

OUR JOURNEY IN THE DESERT

Our team stood in front of our congregation and were commissioned, prayed for, and blessed by Mountain Brook Baptist Church for our mission to Jordan on November 21, 1999. We would be helping a missionary of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, who had requested our help for an education ministry. Emma Laura Patrick, Jo Wills, and I went to direct a teacher training program for Bedouin women who would become kindergarten teachers. Classes were to be held in Madaba, the small city famous for its ancient mosaic map of Jerusalem (and we saw that map!). At the same time, other members of our crew would be out in the desert, remodeling an abandoned concrete building, to become the first kindergarten for the area. Most of this team had a lot of volunteer experience in construction.

The teacher training site was comfortable with modern bathrooms and water. About 40 Bedouin women faithfully attended, wearing their long robes and head covers. We three visiting teachers worked hard to teach through interpreters. When our training included singing and dancing such as children would do, the Bedouin women removed their outer garment to reveal beautiful, colorful silk clothing, and abundant jewelry. Our training was joyful and appreciated. The young women must have worn all their finery at one time. When we visited in homes, we did not see closets. Meanwhile, out in the desert, our school building was repaired and painted. Martha Isom designed the décor and hauled chalkboard paint from the U.S. Jerry Edwards, Bill Baker, and Reid Wills installed running water and lighting fixtures. A terrace was created outside—with our folks shoveling sand and hauling rocks. There were no indoor toilets, and the locals did not feel the need of a formal outdoor privy. I was told that some of our team rigged up their own outdoor facilities with some sheet metal and a plastic chair. I understand that some of the locals gathered around to watch proceedings with great interest.

Our missionary had given strict orders for women on our team to be totally covered in order to be culturally appropriate. We were “hot”—with long overshirts, long sleeves, and long pants. No skin showed except face and hands. This was true both in the teacher workshop and at the future school building. It was a rather long drive through the desert between our worksites. We took some detours to see sites

mentioned in the Bible. I remember the sound of bells in the desert. Each sheep or goat was outfitted with a little bell at birth, to help the shepherd keep track of the flock. Our team took a day trip down the Kings Highway to the ancient site of Petra. Some rode donkeys and camels. We stood on Mount Nebo and looked across the Dead Sea to Bethlehem. We briefly went into Israel to see Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee. As we traveled, we met several missionaries and offered them gifts from the United States of America—much appreciated. We also gave gifts of cosmetics to the Jordanian teacher trainees, and they were thrilled. The cosmetics had been donated by the Parisian Department Store in Birmingham.

One year later, a church member visited our worksites in Jordan, with guidance from our missionary hostess. She saw teachers using our materials and methods in the desert and small towns. Praise be to God. We continue to pray for the Bedouin women and children and for God’s work in the land of Jordan.

Billie Cope



Emma Laura Patrick (left) and Billie Cope (right), pictured with Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missionary Tamara Tillman (center), who arranged for the first-ever training workshop for kindergarten teachers. This happened in cooperation with the Jordanian government’s emphasis on early childhood education. Some team members led training for the workshop, while other team members refurbished an old farm shed in the countryside to serve a community kindergarten building.



JULY 28, 2019

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

BARBARA MORGAN—EYEWITNESS TO 36 YEARS OF MOUNTAIN BROOK BAPTIST CHURCH HISTORY

A familiar friendly face at Mountain Brook Baptist Church is Barbara Morgan. She is the ever-efficient, helpful assistant to the senior minister. Many may remember her as their teacher in a weekday education program. It all started 36 years ago—and that makes her tie for the honor of being the longest-serving employee in the history of the church. At the time of his retirement in 2011, Dr. James D. Moebes achieved the 36-year milestone. Mrs. Morgan keeps on serving. Here are her recollections:

*“For I know the plans I have for you”, declares the LORD,
“plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11*

Over the past 36 years I have been blessed to work with many dedicated servants of the Lord in different ministries at Mountain Brook Baptist Church.

How it all began...My journey at Mountain Brook Baptist started when I moved to this neighborhood in 1982. I attended an exercise class at the church, and my young son was watched over during that class by Edna Campbell, Martha Moyers, and Mary Waugh. These ladies provided a warm welcome that is just one example of how they served the church in a childcare ministry for many years.

Joining the staff...Throughout the 1980s and 1990s I worked in Weekday Education at the church. Anne Moore was director of the Mother’s Day Out program in 1982, and she asked if I wanted to work in the program on a part-time basis. From there I taught in several classroom and gym roles with children in the Mother’s Day Out and Kindergarten programs. I worked with Mary Waugh who followed Anne Moore as director. At that time the Kindergarten program was led by Betty Acton.

Emma Laura Patrick was employed in the late 1980s to lead the Mother’s Day Out and Kindergarten programs, which eventually were grouped together as Weekday Education. A separate full-day program was added to Weekday Education in the early 1990s, significantly expanding the size and reach of this ministry. I was asked to direct the program for children attending half-day classes, which I did for the next nine years.

Whether Barbara is scheduling weddings, sorting through membership records, or preparing a baptismal certificate, you can always find her serving with a smile on her face!



*Mountain Brook Baptist Church's
1989 Kindergarten Class. Front row
from left to right: Walker Badham,
Morgan Jordan. Second row: Frances
Drennen, Cate Yielding, William
Mattison, Mamie McNeil, Taylor
Wingo, Erskine Ramsay, Blake
Agricola. Back row: Barbara Morgan.*



I had the opportunity to meet and interact with many members of the church who had children in the program or who contributed on a volunteer basis. And, of course, I had the pleasure of seeing countless children go through our program and then move on with their education.

Changing direction...Starting in 2000 I moved to a full-time position on the administrative staff of the church. For the next 15 years I worked in ministries for youth, children, Christian Life Center, outreach, senior adults, and transportation. Over that time I served with many very talented staff members.

Since 2016 I have had the honor of serving as Dr. Doug Dortch’s assistant. I support him and all of the member committees and staff who operate under his leadership. Maintaining the church membership records is another responsibility that I handle, documenting part of the church’s history through the detailed recording of membership changes over the years. And I work on the administrative side of the church’s extensive music ministry.

Journey of life...An interesting and unique aspect of my work at the church is being involved with activities across the lifespans of church members—from dedications and baptisms through funerals, and everything in between. These activities show how important the church is throughout the lives of members. I especially like scheduling a wedding for a young adult who was in the Weekday Education program as a child when I worked there.

Thankful...I have been blessed with all of these opportunities to work at Mountain Brook Baptist.

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for human masters.”
Colossians 3:23*

Barbara Morgan