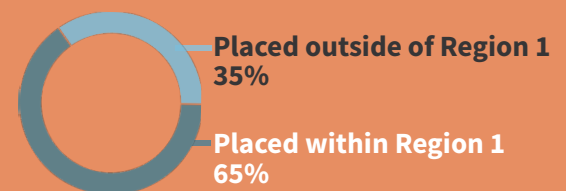
In our region (Region 1), encompassing 41 Panhandle counties, 68% of the children in Substitute Care are placed in **Non-Kinship Care**, the home of a non-relative. At the end of 2022, there were 535 children in non-kinship homes in this region alone.

### Children in Substitute Care in Region 1



**When qualified foster homes are not available, it is often necessary to place children outside of their own region.**

In August of 2023, for example, there were 260 children in foster care in Potter-Randall Counties. Approximately 35% of those were placed in homes *outside* of the Panhandle region.



# Fostering Hope

## Tell Me More



### YOU'RE INVITED

**NOVEMBER 5<sup>th</sup>**  
**"MOVING CLOSER TO FOSTER CARE"**  
**6:00pm in the Sanctuary**

Whether you are curious, committed, or just want to connect with the need, come join our November 5th evening service.

Learn about the community of support at FBC, hear from experienced foster parents, and consider how you can help the church move closer to foster care.

From respite care to foster home training, we're working toward a world where every child in our community can find quality care close to home.

### I'M READY TO CONSIDER FOSTERING

We're ready for you! We want to pave the way for you to be a healthy, qualified foster home and surround you with a village of support.

We've already begun recruiting respite care providers, building support systems, and planning trainings, to help lower as many barriers as possible.

We're partnering with **A World For Children** to equip you to become a licensed home. First Baptist Church is connecting you with other church members in the same process, hosting necessary trainings on FBC's campus, providing child care as needed, and encouraging you along the way.

### BECOMING A LICENSED FOSTER HOME INCLUDES:

- Meeting the basic qualifications.
- Completing an application.
- Attend/complete the required trainings.
- Pass a background screening.
- Undergo a home study.

This process can take 6-18 months, but with one step at a time, you can move closer to foster care.

*Learn more at [firstamarillo.org/fostering-hope](http://firstamarillo.org/fostering-hope)*

# Computer Ministry Sharing Hope

First Baptist donations find purpose through local partnership

## APRIL RIGGS

*Executive Director of Sharing Hope, Inc.*

In April of 2022, Tommy Hill contacted Sharing Hope Ministry to see if there was a need for refurbished computers. Tommy was active with First Baptist Church's Computer Ministry, and his call was an answer to prayers.

Sharing Hope is a local ministry whose mission is to assist at-risk and incarcerated women in changing their story by sharing hope through Christ's love. Sharing Hope Ministry sends the Life Recovery Bible, Bible studies, and prayer correspondence to women residing in correctional and addiction rehabilitation facilities nationwide. Locally, programs include the Lucille and Leo Caiafa, Jr. Center for Advancement, an outreach ministry that provides classes, recovery groups, and meeting space, in addition to offering emergency food, clothing, and hygiene items for women who have been released from prison or jail.

Sharing Hope also operates Patsy's Place, a Christ-centered transitional home in Amarillo where volunteers





and staff nurture and mentor women as they cope with overwhelming obstacles upon release from county jail or prison.

Computer classes were about to begin at the Lucille and Leo Caiafa, Jr. Center for Advancement and were being taught by Goodwill Industries. The classes are offered to women in other Amarillo shelters and then opened up to at-risk women in the Amarillo community who are lacking the basic skills necessary to function in today's society.

Sarah was one of the ladies who was living in a local shelter, and she was trying to get back on her feet after an unexpected situation left her homeless. Sarah had recently been offered a wonderful job, but she needed computer skills and her own computer before she could start the job. Sarah was one of the first women to receive a refurbished computer from First Baptist Church.

Maria was another woman who took the first step to improving her situation by attending the computer class. She was nervous about entering a classroom setting since she dropped out of school in the ninth grade. Maria flourished in this environment and was thrilled when she received her Certificate of



Completion and her computer. Maria was so empowered by her success that she has recently begun attending the G.E.D. prep classes that are also offered at the Center for Advancement.

Tommy participates in the training by attending the last computer class to teach the women how to navigate their computers and the free software that allows them to get started without additional costs. The graduating women are also given free USB wireless Wi-Fi adapters. Jessica, a recent graduate of the Patsy's Place program, started her first semester at Amarillo College this fall and was able to enroll in online classes due to receiving one of these free computers.



The impact of the partnership with First Baptist Church, Goodwill Industries, and Sharing Hope Ministry has been amazing. Since April of 2022, forty-eight women have learned important computer skills and have received their own refurbished computer which allows them to take the next step to self-sufficiency.



# Stories of Service



“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, 6 so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Romans 15:5-6

# Students' Spring Break Building Community and Sharing Christ

*Last Spring Break, First Baptist high schoolers spent the week serving and sharing in the Phoenix, AZ, area. In the following reflection, one of the group's 12th graders shared his perspective on the value of the trip and the blessing of his church.*

**COOPER PILLION**, *FBC student*

While on our Spring Break trip to Arizona, we held a kids' camp at two churches in Phoenix: Antioch and Phoenix Bible Church. I was in the Phoenix Bible church group, and my job was to be a group leader. That means that I had a group of 5th graders to take to each rotation. My group of 5th graders consisted of about 8 boys and 4 girls. My favorite part about the group was getting to see the type of bond that

they all had with each other. They were so excited and happy to be hanging out with each other, and that made me very happy to see. It made me happy, because I have been blessed with an awesome group of people as well.

I have created so many memories with the people in the FBC youth group. I know that those kids were getting to experience some of the same thing. My group of friends has changed my life by the way they impact me and encourage me to chase after God in everything that I do. It was so cool to help my group of 5th graders have the same thing that I have had the past several years. God has been so faithful in how he has placed people in my life, and I know he






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**“We made sure that we had a servant’s heart, because that is what we were there to do.”**

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will continue to be faithful to all of those kids at the camp.

While on the trip we also had service projects that consisted of demo work, cleaning, and painting. I mostly painted and did demo work, which sounded like a fun job for me and a few other guys for about the first 30 minutes. After that, it didn’t seem as fun of a job. Although it may have been a very hard job, the demo team, which consisted of Morgan Turner, William Booth, Joseph Cunningham, Will Henderson, Ryan Armstrong, Mel Mou, Placide, Parker Maybin and the anchor, James Booth, still made it fun.

We made sure that we had a servant’s heart, because that is what we were there to do. That is what God calls us to do. I also got to do a lot of painting, and David

Nance did a great job showing us how to lead a group in the short amount of time. I had a great time getting to paint and listening to Jake Chapman’s famous Spotify playlist, “Hype for Jesus.” While painting, the bond and teamwork of this youth group really came to light. Without it, I wouldn’t have had the amount of fun that I had, and the job, most likely, wouldn’t have gotten done in time.

On the last night of the trip, it is





a tradition that the seniors share a testimony of their time in the youth group. While listening to everyone else’s testimonies, you kept hearing things like “community,” “friendships,” and “memories” created and how thankful everyone was that God has provided all of those things in this church.

That is living proof that this is a church that values every single one of those things, and the best part about having all of those things is that we get to do it in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is one of the greatest blessings that I have received from God. I hope and pray that He provides the same thing for me as I move into a new chapter of my life.

The seniors also picked a verse for the week, and that verse was Proverbs 18:24. It says, “One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” The youth here have shaped me into the person I am today, and I don’t know what I am going to do when I will not get to see all of them every week. I can’t wait to see what God has for all of us in the future.



# Tools For Ministry

## College Groups Grow and Serve

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**COREY STEWART**

Just south of Colorado Springs, in the Fountain Valley, sits Mountain View Bible Church. As a recent church plant, they've been serving their community together for less than two years. Within the last year, an opportunity arrived to move into a permanent church building. The building is located in the middle of several neighborhoods, within walking distance of an elementary school, and near the local high school. The building complex had been a church and daycare several decades ago.

While the building is a wonderful gift, it had room for updates. Some reconfiguration was needed to serve the congregation and community safely and effectively. In partnership with the students from Northside Baptist Church in Weatherford, TX, the First Baptist Amarillo college ministry was able to offer



just that. Comprised of college students on their Spring Break, the group spent a week on several construction projects, including installing new windows, redesigning a stage, building a new sound booth, cleaning up a playground, making Dutch doors for the church’s children’s department, building picnic tables for an outdoor courtyard, and rebuilding two storage sheds.

The students didn’t go with construction experience and knowledge, but they did go motivated to love on brothers

and sisters in Christ at MVBC and to support them as they serve. They went willing to learn and develop new skills. Their work helped elevate the building from a burden to a tool. The student crews were led by an incredible group of adults sharing their skills, humility, time, and experience with the Lord. Each evening they had the opportunity to worship together with members of MVBC.

This year in Challenge, the midweek discipleship groups in our college ministry, we have studied and practiced

loving others “one [person, opportunity, connection] at a time.” This Spring Break, the Lord coordinated our connection and opportunity. Our students said “yes” to loving others in the dirt, dust, noise, drills, saws, and cold of a construction site. Thank you to the family of First Baptist for your continual support of our students as they grow and serve.



# Choirs in Costa Rica

## Sharing in the Language of Music

**JESSICA SWENN**

I was blessed and honored to attend my first foreign mission trip with our choir to Costa Rica. In Colossians 3 & Ephesians 5, after telling us how to be a good Christian, the Bible tells us that we need to sing with each other to help build each other up so we can serve our amazing God. Singing together builds us up.

What I saw in Costa Rica was just that. People coming together worshipping the one true God. Maybe we weren't always able to communicate through words, but, through the language of music, the Holy Spirit was able to transform hearts and minds and point many people to Jesus' love.

As I sang in the choir, my heart and soul were encouraged by seeing the confidence and boldness of fellow believers praising God in the streets and churches. I was also encouraged by the curious looks of others who must have wondered what in the world we were so excited about.

My constant prayer was that someone from our group was able to speak to them about Jesus' love for them. I spoke and prayed with a mother and daughter who shared with me that they don't experience people gathering in Jesus' name in San Jose. They were so blessed and thankful for the corporate worship opportunity.

I painted classrooms for Jesus! I was able to facetime the kids at Merge camp while they spoke about the importance of missions.

Church family, the power of the Holy Spirit moved, whether I was painting classrooms, singing, or praying. I am so humbled that God chose me to share His gospel through music. To God be the glory.

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**“Singing together builds us up. What I saw in Costa Rica was just that. People coming together worshipping the one true God.”**

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## Learn About Upcoming Trips

This year, more than seventy members of First Baptist Amarillo were able to be a part of an international trip, serving in a short-term capacity alongside our long-term partners. Want to learn more about joining a future trip? Join us for our fall interest meetings as we plan and prepare for the coming year.

*The latest information is available at [firstamarillo.org](http://firstamarillo.org).*

# Year After Year

## Lasting Impact in Lebanon

### SARAH MANCHEE

I've had the blessing of seeing some of the same kids multiple years in a row in Lebanon. It's been really cool to see some of those kids that we served in the past come back to serve alongside us as leaders and translators. This year, especially, was really great, because one of the girls that was in my small group the first year we went was able to come back as a leader.

I also want to share a story about one of the residential boys whom we've become really close to and grown to love more and more every year.

When we first arrived at Dar El Awlad (DEA) on Sunday afternoon to set up and decorate for a Vacation Bible School, the residential boys were thrilled to see us. They were running out to give us hugs, and they already knew us by name. We could see the lasting impact of the church's continuous support of DEA right then. Something special happened with one boy, in particular. He raced back up to his room to grab something to show us. For what it was, I was really impressed how quickly he found it.

When he returned, he was showing us a "Spark Studios" themed craft (the previous year's camp theme). It was a yellow foam prayer journal, made and given to him by a team member a year before. When he opened it up, we discovered that not only had he kept up with this Oriental Trading masterpiece for a year, but he had spent time writing personal notes to every single team member from our 2022 team – all with the hope

of getting to see us in person to share them with us again.

Additionally, from the time we arrived he loved showing me VBS song moves he remembered from 2022 and even back to 2019, four years ago. Honestly, I could barely remember those, so I don't know how he was able to remember them that well. He was also so eager to learn more songs and more scripture as he participated in the "Twists and Turns" VBS we had this year.

Seeing how he was able to remember God's Word through song so much time later showed me the lasting impact of our presence in Lebanon.

I also spent some time in conversation with Sarah



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“Thank you, church family,  
for continuing to equip people  
to send them out to fulfill the  
Great Commission.”

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Boucher, who is part of the missionary family from the U.S. and works with KidsAlive Lebanon. She said, “Churches like yours are rare. It’s not often that they find places like DEA and continue to come and support God’s work here year after year, but those that do help us leave a lasting impact on the kids they interact with.”

Thank you, church family, for your prayers to the Lord and for his children on the other side of the world, for continuing to equip people to send them out to fulfill the Great Commission, and for supporting mission work - both short and long term - in Amarillo and Lebanon and all over the world.



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# THE JOURNAL

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](http://www.firstamarillo.org)