

**BEE RIDGE**

**CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH**



**1832 - 1982**

**150th ANNIVERSARY**



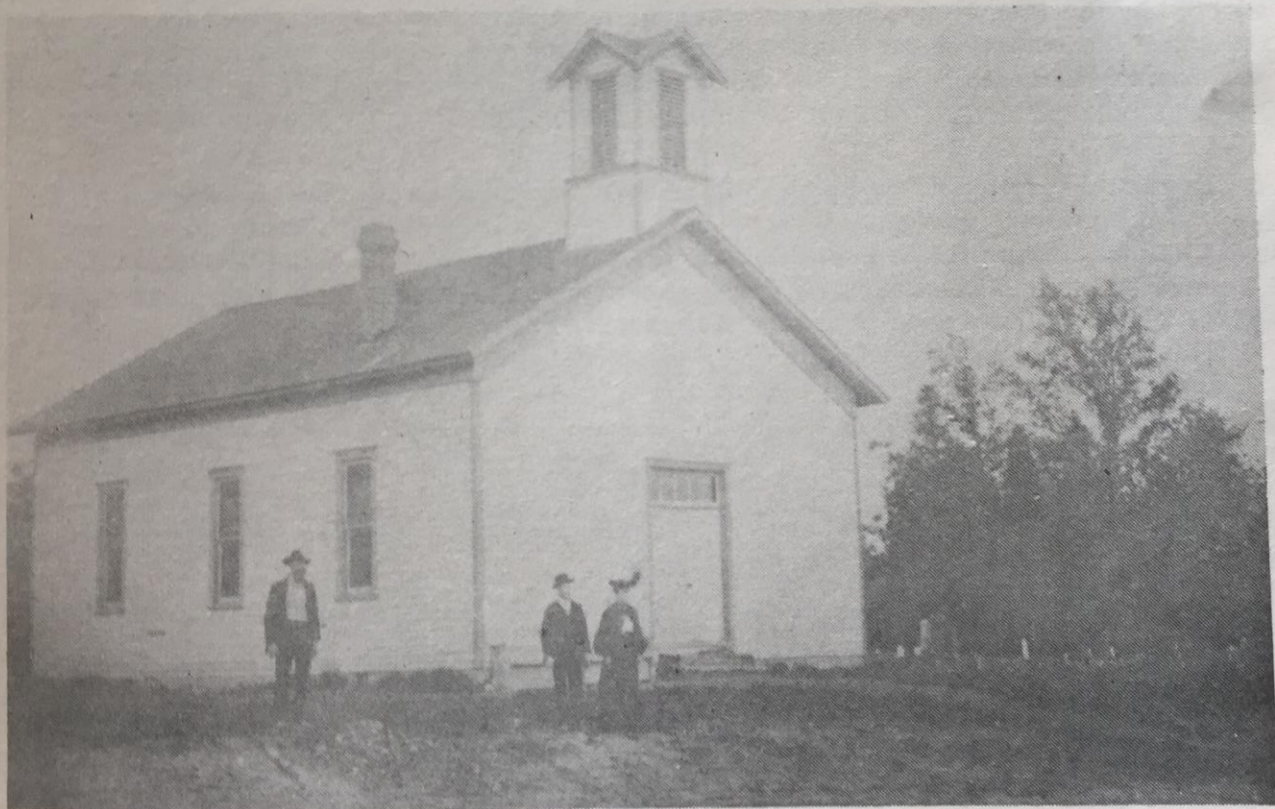
## CHURCH HISTORY

1832 - 1982

The Bee Ridge Church is located in Dick Johnson Township, on the Rockville - Bowling Green Road, at the top of a ridge or hill south of Otter Creek and a mile and a half north of the Kennedy Crossing of the old National Road. It was the first church founded in the northern part of Clay County and, in fact, it was claimed by the founders and first patrons to be the oldest in the county.

In the ten-year period of 1828-1838, many families settled along a heavily forested ridge named by the settlers for the numerous bee trees found there. Amid the rigors of frontier life, these people realized the need for a religious arrangement providing regular meetings for worship and spiritual guidance. From this need evolved the Bee Ridge Christian (New-Light) Church, organized in 1832 at the home of Elder Louis Fortner, with Elders Crossley and Scrogans participating in its institution.

The society that turned into the Bee Ridge Church was a result of the Cane Ridge Revival. At first, the services were conducted in the various homes, chief of which was the home of John Downing. In 1834, when Elders Fortner, Crossley, and Scrogans emigrated westward, Elder William Yocum conducted the meetings. Within three years came Elders Jonathon Murphy and William Wyatt. Following a series of meetings, Francis B. Yocum and Alexander Cabbage were ordained.



Constructed in 1870 this building replaced the original log structure built on this site.      circa 1901



In 1837, it was decided to build a house of worship. Francis B. Yocum gave the ground still occupied by the church, with the special provision that it belonged to the church so long as it remained a Christian Church. At that time the land was an unbroken forest. On the day set for the beginning of construction, all responded promptly to the call. After the trees were felled, they were lined and scored by the men. Elder William Yocum hewed the first log, as he did most of them. The carpenter work was done by Jonathon Murphy, Solomon Myers, and Berryman James.

The log structure included an open fireplace in the north end, a large wood stove in the center, a pulpit, and seats made of planks. The building, probably 35 feet by 25 feet, faced the east. In the year 1832, Elder Jonathon Murphy made a small table or stand, without nails, which was given to the church and which still stands before the pulpit.

In the year the building was begun the society was reorganized under the leadership of Elders William Yocum, Jonathon Murphy, Alexander Cabbage and William Wyatt. Elders Cabbage and Francis Yocum were important in holding the church together. They were often visited and assisted by Brothers Kee, Davis, Duly, McKinney, and David Hayes. Later on came Elders Carney, Phillips and Akers.

At this time, some new religious notions were put into practice. Women were given the same rights as men in the church and co-education was set up at Antioch College in Ohio. Later, Old Union Christian College was built at Merom, Indiana, and dedicated on Christmas Day, 1860. Baptism by immersion was the only form adopted by the Bee Ridge Christian Church. The first immersions after the organization of the society were those of Alexander Cabbage, Orpha Cabbage, Mary James and Campbell Gipson. This rite was performed in December, 1833, in Otter Creek. The assemblage sang, "If Your Hearts Be Warm, Ice and Snow Can Do No Harm."

Regular church services were held once each month, other services being held by local ministers. From its incipience, the church has placed stress on singing, and it has at various times produced notable achievements. In those first years, the congregation sang with the leader "lining" the songs. He would sing one or two lines and the congregation repeated them after him.

The cemetery south of the church was opened the same year in which the church was built. This land was also given by Francis B. Yocum. The timber was cut and the ground cleared by Beverly Baldwin, Levi Stewart, Arnold Cabbage, George W. James, Samuel M. Stewart, and William Y. Downing, who also dug the first grave, in which was buried one of Elder Jonathon Murphy's children.

The community was also education-minded, and for a time (until a school was built) the church was used for school purposes.

In 1870, a new frame structure, twenty by thirty-six feet, was built on the original site. It had a seating capacity for some 250 people. This building was constructed with a belfrey, housing a bell which summoned people to church. It was also tolled when there was a burial in the cemetery.

In 1923, when Rev. Hendershot was pastor, the frame building was remodeled. A basement was completed, a furnace installed, and the church walls were redecorated. Four years later, the plain glass windows were replaced by stained glass memorial ones.





In 1923 the frame structure was remodeled. By 1936 this building would be lost to fire, but from the ashes would rise the third and present Bee Ridge Church.



In 1929, during the ministry of Russell Sieford, an organization of the young people of the church entered a contest promoted by Oakley's Grocery, in which the entrants collected can wrappers for Oakley products. The young people collected bushels of wrappers and won the prize, a shetland pony. The pony was sold for fifty dollars, thirty-five of which were expended for two beautiful pictures in which Christ is shown. These pictures have always been placed on the front wall of the church. The remaining fifteen dollars were given to the church fund. On the morning the wrappers were counted, it was discovered an ever-ardent friend of the church who had over-imbibed was helping carry the bags of wrappers into the store to be counted. Then when they were counted, he carried them to the back of the store, out the back door and again in the front. However, the church youth group had so clearly won without his assistance that the story was not widely circulated.

On May 30, 1936, the National Road (U.S. 40) was being reconstructed between Terre Haute and Brazil, and so traffic was detoured from Terre Haute via the Rio Grande Road and south again past the church. A St. Louis traveler going to the Memorial Day Five Hundred Mile Race noted the church was afire at about 2:30 a.m. He stopped his car and went into the building. It was too late to save the structure but he called in help and succeeded in getting the piano, old stand table, two large pictures, song books, upholstered chairs and a few of the pews out of the building. The other of the equipment was completely destroyed. Only the basement remained after the embers had cooled.

The Township Trustee granted permission for the church services to be held in the Bee Ridge School building. Here the Sunday morning services were conducted and the evening services were dispensed with until such time as plans could be made for a new building.

A meeting was called and State Superintendent Simon A. Bennett was invited to take part in the deliberations. After another meeting or two the plans for erecting a new building were perfected. The Trustees, Marion Applegate, Ross Weaver, and Gifford Downing, assisted by all of the people of the community, began the task of erecting a building with only two thousand dollars which they had received from the insurance company and the offer of logs and small amounts of money from interested people. Throughout the weeks that they were engaged in building a splendid spirit of cooperation existed and the work was done in record time.

Time and space would not permit a list of all of those who contributed to make this building program become a reality. Suffice it to say that not only the people of the Bee Ridge community, but those from outlying districts, including Brazil, were very liberal.

On June 13, 1937, the new brick veneer building was dedicated. At the service it was explained that there was not a cent of indebtedness against the new building and that there was a surplus of a little more than thirty dollars in the building fund. It was a great day for this little community when they were permitted to begin their services in their new church home. From out the ashes of the past there arose not only a building dedicated to the worship of God, but also a new spirit of friendliness and cooperation which can oftentimes be detected only in times of stress and strain.



Progress through work was the adopted practice by all the congregation from the day of dedication to the present moment. Many forward steps have been taken.

In April of 1939 the trustees were asked by Earnest Swearingen to have the congregation to consider the plot of land just north of the church site as a site for a new cemetery. After some consideration the trustees were instructed to make the purchase. Again the trustees signed a note to borrow four hundred dollars (400.00) from a local bank. The transaction was completed; the first section was plotted and the single grave lot was sold at five dollars (5.00) or a six grave lot for twenty (20.00) dollars. James Anderson was the first person buried in the new cemetery. The second section of the north cemetery is now open and a flagpole has been added.

Our driveway and parking lot was enlarged, rocked and graveled to take care of an increasing church population. Today we have adequate parking for our church, services for funerals, services during the entire year with its fair or inclement weather.

Another forward step was taken when it was decided to install a tape recorder and public address system which can be used either indoors or for cemetery services.

Music has always played a vital part in the worship services of the Bee Ridge Church. To assist in the worship program of the church a Hammond electric organ was purchased and installed in the sanctuary. It has beautiful tones and is an inspiration to this singing church. The project was sponsored by the young people and the older members responded splendidly with gifts to the organ fund.

Beautiful red choir robes were purchased and may be seen at such times as the choir appears.



Trustees, Elders, Deacons; (from left) John Russell Cox, Ernest Weaver, Tim Weaver, Gene Mathews, Bert Baysinger, Robert Munn, Don Loughmiller, (not pictured) Dale Brown, John Cox Sr.





Choristers and Musicians; (front row) Leah Short, Helen Stewart, Ruth Eppert, (back row) John Russell Cox, Chris Loughmiller, Madge Weaver.

The Ladies Aid Society, 1905-1969, was a noteworthy organization of the church. The ladies faithfully devoted many hours and much effort in helping the church in both financial and spiritual ways.

The kitchen was used so frequently and by so many groups that the Ladies Aid of the church had it remodelled. They installed a gas stove, running water, built in cabinets, folding tables, a serving counter, and an electric water heater. Much of this work was supervised by James Sanders and Harry Boswell.

Another outstanding addition to the building was the new entrance to the east side of the basement. In conjunction with this entrance was erected a small storage room for the caretaker's equipment. The brick work was supervised by James Cutshall. Many others assisted by the donation of both labor and money.

An outdoor baptistry is located in the northeast corner of the church lot. It is sufficiently near the building that it can be filled with water from the well and heated by electricity. This addition was made necessary by the fact that the nearby creeks afford no suitable pool for outside baptismal services.

The old furnace that we placed in the new building served its allotted time and was replaced by a new unit. This had made possible the removal of all stoves from the building.



During the more than thirty-year ministry of James Conlin, the Bee Ridge Christian Church became a Congregational - Christian Church. In 1956-1961, it was decided that the Bee Ridge Church should remain independent of the merged churches forming the United Church of Christ, which became affiliated with the World Council of Churches.

To this day Bee Ridge remains a shining example of the free and independent religious belief in our Christian doctrine.

Since the anniversary observed in 1957, many material additions to the church improvement have been purchased or contributed. These include:

- \* a new communion service -- in memory of Rolla and Mary Flossie Biggs
- \* a tape library and tape players
- \* storm windows and airconditioning
- \* a mimeograph machine and file cabinets
- \* songbooks -- many of which were contributed in memory of Maude Weaver, Freida Cox, and John Loughmiller and of other persons beloved by members of the congregation
- \* new pews -- given in memory of: Henry and Carrie Downing, Wesley and Emma Downing, Bonnie Wilson and Jessie Sanders, Max and Laura Stewart. The others were contributed by individuals or by church groups.
- \* church bell restored to use -- 1975
- \* flowering crabtree -- near baptistry, in memory of Lena Wilson, who, though a member of First Christian Church, was for many years active in the primary department of the Bee Ridge Sunday School especially as a teacher during first quarter of this century.
- \* drainage tile -- done to protect the basement
- \* wall paneling and drapes
- \* christening font -- in memory of Marie White
- \* two new pianos

Services dedicated to God, to our fellow men and to spiritual self-improvement have included:

- \* New members added since 1957 totals 148
- \* Children christened since 1957 totals 55
- \* Church services held every Sunday (except 5th Sunday of a month) begun in June, 1978-9
- \* Material and labor support for Lighthouse Mission in Terre Haute
- \* Adult and Junior Bible Study groups which meet regularly
- \* Singing and services for the Hart Nursing Home
- \* Christmas caroling and distribution of fruit baskets to older members and to those of the community who should be remembered
- \* Bible School and various Youth activities
- \* Family - night dinners once a month





Sunday School Teachers and Officers; (from left) Don Brannan, Delores Mathews, Holley McClain, Karen Baysinger, Helen Stewart, Tim Weaver, Madge Weaver, Fred Whitkanack, Bert Baysinger.



The names of the ministers of the Bee Ridge Church (as nearly as possible in chronological order) are:

- 1) Louis Fortner - who hailed from Kentucky and three different times served his people in the state legislature
- 2) Francis B. Yocum - who lived south of the church and contributed the land for the church and south cemetery
- 3) David Hayes
- 4) Hiram Fortner - lived on what was known as the Weaver farm, later the home of Lawrence Dellacca
- 5) Louis Fortner - whose home was south of Otter Creek
- 6) A. D. Cabbage
- 7) Rev. McKinney - a scholarly man, possessed of much natural ability. He had the contract for the building of the first bridge across Otter Creek, at the site of the present bridge north of the church. He was remembered as superintending its construction while wearing a silk hat.
- 8) George Weston - a Civil War veteran who was incarcerated in Libby Prison and who was later buried in the Bee Ridge Cemetery. He conducted services in Bee Ridge Church during the 1870's.
- 9) Rev. J. T. Phillips
- 10) Rev. Simmons
- 11) Rev. Carney, Sr.
- 12) Rev. Carney, Jr.
- 13) Rev. Joseph Francis
- 14) Rev. John Carney
- 15) Rev. O. V. Rector
- 16) Rev. Lutell
- 17) Rev. Kibbey
- 18) Rev. B. W. Stoddard - a very quiet, reserved, scholarly man.
- 19) Rev. Gott
- 20) Rev. Mosteller
- 21) Rev. Hendershot - it was during his ministry the frame building was remodelled
- 22) Rev. Russell G. Sieford
- 23) Rev. J. W. Conlin - began serving when a sophomore at Merom College and served for over 30 years altogether although absent from service at the church during illness in his family and while a chaplain in W.W. II.
- 24) Rev. Harry Leap
- 25) Rev. E. M. Muncie - a Methodist minister, principal of Brazil Junior High, and a history teacher. He served Bee Ridge while Rev. Conlin was a chaplain in W.W. II.
- 26) Rev. J. W. Conlin
- 27) Rev. Loren Page - a retired Methodist minister, devoted to Bee Ridge and beloved in return. He was very scholarly and served from spring, 1958, to December 1975.
- 28) Rev. Herschel Seibert McCullough - began serving in January, 1976.





**BEE RIDGE CONGREGATION**



The records of the church clerk were lost in 1932 when fire destroyed the home of Ellis and Lucy Biggs. However, after diligent research and many interviews with elderly and informed persons, a reliable record was reconstructed for that early period and presented at the 1937 dedication. Leah Stewart Short compiled and recorded that history which has been used here and her sister, Helen Stewart, prepared this updated version.

Present (1982) officers of the Sunday School and Church are:

**TRUSTEES:**

- Ernest Weaver
- Bert Baysinger
- John Cox, Sr.

**ELDERS:**

- Timothy Weaver
- Bert Baysinger
- Robert Munn

**DEACONS:**

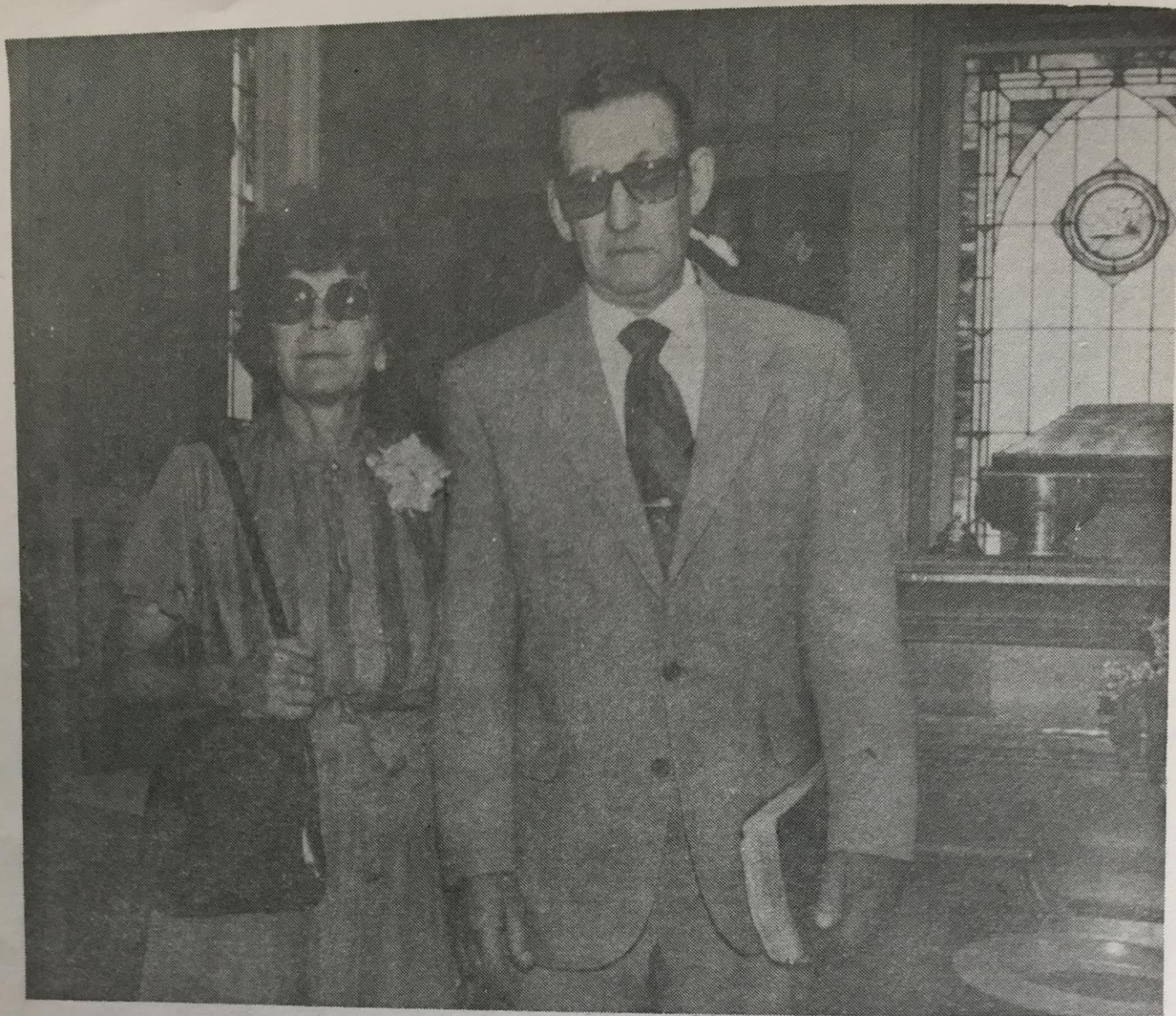
- Gene Mathews
- Donald Loughmiller
- Dale Brown
- John Russell Cox

**Sunday School and Church officers:**

PASTOR - Seibert McCullough  
SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT - Donald Brannan  
CLERK - Madge Weaver  
TREASURER - Delores Mathews  
CHORISTER - John Russell Cox  
ORGANIST - Leah Short  
PIANIST - Helen Stewart  
SUPERINTENDENT of CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT - Timothy Weaver  
PIANIST for CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT - Nanette Brown

This very old church has continued to put worship as its first priority. It remains a vital, ever-functioning part of the community. May its past serve as an inspiration and source of encouragement to the Bee Ridge Church in the future.





Hershel Seibert McCullough was ordained at Croy's Creek Church on August 16, 1970 and has served the ministry in several capacities since that time. On January 11, 1976 Seibert became the pastor of Bee Ridge after the retirement of Rev. Page who had ministered to the church since 1958. From 1976 until May of 1978 Seibert served both Ebenezer and Bee Ridge, before becoming our full time minister in June. Since that time he has conducted services every Sunday (except the 5th Sunday of the month) with an honest, down to Earth manner that the congregation appreciates.

The Bee Ridge Church has prospered in our Christian work during Seibert's ministry. Adult and Junior Bible Study groups were formed to further our knowledge of the scriptures. We undertook the task of helping those in need through individual assistance and support of the Light House Mission. Our efforts have brought much in the way of fellowship and Christian service to the congregation and are a reflection of Biblical messages Seibert has taught us.

Seibert and his wife, Betty, were married December 3, 1945 and have two sons and several grandchildren. They were raised in the Reelsville area and still live on the farm near his childhood home. Betty serves the church along with Seibert ministering to the needs of the sick or down-hearted, lending a helping hand, and sometimes leading the singing. Together they provide a stable and respected leadership for the Bee Ridge congregation.



The stormy March has come at last,  
With wind and cloud and changing skies.  
I hear the rushing of the blast  
That thru the snowy valley flies.  
Oh thoughtless few are they who speak  
Wild stormy month in praise of thee,  
But though thy winds are cold and bleak  
Thou art a welcome month to me  
For thou to northern lands again  
The glad and glorious sun doth bring,  
And thou has joined the gentle train  
And neareth the lovely name of spring.



This booklet commemorates the 150th anniversary of the Bee Ridge Church and was donated in memory of Maude Ellen Weaver by her husband Ernest Weaver. Maude served the church in many capacities after becoming a member in 1917. Her roles included Sunday School Superintendent, teacher, church clerk, Ladies Aid member and officer, and leader in general. She spent her life loving God in a way that inspired us all and exemplified the Christian life. Her presence is sorely missed by all, but it's effect lives on in each of us through the faith she helped instill. Her earthly life has passed, but her soul lives forever.