

## VISION 2020

Like most of you, it has been my good fortune to attend and experience many positive and spiritually uplifting events at Mountain Brook Baptist Church. As a church body, nothing I have been involved in approaches the enthusiasm, the spirit, and fellowship that occurred during the Vision 2020 process.

Led by Dr. Bill Wilson, a consultant from The Center for Healthy Churches, the congregation was brought together to progressively examine our past, present and future. Our members addressed questions such as:



*Church members put post-it notes on the Vision 2020 timeline to indicate when they joined Mountain Brook Baptist Church.*

- What brought you to Mountain Brook Baptist Church?
- What keeps you at Mountain Brook Baptist Church?
- What are the core traits of Mountain Brook Baptist Church?
- What are our most important and fruitful ministries?
- What are our ministry strengths, areas with which you are comfortable?
- What are our ministry opportunities needing more focus and fine-tuning?
- What ministries should be our priority in the next 5 years?
- What are our dreams?
- Where do we see our church in five, ten, or more years from now?

During three meetings, our members (ages 13 to 90+) collaborated, brainstormed, reminisced, shared, dreamed, planned, and ultimately put into writing their thoughts

and aspirations of who and what we could become at our best usefulness for God's kingdom.

These sessions exceeded our expectations. Not only were the meetings well attended (more than 730 participants), they brought to the forefront and identified a vast number of incredibly talented individuals who showed a willingness and desire to share personal stories and offer their insights. The process was enhanced by having so many Spirit-led individuals, many of whom had never had a forum to contribute, offering their observations, perspectives, and hopes for the future.

Watching the church body in action was moving. The enthusiasm was palpable. The vision of our members was dynamic as God-sized dreams were identified. The spiritual discernment process resulted in proposals that are being systematically implemented.

The Vision 2020 process confirmed that our congregation is passionate about our faith, willing to engage, and has a depth and diversity of talent that is deeper than anyone could have dreamed.

*Billy Bates*

*Church members gather to share about how God brought them to Mountain Brook Baptist Church, and what has kept them at Mountain Brook Baptist Church.*



JANUARY 20, 2019

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

## BESTOR BROWN—AMONG THE BEST

*“He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.” (Matthew 7:29)*

During Mountain Brook Baptist’s formative years, nobody stood taller than Deacon, Life Deacon, and Trustee William Bestor Brown (1908–1985). There couldn’t have been a member who didn’t look up to Bestor. To be clear, the membership all looked up to Bestor figuratively, but maybe not literally. He was in a wheelchair for most of his life.

Bestor was a high school athlete and academic star. He played baseball for Washington and Lee University expecting to try out to play professional ball. Like so many of his generation, his dream was interrupted by World War II where he survived 10 major Pacific battles serving as a Captain in the Navy. Returning to Birmingham, he married Mary Virginia Pounds Brown and became one of the top executives with the growing Liberty National Life Insurance Company. He joined Mountain Brook Baptist Church in 1955. Life looked most blessed for this member of the “Greatest Generation.”

Bestor would likely have said his life continued to be blessed, even when he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Following the diagnosis, he was confined to arm and leg braces and his wheelchair for the next quarter of a century. He was forced to give up his career at Liberty National but never lost his devotion to Mountain Brook Baptist.

Dr. James D. Moebes, who served as member and chairman of the Alabama MS Society, said “Bestor stood tall in all leadership positions—even though he sat in a wheelchair for years. He was always at church when he had reason not to be.

*In the late 1960s, Bestor Brown presented a portrait of his father, Darby H. Brown, to the Baptist School of Nursing. Receiving the gift was Ida V. Moffett, director of nursing for the Baptist Medical Centers. Bestor’s ancestors were prominent Baptist leaders, and his father was a pivotal figure in the development of a Baptist health system in Birmingham.*



He supported Dotson Nelson and the church. When he spoke, people listened.” He served on every important committee, including the Sanctuary building committee.

His wife, Mary Virginia, was an accomplished author, writing a number of books related to Alabama history. Mary Virginia and Bestor opened a successful and popular bookstore, Book Keepers on Canterbury Road in Mountain Brook Village. They had no children but their niece Bettye Brown Donovan was somewhat a surrogate daughter. She would attend Wednesday night services with Bestor and his driver. She recalls his excitement about the construction of the Sanctuary. He called her one day saying he and his driver were on the way to pick her up, telling his niece, “You’ve got to come and see our steeple going up.”

Appropriately, the Teaching Window in the Sanctuary is the Bestor Brown window. That window is adjacent to where he would park his wheelchair during worship services. The plaque on the Teaching Window states “To the Glory of God in Honor of William Bestor Brown.” While records don’t exist, that acknowledgment would indicate that some member or members anonymously funded the window to be a lasting memorial to Bestor and what he meant to Mountain Brook Baptist Church.

*The Teaching Window, located in the Sanctuary, to the Glory of God in honor of William Bestor Brown.*

