



THE JOURNAL

Stories from the missions and ministry of First Baptist Church Amarillo

Virtual VBS

Modified Children's Programs
Continue to Build a Firm
Foundation

Weekly Broadcasts Take Center Stage

TV and Media Ministries Serve
Amarillo and Beyond

SALT Ministry

New Missions Group Equips
Young Women to Serve

In This Issue

03

Virtual VBS

Modified children's programs continue to build a firm foundation

06

Weekly Broadcasts Take Center Stage

Adding to 60 years of ministry, media team plays a vital role

10

A Hallelujah Chorus For Virtual Choir

An Easter anthem comes together by video

14

SALT

Equipping young women to impact their community and world

19

Grateful For Your Giving

Dozens of partners worldwide are blessed by your generosity



VIRTUAL VBS

We were reminded of God's great faithfulness, and that where He leads, He provides.

**CLIFF CARY
SARAH STEVENS
ELAINE CLARK**

“So what is Virtual VBS?”

When the decision was made to shift from traditional VBS to Virtual VBS, we really didn't have an answer to that question. However, we strongly felt God's call to continue FBC Amarillo's long-standing tradition of providing Vacation Bible School and knew that going virtual was the best chance we had to connect with kids and families.

Virtual VBS presented many unknowns and new challenges. We quickly realized that we needed

help creating a vision for a VBS unlike any other and began recruiting a Planning Team. (We are so thankful they agreed to our desperate plea that sorely lacked any meaningful details. “VBS is going virtual. We don't know what that means or how we do that. Can you help?”)

Through countless brainstorming sessions, emails, and conversations, our team began answering the big question, “How can we take what happens on campus into the homes of families in our community?” As we narrowed down our ideas and





1,028
children

options, we decided to offer a take-home component in addition to an online component.

The take-home component included two items. Each family who registered would receive a Family Pack box containing a daily family devotion, conversation starters, games, and a small snack for the whole family. Each child who registered would receive a Kid's Pack containing daily crafts, activities, and a 'ticket' for a daily prize giveaway.

The online component included daily Worship Rally (livestreamed from the FBC sanctuary), age-specific Bible story videos, puppets videos, and an interactive Family Game Night.

More than 120 FBC volunteers

organized crafts, labeled bags, filled 480 Family Pack boxes, prepared 1,200 Kid's Packs, recorded 21 Bible stories & puppets videos, passed out popsicles and Family/Kid's Packs at a drive-thru event, and collected cans for our mission project.

Virtual VBS took place July 27-30. 1,028 children were enrolled, representing 434 families. Of those families, more than 50 indicated that they did not have a church home.

The first morning of Virtual

VBS was filled with the same anticipation and excitement as past years, though there were brief moments of heartache as we looked into a nearly empty sanctuary that should have been filled with kids' smiling faces. However, as families began sending us pictures of their children putting together crafts, watching online Bible stories, and singing along during Worship Rally, we knew that Virtual VBS was reaching families at home.

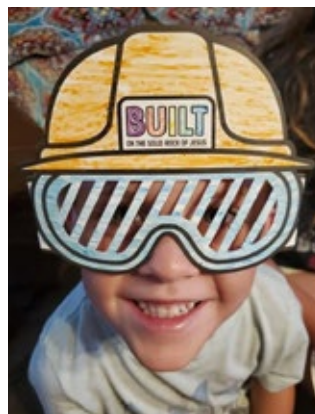
Every step of the way was, undeniably, paved with God's provision and grace. Through

**Every step of the way was,
undeniably, paved with
God's provision and grace.**





Virtual VBS, we were reminded of God's great faithfulness, and that, where He leads, He provides. Thank you, Church Family, for loving our children and families and for the constant support and prayers you give. It is a blessing to serve alongside you as we reach our community for Christ.



434
families



Weekly Broadcasts Take Center Stage

After more than 60 years of live television broadcasts, volunteers continue to share weekly worship with the Panhandle and the world.

By JON MARK BEILUE

It was just a few seconds past 8:30 a.m. on a Sunday morning in late June. Dan Baker, minister of music, opened the worship service with “Know My Heart.” The congregation, smaller and spread out because of the COVID-19 pandemic, sang in a quiet reverential tone.

The opening song was one that promoted peace and reflection. But not everywhere.

“Stand by 5...4, pick some one out and do a full back...Stand by 5, start your move. You caught me in between she’s not doing anything...Easy 4, good



FBC's weekly broadcast and livestream volunteers after morning worship.

move 4. Start your move 5, easy 5...2 on podium, coming to 8...Get the whole choir, the whole choir... Come to 5, stand by 2."

That was just during the first three verses.

In a booth in the northeast corner of the church sanctuary, accessible only by stairs in the crow's nest of the balcony and visible as only a dark window for those looking for it, is the nerve center of the TV ministry at First Baptist Church that is at least 60 years old and counting.

About a dozen church members – all volunteers – have a hand in presenting the service to television viewers in a 200-mile radius of the Panhandle. Now with

online streaming avenues, viewers to the broadcast can be traced from California to the Carolinas. If worshippers can't come to the sanctuary, the sanctuary can come to them.

"Our responsibility is to help Howie (Batson) and the church to convey the message that Christ has laid on Howie, and present that in a respectful way so that, hopefully, others understand and are interested in learning more about Christ," said director Shan Phillips.

"After Robby's announcements, Kathryn's coming up for a solo, and she's singing off-center, so we need Camera 2 on her..."

In the booth on this June 28

Sunday are five – Phillips, whose steady voice is heard by cameramen in the sanctuary; co-director Bill Pair, involved in the TV ministry since 1972; Mikal Stevens, minister of media and communications; Randy Hopper and Noah Sawyer, a recent Amarillo High graduate who has volunteered since he was 14 years old.

There are at least 16 screens and monitors of various sizes, all of them there for a reason except to the untrained eye. On the wall near the entrance of the booth, as it has been for years, is a sheet of paper with the "Director's Prayer" on it. It's believed to have come from longtime director Jack Young:



"I want to thank you, Lord, for being close to me so far this day. With your help, I have not been impatient, lost my temper, been grumpy, or judgmental to anyone. But we will be going live in five minutes, and I think we will really need your help then. Amen."

Yes, it is live. The 8:30 a.m. broadcast is carried live on KZBZ, cable channel 6. It is then rebroadcast at 10 a.m. on KFDA, channel 10 and cable channel 12. The partnership with KFDA goes back to at least 1960, the second year of the pastorate of Dr. Winfred Moore.

"I've had to defend that time slot to CBS for many years," said KFDA general manager Brent McClure. "But our ownership gives us full support. The service is a legacy in our community and serves so many. We appreciate the partnership with First Baptist."

"OK, Anna is going to read from Luke 7. We'll go to 4 when she's done...4, get Howie coming up from the pew for Pastor's Pals...A little tighter...Perfect... Come to 5, oops, he's drinking coffee. Must have got used to that watching from home...You're shooting Brent Clark, and that's not a good idea. You know I'm kidding."

The technicalities of shooting a live service were rudimentary in 1960 compared to today. It was almost rudimentary as late as 2013 when the switch was made from analogue to digital.

There are eight available cameras with at least five used all the time. Camera 4, balcony on piano side and Camera 5, opposite side of balcony on the organ



side, require volunteer cameramen.

The other cameras are remote – 1 closest to the piano, 2 in the center of the sanctuary under the balcony, and 3 under the balcony pointed to the organ. There are others positioned in the grill behind the choir, in the crow's nest by the organ pipes, and a Go Pro camera on the floor near the front that often brings organist David Lowe's feet into Panhandle living rooms.

"I'm the one switching cameras and changing angles," Phillips said, "and I've called on the wrong camera before. I'm planning out our shots two to three shots in advance, and then you have to move on the fly and bail out of a camera shot like if you're showing a young kid and he starts to yawn or is chewing gum."

WHERE TO WATCH

Today, FBC's weekly worship livestream can be found on our website (firstamarillo.org) and Facebook every Sunday. The live broadcast can be viewed on cable television at 8:30AM on KFDA/KZBZ & 10TOO 10.2 Cable Channel 6. A replay of the morning service airs at 10:00AM on KFDA Channel 10 or Cable Channel 1.

Experience is an effective teacher. To paraphrase, this is not their first Baptist rodeo. There are many years among the volunteers. Pair, a co-director, is nearing his 50th year. Each Thursday, he works up the graphics ahead of time, typing in the scripture reading for that Sunday among his graphic duties.

Stan Austin, on Camera 4, has been with the TV ministry since 1972 as a 14-year-old. Only brief moves to Pampa and Lubbock during the span interrupted 48 years.

“Why do people keep teaching Sunday School? It’s their ministry,” Austin said. “I’ve never thought of quitting. It’s just my ministry. It’s what I do. I never felt called to teach, but I always felt like I’m halfway decent at this.”

The goal of the broadcast: to make the viewers feel as if they are sitting in a cushioned pew six rows from the front.

“Unlike edited broadcasts, the live, raw production at First Baptist hopes to offer our viewers a more realistic experience,” said Dr. Howard Batson, FBC pastor who can view a monitor either on the first pew or on the floor in front of him. “What you experience on television is actually happening in the room. Too many times polished church broadcasts come across

as plastic and perfect. Our service, hopefully, is warm and personal.”

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many more eyes to the broadcast as the public looked for an anchor, a reason for renewed hope in times of uncertainty. Some may have only discovered the televised service in 2020. But for many others, it’s been a Sunday staple, a timeless tradition on a Sabbath morn through six decades.


“The broadcast has made First Baptist everybody’s church,” Dr. Batson said. “Through our broadcast, we are joined by Methodists, Presbyterians and folks from various backgrounds throughout the broadcast area.

“Our church staff rarely goes into a restaurant or retail establishment without being told, ‘You don’t know me, but I know you, and I watch First Baptist every week.’ Through the years, we have become the community’s church, everybody’s backup when they have to stay at home. Now, with social media, the limitations of geography have evaporated. We have an opportunity to make the world our audience.”

“Robby promised not to say anything silly this time. You know it made the air last week. Yeah, both times.”



Want to serve with our media team?
Contact Mikal Stevens at mikal@firstamarillo.org



A Hallelujah Chorus For Virtual Choir

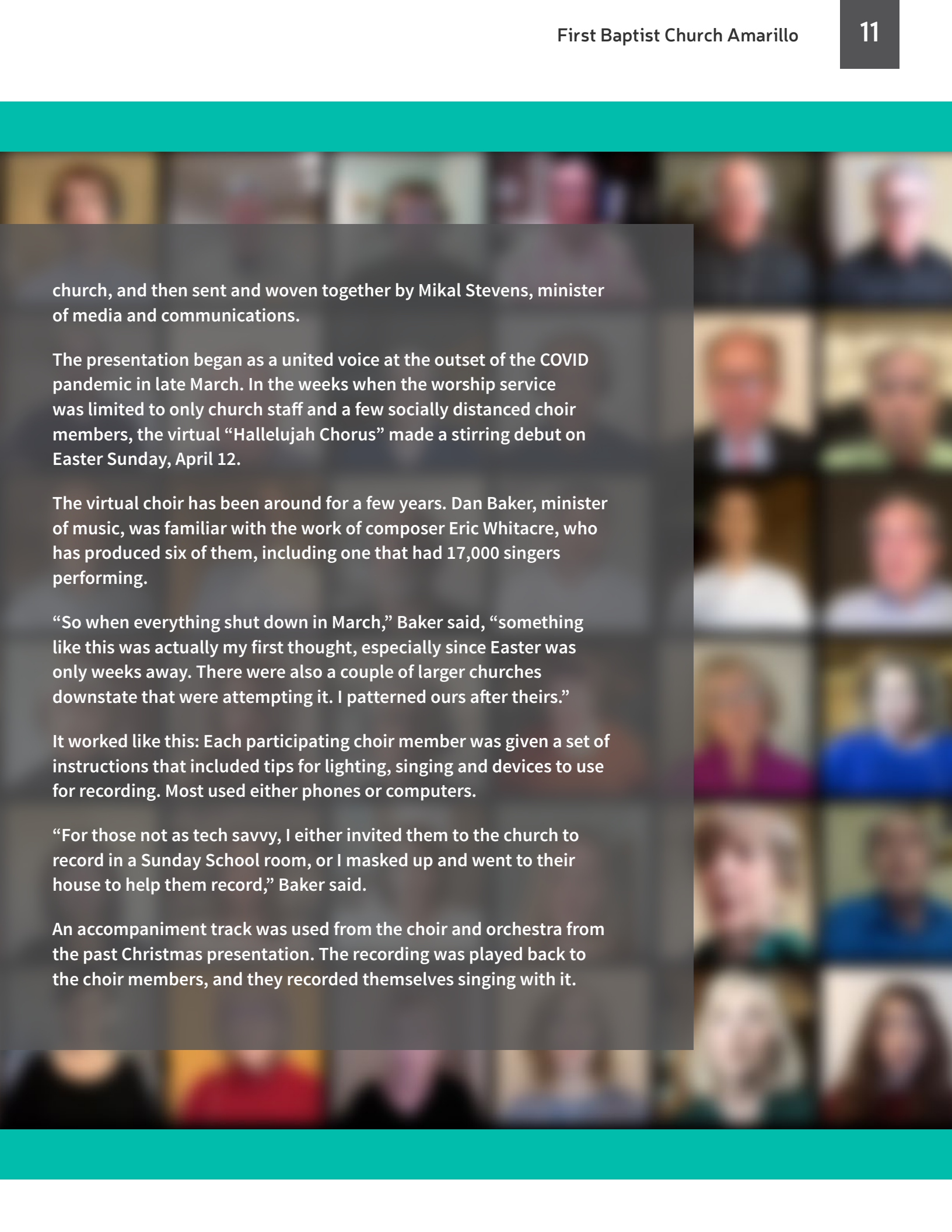
BY JON MARK BEILUE

The moment was a blending of history, technology and a musical message delivered in a way that spoke to the times with words that are timeless.

“The Hallelujah Chorus” has been a staple – a fitting climactic ending -- for years at the conclusion of the Christmas presentation each December by the choirs of First Baptist Church. But the one performed by 72 members in the spring was unique, an historical achievement in the 131 years of the church.

“It was like the rug had kind of been pulled out from under us in our mode of worship,” said Debbie Skinner, choir president. “It shut the door to our church, but it didn’t shut the door to the praise of the Lord.”

It was a 3- minute, 58-second video of the masterpiece from Handel’s “Messiah,” written in 1741. This was a virtual performance, 72 separate video solos by choir members in their homes or at the



church, and then sent and woven together by Mikal Stevens, minister of media and communications.

The presentation began as a united voice at the outset of the COVID pandemic in late March. In the weeks when the worship service was limited to only church staff and a few socially distanced choir members, the virtual “Hallelujah Chorus” made a stirring debut on Easter Sunday, April 12.

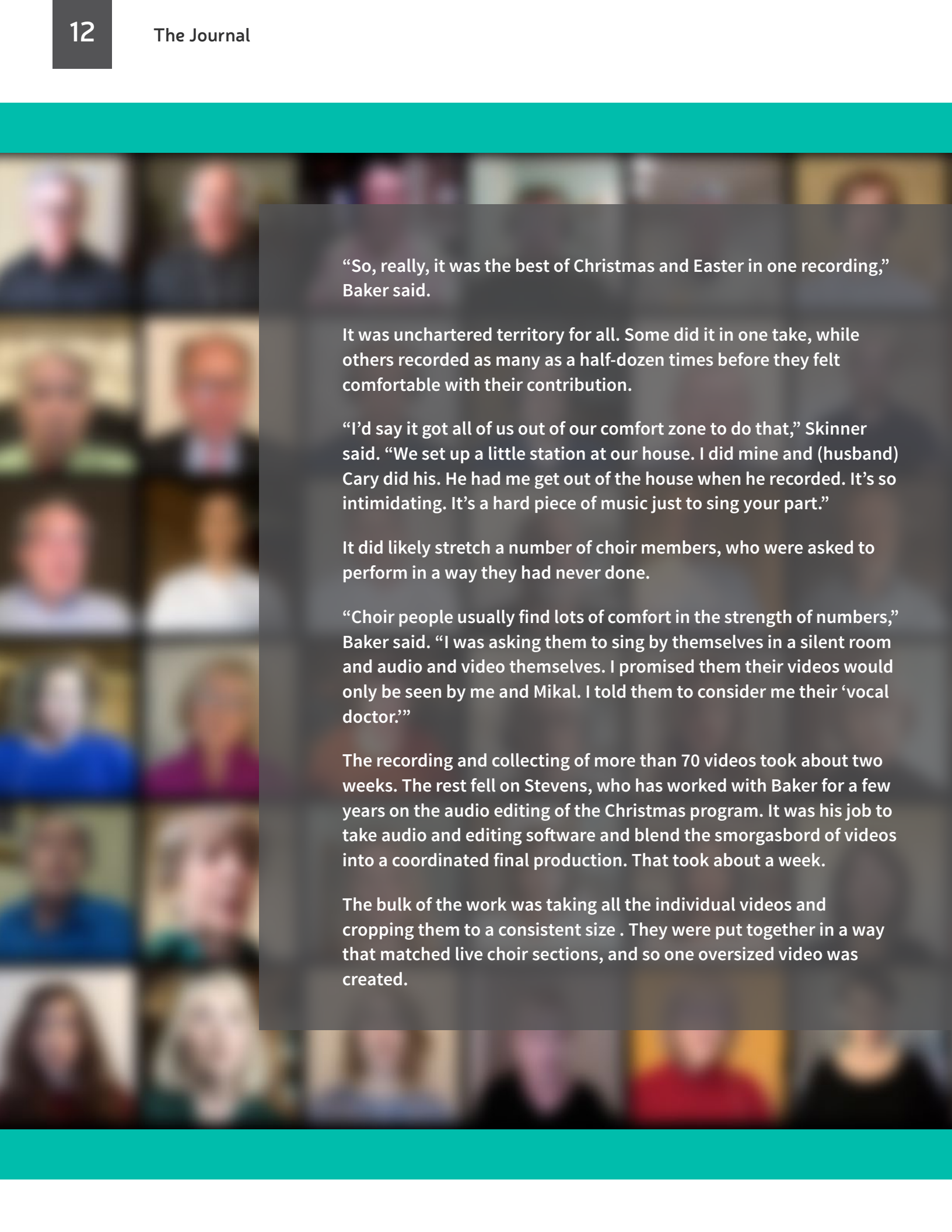
The virtual choir has been around for a few years. Dan Baker, minister of music, was familiar with the work of composer Eric Whitacre, who has produced six of them, including one that had 17,000 singers performing.

“So when everything shut down in March,” Baker said, “something like this was actually my first thought, especially since Easter was only weeks away. There were also a couple of larger churches downstate that were attempting it. I patterned ours after theirs.”

It worked like this: Each participating choir member was given a set of instructions that included tips for lighting, singing and devices to use for recording. Most used either phones or computers.

“For those not as tech savvy, I either invited them to the church to record in a Sunday School room, or I masked up and went to their house to help them record,” Baker said.

An accompaniment track was used from the choir and orchestra from the past Christmas presentation. The recording was played back to the choir members, and they recorded themselves singing with it.



“So, really, it was the best of Christmas and Easter in one recording,” Baker said.

It was uncharted territory for all. Some did it in one take, while others recorded as many as a half-dozen times before they felt comfortable with their contribution.

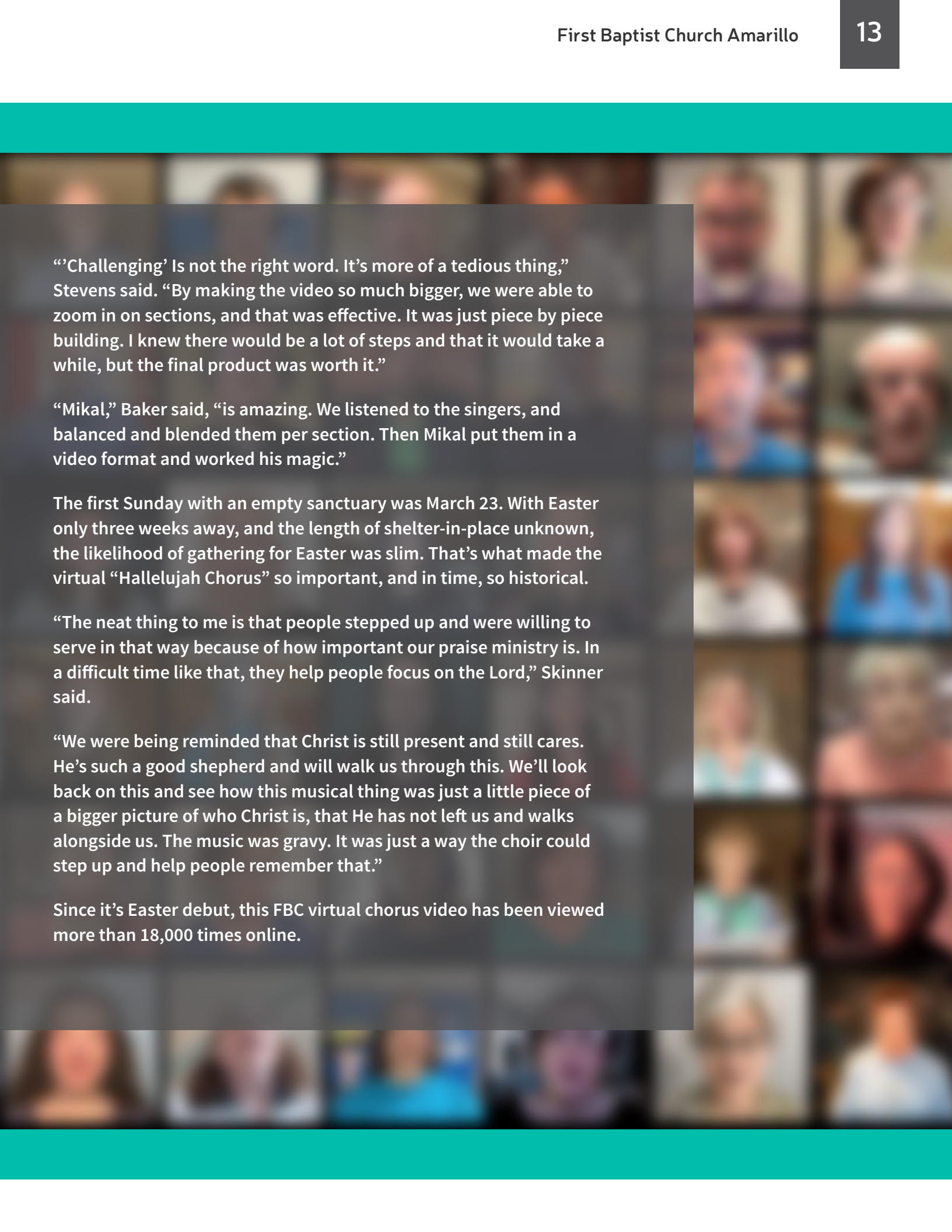
“I’d say it got all of us out of our comfort zone to do that,” Skinner said. “We set up a little station at our house. I did mine and (husband) Cary did his. He had me get out of the house when he recorded. It’s so intimidating. It’s a hard piece of music just to sing your part.”

It did likely stretch a number of choir members, who were asked to perform in a way they had never done.

“Choir people usually find lots of comfort in the strength of numbers,” Baker said. “I was asking them to sing by themselves in a silent room and audio and video themselves. I promised them their videos would only be seen by me and Mikal. I told them to consider me their ‘vocal doctor.’”

The recording and collecting of more than 70 videos took about two weeks. The rest fell on Stevens, who has worked with Baker for a few years on the audio editing of the Christmas program. It was his job to take audio and editing software and blend the smorgasbord of videos into a coordinated final production. That took about a week.

The bulk of the work was taking all the individual videos and cropping them to a consistent size. They were put together in a way that matched live choir sections, and so one oversized video was created.



“‘Challenging’ is not the right word. It’s more of a tedious thing,” Stevens said. “By making the video so much bigger, we were able to zoom in on sections, and that was effective. It was just piece by piece building. I knew there would be a lot of steps and that it would take a while, but the final product was worth it.”

“Mikal,” Baker said, “is amazing. We listened to the singers, and balanced and blended them per section. Then Mikal put them in a video format and worked his magic.”

The first Sunday with an empty sanctuary was March 23. With Easter only three weeks away, and the length of shelter-in-place unknown, the likelihood of gathering for Easter was slim. That’s what made the virtual “Hallelujah Chorus” so important, and in time, so historical.

“The neat thing to me is that people stepped up and were willing to serve in that way because of how important our praise ministry is. In a difficult time like that, they help people focus on the Lord,” Skinner said.

“We were being reminded that Christ is still present and still cares. He’s such a good shepherd and will walk us through this. We’ll look back on this and see how this musical thing was just a little piece of a bigger picture of who Christ is, that He has not left us and walks alongside us. The music was gravy. It was just a way the choir could step up and help people remember that.”

Since it’s Easter debut, this FBC virtual chorus video has been viewed more than 18,000 times online.

SALT

Equipping Young Adult Women To Impact Their Community And World

BY TRENNIS HENDERSON, WMU National Correspondent

Kristi Moore has vivid memories of growing up in Mission Friends, Girls in Action, and Acteens at her home church of First Baptist, Amarillo, Texas.

Those experiences “really immersed me into this missions atmosphere,” she said, crediting her involvement in Woman’s Missionary Union-related programs with “creating and molding my heart to love missions and to love service in the community.”

When she moved back to Amarillo after college, Moore longed to be part of WMU again, but there wasn’t a missions group option available at First Baptist for her young adult age group.

Members of SALT, write notes of encouragement to college students leaving for a mission trip.



As a former National Acteens Panelist, a dream was born to help start a young women's WMU group, but her plan didn't materialize right away. Instead, she put her energy into volunteering with high school Acteens on Wednesday nights. After getting married and becoming a mom, she shifted to teaching first grade GAs.

But her dream persisted. Eight years later, "I still felt God whispering like, 'Kristi, you need to start this younger WMU group,' and then I heard Him get a little louder in my head," she said. By the summer of 2019, "He was really just shouting at me," she admitted.

Contacting Angie Graves, First Baptist's WMU director, Moore recalled, "I told her I felt like God was leading me down this road, and she was just ecstatic.

And it was really easy from that point on. The church was ecstatic that someone was leading this up. And they basically said, 'Whatever you need, we will do.' So we just started pretty fast. We really started planning in August, and then our first meeting was a few months after that."

Graves said identifying someone to organize such a group "has been my prayer since becoming director because there was a gap" in actively involving that age group in missions support and discipleship.

"I think it will help these young women get a better understanding of what other people are going through," Graves said. "It can also help them be more intentional about teaching their children about how they can help others and how they can be a missionary in their own hometown."



Kristi Moore, leader of FBC's SALT group

WMU photos by Pam Henderson



Sky Scott, SALT guest speaker, shares about her life as a missionary in Africa

Missions focus despite pandemic

With those goals in mind, SALT was launched as a Women on Mission group for young women from their mid-20s to early 40s. While the new group got off to a great start with the support of church and WMU leaders, there still were challenges ahead.

When the group's inaugural gathering in early 2020 attracted 34 women, no one anticipated the impact of the COVID-19 crisis in the coming months. Although meetings moved online, and in-person mission projects were put on hold for several months, the group has continued to seek out creative ways to maintain its missions focus.

SALT, based on Matthew 5:13, encourages participants to be spiritual salt and light in their

community and world. Describing the group's focus as "purposeful and meaningful," Moore said, "We're driven with the foundation that we're sisters in Christ, and we all are yearning and desiring to practice servanthood and missions."

Their basic strategy involves meeting together every other month to pray, study missions and plan future service projects. The following month, they go out into the community to serve such groups as homeless women and children, battered women, orphans, widows, veterans and the elderly.

"It's been a wonderful experience," Moore shared. "I've had a lot of good feedback from it." She said several of the young women have told her, "Wow, I've been looking for a group like this" or "I've never done this before."



Angie Graves, WMU Director

During the time they were unable to meet and serve in person, SALT members sent handwritten notes of encouragement to 80 church members who are homebound or in nursing homes as well as 161 inmates in area prisons. Moore said those projects provided an outlet for them to continue to serve the community from their homes.

"Our group's purpose is still shining through, even in this cloud of COVID that's over everyone's lives," she said. "I think there's this need, especially in 2020, for

younger people to take a stand and to show Christ's love because our world can seem so dark and gloomy."

Living out the calling of Christ

Other members of SALT are quick to affirm the group's vision and direction.

"So often as young moms, even when we get together with other moms, we just talk about our kids. We talk about our preschoolers, we talk about potty training," noted Hannah Brown, a mom to three young children. "We don't always have the opportunity to talk about how God is moving in our lives or the opportunity to go out and be the hands and feet of Christ to people around us. So SALT is really that opportunity where we can live out the calling of Christ to care for the least of these in our community beyond just our family unit.

"There's a great value in getting to be a part of God caring for other people," she added. "God is moving in the community around us whether we participate in it or not. Being able to participate in that is a blessing and a reminder of who God has created us to be."

Brown's husband, Trevor, serves as associate pastor of First Baptist, Amarillo. "We're a multi-generational church that has been able to teach and equip people for missions from the youngest to the oldest in our congregation," he said, describing SALT as a prime example.

"Sometimes opportunities to serve need to fit people's life stage and circumstances in life," he said. "Having a young adult group that provides opportunities to serve in our community, fits ministry around the needs of their life stage, and surrounds them with other people who are also passionate about missions has been really fruitful for our church."

Bonding together through ministry

Mary Turman, a SALT member who also serves as an Acteens leader, voiced appreciation for SALT's hands-on approach of planning and participating in various



Serving With SALT

The SALT group meets on the second Tuesday evening of each month and hosts other service opportunities in between. FBC's young women gather for a meal, missions speakers, prayer, activities, and hands-on service. Childcare is offered as well. If you'd like to connect to this ministry, contact trevor@firstamarillo.org.

ministry projects such as leading activities at an area shelter for women and children.

Citing “the needs that are in our own schools, in our own communities,” she pointed out, “There’s just so much that we can do to serve God and to serve our communities.

“There are lots of young mothers in SALT who are busy with babies, and they’re still trying to serve God, to serve the community,” Turman added. “It’s an awesome way to bond together and to serve one another and have meaningful relationships with one another.”

Rebecca Bulla, a mother of two young children, noted that she didn’t grow up Baptist. Through her involvement in SALT and other missions efforts, however, she has gained a deep appreciation for WMU’s unwavering missions commitment. “It’s this organization that is fueled by these women that gather and serve and pray and are focused on missions here and all over the world,” she emphasized.

SALT attracts “a whole mix of women, and we’re not sitting around talking about one facet of our life, but we are there because we follow Christ, and we want to make an impact,” Bulla said. “We don’t have to



wait until we’re empty nesters, and we don’t have to wait until we retire. We can begin now to plant these seeds of prayer and work and encouragement.”

Reflecting on SALT’s transformation from dream to reality, Moore said it is humbling to help her peers “come together for the sole purpose of being Christian missionaries in our own city.”

Urging other young adult women and local churches to pursue similar goals, she said, “Just have the courage and listen to the Holy Spirit. If He is calling you to start something, then just go for it and take the leap.”



grateful
FOR YOUR
giving

Buckner Family Ministries WT BSM
Colorful Closets Faith City Mission
Gideons High Plains Food Bank Hope
Choice Hope Welcome Center High Plains
Retreat Center Interfaith Campaign for
the Homeless Juneteenth Celebration
Mission Amarillo Margaret Wills
Elementary The PABC Grack Pack 4
Kids Sharing Hope Ministries Uniting As
One Christian Job Corp International
Friends ESL Fostering Hope Perkins
Community Center Prison Ministry Aim
Right Ministries The Branch Community
Church Baptist University of the Americas
Bethel Baptist Mexico Truett Seminary
Santa Cruz Baptist Church Phoenix Bible
Church Disaster Relief Buckner Family
Hope Center Guatemala Christ Life
Ministries Zambia Kids Alive Lebanon
Make My Disciples Church Sudan Good
News Preaching Church Kenya Uganda
Baptist Seminary Baptist World Alliance
Texas Baptists International Mission Board

First Baptist Church Amarillo
1208 S. Tyler St.
Amarillo, TX 79101

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