

## THE OUTSIDE DOOR

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Several years ago a small group of men came to me and the Sunday School director asking about a way to start a men's group specifically designed to attract new men and hopefully bring men back who had not been attending regularly. It is always good when a group wants to start a new Sunday morning class. The only caveat with them was that there must be an outside door. The outside door obviously meant that men could come and go without passing through the usual labyrinth of entrances and hallways. Their request did not involve the use of specific tables or chairs or even Bible maps. They were willing to use a room that served a dual function for the Early Learning Center. The main idea was the outside door.

Working with the Sunday School director we found a room under the Chapel that indeed had an outside door. Coming and going unnoticed was very easy to accomplish. After several years the men's class has grown and experiencing a very strong community with effective outreach. They eventually moved to an inside room that was larger, thus abandoning their outside door.

This class has become a hub for involving other men in their community of faith. They now send their members to places of leadership in the church as well as Deacon service.

*Dr. Alvin Pelton, Minister of Education 1996-2016*



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## LIVING IN THE MISSIONARY HOUSE

In 1994, my family made a big trip across the ocean from Bangkok to Alabama. This was my first time to come to America. I didn't know what to expect. I couldn't imagine a place where people didn't eat dried fish every day as a snack or people who wouldn't stare at you walking down the street for being a white American boy in a Superman costume. It was all new. It was our first furlough and Mountain Brook Baptist Church was going to be our church home for the next seven months. The White House on Overbrook Road was my first American home, and it was certainly a house to remember.

The White House was huge! It was only second in size to the other White House that was many miles away in Washington D.C. I imagined that the President would soon be calling to welcome me to the "club-of-people-with-giant-homes." It was wonderful, and very different from our house in Thailand. There, we would sleep on the floor in the one room that had an air conditioner. Here, the air conditioner could cool off the whole house!

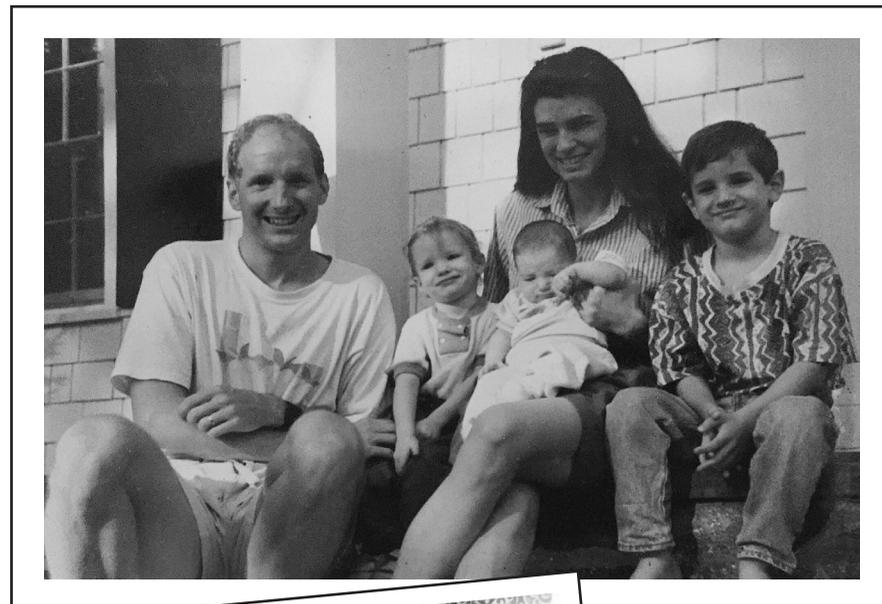
During the day the house was wonderful, so large and full of rooms to play hide-and-seek, tag, or my imaginary Indiana Jones game that had something to do with jumping across a waterfall and climbing up a mountain to find treasure. But at night the house changed. The rooms that were once so welcoming, quickly turned into dark, ominous caves where four-headed monsters hid under the beds to patiently wait for little children to fall asleep. As a five-year-old, I was as tough as a tea cup falling from the Great Wall of China. So every night I would sneak to my little sister's room and wake her up, and together we would make the "long journey" down the stairs to my parents bedroom. Sometimes the "journey" was too risky. Maybe it would be best for me to just sleep in her room. The monsters never seemed to bother her anyway. When the sun rose, the house once again became a happy place, where I could carry on playing without any worries.

Out the back door, we could walk to the church in just a minute. I remember being in Mrs. Pinkie's kindergarten class. She was the real-life Mary Poppins, always sweet, caring, and a little bit spunky. I loved being in her class.

We had a wonderful seven months at the White House. Now, every Sunday when I drive by, I realize how grateful I am for that time of life. I am thankful to Mrs. Pinkie and her wonderful class, and for a church that is so generous in providing for missionaries across the world.

*Geoff Johnson*

*Note: Katie and Geoff Johnson are active members of Mountain Brook Baptist Church. They are members of the Anchor Sunday Morning Bible Study, where Geoff serves as a class teacher.*



*Above: The Johnson family, pictured in 1994 on the steps of the White Missionary House: David and Claudia Johnson with children Glynnna, Grace, and Geoff.*



*Below: Katie and Geoff Johnson, with their sons Charles Brewer ("Brewer") and Geoffrey Grantham ("Grant").*



*A recent photo of the extended Johnson family - front row: Katie Calhoun Johnson holding son Brewer, Glynnna Johnson Courter, Dan Courter, and David Johnson; back row: Geoff Johnson, Grace Johnson, Claudia Johnson.*