



THE JOURNAL

Stories from the missions and ministry of First Baptist Church Amarillo

Spring Break in Mexico

Fifty Years of Ministry
at the Border

Christian Job Corps

Graduates Discover
New Beginnings

Auto Ministry

Providing Pieces
to the Puzzle

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Mexico

A Spring Break Tradition

• What began 50 years ago has found its mark in Ojinaga •

BY JON MARK BEILUE

A little more than 25 years ago, Anson Cagle found himself mingling with some inmates in an open area of a Mexican prison near the border town of Ojinaga, Chihuahua. On more than one occasion on the exploratory trip with First Baptist Church members J.V. Selman and Jeff Frazer, Cagle asked a question many others would have asked: What had he had gotten himself into?

They were sharing Christ with some of the inmates, with Frazer doing his best to translate into Spanish while Selman handed out tubes of toothpaste.

“Finally, we had happily made it past the front gate,” he said, “and then on to Presidio and back to Amarillo. But I think I shared the same opinion as the others: this just might work.” Minus the prison, of course.

It did work, and has worked for a long time. Each spring break in March, as they have for 25 years, vans full of FBC teams leave the church on a Saturday morning for the 500-mile trip to Presidio, Texas.

For the next five days, they stay in the fellowship hall at the Bautista Iglesia in Presidio. Each morning, they cross to the border town of Ojinaga (pop. 28,000) and then some 20 miles on hard-scrabble road to the barren village of Mulato.

Teams will lead Bible School at three schools separated by a few dirt road miles, working with young primary children, older elementary students, and those in middle school. There’s also a women’s ministry, painting and minor repairs, and a makeshift medical clinic led by Dr. Richard Bechtol and wife, Susan.





In the late afternoon, it's back to Ojinaga to Iglesia Bautista Bethel, or Bethel Baptist Church, and pastor Edmundo Valenzuela. After the school day, about 60 kids, from pre-school to early teens, flock to Bethel for two hours of Bible School. In addition, there's a women's class led by Ruth Baggett, and later a one-day pastor's conference led by her husband, Dr. Lee Baggett.

There are always minor tweaks and changes, but the heart of this trip has held true year after year after year.

"There's a consistency to it," said James Chaddick, who's been leading the mission team since 1994. "We're always meeting someone who's grown now, but was saved in one of our Backyard Bible Clubs.

"But no one else goes there [to these regions] any more. That's the big thing. There used to be other church groups that would come. But when all the violence started, they stopped coming. Not only did churches stop coming, but all the support dried up, too."

Roughing It 50 Years Ago

The roots of FBC's longest-serving mission trip go back a half-century to 1969.

That's when Charlie Dawson, at the request of a pastor friend in Marfa, Texas, took his three children and C.O. Sutton to Porvenir, a tiny community 145 miles northwest of Presidio along the border, to help build a church.

More men joined the next year when they served the village of Montoya, adjacent to Mulato. It was, in essence,

roughing it. Church members stayed in tents on the Texas side of the Rio Grande River, bathed in the river, and boated across for Bible School that was all outdoors.

Two were baptized that year in the Rio Grande. Dawson was presented with a stuffed iguana by the pastor at Montoya in appreciation.

In the ensuing years, the mission would take on various forms, including building a church in the Texas border town of Redford. Some years, college students would attend over Thanksgiving break. There were some years when no one went.

But it recharged in 1993 and 1994. At that time, FBC high school students had no mission trip. There was a ski trip in the winter, but no trip of service, none of mission.

High school teachers knew Selman had a history with Mexico, and he took Cagle and Frazer with him to Presidio and across the border to Ojinaga and Mulato. The stop at the prison... well, that was an unexpected detour.

So on March 12, 1994, the modern era of the Mexico mission trip began with 28 high school students and seven adult sponsors leaving from the Family Life Center parking lot for the Mexico border.

Steven Becker went with his daughter, Sara, a sophomore, in 2001. He has not stopped going since. R'Jana, his wife, has gone on 10 different trips.

"I thought I'd work it for a couple of years after Sara graduated, long enough so I'd have a week's worth

of T-shirts,” he said. “But I just kept going back. It has become a way of life each spring, making mission work a lifestyle.”

College Students Take the Lead

The number of participants who have gone has been as high as 85. That was when it was just high school students. Drug violence in Mexico escalated about 10 years ago and had church staff evaluating the safety of minors in that country. Three different times, church members stayed on the Texas side and worked in Presidio.

In 2015, high school students changed spring break trips, first to Shreveport, and now in the inner city of Phoenix. That year, college students joined with adults. The numbers now are smaller, in the 30s, but each year in mid-March, they are there. Their presence is felt.

“The first year we didn’t cross, we said we’d be back the next year,” Chaddick said. “They said, ‘No, you won’t. Nobody comes back.’ Those years we didn’t cross (2009, 2012-2013), when we’d come back, they remembered – ‘Hey, you didn’t cross last year.’”

Adults will show up on the dirt streets in front of Bethel Baptist with old Polaroid pictures of them taken as children when they were in Bible School. But the impact of the mission trip, like just about all mission trips, is also on those who serve.

“First, I see students, high school and now college, who learn to love somebody from a different culture and share their testimony,” Chaddick said. “They learn how to love others with the love of Christ. You see that in the last Thursday service and how emotional it is for everybody.

“The other thing is encouraging the people there, for them to see what it’s like for Edmundo to drop to his knees in the dirt and students gather around and pray for him – that’s powerful.”

Chaddick and Becker travel to Ojinaga every January to assess needs, note changes, get feedback for the trip

in two months. Chaddick comes back annually with 10 pages of notes.

Through the Angel Tree at Christmas, church members annually purchase gifts for 600 needy children. About 180 of those go to the children in Ojinaga and Mulato.

In 2014, Chaddick pulled out his records over the years and totaled 460 different students and adults who have gone to Mexico. Five years later, that total likely is more than 500.

One of those adults was Pam Beckham. While on the trip in 2018, she later said, she thought she was coming down with a bug, though she did not complain. It was not long after her return that she received a much more serious diagnosis of cancer.



Pam died nearly a year later on March 10, 2019, the first full day of the Mexico mission trip in this the 50th year. Her memorial service was on March 13, and the Mexico group held a prayer service at the same time in the secondary school.

“Mexico was like a deep current running through her life – not on the surface all the time, but always something she thought about and loved,” said James Beckham, her husband.

She cooked a meal or two for the group, enjoyed the camaraderie and getting dirty for a good cause, James said. But she loved the construction and painting, especially with Anson Cagle.

Pam was involved in numerous causes and had varied interests, but James and their two daughters decided memorials should go to the Mexico mission.

“We knew that Pam would have loved that,” James said, “and the trip would receive additional support in her honor.”



2020 Mexico Missions

The Mexico mission team is currently forming for this Spring Break's trip, March 14-20. There are all kinds of ways to serve. The group will again stay in Presidio, TX and minister daily in Ojinaga, Mulato, and Palomas, Mexico, with backyard Bible club, youth, and women's ministries.

If you'd like to be a part of this trip, contact our church office. The first training date is February 9th, and the cost is \$225 for adults and \$125 for students.

2020 MISSION TRIPS

Mexico | March 14 - 20

Hungary | June 24 - July 5

Lebanon | July 17 - 25

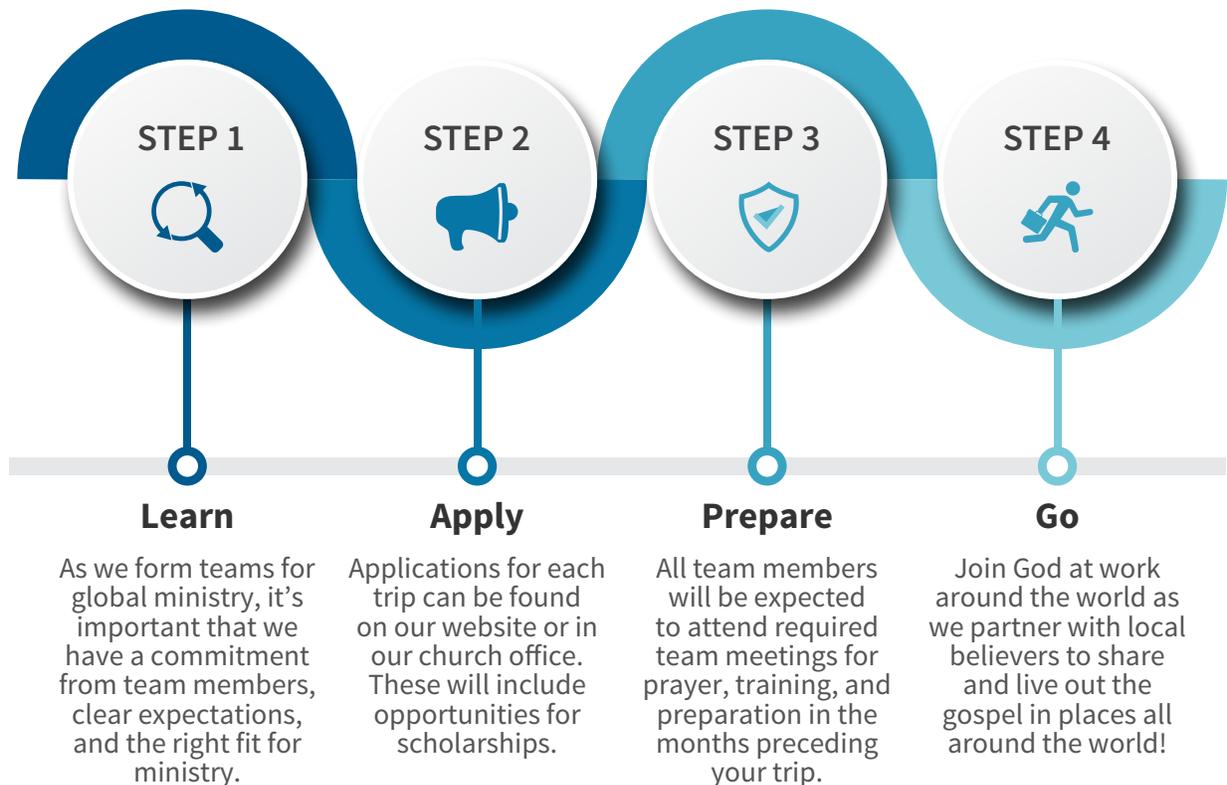
Guatemala | July 24 - August 1

Lesotho | October 2020

How To Go

We encourage members of First Baptist Church to participate in the global mission of God. To make that possible, we partner with church plants, missions organizations, and other ministries to serve through short-term mission trips. These trips are made possible and effective through the faithful giving and continual prayers of our people. We are all called to be involved. 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. If you're expecting to be a part of an international trip, you should acquire a passport and follow these simple steps:





Christian Job Corps New Beginnings

BY JORDAN WASHER

September 2019

It's a Tuesday morning around 9:00AM. I've just dropped my youngest daughter off at her Mother's Day Out class at First Baptist Church, where she is loved on and encouraged to excel, have fun and use her imagination. Downstairs in Room 101 a dozen other women - moms, daughters, grandmothers - meet for a session of Christian Job Corps, seeking to prepare for the GED, acquire job skills, and ultimately get out of a life of difficulty and distress.

The teacher is having the ladies call out "lanes you get stuck in." "Homelessness," "Addiction," "Anger," "Unforgiveness," "Discouragement," "Felonies." While I can relate to a couple of these, there are a few that I myself have never had to deal with. I am suddenly overwhelmed with a mix of gratefulness and embarrassment at my lack of gratitude for all I have been given.

I sit here in this class with a high school diploma and a bachelor's degree. While these accomplishments have allowed me to hold multiple jobs as an adult, I am now lucky enough to have the privilege of being a stay-at-home mom while my loving husband is at a job making a living for our family. These are blessings to be thankful for, but also blessings and experiences that many of the women in this room have not experienced. How truly grateful am I? How often do I take my lifestyle for granted? And how willing am I to come along side these women through prayer and encouragement?

For Jeri, mother of eight and a high-school dropout, the circumstances I'm so used to would absolutely change her life for the better. She said her kids occasionally attend First Baptist Church with their uncle, and she herself attends another church when she can. However, life at home is chaotic, to say the least. She is currently going through a marriage separation





and is overwhelmed with the responsibilities and work it takes to be a mom to six children who still live under her roof.

“I deal with anxiety and depression a lot,” Jeri shared. “With going through a separation and my lifestyle right now, I’m trying to make it a little better. I plan to take the GED and get my education so I can show proof to my kids, ‘if I can do it, you can do it.’ Especially the ones in high school who want to give up on things. No, you’re not going to give up. If I can’t give up, then you can’t give up.”

She learned about Christian Job Corps through Amarillo’s director, Kim Zimmer.

“When my kids got baptized, I met Kim, and she’s been trying to get me

to take these classes for a couple of years, and I’ve just been pushing it back. Finally, I decided, you know, I’m just going to do something positive with my life and just jump in it.”

Christian Job Corps is a 10-week program for both women and men. Those in the program take classes such as money management, health and nutrition, high school equivalency diploma preparation, as well as practice mock interviews, work on their resume, and attend a Bible study. They complete a total of 140 hours of coursework throughout the program.

Jeri is 3 weeks into the program and is looking to make a big change in her life.

“I haven’t had a job in twelve years. I’m a stay-at-home mom. My husband always did the working and wanted me to stay home. It’s just going to be something different, but I want to be independent again and do that for myself. I just want my life to be different.”

“I feel like I’ve gotten closer with God. I hope they see a change.”



November 2019

Seven weeks later on a Wednesday evening, the Christian Job Corps Graduation is finally here. I have been praying for Jeri since I met her back in September, not only for the Lord to work in her life, but for her to complete the Christian Job Corps program. It is amazing how God works because three days prior, I ran into Kim Zimmer at First Baptist Church. I asked her how Jeri was doing in the program because I planned to speak to her at graduation. Kim shared with me that not only would she be graduating, but Jeri would also be sharing her testimony at the ceremony!

I found Jeri downstairs in Room 101, where we met seven weeks before. She was nervous about her testimony, but excitedly claimed she was going to “rock it.”



“I have never been more proud of the goals I have set up for myself.”

“I’m glad that I achieved my goals,” Jeri added. “I had set so many goals, and I achieved this one, which was one of my biggest ones.”

Jeri’s kids, mom, sisters, as well as other family members, were all waiting in the sanctuary to celebrate her accomplishment.



“I feel like I’ve gotten closer with God. I hope they see a change - a happier person, less depression, less anxiety.”

Kim Zimmer opened up the graduation ceremony with an encouraging word to the graduates: “God shows up every Monday and Tuesday, and He does big things, and He does little things. So while, yes, it is a celebration of your success and finishing this program, this really is a celebration of our God who loves us enough to find you wherever you are, whether it be through Facebook, through a letter in prison, or on the streets, and he sees you and he has a plan for you, and so this evening is to celebrate all that He has done.”

The Christian Job Corps program not only prepares the participants for the workplace, but sets them on a path in seeking the Lord in every area of their lives.

Jeri shared a wonderful testimony about her experience with Christian Job Corps. “It has opened up doors for me to new and better things. I am no longer afraid to get out of my comfort zone. I have never been more proud of the goals I have set up for myself, and I’m looking forward to my future as I have come a long way. I no longer doubt

myself. I no longer feel depression or anxiety as God has lifted it all off my shoulders and opened up a new beginning for me as I walk with Christ.”

As I listened to Jeri’s testimony, I felt like, in a very small way, I played a part in her journey through Christian Job Corps. But do I stop there and go on my way? Or do I find a way to volunteer my time and effort to both men’s and women’s Christian Job Corps in another facet? Will I pray for not only the participants, but for the director, Kim Zimmer, and the many teachers and mentors who daily walk through the program with those in it? Will I volunteer to provide breakfast, snacks or lunch, which the participants receive every Monday and Tuesday? Or will I settle back into my own life of comfort and forget about those who may have taken, by their own choice or not, another path in life than I?

Trevor Brown, Associate Pastor at First Baptist, concluded the evening’s graduation ceremony with a convicting and encouraging reminder for those in Jeri’s shoes as well as my own: “What a gift to hear the graduates’ stories and to be reminded that at the foot of the cross each of us receives endless second chances and countless new beginnings.”



Fall 2019 CJC Graduates

WANT TO SERVE?

Each semester the Christian Job Corp of Amarillo program welcomes a new class of men and women to be equipped for life and employment in a Christian context. Mentors, teachers, and volunteers are vital to meeting this goal. If you can serve as a part of the next session, email cjcofama@gmail.com or contact our church office.

Trusting God In Lesotho

BY SARAH STEVENS

In October of 2019, John and Angie Graves, my husband, Mikal, and I had the opportunity to travel to Lesotho, Africa, to serve with missionaries Stan and Angie Burleson. Our team hosted multiple Vacation Bible Schools, led adult discipleship, taught a women's Bible study, and sang way too many rounds of The Hokey Pokey.

While we were planning and preparing for the trip, I felt that God began consistently asking me, "Do you trust me?" Admittedly, that made me a little nervous because typically when God asks you to trust Him, things aren't going to go as you've planned. So, I spent most of the trip waiting for things to fall apart. But they never did. Both going and coming back, flights were on time, and all of our bags made it. We all stayed relatively healthy. Even when we'd planned on 75 for VBS and 175 showed up each day, nothing fell apart.

It wasn't until I returned home that I realized God asking if I trusted Him was meant for how I processed and reflected on what we'd experienced.



During our trip, Lesotho was in a horrible drought. The water was the lowest it's ever been. All but one of the villages we visited were without water and didn't know the next time they'd have water. While recent rains have brought some relief, it continues to be a struggle.

Women and children are abused in various ways. One in three is HIV positive. Witch doctors and ancestor worship have often captured the hearts and attention of the people, and the presence of spiritual darkness is almost tangible.

“Do you trust me?”

God continued to ask me this question as I returned home with a new love and deep concern for the Basotho.

The problems facing the Basotho seem bigger than the mountains on which they live, but how incredible to know that our God is even bigger.

The same God who calms the storms is the same God who we can trust to provide the storms when our lands are dry. The same God who leaves the ninety-nine to find the

one is climbing the mountains of Lesotho to bring life to not just the land but the hearts of the Basotho.

How foolish am I to think that God isn't big enough to be all we need and to provide all we ask for? How foolish am I to think that despair and suffering in the Lesotho mountains means there is no hope?

I fully trust God to continue His work in Lesotho. I'm so thankful that God is bigger than what the Basotho are facing (and what each of us are facing in our own lives), and I'm thankful to have been a small part of reaching those ends of the earth for Christ's sake.



Auto Ministry Provides Pieces to the Puzzle

BY JON MARK BEILUE

The details of Dominic Head's recent life story are uniquely his own, but the big picture need is similar to many who have been recipients of First Baptist Church's Auto Ministry.

"It's been a huge enabler in my life in multiple ways," said Head, 24, of his 23-year-old Chevy Silverado truck.

The woman who lives in North Heights and who often walked four to five miles to her job with Baptist Community Services would echo that. So, too, would the woman in San Jacinto who, when missing the bus, walked to work at the Civic Center and, in September, walked to the Tri-State Fairgrounds for a second job.

Then there is the man who works polishing floors and other maintenance duties at the Salvation Army. Recently released from one of the local prison units, his walk is not far, but he now has transportation to see his daughter in Houston for the first time since before he was incarcerated.



Then there was the family of four whom church member Walter Wolfram encountered. They were homeless. He set them up in a hotel for five days and after that, they were able to live in Faith City Mission's family unit. The father is a licensed fork-lift operator.

Those with the Auto Ministry soon met him, talked with him, went over the modest requirements needed for a vehicle, and told him of the love of Jesus in the process.

"When we gave him a car, it changed that guy's life," said Don Judd. "You begin to take them out of poverty. You never realize how important something like this is until you deal with people like that.

"When you say to them, 'This is your car, it's registered to you and no balance is due,' just seeing the raw emotion on their face is something you cannot believe."

The Auto Ministry will be two years old in January. In 24 months, it has provided more than 80 vehicles to those in need. That's more than three a month for what is a hand up in their often dire situations, a springboard to jump them into a newer and better way of life.

No car can mean no job, difficult access to places like a grocery store or health clinics, and battling the elements to get from point A to point B in the cold months.

Donors Are 'Real Heroes'

Judd, who spent much of his life in the car business, lived in Amarillo from 1964 until 1990. He moved back to Amarillo from the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex in 2016. He brought back with him an idea.

A car dealer friend in Garland started an auto ministry at a church there, and the need and success were immediate. What about a similar ministry through First Baptist Church? With the support of church staff, Judd enlisted the help of friends Don Babcock and Gary Gilley.



Auto ministry volunteers (from left) Don Babcock, Don Judd, and Gary Gilley have helped facilitate a Silverado truck for Dominic Head, one of about 80 they have helped provide over the two years of the ministry.

“And it did not take long at all to get rolling,” Judd said, “which told us how much of a need there was out there.”

There is a need. But what about the supply? Vehicles need to match the recipients. Donors have been plentiful.

“These are the real heroes, the ones who have stepped up and given us cars,” Judd said. “It’s not about us three at all. If not for donors stepping up, where would we be?”

Donations come from varying situations: seniors entering assisted living facilities with now no need of a car; a family instead of a trade-in for a newer vehicle makes a donation; the couple with two cars that believe they can get by with just one. You name it.

“It’s people who are just unselfishly giving,” Judd said. “They are the ones making a difference.”

“If I hadn’t gotten this vehicle, I don’t know what the final outcome with me and my job would have been. The truck is a piece of the puzzle, a pretty large piece.”

Most vehicles need repair. They are taken to a nearby auto shop for any needed brake work, tune-up, air/heating work, the basics of a properly running vehicle. Tires are also examined. Some vehicles the ministry receives are sold at auction, and that money goes into a ministry fund.

“We don’t want them to get 30 feet down the highway and have it break down,” Judd said.

A Gift Bigger Than Us

The church office keeps a list of potential recipients. They are often single mothers, older teens aging out of the foster system, homeless veterans.

Judd, Babcock, and Gilley meet almost weekly with candidates, where among other things, they want to make sure the recipients are not going to immediately sell the car. There are three requirements for a vehicle:

A driver’s license, liability insurance (where church member Clark Damon provides an inexpensive policy), and payment for registration and any repairs, which usually are between \$500 and \$600, though that can be worked out.

“We feel it’s important they have some ‘skin in the game,’” Babcock said.

It differs from buying a car from a dealer. They talk to the recipient about his or her life, hope for the future, and ask about a relationship with Jesus.

“They need to understand that this gift is bigger than any of us,” Judd said, “that we’re just instruments of God’s grace.”



The truck for Dominic Head, 24, has made getting to his job and college classes manageable.



Dominic Head is from Albuquerque, but was arrested passing through Amarillo in December 2017 while transporting illegal drugs. He received probation, but that didn't end his problems.

Judd said that Head had little home life in New Mexico. He'd never received a birthday card. Never received a Christmas present. Really, he had nowhere to turn.

But he was able to live at Faith City Mission. While there, he would graduate from Hope for Men discipleship program. He also got a job with City Machine and Welding on Soncy Street. He was able to get rides much of the time to get across the city.

Head began to attend a local church. Parents of a friend there knew Judd and of the auto ministry. In March 2019, Head met the committee. He got a driver's license and insurance. He first got a Toyota, but the rings wore out. He then received the 1996 Silverado with 131,000 miles.

In mid-November, Head was preparing to move into an apartment off Paramount Street.

"Where I'm at now is completely different than where I was before," said Head, who often eats dinner and then attends Wednesday night prayer meeting at FBC. "I previously would have thought this was impossible.

"I have a lot of financial worry relieved from me. If I hadn't gotten this vehicle, I don't know what the final outcome with me and my job would have been. The truck is a piece of the puzzle, a pretty large piece. It's another step in God's plan for me. I think I was kind of brought here."

Vehicles and More

To continue to meet the transportation needs of our community, this ministry has expanded to include not only vehicles, but bicycles, as well. If you'd like to donate a used car or bike, please contact the church office for more information.

First Baptist Church Amarillo
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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

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