

Young women at Amarillo church focus on missions

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AMARILLO—Kristi Moore has vivid memories of growing up in Mission Friends, Girls in Action and Acteens at First Baptist Church in Amarillo.

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.

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.

Listening to God’s voice

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 asserted.



Angie Graves serves as Woman's Missionary Union director at First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas. She said having someone organize and lead a missions group for young women "has been my prayer since becoming director." (WMU photo by Pam Henderson)

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 heading 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.

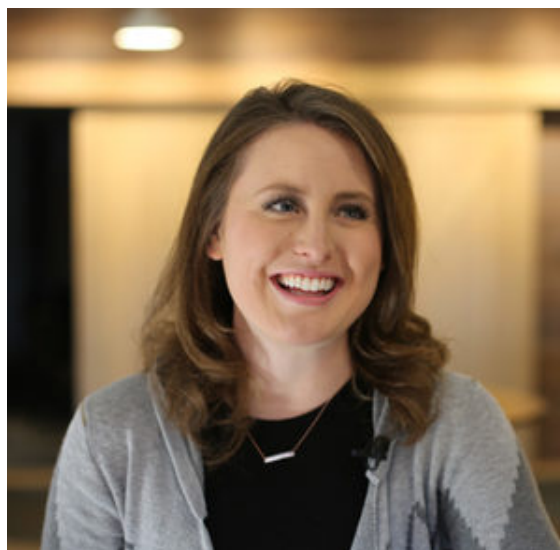
"I think it will help those young women get a better understanding of what other people are going through," Graves said. "It can also help them be

more intentional about teaching their children about how they can help others and how they can be a missionary in their own hometown.”

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.

Women practice servanthood and missions

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.



Kristi Moore, the founder and leader of Salt at First Baptist Church in Amarillo, said she sensed God telling her, “Kristi, you need to

start this younger WMU group.” She said the group’s primary goal is “being Christian missionaries in our own city.” (WMU photo by Pam Henderson)

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 said. “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.”

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 Christian calling

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 can provide opportunities to serve in our community that fit their schedule and that make it accessible to them and that surround them with other people who are also passionate about missions has been really fruitful for our church."

‘Bond together and to serve’

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 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’s 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 just 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.”