

## I WAS A BABY AT MOUNTAIN BROOK BAPTIST CHURCH

I was a baby in the newly formed Mountain Brook Baptist Church, just returned from living with my parents in Germany during my father's service in the Army Medical Corps. My grandfather, John H. Holcomb Sr., wanted all his family to be together in Mountain Brook Baptist Church. My parents went forward on December 11, 1950 to join the church, which had just completed construction of the Chapel on Montevallo Road.

I personally became a member of the church on April 4, 1958, 60 years ago, at age 9. I was baptized in the Chapel by the Rev. Waterhouse, our pastor at the time. My membership has been continuous since then with a brief hiatus during our four years of residency in Minnesota. Darleen and I returned in 1982 and renewed our membership. Needless to say this church has been a large part of my life, and I have many fond memories of the early years and of the fine people I have come to know. A few of the early highlights I remember are mentioned here, although not a complete listing by any means.

I remember as a youngster the great emphasis on Sunday family activity that was instilled by my grandfather John Holcomb Sr. An example was the traditional Sunday morning gathering for breakfast at 20th Street Britling Cafeteria. The entire extended Holcomb family would attend before Sunday School. I remember the Episcopal group from the Advent would come by on their way out, led by their minister Dr. John Turner. He would always stop and exclaim "My goodness, would you look at all the Holcombs!" Church activity absorbed nearly the entire day for us in those days. Afternoons began with choir practice at 4 p.m., followed by Training Union and Sunday evening worship service. After evening services a number of us would often head to Howard Johnson's for ice cream to wind up the day.

My memories of the early years at our church were filled with so many dedicated teachers, leaders, and church staff. It seemed that everyone gave so unselfishly of their time, talent, and finances that our church couldn't help but to grow and prosper. We had a tremendous youth program headed up by Bill Williamson in the early 1960s. Each Friday night we had Friday Night Frolics with games, skating, volleyball, and other activities in what was the Fellowship Hall. Our church was the place to be on Friday night for local youth regardless of denomination. Associate Minister Bob Poerschke and Music Director Lester Barker were also instrumental in youth activities during this time. We often attended church camps at Mentone in the summer and youth choir camp at the beach over spring break.

I remember some of my early Sunday School teachers who had a large presence like Anne Lee, Henry Fowlkes, Bim Burgin, Edith Broughton, Law Lamar, Bill Manly, and Jimmy Ratliff. I remember Law Lamar's emphasis on the junior boys learning our memory verse for Sunday School. I will always remember the Christmas Eve services of years ago. During the service the church sexton for many years, Odell McDaniel, a fine Christian man, would sing the spiritual "Sweet Little Jesus Boy" in his beautiful tenor voice. It was wonderful.

These are but a very few of the many memory highlights that keep Mountain Brook Baptist Church in a special place in my heart.

*John H. Mears*



DECEMBER 30, 2018

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

## CHOIR BEGINNINGS

Mountain Brook Baptist Church always had excellent music. The first regular minister of music was Winfield W. Crawford, who then taught voice at Howard College (now Samford University). He served the church part-time 1950-1962, when he shifted careers into the insurance business. Everybody appreciated his rich baritone voice, with training at the American Conservatory and the Westminster Choir College. His first days with Mountain Brook Baptist Church were in the original house-chapel in Crestline Village. The choir “loft” had only 8 seats. After the move in 1950 to the Chapel on Montevallo Road, the choir loft sat about 16.

In 1969, for the church’s 25th anniversary, Winfield Crawford wrote some of his recollections.

*In the original house, my first choir consisted of four wonderful people. I remember leading the music one Sunday evening and noticing smiles on everyone in the audience. I finally glanced behind me and saw my four-year-old son waving his arm just as I was. I remember another Sunday evening when my daughter rushed in the front door of the church and right in the middle of the hymn crawled under the*



*For many years, the Sanctuary Choir has faithfully led Mountain Brook Baptist Church in worship.*

*church service, Don Laidlaw got his foot stuck between chairs in the choir loft, with his back to the audience so that he could not sit down. It became excruciatingly funny.*

*Of course I remember Bill Waterhouse, Mabry Lunceford (interim pastor and a Samford professor),... and you... a great church.*

*Winfield W. Crawford, Manager*

*Liberty National Life Insurance in Gadsden*

*Part-time Minister of Music at Mountain Brook Baptist Church 1950–1962 (long ago deceased)*

*the communion table and started waving at everybody.*

*I remember that for seven or eight years, I was Judge Bailes’ substitute teacher. I had to teach the temperance lesson for every one of those years. I still haven’t figured this one out.*

*One Sunday morning, Bill Waterhouse (the pastor) called ten minutes before church and told me that I was going to have to preach the sermon. I remember that I was just getting warmed up and everybody in the choir started coughing, to remind me that I was running into the lunch hour. From then on I had a greater appreciation of preachers’ problems.*

*I remember at an early morning*

## CHURCH MUSIC GOES CONTEMPORARY

Listen! One of the many gifts of God is music. While we may not agree on the style of worship music, we can all agree that lifting our voices and instruments to God in worship is a Scriptural and beautiful thing. Since it began some 15 years ago, music has been the very heart of the Mountain Brook Baptist Church Contemporary Worship Service. From the beginnings of the service on a weeknight in the Chapel, the service now ministers to well over 150 on Sunday mornings in Heritage Hall.

I grew up in a very traditional worship (and music) environment. I had played several musical instruments along the way and had sung in a gospel quartet for many years in Atlanta. My first exposure to contemporary Christian music was in a very large gymnasium, packed with hundreds of teenagers in Memphis. The music was loud and, frankly, I couldn’t understand a word of this music that I had never heard before.

What a start! We moved back to Birmingham and joined Mountain Brook Baptist Church when the contemporary service had just begun.

At that time our music was an acoustic guitar and a couple of vocalists. The congregation was small but enthusiastic. Over time, drums and a few other instruments were added. Not long after, the service moved to Heritage Hall and became a permanent part of our worship experience on Sunday mornings.

My “real” story is this: It is never too late to learn or experience something new that can not only lead others to know Christ, but strengthen your own worship experience. I increase the average age of the musicians in our Contemporary Worship Service significantly! I have played drums and keyboards, and now am one of the regular bassists in this service. This music speaks to many people, including me. The message of Christ’s love for us can be found in this music—if you’ll listen. The music provides a way to worship our God—and He is listening. This joy shows on your faces when you are participating in worship.

Regardless of the style of worship you choose, listen. God will direct you. Don’t be afraid to try something new if He leads. He led me, and I couldn’t be happier!

*Terry Wall*



*Top: Joel Burks leads the congregation in song during the Contemporary Worship Service.*

*Bottom: Douglas Grant, Julie Beary, Sara Burks, Joel Burks, and Terry Wall lead the Contemporary Worship Service on Easter Sunday 2018 in the Sanctuary.*