



1900 - 1950

# Fiftieth Anniversary

Of The

## Church of God

Burr Oak, Indiana



December 10, 1950

*Program and History*

*marking the*

*Golden Anniversary*

*1900-1950*

*of the*

*Church of God*

*Burr Oak, Indiana*

*December 10, 1950*

## PROGRAMS

### Morning Services

10:00 a. m. ....	Sunday School Special Music by Children's Choir
11:00 a. m. ....	Morning Worship
Hymn .....	Page 234
Prayer Hymn .....	Page 151
Prayer	
Hymn .....	Page 171
Scripture Reading	
Announcements	
Special Music .....	Choir
Sermon: "Let Thy Word Be Verified" .....	Elder Harry A. Sheets
Hymn .....	Page 51
Benediction	

Note: Ladies of the Church will serve dinner.

### Afternoon Service

#### Two O'Clock

Piano Prelude	
Hymn .....	Page 37
Prayer Hymn .....	Page 97
Prayer	
Special Music .....	The Dale Wards
Church History Over Fifty Years.	
Recognition of Honor Members.	
Solo .....	Wayne Van Der Weele, Sr.
Anniversary Message .....	Elder F. L. Austin
Hymn—"Blest Be The Tie"	
Benediction.	

Elder L. E. Connor, former pastor and friend. His valuable contributions in deed and word reach back to the earliest days of our congregation. Elder Connor dedicated the first church building in 1900; on August 8, 1909, he conducted the dedicatory service for the present church building. He again served the church as pastor in 1942 and 1943.



Elder F. L. Austin, one of the first pastors of our congregation, who later served in 1934 and 1935. As one of our benefactors he assisted in working out the church constitution in 1934.

Elder Harry A. Sheets, present pastor, came to our church in 1945 from Aurora, Illinois, first as a part time pastor and finally as a full time pastor. Under his ministry our church has mounted to new heights in His work.





## FORMER PASTORS

F. L. Austin  
L. E. Conner  
D. E. VanVactor  
J. H. Anderson  
C. A. Smead

A. E. Hoskins  
Wilsey McKnight  
J. W. McLain  
C. R. Randall  
Harry A. Sheets

## MINISTERS AND EVANGELISTS

### Serving The Church

#### Those serving at the North Union Church

N. H. Gieselman      J. H. Wagoner      John Wince

#### Those serving at the Burr Oak Church

Sr. B. W. Woodward  
A. H. Zilmer  
Willis Logan  
S. J. Lindsay  
Joseph Williams  
Elder Drew  
J. H. Willey  
C. C. Maple  
G. M. Fox  
Orin Jenks  
J. E. Hatch  
Arthur Johnson  
Paul Johnson  
M. W. Lyon  
Vaughn Long  
Cantwell Drabenstott  
James A. Patrick

Paul Hatch  
Sidney E. Magaw  
O. J. Parker  
C. E. Randall  
Richard LeCrone  
Delbert Jones  
Earl Thayer  
C. E. Lapp  
Emery Macy  
Harry Coekler  
Grover Gordon  
J. M. Watkins  
Robert Hardesty  
Alva Huffer  
Terrell Ferril  
Sr. Verna Thayer  
Harvey U. Krogh

## HONORARY MEMBERS

Della Osborn Overmyer	1890	Hettie Shearer Fettes	1903
Melvin J. Osborn	1899	Effie Emigh Hatten	1903
Anna Aley Cochran	1901	Pearl Hatten Zechiel	1905
Ida Overmyer Osborn	1901	Dominicus Hatten	1906
Myrtle Emigh Rogers	1901	Goldie Emigh Wenrick	1907
Bertie Aley VanDerweel	1902	Ruth Maxey Hardey	1907
Hattie Aley Woods	1902	Clarence Woods	1908
Isabelle Bender Weaver	1903	Laura Overmyer Behmer	1910

## BURR OAK CHURCH OF GOD HISTORY

**D**ID YOU ever stop to think of all that is involved in starting a new church? As we glance through the years and reminisce, we begin to discover in a small measure the labors of Faith and Love that have gone into the founding and building of the place where we worship God. Today we see a completed church building. We see a well organized and working congregation. We are inclined to be well satisfied and quite proud of ourselves. Did you ever think of the time when there was no Church of God in Burr Oak? Did you ever stop to wonder who, because of their love of Truth, made this church possible?

There was a day when a small group of faithful believers banded themselves together, and bearing many discouragements almost beyond our comprehension, established the Church of God here. This new Truth; and it was new to the people who heard; explained so simply and logically the Word of God. The hearts of the people did rejoice and they were zealous that those who should follow after might hear the Word and be established in the Faith.

### THE FORMATIVE DAYS

It was in the late 1800's that a family by the name of Fettes had settled in this part of the state. They had heard the Word of God as taught by many of those early ministers going from place to place preaching. After much study, prayer and deep consideration they were persuaded of its truth. Thus, when David and Martha Fettes settled here they were most anxious that others might hear this message proclaimed. When the opportunity came to secure a minister by the name of N. H. Gieselman it was happily received.

Also living in the community was a family by the name of Williams. Lorenz Williams, although a staunch member of the old Dunkard church, faithfully studied his Bible. Many times he remarked to his family that the Word was not rightly being taught. He pointed out to his loved ones things they should and things they should not accept as Scripture. He also always instructed them to be on the alert as he was sure some day one would come preaching as he was sure the Bible taught.

### FIRST PASTOR

There was a country church near the Albert Overmyer, Sr. farm called the North Union Church. While this was a union church and open to other ministers, it was predominately a United Brethren church. It was at this place the Elder Gieselman came to preach. Within a very short time many families embraced this new Faith. They were William and Louisa Osborn and their daughters Olive, Cora, and Carrie. The Lorenz Williams family was also persuaded of the things being taught as the very things they had been looking for and were baptized in the name of Christ. Others to follow were Amos and Alice Osborn, Julia Garn, George Osborn, the Conrad Cup family, Mrs. Emma Rank, a Mrs. Wright, the George Maxeys, one Joseph Hissong, and many others of which there were no records kept.

As this group grew in numbers they began to meet with much criticism. Could it be wondered at? Surely no one in his right mind could believe that Jesus who was crucified and ascended into heaven would ever set His feet on this wicked earth again. These people were teaching that this same Jesus was coming again. They were teaching that He would establish His glorious Kingdom on the earth. They were shattering all the beautiful dreams of being carried to heaven some day. Needless to say, when they sought to teach others this glorious Gospel they met with many rebuffs and slanderous remarks. The incident is told of a song that was jestingly sung in the presence of many



of their members. It went something like this: "There's an Advent in Heaven, Well I'll be darned." They called the people "Advents" because they believed and taught the return of Christ. In fact anyone who taught the coming of Christ was called an "Advent."

### **CONFLICT OVER TEACHING**

Another teaching that brought much criticism to these early believers was that of the sleep of death. Just who would want to believe that the dead await in the grave until the resurrection? For this teaching they were called "Soul Sleepers." The feeling became so bitter toward this group for their many peculiar teachings that North Union Church could not successfully accommodate the two groups. The "Advents" would not compromise in the things they were sure the Bible taught and because of this fact soon realized they must have a place of their own to worship.

While this group was growing in faith, and carrying on their work in the North Union Church, the Word was being preached in another locality near Burr Oak. Sunday services were held now and then in the Overmyer Grove southeast of Burr Oak. A young minister from the Church of God in Argos walked down the railroad tracks on Sunday to hold meetings here. This was our well known and beloved Elder F. L. Austin. Under his inspiring ministry a number of others found their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and were baptized in His name. Some of those converted under Elder Austin's ministry were Melvin J. Osborn, Laura and Maud Maxey, Clarence Schutte and others. Elder D. E. VanVactor and a few other ministers known as "Circuit Preachers" held services in the "Grove." These services were held in the summer months but during the winter, prayer meetings and now and then a preaching service would be held in some of the homes.

### **FIRST CHURCH BUILDING**

In the year 1900, after much prayer and consideration as to the location, construction and the many things involved in building a church, a lot was purchased from the old Burns' farm and a new church was erected. Here again there were many difficulties. Brother Samuel Osborn and Brother George Maxey were more or less in charge of the work. Elder D. E. VanVactor was the architect and assisted by Charley Grover the church was constructed.

The church building was pretty well completed and the oak lumber was purchased and stored in the church for the construction of the pews. One morning when Mr. Grover came to work to start making the seats, he was very much surprised to find no lumber there. Someone had taken it all and more had to be purchased to build the seats. This was indeed quite a blow to the people for building a church was no small matter and finances were very low. Elder VanVactor added a pleasant note when he presented the church with a beautiful hand carved pulpit which he had made himself.

### **DEDICATION**

At last! The church was completed and the day for dedication was at hand. Imagine the great thrill in the hearts of all the people. They had a fine new church all their own. They could worship God as they saw fit and in the way they felt sure the Bible taught them. The day was set for the dedication. Sister B. W. Woodward was chosen to give the dedication sermon. She came but there was no dedication. They had a church, but it was like a ship without a first mate and without a crew. There was considerable indebtedness, and no business management to care for it. She could not dedicate the church until the house was put in order. Elder L. E. Conner, then active in the Maxinkuckee area, came to Burr Oak and ably assisted in getting the business in order. Subscriptions were taken to cover the remaining indebtedness. When it seemed that all might be doomed to failure as each person had subscribed to the limit and there was still a considerable sum to raise, Brothers Amos and Samuel Osborn came forward and shared equally the remaining debt. Thus, in the year 1900 the Church of God at Burr Oak was dedicated to the



Lord by Elder L. E. Conner. The exact day and month of the dedication is not known as the early records were destroyed.

There was also the selection of a name for the church. Many of the first ministers were of the Advent Christian faith. Elders Austin, Conner, VanVector and others were from the Church of God. Again much searching of the Scriptures followed and since the name "Church of God" seemed the only Scriptural name given, that was the name chosen. It was not until a number of years later that "Of the Abrahamic Faith" was added. This was done largely to distinguish this group from the many others using the name Church of God.

### **EARLY CHURCH PASTORS**

The church grew and prospered in the next few years under the ministry of Elders Austin, VanVector, A. H. Zilmer, Willis Logan,, S. J. Lindsay, Conner, Sister B. W. Woodward and others serving the congregation from time to time. Many faithful workers were added to the church during these years. Some of which were, Anna Aley Cochran, Hettie Feters, Pearl Hatten Zechiel, Ida Osborn, Isabellè Bender Weaver, and many others now fallen asleep.

The joy of these zealous people was to be short lived however, for on the morning of June twenty-first, 1908, the church was struck by lightning and completely destroyed. The pews, pulpit, organ and some of the small furnishings were saved however.

### **REBUILDING DESTROYED CHURCH**

The struggle of building the first church was still vivid in the minds of this small congregation. Now it was to be gone through with again. Many might have said "It is hardly worth the effort." These people had been without a church and they knew how difficult that condition was. God's Word was very precious to their hearts. When faith might have faltered and utterly have failed under so grave a testing, these people faced undaunted the task of immediately setting to work to build another church. On October eighth of that same year the trustees and members of the church met at the home of Sister Anna Aley to make final decisions as to the building of the new church. Trustees George M. Osborn and Albert Overmyer, Sr., proposed the new church be built the same as the former with the exception that patent lath and a shingle roof be used instead of slate as was on the first. Also that the church be without a bell. It was necessary to conserve wherever possible. The amount of \$1200.00 was received from the insurance and they wished to start with as little indebtedness as possible. It was necessary to subscribe considerable sums of money to meet the building needs. Some of these pledges made could not be paid when the time came. Without a word to anyone Brothers Osborn and Overmyer assumed the remaining indebtedness. Some of these facts were never disclosed to the public until the writing of this history.

There were still many obstacles to mount, but with a strong faith in God these problems were met. Brother George Maxey, one of the elders of the church at that time, was also very influential in the work of the building. One moonlight night Mr. Maxey seemed very troubled and could not sleep. He arose, dressed and walked over to the place where the new church was being built. There to his amazement was a man very easily recognized helping himself to nine bundles of lath. Mr. Maxey watched the man and never said a word. After the man left Mr. Maxey went home. The lath was replaced and there were very few people that ever knew of this incident, and only a couple of people to this day ever knew just who the man was. Yes, it took courage then to be a Christian even as it does now. How nobly many of those who made this church possible met the challenge of life. Pray that we may always do as well.



## **DEDICATION SERVICE, AUGUST 8, 1909**

Some felt the Hand of God was against these people when their church was destroyed by lightning. However the people of the church accepted their misfortune as a test of their faith, and they immediately set forth to replace their church. On August 8th, 1909, Elder L. E. Conner came from Cleveland, Ohio, where he was pastoring a Church of God, and dedicated the second church. This being the church building we now have.

Sunday School and prayer meetings were about all the services held at the new church during the remainder of that year. In fact the work was entirely held together by the Sunday School. Uncle Sam and George Osborn were the leaders of the Sunday School during those early years. The only recorded preaching services until late in the year of 1910 were thirteen sermons delivered by Elder Joseph Williams of Hillisburg, Indiana, and two sermons by an Elder Drew. However, there were four baptisms recorded in this year, one of which was Sr. Laura Overmyer Behmer. From the year 1910 to 1915 the church was served intermittently by only a very few ministers. One of which was Orin Jenks, now President Emeritus of Aurora College.

## **SUNDAY SCHOOL WORK**

During these years the Sunday School was the backbone of the church. If we ever doubt the value of the Sunday School we have but to look at our past history to see just how important the work of this department can be. Truly if it were not for the faithful members that kept the church doors open and continued to teach the Word, the work of the early faithful would have been for naught. Many times the number was so small that the back class room adequately served the entire Sunday School. Again I ask, would our faith have been so strong?

In 1915 the church seemed to take on new life. Elder C. C. Maple of Argos Elder D. E. VanVactor and Elder J. R. Fox, all ministered at the church. At least twenty were baptized during these services. While many new laborers were added to the fold the work was still largely carried on by the Sunday School until about 1924.

## **ELDER J. H. ANDERSON**

A number of years had passed and no evangelistic efforts had been put forth. The harvest truly seemed white and a goodly number were ready to embrace the Truth. It was agreed to have Sr. Pearl Zecheil write to Elder J. H. Anderson and see if it would be possible for him to come to Burr Oak for services. His first reply was favorable. The group set to work to raise the money and have everything in readiness before his arrival. It would seem he had inquired concerning the work here and felt the effort might not be profitable. He then wrote and declined to come. When he was informed of the work the people had set out to do, and how everything was arranged for, he felt surely where the people were so anxious to have the Gospel preached, he could not refuse. This time he wrote consenting to come. This proved to be the real awakening of the church. Many young people accepted Christ and set out to work for him. One that has endeared herself to the hearts of so many was the late Leta Osborn Johnson. Elder Anderson continued to serve the church two Sundays each month for a number of years, in fact until about 1932.

## **FIRST FULL TIME PASTOR**

Until this time this present church had never had a full time resident pastor. Many felt we would never really accomplish our real purpose in serving our community until we had a shepherd to feed the flock and labor in their midst all the time. In 1932 Elder C. A. Smead was hired as our first pastor. The going wasn't easy as the church was pretty well established in its ways and unused to outside leadership.



In 1934 Elder Austin again came to our rescue. He assisted in working out a church constitution by which there would be orderly and established rules for working. This was indeed a great help as the working rules of the church were quite obsolete.

In 1935 Elder A. E. Hoskins moved into our midst as the pastor. During his ministry here the church again made some very great strides forward. Elder Hoskins attended the county ministerial meetings, and did many things that gave us recognition in the community. He encouraged many of our teachers to avail themselves of the county teachers training courses being held at that time. Also during his ministry here and by the encouragement of the Morning Star Sunday School Class, the work of building a full basement was begun. There was a great need for class rooms and a place large enough for fellowship meetings without using the sanctuary of the church for all occasions. In 1937 the work was completed and dedicated.

### **OTHER PASTORS**

Following Elder Hoskins, the church was served by Elder Wilsey McKnight and family. Elder James W. McLain and family succeeded the McKnights. Elder McLain served as half time pastor and the remainder of his time was devoted to evangelistic work. The church continued to grow spiritually and in number under his ministry. In December of 1940 Elder McLain resigned his pastorate to go into full time evangelistic work. Elder C. R. Randall, then a student at Oregon Bible College, filled the pulpit for some time afterward.

A happy note to add to our past history was the few years when Elder L. E. Conner, now in his "seventies," came to Burr Oak for one to two Sundays each month. His sermons of sound doctrine and practical Christian experience endeared the Word more profoundly to the congregation. We shall always be grateful and cherish his wise admonition.

### **ELDER SHEETS**

The church was very much in need of a full time pastor so inquiry was made of the National Bible Institution as to available men. It was suggested that we contact Elder Harry A. Sheets who at that time was not engaged in the ministry. After much prayer and consideration, he agreed to come to Burr Oak from Aurora, Illinois, twice each month. This, with holding down a full time factory job was a real service on his part. After serving the church in this capacity for about three years, and turning down as many offers to come as a full time pastor, we were all most happily surprised to receive a call of acceptance after we thought it useless to offer again.

In 1945 the church had purchased the Neil Shock property west of the church as a parsonage. With few exceptions the money paid Elder Sheets while he was driving from Aurora was turned into the parsonage fund that the indebtedness might be quickly liquidated. The parsonage was modernized upon word of his acceptance.

### **CHURCH GROWTH**

The church has mounted to new heights under his ministry. We pray it shall ever continue to do so and serve as a beacon light in this community for Christ. May it ever continue to lead men and women to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus until He calls us into His completed and glorified Church.

As the church has grown through the years, each and every department has continued to grow. Today our Sunday School as the educational department of the church, is most outstanding as a means of teaching the Word of God. Some of its leaders through the years have been Uncle Sam Osborn, George Osborn, Walliam Marme, Melvin J. Osborn, Dunn W. Weaver, D. Hatten and many others of more recent years. Norman LaMunion is serving at this present time.

The Ladies' Organization has been no small part of the church work either. In many emergencies they have risen to the occasion and shouldered the load when there was no one else to do the work. As Lydia and Dorcas of old, our women have carried



on a noble and far reaching service, for which the church can be justly proud. Sr. Mary Hatten is the present leader of this department.

Every department and every class has its work to do, and is a part of the church as a whole. The present elders appointed by the church are Dewey Overmyer and Darrell Carlisle. May God continue to bless the church as He has so wondrously blessed it in the past. May the coming of the Lord find each in our place, serving daily as becometh a good soldier of the Cross. May the Burr Oak Church of God continue to grow in the grace of God, and carry the message of "Salvation" until the "Well done, good and faithful servant" shall be proclaimed of it.