

LEADERSHIP IN THE INTERIM

Dr. William Mabry Lunceford was a beloved interim pastor of Mountain Brook Baptist Church, who turned down the chance to become the permanent pastor. He joined the faculty of the religion department at Samford in 1954, soon after completing a doctorate in Greek and in Old Testament theology and a master's in philosophy. Mountain Brook Baptist Church invited him to preach for a revival series.

The church admired him and signed him up as interim pastor when the Rev. William Waterhouse resigned effective August 31, 1959. Dr. Lunceford's steadying influence allowed the Mountain Brook Baptist Church pulpit committee to take its time to convince Dr. Dotson M. Nelson Jr. to become pastor. Dr. Nelson did not come until May 28, 1961. During the 21-month interim, the pulpit committee talked with Dr. Lunceford about staying permanently, but he felt called to a teaching ministry in a university setting. Many who remember him thought that he was in fact the regular pastor of Mountain Brook Baptist Church. Over years to come, he was often invited to return to teach or preach on special occasions.

Dr. Lunceford taught religion and philosophy at Samford for more than 36 years; then he traveled the state to encourage pastoral ministry for Beeson Divinity School and the Samford Extension Division. He and his wife were charter members of Baptist Church of the Covenant. At his death in 2000, the family requested his former student, Dr. James D. Moebes, to officiate at the funeral—thus bringing to a sentimental end his long years of association with our church. One of his former students noted that Dr. Lunceford was distinguished not so much by what he said, as for how he listened.

Dr. Gilbert L. Guffin preached for Mountain Brook Baptist Church during the long year following J.O. Colley's resignation as pastor in April 1947. Dr. Guffin was an experienced pastor who had just founded the Extension Division for Christian Training for Howard College (now part of Samford University). Dr. Guffin's goal was to take theological education into the countryside where pastors and Bible teachers had little preparation. His job required much traveling throughout the state.

He was not able to accept Mountain Brook Baptist Church's request to be the regular interim pastor. Dr. Guffin did preach for Mountain Brook Baptist Church a number of times during the interim. He went on in 1950 to be president of Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, where he had earned a degree in 1935. While he led Eastern, the seminary spun off Eastern Baptist College. It grew rapidly to become Eastern University.

Dr. Guffin returned to Birmingham in 1961 as Dean of Chapel at Samford University. Occasionally he returned to preach or lead courses for Mountain Brook Baptist Church. He passed away in 1992 at the age of 86.

Dr. William T. Edwards was a member of Mountain Brook Baptist Church for 29 years, along with his wife Peggy. Their three children grew up in Mountain Brook Baptist Church. He was professor of religion and university chaplain for Samford. During the pastorate of Dr. Nelson and the early years of Dr. Moebes, Dr. Edwards served as fill-in preacher. He never was named "interim pastor" at Mountain Brook Baptist Church (though he held this role in other churches). At the start of Dr. Moebes's pastorate, Edwards was the interim associate minister. He taught Sunday School and frequently led special study classes for Mountain Brook Baptist Church. He was a useful member of the pulpit committee which selected Dr. Moebes to assume the pastorate in 1981. It would be hard to find a member with higher qualifications for teaching, preaching, and counseling, and Dr. Edwards gave of himself generously. His wife Peggy was an outstanding soprano soloist and choir member. Together they traveled the state to give programs combining musical concert and scriptural meditations.



DECEMBER 2, 2018

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

MY MEMORIES OF MOUNTAIN BROOK BAPTIST CHURCH

Mountain Brook Baptist Church was so much a part of my life growing up that it is interwoven throughout all my childhood memories. My father (Robert Cecil Berry) was Sunday School Superintendent from 1958 to 1960, and he was a lifetime Deacon. My mother (Lloyd Berry) was President of the Woman's Missionary Union from 1968 to 1970, and she was a Deacon in her later years. Their best friends were church friends, so their social and church activities were often one and the same. If the doors were open, our family was there! Church was never cancelled, so even on occasional "snow days," we would walk the one block to church from our home on Overbrook Road.

I have early memories of my baptism in the Chapel by the Rev. William E. Waterhouse. My father was at one time in charge of preparing the Chapel pool for baptisms. On one such occasion, my five-year-old cousin, who was Episcopalian, accompanied him to prepare for the service. As water filled the baptismal pool, he asked my dad with wonder in his eyes, "Are you going to take a bath?"

Sunday nights meant Training Union, and I would ride with Daddy across town each week to buy Ousler sandwiches to serve the attendees. Irene Hawkins was the kitchen hostess. Mrs. Watkins, Mrs. Marshall, and Edna Campbell kept the nursery. Daddy often picked up Mrs. Marshall, and I remember her quaint little cottage near the zoo.

Saturday mornings often involved youth activities. Particularly fun was roller skating in fellowship hall, which is where I learned to enjoy pouring peanuts into my Coke for a unique blend. Jim Moebes was such a special youth minister! Also memorable was youth choir with Lester and Dot Barker, and I still fondly recall choir retreats to Panama City over spring break.

I have fond memories of Dr. William Mabry Lunceford as our interim minister (September 1959-May 1961). We all loved him and his family and invited them to dinner at our house at least once. Dr. Lunceford was one of the kindest, most gentle-natured men I ever met, and I remember him as such an example of a godly soul. (He was a professor of religion at Samford.)

My mother was very involved in GAs, Girls Auxiliary, a program where you would earn rankings (based on missions and Bible study), similar to earning badges in Scout programs. GA activities were on Wednesdays. The annual culmination was the GA Coronation, where the girls were recognized before the congregation for earning the rankings of Princess up through Queen Regent. My scepter from "Queen with a Scepter" is currently a favorite toy for my grandchildren! The GAs also attended retreats at Judson College and various other activities.

Dr. Dotson M. Nelson Jr. is the primary minister I remember (I was between the ages of his two younger children, Mary Grace and Buddy). He initiated the Living Nativity, and at the time, we "angels" would climb a ladder, rain or shine, to stand on the roof with the manger scene on the hillside. It was, and continues to be, such a wonderful gift to the community! When I now hear Dr. Nelson's distinctive

tape-recorded voice, I am flooded with memories of those early pageant days. Flashbacks of Bible School, church picnics, and other events from those years remind me of the huge part Mountain Brook Baptist Church played in our everyday lives, activities, and friendships.

After college at The University of Alabama, I returned to Birmingham and Mountain Brook Baptist Church. Grace Nelson taught a group of young professional women in her home each week, of which I was a part. Every Christmas I still display a small poinsettia/candle oil canvas she painted for each of us.

Before marrying my husband Arnold, Tom Toby was the church staff member who provided our premarital counseling. Of course Dr. Nelson performed the ceremony in the Sanctuary. Arnold was an Associate Deacon until we moved to Tuscaloosa. He loved the 8:30 a.m. early service in the Chapel, and he served there faithfully on Sunday mornings along with Jerry Edwards. Arnold had an especially close relationship (as we all felt we did) with Dr. Moebes, who coordinated the Associate Deacons in his role of executive minister.

After 36 years in Tuscaloosa, I certainly feel like I am now "home" again. I remember writing a letter to Dr. Nelson and Dr. Moebes before we moved away. I told them how much we would miss Mountain Brook Baptist Church, and that even though we were leaving, this would always be our "home church." And so it has come to pass...I couldn't be more excited to return home under the leadership of Dr. Dortch and the wonderful congregation at Mountain Brook Baptist Church!

Cecil Berry Avery



Cecil and Arnold Avery were married on June 29, 1974 at Mountain Brook Baptist Church. Dr. Dotson M. Nelson Jr. officiated the wedding.



Lloyd Berry, pictured with Dr. James D. Moebes, at her Deacon Ordination in 2003. Her husband, Robert Berry, was a Life Deacon and served as Superintendent of Sunday School at Mountain Brook Baptist Church. Her daughter Cecil Avery was elected to serve as a Deacon on November 25, 2018, and will be ordained on Sunday, January 20, 2019.

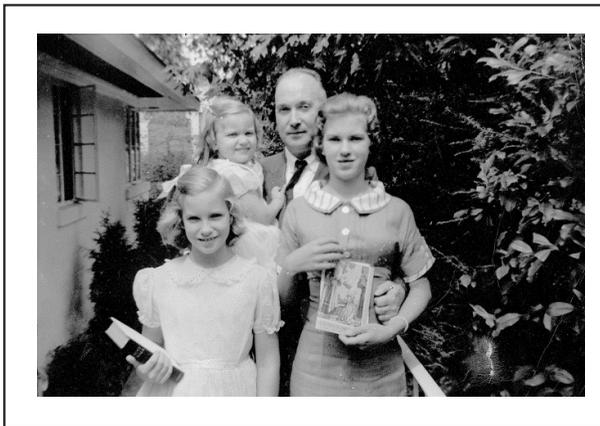


Photo of Robert Berry with his daughters Cecil, Caldwell, and Lloyd, on the way to church, taken by their mother, Lloyd Berry.