

'The Scriptures tell us to teach our children'

Four Edmond members have taught so long that they remember when some students' parents were in their Bible classes.

By Ann Jayne 8.26.18

When a baby is born into the Edmond church family, the parents become the child's first Bible teachers.

Standing ready to support that family are faithful volunteers who help bring the stories, people and lessons of the Bible to life.

Four of Edmond's longest-serving Bible school teachers are Susan Fuller, Tamie Willis, Camey Johnson and Maudie Surber. They have served so long — nearly 100 years combined — that second-generation students now appear frequently in their classes.

Susan has taught toddlers and 2-year-olds for 38 years. She started after her first son was born. Among her current students is Tate Marshall, daughter of Sarah (Risley) Marshall, one of her previous students.

Asked why she has kept at it so long, Susan replied simply: "Because that's what I am supposed to do. The Scriptures tell us to teach our children."

Each teacher who gives a quarter, a year or multiple years of service makes a tremendous impact in the life of the

church and its classes, children's ministry director Brenda Gordon said.

"In the cases of these four extraordinary women, it's multiplied that many times over," Brenda said. "The work they do is incredible. Our teachers are some of our children's first look at the Bible in a setting outside their home."

In the nursery, this takes age-appropriate form with songs about God making worms that are green and bugs that can't be seen. Toddler classes continue with songs and manipulatives about creation. By preschool, it's time to cut and paste, fold and staple and march in the Lord's army.

Four-year-olds and pre-K students begin to really use the Bibles so many bring each week. By the end of that year, they're nearly ready for the trip upstairs and the transition to kindergarten. That first Sunday inside Mrs. Camey's class isn't so much about the trek or the distance, but the ex-

pectations.

Camey tells the class she expects their best behavior each week



Camey Johnson

and listening ears when she speaks. She explains how they'll be given notebooks and bags to take home and bring back each week, adding a page each week until they're full. She instructs them on Bobby the Bible Bear and memorizing Scripture, bringing canned items for the church pantry and placing coins into the classroom Change for Change can, which has helped fund mission trips, fireplace stockings at Christmas, missionary families, donations for soldiers and Thanksgiving baskets.

"The point is no matter what we give, it can make a difference," Camey tells the class.

She likens her students to "little sponges" and says they learn more than most people think possible.

"They absorb everything," she said, which is reflected not only in the curriculum she teaches, but in each prayer request she takes and honors. While most kids want prayers for their families, some feel moved to thank God for frogs as well as lemons. (Camey said one little girl always



Susan Fuller

thanked God for lemons because “she said ‘I could eat all of the lemons in the world.’”)

By the time they celebrate kindergarten graduation with a family cookout and demonstrate what they’ve learned, these boys and girls know the details of creation, can name the Fruits of the Spirit and books of the Old and New Testaments, the apostles and the Sons of Israel.

Camey’s personal favorite Bible story?

“Peter walking on the water,” she said. “Peter could hear and see Jesus, which equals that his heart and mind were on Jesus. But the storm took his eyes and ears, and subsequently his heart and mind off Jesus. When he began to sink, all Jesus had to do was hold out His hand.”

Camey wants her kids to know that no matter what they do or what happens to them, Jesus is right there with them. “All we have to do is take His hand.”

Tamie Willis serves as Bible class director for grades two to six and has taught children’s Bible classes at Edmond for 40 years, when she and husband Kirk placed membership.

Tamie and Brenda Risley helped launch Edmond’s current curriculum, which is geared toward the grades she directs and covers a full year. Developed by Sally Frazier and discovered by Risley when she visited a congregation in Duncan, Okla., the lessons are arranged chronologically and incorporate a theme. Each year

includes reviews from the previous year and builds from there.

Tamie rotates her teaching schedule through each grade she supervises, allowing her to check lessons and materials. When pressed, she says she particularly enjoys her stints teaching third grade. “They study the last half of the Old Testament, the narratives and what they teach us. There are battles, kings, romance ... this fascinates the kids.

The teachers like it and study the stories they don’t know very well. Everyone learns so much.”

Making learning fun is important to Tamie, and the curriculum allows for this while keeping structure, she said. Each grade has a particular study and emphasis, such as knowing the Bible, Bible research, service, missions and prayer.

Its purpose is real, and displayed in students and teachers, she said: “Learn and be blessed.”

When meeting with new teachers, she stresses this aspect and encourages them to consider teaching at least two quarters. She also recruits parents to teach or assist in class so that they can get to know their children’s friends.

During these years, classes are highly interactive. Memory verses and the major and minor prophets are learned, as well as all 66 books of the Bible. Students who complete the last task are recognized as part of the

“66 Club” in the hallway outside their wing and celebrate at the end of the year.

In Maudie Surber’s Wednesday night first-grade class, the focus is the history of the Jewish Nation. Utilizing *The Chronological Bible* by F. LeGard Smith, students learn about Old Testament events from the creation to King Solomon. “I love reading it,” Maudie said. “I read it every year.”

She also loves bringing characters and settings to life. She helps the class travel back in time to meet Zipporah — which is Maudie’s favorite lesson — or a host of other Bible characters, enter their tents, see an oil lamp and clay jar, and ask questions.

“Their eyes get as wide as saucers,” Maudie says, laughing. “They get to march around Jericho and follow the pillar of fire in their conquest of Canaan, taking time to ‘camp out’

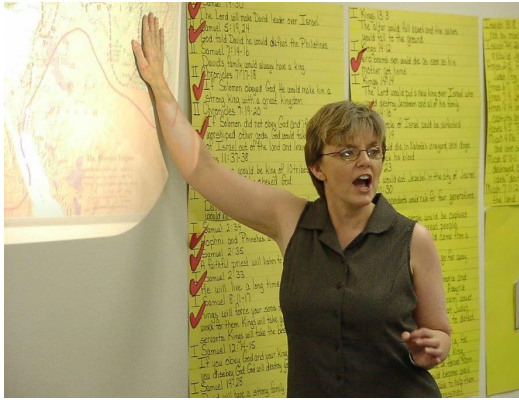
on the stairwell before going outside to follow the pillar of fire around the church building.

“The Bible is a textual book. We read it and try to visualize,” Maudie said, adding that stories like that of Ehud

and Eglon in Judges 3:15-26 are among those the class tackles.

She says her work at church is some of her most rewarding and called 2018 a landmark year: Fifteen of the 2018 group of seniors at Edmond were Surber’s former students.

“I just love the lessons and want to perpetuate them,” Maudie said.



Tamie Willis



Maudie Surber