

## MAKESHIFT SANCTUARY

---

For nearly six years, Mountain Brook Baptist Church held its primary worship services in the basement Fellowship Hall. The space was half the size of today's Heritage Hall.

As quickly as possible after Dotson Nelson arrived as pastor in 1961, construction began on a "temporary" worship hall. The south wall of the Fellowship Hall was knocked out, and the room was doubled in size (with eight new classrooms created on the second floor). A long, low platform was built across the west wall of the room. A pulpit was set up there, along with two long rows of choir seats. Speakers for the sound system and a piano took up more room.

The hope was to set up 750 folding chairs, but that was impossible. Eventually the seating shrank to a realistic, but jam-packed 500. There were no elevators—just two stairways to reach nurseries and classrooms on upper floors.

The first service was held in the basement sanctuary on September 10, 1961—just three months after Dr. Nelson arrived. Alas, people on the back rows could not see the preacher. The choir could not see the director. The low acoustical ceiling ate up the sound. Aesthetics? None! Yet the situation was better than holding services in the Chapel. Even running two services in the Chapel, no more than 400 people could be seated on Sunday morning. The basement sanctuary gave breathing room for the congregation to grow, especially with dual services.

New members flocked to the church despite the makeshift situation. Makeshift lasted almost six long years. When the glorious new Sanctuary was opened for worship on March 26, 1967, Dr. Nelson said: "We've built a Sanctuary for the congregation. Now we have to build a congregation to fit the Sanctuary."

Many people felt nostalgic about Sundays in the Fellowship Hall. With all the limitations, the place offered a feeling of intimacy and working together. In 1994, the congregation again returned to the Fellowship Hall for Sunday services. They met there for three months while the Sanctuary was refurbished. This time, the Fellowship Hall was even larger than before!

Again, worship returned to the Fellowship Hall—now called Heritage Hall. Contemporary worship has been held there weekly starting in 2004. Over time, several innovations made the space attractive and functional: comfortable padded chairs, variable lighting, and video capabilities.

Mountain Brook Baptist Church Christians have a spiritual bond that thrives in makeshift space. It's been true time and again, from the start in 1944.



JULY 21, 2019

WE'VE A STORY TO TELL  
*75th Anniversary Memories of Mountain Brook Baptist Church*

## REINFORCING THE FOUNDATION

---

*1 Corinthians 3:10*

*By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care.*

Grace and generosity can extend beyond a person's life, beyond the current life of the church. Some charter members showed the way to care and share for the ages. The earliest was probably Colquitt Carter Cole, the first chairman of Deacons. He and his wife Lucy hosted preliminary meetings of the church in their home at 3402 Montevallo Road. When Woman's Missionary Union was organized in the church, Lucy Cole was the first president. Mr. Cole started out in the limestone business. Mrs. Cole died in 1966, and Mr. Cole in 1968. Mountain Brook Baptist Church was beneficiary of a portion of their estate. The bequest was kept in the church's general fund and accounted for in a line item in the monthly financial reports for many years. At some point in the 1980s, Deacons designated the fund's proceeds to maintain missionary houses. At the time of the original bequest, the Coles could not have imagined the church would have owned missionary houses, but their early decision helped the church reach beyond itself. More recently Deacons voted to transfer the Cole bequest to management of the church's Foundation.

Other charter members who reinforced the church's Foundation were Eunice and M. Reynolds Baum. On the original church roll, their names were #1 and #2. He was an engineer and she was an office administrator. Soon after the church was chartered, he was elected clerk of the congregation, and he served faithfully for 40 years. He kept the membership list and documented the church's growth in minutes and statistical records. Reynolds Baum died in 1990 and Eunice in 1992. Through the years they lived at 136 Euclid Avenue, until she moved to Mount Royal Towers. Their unexpected bequest to the church amounted to more than \$75,000. It came just at the right time to fulfill a plan for Mountain Brook Baptist Church to help Russian Baptists complete their first headquarters and seminary building in Moscow, dedicated in 1992. After the Baum fund was replenished, the bequest was used to help Mountain Brook Baptist Church upgrade its own building in the mid-1990s.

Some second-generation pillars of the church rallied in the 1980s to be loving protectors of the church beyond their own lifetimes. Some members planned to make bequests to the church from their future estates. They wanted an endowment fund to receive their gifts when their lives had passed on into heaven. On January 15, 1989 the church voted to establish an Endowment Trust. John H. Holcomb Jr. was the first chairman, immediately succeeded by Milton Bagby. Other initial trustees were a "who's who" of stalwarts of the church at the time: Dotson M. Nelson Jr., Ruel Russell, Frances Brown, David R. Pittman, Harold Williams, Sloan Y. Bashinsky Sr., John Taylor, and Boyd Walton. Soon after being established, assets of the trust stood at \$6,078. In 1990, Mr. Bashinsky became chair of the trustees. By 1994, the trust had reached \$351,807.

The trustees never aggressively promoted bequests to the Endowment Trust. They simply let people know that a channel was available for tax-exempt special gifts and bequests to be held long-range for the church. Only earnings could be spent. So seriously did founders consider this channel of generosity that some purchased life insurance policies with the church as beneficiary. Trustees were elected by the church, and their names were posted among church officers each year. Trustees elected their own chair annually. It is safe to say that legacy gifts planned in the 1990s are still paying into the church today.

Between 2011 and 2013, plans were developed to modernize the Endowment Trust into a newly created Foundation. The new entity was named the Mountain Brook Baptist Church/James D. Moebes Foundation. The name honored Dr. Moebes as he retired from 30 years as senior minister of the church. The Foundation enables a gift to be held as perpetual endowment, just as in the old Endowment Trust. Or a gift can be held until cash is needed for designated church work, as determined either by the donor or by the directors of the Foundation.

The first chair of the new Foundation was Rodney Rushing, and he was the last chair of the Endowment Trust. The current chair of the Foundation is Grantland Rice, who will remain on the board of the Foundation until 2021. Other directors in 2019 are Chad Fooshee, Marty Lloyd, Jim Sullivan, Dave Carder, Eddie Elliott, and Emris Graham. Ex-officio members in 2019 are the chair of Deacons (Baker Crow), chair of trustees of the church (Jo Wills), and chair of the church finance committee (John Holcomb III). Directors are listed annually in the church publications.

As soon as the Foundation was incorporated on January 31, 2013, the directors selected the Baptist Foundation of Alabama as agent to handle investment of money held by the Foundation (though ownership remains fully with Mountain Brook). Directors hired an external estate planning expert to assist members if they requested consultation in planning legacy gifts to the church. Several members utilized the estate planning services and did plan gifts through the Foundation. At the time the Foundation was established, approximately \$605,000 was transferred to it from the Endowment Trust.

Foundation assets have grown to exceed \$2.5 million dollars. Foundation bylaws indicate four categories of funds to which a donor might designate money: (a) Missions Fund, (b) Facilities Fund, (c) Compassion Fund, or (d) General Fund. Directors may receive, or decline to receive, a gift depending on its fit with the purposes of the Foundation. Several specific projects have been funded through the Foundation—such as a scholarship fund entrusted to Samford University in honor of James D. Moebes. Another designated fund will assist publication of a book written by Doug Dortch.

Of current holdings, approximately \$1.7 million is unrestricted—meaning that directors can choose to use the income or principal as needed by the church. Other holdings can be used only as the donor designated, and that may mean that principal remains untouched.

The question for anyone who has deeply cared for the church is: What will happen to my beloved church after I'm gone? How can I best share my blessings through the church in an ongoing, shared ministry? How can I memorialize someone?

A person can always give cash or other liquid assets to the church for the budget, for a building campaign, or for a special mission. For a deferred gift, or for a gift that ought to "keep on giving" for years to come, the Mountain Brook Baptist Church/James D. Moebes Foundation is a historic channel available.



*Eunice and M. Reynolds Baum*

*Psalm 89:14*  
*Love and faithfulness go before you.*