

OUR PASTOR LEADING AMONG BAPTISTS

When the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship called upon Doug Dortch to join the new Governing Board in 2013, the entire Fellowship of 1800 churches gained a leader of sterling quality. Doug's first position of leadership was to chair the Advancement Committee, which he led to embrace both the expected topic of fundraising strategy for our Fellowship's mission around the world and the less tactical, but more deeply relevant, task of deepening the advancement of Christ-centered identity for CBF within and among our churches. Doug's leadership of the Governing Board enlightened and propelled CBF forward.

As a result of his trusted leadership, he was named Moderator in 2016 and helped to shape the nature of the roles and responsibilities of the CBF Moderator position. With his guidance, CBF launched a very fruitful 25th Anniversary Campaign to support healthy churches, global missions, and young Baptists, and the seeds of its success and formation are to be found in Doug's capacity to put into practice the ideas germinated in the earlier Advancement Committee strategies.

Perhaps the most uncertain days in recent CBF history have been the months of deliberation around what was called "the Illumination Project." Doug Dortch as Moderator and then as Past Moderator was heavily invested in that process. I remember Doug coming to an important and deliberative meeting, sitting silently while others spoke, and then taking his time to talk about his study and preparation for a recent sermon series. "I have been studying the mind of Christ." That powerful statement hung in the air in a moment of unforgettable relevance as he continued. "This important descriptive phrase is found in Scripture and lets us know that the mind of Christ must have been compelling to the disciples and the rest of the believers. So, let's spend some time asking the questions before us today with a deliberate effort to discern the mind of Christ." This statement was a turning point moment for the depth and maturity of the CBF leaders tasked with loving and serving a diverse Fellowship.

There is no need to remind the members of Mountain Brook Baptist Church of Doug's eloquent and effective capacity to communicate the gospel and his skill as a wordsmith to craft a great phrase or a humorous and wise anecdote. By the time Doug Dortch left his posts of leadership for CBF as Past Moderator, he had shared with CBF in many settings and had delivered two powerful and inspiring addresses from the podium at the General Assembly. One reporter asked after Doug's first address, "Can we get a quote from that elegant and powerful preacher? Don't see those qualities in the same person very often."

Scripture is light. Words can be light. Leadership can be light. Doug Dortch shines with the light of a Christ-centered ministry...and the churches, missions, and people of CBF are no doubt brighter because of it.

Suzii Paynter
Former Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship



Dr. Dortch speaks at the 2017 Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly.



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

ENDURING FRIENDSHIPS

*Since my youth, God, You have taught me, and to this day I declare Your marvelous deeds (Psalm 71:17).
A friend loves at all times (Proverbs 17:17).*

A special event of the 75th Anniversary happened on April 27. Long-ago “youths” of Mountain Brook Baptist Church had a reunion at Hargis Christian Retreat—about three dozen of them. Meet them: a church youth group that so bonded together, that they keep in touch after 40 to 50 years.

In 1985, a small group from the church’s classes of 1971 and 1972 decided to get together in order for their children to meet and spend time together. Unfortunately, one of the organizers, Jan O’Quinn Young, passed away from cancer before the scheduled event. The decision was made to proceed with the gathering. Jan’s husband, daughter and son attended, as did beloved Lester and Dot Barker, the minister of music and organist.

The group commissioned a painting in Jan’s memory, to hang in the church nursery area. The painting shows children playing on what was then the new church playground, and two of the children depict Jan’s children. (The painting hangs today in a children’s reception area on the second floor.)

By word of mouth, other former Mountain Brook Baptist Church youth heard about the reunion. Voices echoed from youth groups of the late 1960s to the 1980s. “We want to see our old friends, too,” they said. An informal committee kept on collecting contact information for the “old youth.” A few years later, another reunion was staged, greatly enlarged.

The next reunion was held in November 2014 in Hudson Hall. Mary Lou Crutcher, widow of a youth minister, attended, along with the new pastor, Doug Dortch. Former associate pastor Bryant Strain and his wife Ruth, and former minister of education Hoyt Wilson and his wife Janet also attended. Networking, email, Evite, and Facebook helped over 100 “old youth” to be in touch. At each reunion people remembered the 1970s, when several church ministers helped the youth bond through many adventures. One of the first youth ministers was Barbara Thurman (later Griffin), who led the youth when they anchored their activities in “The Rock,” the youth center located to the west of the Chapel. She served from 1968-1970, but took a position in Texas where she married and still lives in 2019. She has stayed in touch with some of her flock of Mountain Brook Baptist Church youth. Next came Robert “Bob” Crutcher with wife Mary Lou, who served from 1971-1975 and again from 1980-1983, followed by James W. Parrish (1976-1980).

Lester Barker (minister of music from 1963-1976) had a big influence on generations of youth. He built a large youth choir that toured from Mexico and south Texas to Pittsburgh, Washington D.C., and Chicago. He helped to organize beach retreats in Panama City, and even inspired the owner of a hotel facility there to build a meeting room where the choir could rehearse. Randall Veazey followed as minister of music from 1977-1985, with emphasis on a large youth choir. The youth of 50 years ago kept photos and have made video shows to share in the periodic reunions.



The painting memorializing Jan O’Quinn Young.

Some of the Youth Reunion group of April 27, 2019. (Photo courtesy of Claude Rhea III). Front Row (L-R): Patricia Brown Baughman, Minda Barker Cedeno, Bill Casey, Nancy Johnson Polidoro, Cindy Lutenbacher, Marilyn Cox Sykes, Charles Barker, Janet Walker, Martha King Fulghum, Kim Williamson Johnson, Michelle Lyons Rushing, Cindy Barker (Charlie’s wife). Back Row (L-R): Julie Thomas Gilliom, John Compton, Richard Williams, Merritt Burgin, Cecil Ingram, Rob Ballard, Debbie Ward McIntosh, David McIntosh, Henry Teel, Randy Brown, Susan Little Foster, Elaine Arbuckle Teel, Rusty Foster, Harriet Smith Lawrence, Anna Williams, Kathy Cox Petro, Ann Weaver Knight, Gail Gunter Brown. Not pictured: Luanne Burgin, Claude Rhea III, Ellen Mears Duncan.



For some of the recent reunion bunch, it had been about 50 years since they first bonded at Mountain Brook Baptist Church. As one person said, “Maybe we are now old enough to appreciate the role this group played in our development. Old enough to realize that we have been able to weather life’s storms, because of the foundation we developed years ago. And we realize how unique our friendships are. Old enough to appreciate the investment parents and ministers made in our lives. In other words, we are old!”

One of the youth alumni, Margaret Black Odom, couldn’t make it to the latest reunion, but she described her memories: “...being involved with Mountain Brook Baptist Church since 1956; watching the church grow from the small Chapel into what it has become, the Sunday when Dr. Nelson received the vote to be our pastor ... Amnesia hasn’t arrived! Will be thinking of you.”

Some of the old youth network remain as stalwarts in Mountain Brook Baptist Church, such as Cecil Berry Avery, Rob Ballard, Debby Brown Brittain, Tricia Brown Baughman, Lisa Paden Gaines, Cecil Ingram, Duane Randleman, Michelle Lyons Rushing, Don Moore, Lee Smith, Sharon Smith Howard, Lynn Weaver Williams, Anna Williams, and Richard Williams. Others of the old gang have migrated to churches like Brookwood and Dawson and Vestavia Hills. The recent reunion attracted six who now live in Tennessee, three from Georgia, and one each from Mississippi and North Carolina. Ann Weaver Knight is a member of Vestavia Hills Baptist, but she works part-time in the office of Mountain Brook Baptist Church.

Here are some of the recent reunion crowd who are now serving in other churches: Claude H. Rhea III, Harriet Smith Lawrence, Minda Barker Cedeno, Billy Casey, Nancy Johnson Polidoro, Cindy Lutenbacher, Marilyn Cox Sykes, Charles Barker and wife Cindy, Janet Walker, Martha King Fulghum, Kim Williamson Johnson, Julie Thomas Gilliom, John Compton, Merritt Burgin, Debbie Ward McIntosh, Henry Teel and Elaine Arbuckle Teel, Randy Brown and Gail Gunter Brown, Susan Little Foster and Rusty Foster, Kathy Cox Petro, Ann Weaver Knight, Anne Owens Kendrick, Ellen Mears Duncan, and Luanne Burgin.

Many of the alumni who network, but who were unable to make the reunion this year, are children of historic leaders of Mountain Brook Baptist Church, such as William “Buddy” Nelson, Debbie McKewen Ferguson and husband Bob, Janet Jackson Bishop (whose father was interim music minister), and many others.

Here’s a challenge to today’s young people in Mountain Brook Baptist Church: Can you carry your church friends in your heart and address book for 50 years forward? Can you learn from each other today and care for each other through life ahead? Church youth friends become more precious as years roll past.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:11).