History of the Colbert United Methodist Church

The Colbert United Methodist Church, formerly known as Five Forks Methodist Church, was organized in 1901 and the first building was erected in 1902.

The dissolution of the Bethel Methodist Church, located approximately halfway between the communities of Hull and Five Forks, and which itself had emerged from a simple brush arbor inspired by consecrated Methodist, caused keen concern to several of its members left without a permanent house of worship. Therefore, according to the first church records, several of the former Bethel members together with a few other devout people of the Methodist faith formed a committee to select a desirable location and organize a new church.

Since several former Bethel members had moved to the thriving Five Forks Community, it was decided that there was the desirable spot to organize this new church.
Land was secured from F. E. Kirk for $75.00 and the deeds were recorded to Five Forks Methodist Church in 1901. The membership was formally organized in 1902 with the Reverend George E. Stone as its first pastor. Since the Reverend Stone had spiritually led the members so well at Bethel, his influence was widely felt in the new congregation and much credit is due him for his leadership in the new church's early years.

The first edifice was a simple one room frame building that housed the sanctuary and other normal church activities. Mr. Fletcher Colbert, one of the early members and for whom the city was later named, contributed the lumber for the new building and the members gave freely of their labor in the construction. This building was kept attractive and in good repair and served well the needs for approximately forty years. In 1909, when the city changed its name to Colbert, the church assumed the new name of Colbert Methodist Church in order to identify itself better with the community.
During the late thirties the members became very concerned that the frame building was no longer adequate to carry on the church program so a committee was appointed to make plans for the erection of a new sanctuary. In 1941 the present brick building, composed of the sanctuary and two Sunday School rooms was erected. Mr. M. L. Wread, a local contractor, drew the plans and supervised the construction. The Reverend L. G. Hendrix was pastor at the time. Dedicatory services were held October 20, 1950 with the Bishop Arthur J. Moore, delivering the dedicatory sermon. The District Superintendent, Reverend Clyde L. Callaway, and the pastor, the Reverend J. W. Eberhart, also gave their blessings.

Several improvements were added to the present structure. In 1949, beautiful stained glass memorial windows replaced the original clear glass ones. These were provided by personal gifts and faithful work of all members. Later new pews and carpeting were installed and the altar and chancel renovated.
The church was also freshly painted to conform with the more modern facilities. The Reverend E. S. Carlock was serving as pastor at this time.

In 1955 the present Fellowship Hall was added. This addition includes an assembly room, kitchen, three Sunday School rooms, a hall and two rest rooms. The Reverend Plemon Folds served as pastor at the time. Formal dedication services were held March 31, 1957 with the Reverend Harold Braswell, a former pastor, delivering the dedicatory sermon.

Since the erection of the Fellowship Hall, several improvements were made at the church. A central heating system was installed replacing the outmoded coal heaters. In 1965, the grounds were beautified and shrubbery was planted. This added greatly to the attractiveness of the total church plant. This was done through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Benton in memory of their son Sammy, who was also a member at the time of his death.
Through funds left in the will of one of its members, Phil M. Hardman, and with added contributions, a central air conditioning system was installed in 1970. Several other essential needs were also met from time to time, each one becoming a reality through the cooperation of the members and their loyal devotion to their church.

No history of a church can be complete without recognizing the faithful work of its dedicated pastors who served many times during adversities as well as during periods of ease. These noble Christians are all remembered for their great contribution to God's calling and it is to each that the Colbert United Church shall always be very grateful. Those consecrated characters were: