

BUILDING FOR ETERNITY

Builders for Christ has been one of my personal favorite mission avenues. I participated in ten years of building. My first year was in Litchfield, Connecticut in 1988, when we helped the Friendship Baptist Church. Then I went to Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Ohio, Illinois, Maine, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Illinois again, and Kansas. The last place I personally helped to build was in 1998 at the Pearl Street Baptist



Bim Burgin (left) and Scooter Walker (right), on the site of North Port Baptist Church in Bridgeport, Connecticut in June 1984. Both men were active members of Mountain Brook Baptist Church and participated in Builders for Christ.

Church in Paola, Kansas. Each place was different and interesting. It seemed that we were making an impact for Christ even while we built. But I often wondered about the long-range value of our work.

Once I had a business meeting in Pennsylvania. One Saturday afternoon I got someone to drive me 35 miles to Hazelton where we had helped build the Crusade Baptist Church in 1989. As we arrived at the church parking lot, a young lady was pulling in at the same time, going into the church building. I learned that this lady lived in the neighborhood. She had not been a Christian until she was attracted to the church during the building process. She joined the church and began teaching teen girls. On that day I visited, she was going in to prepare to teach on Sunday. That was a great thrill for me to see the impact for Christ from our building effort.

Bim Burgin and I represented our church working with Lawrence Corley, a Brookwood Baptist Church architect and chief organizer of Builders, along with the pastor of Meadow Brook

Baptist Church to pre-plan our church building projects. We went to pre-plan in North Berwick, Maine, on the weekend of March 13, 1993. I was at Destin, Florida prior to that weekend. Hearing about the cold weather in Maine, I called from Destin to get Bim Burgin to go to my house to get me a topcoat. In Maine, it was snowing—two feet had already accumulated—when we arrived. We could hear the snowplow coming by, and the next morning the mailboxes were covered. Bim and I stayed with a couple who had donated land where the New Covenant Baptist Church was to be built. They were fascinating. The husband had laid out his property like checkerboard squares. Each year he changed his crops to a square that had been fallow the previous year. One square was always devoted to his wife’s cut flowers which she sold in the front yard. He was meticulous in agricultural record keeping. I could see why God would bless this couple so they could make way for a new church.

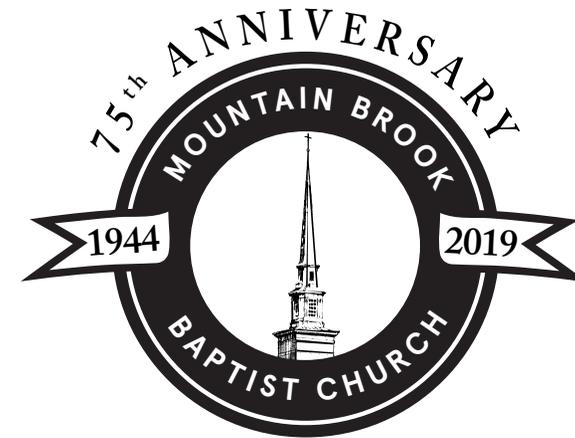
I got a lot of personal satisfaction in participating in church building and was always pleased with this and our other mission efforts. More recently, Ed Wills has represented our church in leading our team for Builders for Christ. In 2017, the team helped to rebuild the Roaring Fork Baptist Church in Gatlinburg, whose original building had been destroyed by forest fire. In 2018, the team returned to the 2006 church: Jacob’s Well in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

It has been delightful to work with our Mountain Brook Baptist Church people on these building efforts. I always enjoyed working with two fine brothers: Bill and Dan Baker. Once they got into an argument about how to install some air ducts. Dan said to Bill: “You just wait till we get home. I’m going to tell Mama on you!” Their mama, Mrs. Alta Baker, known as Jack, was amazing; she was so funny and so straight-laced and lived to about age 104. Nobody could give any back-talk to Mrs. Baker. Well, there was one—a lady who coached women for modeling, beauty, and pageants. She was Bea Talford McLaughlin Jones. She was not at all shy. One day she said to Mrs. Baker, “Don’t wear that hat anymore!”

Our church has been blessed with so many wonderful people—always willing to go out to help others.

William M. “Bill” Johnson

(In the early 1990s, Bill chaired the first missions committee)



MAY 5, 2019

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

GREAT BUILDERS OF PEOPLE AND CHURCH BUILDINGS

Builders for Christ has been an integral part of my life for the past 30 years. I have made lifelong friends on these trips. In my mid 20s, I became friends with Bim Burgin, Ed Miller, Scooter Walker, and Joe Cassese. These folks are no longer with us, but I will fondly remember them for the wisdom they shared with me as a young man.

Builders for Christ is a construction ministry, but it is much more than that. It is a time where:

- Members of Mountain Brook Baptist Church can come together and create lifelong friendships, despite the age difference.
- Other churches join our team each year while we are serving on the Builders for Christ trips. Friendships can form with members from those churches. Each year it is like a family reunion when we can all be together again.
- Friendships can develop with the members of the local church where you are working.

Ed Miller was our chief problem solver with heating and cooling systems. He was a brilliant MIT engineer who could answer questions, solve problems, and explain details in terms that anyone could understand. He never had a tape measure, but he kept a folding ruler in his pocket to measure stuff. After Ed Miller passed away, some of his tools were donated to the church's Builders for Christ tool collection. I remember him every time I see one of his tools.

Joe Cassese was a gruff New Yorker on the outside, but he had a heart of gold. When Thomas, my son, was six or seven, I can vividly remember seeing Joe drive the big forklift with Thomas sitting in his lap. I don't know which of them was having more fun.

On another trip, my son spent an entire plane trip quizzing Jack Pfrimmer on electrical stuff. They have been friends ever since.

These friendships would have never developed if it were not for the Builders for Christ trips.

Ed Wills



Above: David Bell, John Crow, and Wayne Splawn serve on the site of First Southern Baptist in Eudora, Kansas.

Left: The team always eats well on the trip thanks to the work of Jo Wills! Pictured here is the lunch crew from the 2009 trip: Emily Wells, Crystal Chestang, Jo Wills, Mary Splawn, Edna Israel, Reid Wills, Jo Nell Hales, and Charlene Chestang.



BUILDERS FOR CHRIST MISSION TRIP MEMORIES

Among the greatest blessings of being a member of Mountain Brook Baptist Church was the opportunity to join with others in helping build a Southern Baptist church somewhere in the U.S. The fellowship was divine, the bonding with others in the group uplifting, and the overall religious experience unparalleled.

On every trip there were memorable events, mostly happy ones, but sometimes sad, even tragic. At the First Baptist Church in Chalmette, Louisiana in 2007, we saw first-hand the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina—hundreds of empty houses around the church community. We were unable to begin electrical work on the church because the walls were not yet constructed, so instead we rewired several church staff member homes which had been completely under water. While at a nearby Home Depot store buying materials, the manager gave me a picture of the front of their building as the flood waters crested several feet above the top of the front doors.

During the Pearl Street Baptist Church trip to Paola, Kansas in 1998 I shared a room with Dan Baker at a 103 year-old Roman Catholic nunnery. Only about 30 Ursuline sisters were still there, down from a peak of about 150 in the 1960s. Dan and I returned from the job site one evening to find that a squirrel had invaded our room, left a calling card on Dan's pillow, and was still there! After several minutes of chasing that varmint around the room, it finally went out our door and escaped through a damaged window screen in the hall.

At the South Coast Community Church job in Portland, Maine in 2000, our motel was only a few yards from a train track. A freight train came through every night about 2 a.m. and woke us up. The clackety-clack of the wheels on a rail joint was very loud, and I found I couldn't resist counting the number of cars in the train every night!

Then there was the time our very own pastor ran afoul of the law—well, Campus Security actually. We were staying in a dormitory at Merrimack College (in North Andover, Massachusetts) in 1999, while building the Island Pond Baptist Church in Hampstead, New Hampshire. One evening as we arrived back at the campus after work, we found a chain across the main entrance. Dr. James D. Moebes drove the van around to the opposite side of the campus, but there was a chain there also. Under considerable urging from me and his other passengers, Jim drove around the chained gate posts and reached the dormitory—just ahead of a campus police car. A somewhat tense conversation followed, but the issue was resolved peacefully with no one ticketed or jailed.



Jack Pfrimmer, pictured with Meadow Brook Baptist Church member Mae Haygood, at First Southern Baptist in Eudora, Kansas in 2009.

Jack Pfrimmer



Jack Pfrimmer, pictured at Hope Chapel in Sterling, Massachusetts.