

MAPLES BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH

In the early 1930s Maples Branch Community, mostly farm families, had to go across the mountain to Bethel or to other churches to worship. There was a schoolhouse and the growing community decided to have worship services in the school.

With the help of Reverend Wright from Maryville and Reverend Howard Helton, they began having Sunday School at the school every Sunday morning. Later Reverend Isaac Ogle conducted services with preaching twice a month on Saturday night and Sunday morning. He had to walk quite a distance so he usually spent the night with a community family.

The small congregation established themselves as a church Sunday, October 9, 1938. Seven members forming a charter were joined by ten new members joining by letter that day. Reverend James Franklin pastored the newly organized church. By 1939, the Sunday School enrollment had grown to 50 with 21 baptisms that year.

On April 8, 1939, the church held the first deacon ordination service with Reverend James Franklin serving as moderator, M. L. Plemons, clerk, and Reverends W. W. Bailey and Dave Blalock completing the council. Arlie Loveday, Thomas McCarter and Clyde Whaley were ordained as deacons.

When Reverend J. A. Baker became pastor in January 1940, the church was still meeting in the schoolhouse. He inspired the people to build a church house. With only \$8 in the treasury and two committees formed to collect donations, plans began. Luther Maples sold one and nine tenths acres adjacent to the school to the church for \$100. Donations were hard to get because people could only afford small amounts ranging from 10 cents to a dollar. Some gave items that were converted into cash. But by May 1941, Sunday School was held in the new building. It had taken a year. Everybody met at the schoolhouse and walked together to the new church house.

Bills were all paid by September 14, 1941 when the church was dedicated in a special service with Reverend Baker presiding. There as much rejoicing and 25 joined by letter.

Twenty-one pastors served Maples Branch during the first 43 years. There were twice-a-day revivals when school was dismissed for children to attend day services. A piano was purchased for \$90 and the first twice- a-month preacher received \$3 per Sunday. That time span also included the years of World War 11 when two sons of the Cas Caughron family were killed and their brother, Clay, was injured.

The church house still stands where it was first built, looking relatively the same but with many improvements. It still symbolizes faith in *God* for the future and praise to

God for the past. In the first 43 years of Maple Branch's history, 21 pastors served, some of whom were:

Reverends James Franklin, D. Blalock, J.A. Baker, Isaac Ogle. Reverend Hurst, Clifford Williamson, Collie O'Shields, Andy Ball. Earl Lane, Merman Plemons, W. A. Galyon, Arvil Parton, Cleo Whaley, Bill Bryant, Ben Whitted, Sammy Justus, Otha McCarter, John Wallin, Henry Morton, Garlon Whaley, D. A. Cole, Julius Justus, pastor from 1983 to the present 1991.

Reverend Cleo Whaley, son of Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Whaley, and Reverend Garlon Whaley, son of Mr. and Mrs. Marmon Whaley, grew up in Maples Branch Church, later to pastor their home church.