

## History of Our Church

*A brief history of our church. Updated by Pastor Hamill, 4-19-09*

First United Methodist Church was founded as a Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1895, in Grove, Indian Territory. Rev. Orlando Shay was appointed as the first pastor and a building program was begun in 1899 on Main Street in downtown Grove Springs.

The members went to the woods, cut down logs which were taken to the saw mill and cut into dimensional lumber for the church. Labor and construction of the white frame building, for the most part, were donated by the members of the church. The building faced east and had a 6' x 8' entrance hall in front. A tall steeple and bell tower were prominent features.

The church rostrum was at the west, with two rows of seats for the choir. Later it was enlarged, hardwood floors laid, and carpeting installed. There were two pot-bellied stoves for heating--one on each side. The church seated around 150 people and was used for the town's community center for years, until the red brick school building was erected.

Several years later, another building about 20' x 40' was built on the north edge of the church lot and was known as "The Annex." The Annex had a big pot-bellied stove in the center, with no flue. Until electricity came to Grove, colored pull-down lamps were used for lighting. Nevertheless, with just a coal-oil stove, huge parties were held in the Annex. The Annex became the social center of the community, including the holding of elections.

The old church was some 50 years old when the members felt a definite need for a new building. The building committee included Dr. C. F. Walker, Al Perrine, H. E. Worley, Sr., Dennis Beauchamp, Harley Graham and Al Wansel. H. H. Neiman of Muskogee was the architect and Paul Eggers the contractor. The old building was demolished and work on the new one begun on September 10, 1949. The cash fund was approximately \$2,000, so people were asked to give windows, bricks, bundles of shingles, hardwood flooring, etc. Within a year the new building was occupied. The organ was donated by the Dick Sellers' family, the altar given by Mrs. Houston, and the altar ware by relatives of Susan Carr. The indebtedness of \$75,000, with faith and effort, was paid off by November, 1957. On November 24th of that year, Dr. Robert Smith, District Superintendent, dedicated the new building to the Glory of God and the Service of Men. In 1958, the Fellowship Sunday School Class carpeted the sanctuary. In 1959, the building was air conditioned.

By the late 1970's the church family again faced a decision to expand or relocate. Choosing the later, they sold the brick structure on Main Street and erected a new structure which eventually came to be known as "The Church on the Hill." Completed and consecrated November 13, 1982, the membership continued to grow and within the next ten years two new wings were added to accommodate the needs for additional classrooms.

At this time, over 100 years from its beginning, the Lord continues to bless our First United Methodist Church in Grove with a strong and enthusiastic vision for the future.

In 1994, a new parsonage was built on an additional 5 acres of land added to (and adjoining) the west side of the original five acres. Construction began in 2004 on the West Wing, adding 12,000 square feet of space to the existing 25,000. This new space included a multi-purpose large room (high school regulation basketball court, and volleyball), a stage with dressing rooms, large storage closets, a large commercial kitchen, new youth room, restrooms with showers, a laundry room, and a new lobby. Surrounding the West Wing was a new parking lot and memorial gardens for landscaping. The building was opened for use with a new worship service in West Wing on Easter, 2005. In late 2006, an additional 23 acres of land was purchased adjoining the church property to the north, expanding the total campus to approximately 30 acres.