

Success of the Heritage Guild luncheons led to publication of an elegant recipe book in 1994. Called *The Collection*, the book was offered in a green hard-back binding and a deluxe purple leather-bound binding. These books were embellished with a decorative cross which was deemed “the official Mountain Brook Baptist Church cross.” The book contained best recipes of church members plus recipes and menus wrung out of some outstanding cooks in the community. A prize feature of *The Collection* was Clarice Burch’s top-secret recipe for chocolate roulage, never before published.

A new wing of church “table graces” was made possible in 2002, with construction of Hudson Hall, a reception area convenient to the Sanctuary. Adjacent was a “warming kitchen.” Food prepared in the main church kitchen on ground floor can be brought up an adjacent elevator and kept ready for serving on third floor in Hudson Hall. In addition, two small dining rooms are adjacent to Hudson Hall for events for 10 to 12 people each. These dining rooms were made possible by Don and Sandy Logan and by Joann Bashinsky. Many social events are now based in Hudson Hall and adjacent areas. Another step forward in church hospitality came in 2010, with a project called “The Christmas House.” Led by Sherrie Futch, Susan Wells, and Aimee Turner, a group of young women staged a Christmastime fundraiser for missions. Using their own recipes, they cooked and served beautiful luncheons and dinners in the White Missionary House for several days of December. The food was so spectacular that members wanted to purchase it in bulk for their home parties, and the Christmas House proceeds funded the first Family Mission Projects.

This effort led to formation of the growing group called Cooks On A Mission. Always raising money for local mission projects, the talented Cooks prepare banquets for church events, and cook special food packaged for home use. Their efforts use the church kitchen and are served at a variety of church locations. Demand for the delicious Cooks’ recipes led to publication of the hardback binder of recipes, *Something to Savor* in 2011, followed by a supplemental section in 2013.

After Clarice Burch’s retirement, Carrie Hanson was employed as hostess in 2013. Mrs. Hanson came on recommendation of Clarice Burch, her sister-in-law. Mrs. Hanson has been skilled in keeping the kitchen in expert condition for almost constant usage. She not only serves meals and organizes parties, but she also supports the volunteer cooks and hostesses who bring such distinction to hospitality at Mountain Brook Baptist Church.

CLARICE’S SECRET ROULAGE

When Clarice announced her firm intention to retire, people wondered, “What about the roulage?” Some form of roulage had become a distinctive feature of Birmingham cuisine, with several people claiming to have THE secret recipe from Cobbs Corner Cupboard. A cake roll was even being sold commercially, in the freezers of grocery stores. Nobody’s roulage could measure up to Clarice’s, as served from the church kitchen. She had that “special touch” straight from Mrs. Virginia Cobb—and maybe improved.

Traci and Catherine Allen persuaded Clarice to give a personal demonstration in the church kitchen of how she made her roulage. They wrote down and photographed not only the recipe, but the matchless technique. With Clarice’s permission, Traci or Catherine can email the recipe and procedures to Mountain Brook Baptist Church members.

Clarice Burch is 90 years old and eager to help Mountain Brook Baptist Church celebrate its 75th Anniversary. Good food and fellowship will always be part of the inspiration for our church members.



JUNE 16, 2019

TABLE GRACES

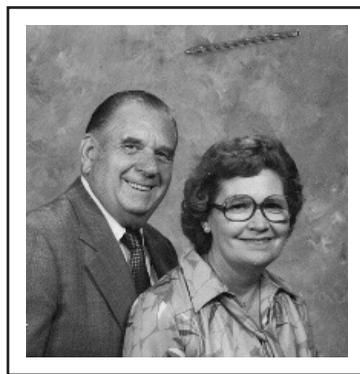
They ate together with glad and sincere hearts (Acts 2:46).

Christians thrive on sharing meals together. That was true from the very beginning of the church, according to the biblical account (Acts 2). It was true for Mountain Brook Baptist Church. The first little church building in Crestline Village barely had a big enough kitchen for the pastor's family of five to be fed. Maybe the kitchen could dispense juice and cookies during Vacation Bible School. Congregational meals could not be accommodated. Social events happened in members' homes, usually on a small group basis.

Hunger for table fellowship found creative ways. During the 1940s with limited space in the Crestline building, Deacon meetings were held in various homes. The minutes state that the meetings were always concluded with ice cream, often with the Deacons walking to Arial Drug lunch counter (on the present day location of La Paz). There they could enjoy their post meeting ice cream. When the Chapel was built in 1950, there wasn't much provision for a fellowship hall. Congregational meals weren't on the program, except for picnics in parks. Could that be why the congregation remained small? Maybe people were hungry to graciously break bread together. Then in 1955, an educational building was added across the rear of the Chapel. There for the first time, our church had a real fellowship hall with a kitchen. Both were located in the same spot as today's Heritage Hall and adjacent kitchen, though both have been greatly enlarged through the years, even as late as 1994. In fall 1957, weekly church dinner was established on Thursday evenings. Some church and community activities were already happening on Wednesday nights, and a Thursday dinner would not conflict with them. According to some early members, the Thursday supper was popular because that was the traditional "cook's day off" in some Mountain Brook homes. Families could get their supper at church instead of home. Popularity and size of the Thursday night suppers called for more labor than church ladies could routinely give. So, the church hired its first church hostess. She was Mrs. Irene Hawkins, who served as hostess from fall 1957 until April 1, 1978. Soon after employment, she and her son Freddie joined Mountain Brook Baptist Church. She was followed ten years later by her husband Edward L. Hawkins.

After Dr. Dotson M. Nelson Jr. became pastor in 1961, he consolidated mid-week activities on Wednesdays, including church suppers. He also wanted suppers provided on Mondays when members gathered to go out visiting people in the community. Women's groups had at least one banquet function, often two, per month. The fellowship hall was extended to make one-third more space in 1961, and the kitchen got a major improvement in 1967, bringing the kitchen up to health codes. When Dr. Nelson came to Mountain Brook Baptist Church, people soon knew that he was crazy about ice cream. As in many other churches, Mountain Brook Baptist Church indulged in periodic ice cream socials. Dr. Nelson loved to have his "cone of cream," as he called it. By this time, food service in the church was so essential that additional

kitchen staff were employed to help with cooking and clean-up. Among the helpers was Clarice Burch, head cook for about ten years (1958-1969). She endeared herself to many kitchen observers. (She would be brought back as head hostess in 1994.) Irene Hawkins retired at age 62, but she remained in church membership, active in Torchbearers Sunday School, until her death on February 1, 2002 at age 86.



Above: Irene Hawkins, who served as church hostess from 1957-1978, pictured with her husband, Edward.



Right: Vivian Sultis, who served as church hostess from 1978-1994, pictured with her husband, Jim.



Left: Clarice taught Catherine and Traci Allen to make her famous roulage recipe, which has been one of Mountain Brook Baptist Church's signature dishes for over twenty years.



Right: Carrie Hanson has served as our church hostess since 2013.

Irene was succeeded as chief chef of the church by another church member, Vivian Sultis. Her husband Jim Sultis was transferred to Birmingham by his business, and they joined Mountain Brook Baptist Church on August 1, 1976, coming from the First Baptist Church of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. With them came son Chris and daughter Karen (later married to Paul Sparks Jr.). The Sultis family actively helped in every phase of the church. Jim became a Deacon. When Vivian became church hostess in fall 1978, Jim helped in the kitchen and staffed the ticket-purchase table during meal functions. Vivian was an excellent cook who ran the business of the kitchen efficiently, with Jim's help. More helpers were employed, enabling Vivian to serve as hostess until she was 73, when she retired in 1994. Both Vivian and Jim died in 2008, having remained active in the church as long as they were able.

At about this time, the fellowship hall got another big enlargement, and the kitchen was again updated. To lead the church hostessing, the church turned to an old friend, Mrs. Clarice Burch. Born in 1928, she was daughter of a Baptist pastor, and she had an excellent education. She had many years of experience in good restaurants in town. Notably, she had worked at the famous Cobbs Corner Cupboard tea room and restaurant on the Southside of Birmingham. The place was preferred for fancy ladies' parties, but men also loved the house specialties: baked chicken, she-crab soup, yeast rolls, and the enviable roulage—a rich chocolate roll-up confection that Mrs. Virginia Cobb claimed to have learned to make in France. The owner guarded her proprietary recipes closely. She liked to make the roulage herself, without the employees watching too closely. When Clarice Burch became hostess at Mountain Brook Baptist Church, she arrived with Mrs. Cobb's techniques locked in her memory. She had been warned not to write anything down while working for Mrs. Cobb, but she observed carefully (despite being scolded). Her chocolate roulage became the signature dish of special meals at the church.

Church members enjoyed working with Clarice to plan menus, to try special new recipes, and to decorate beautifully. For really important events, Clarice might make her famous yeast rolls—or roulage. For one senior adult banquet, Mountain Brook Baptist Church hosted the choir from Clarice's beloved church for lunch and an outstanding concert. Clarice is a member of Bethel Baptist Church. Clarice served Mountain Brook Baptist Church for 17 years, retiring at age 83 at the end of 2011. The church threw a big retirement party for her, with special guests from among her church and from her large, distinguished family. She and her husband, the late Lonnie Burch, had been married 59 years before his death in 2005. They had five children. While Clarice was running the kitchen, church members launched into new, elevated table graces. In 1994, the Heritage Guild was organized, with Carolyn Brinson Reed as the founding president. Special luncheons were held, one of them featuring food and cooking demonstration by Frank Stitt, who became Birmingham's premier world-famous restaurateur. The Heritage Guild began the custom of hosting luncheons during Holy Week. The Guild enlisted some new hostessing and cooking talent from the congregation—both men and women. Gourmet meals were served, and recipes were shared in small booklets.

(Continued on back)