OUR HISTORY

The history of Watkins Memorial Methodist Church antedates the division of the Methodist Episcopal Church over the question of slavery. William Ellington, one of the circuit riders of the Methodist Episcopal Church ordained by Bishop Francis Asbury, spent most of his ministry in the areas of Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee and Ohio. When he retired he came to reside in Gilmer County. Prior to his death he gave some property for the purpose of providing a Methodist Episcopal Church in Ellijay. On May 8, 1857, L. D. Ellington deeded three acres of land to the Methodist Episcopal Church. The first trustees were: Benjamin Johnson, C. A. Ellington, W. R. Coleman, Pearce Roberts, A. B. Roberts, David Roberts, Bryan Roberts, Robert R. Hunt and John W. Bramlett. The first meeting place for the Methodist congregation was the academy. When the land was given in 1857 the congregation constructed a two story building near the academy.

On February 17, 1890, W. R. Coleman deeded to the trustees (E. W. Watkins, Sr., J. I. Jarrett, John Hunnicutt, A. H. Randall and E. W. Coleman) a portion of the lot where the church now stands. In March of 1890, he gave the rest of the present land. The building constructed on the site was a frame edifice and was built from the lumber in the church near the academy.

The Minutes of the First Quarterly Conference on February 14, 1926, contained these words: "As to plans for future work, we are pleased to say that we anticipate a new church at Ellijay." The following people composed the New Church Committee: E. W. Watkins, Sr., E. T. Hudson, R. C. Welch, C. C. Poindexter, Sr., W. B. James, S. G. Dover and J. W. Sellers. The trustees of the new building were: A. H. Burtz, E. T. Hudson, J. M. Parks, C. C. Poindexter, Sr., and E. W. Watkins, Jr. The building Committee was composed of: S. G. Dover, E. T. Hudson, W. B. James, C. C. Poindexter, Sr., J. W. Sellers, and Dr. E. W. Watkins, Jr.

The Church bears the name of Watkins Memorial Methodist Church in honor of this pioneer family of Ellijay, who have always supported Methodism with their love, service and financial assistance. Dr. E. W. Watkins, Sr., and his son, Dr. E. W. Watkins, Jr. served the Methodist Church most effectively for many years. The first service was held in the new church on October 2, 1927. It soon became apparent that additional educational space was needed. An educational annex was constructed some eight years after the building of the new church while the Reverend Henry H. Dillard was the minister.

Some twenty years ago, the church became a part of the Dalton District. The church was a part of a circuit for many years. The first full-time minister was the Reverend Y. A. Bailey.

The church has always provided a comfortable parsonage for the minister and his family. The Minutes of the Fourth Quarterly Conference of May 30, 1948, contain these words: "The following nominations to constitute the Building Committee to act according to the instructions of this Quarterly Conference: E. T. Hudson, A. J. Dover, A. H. Burtz, Paul Sellers, Dow Hamrick, Dr. E. W. Watkins, Jr., and Mrs. H. W. Hampton. The parsonage was completed and occupied in 1949 during the ministry of the Reverend C. B. Cochran.

The new educational annex was started in November of 1966 and first occupied on September 24, 1967. The program of expansion included renovation of the Spring Street Building which included providing a Church Office, Library and Choir Room as well as carpeting the entire building. Also involved in the program was the landscaping of all grounds. The total cost of the buildings and furnishings (for new and old building) was $75,000.00.

The new facility and the renovation of the existing building make possible an expanded ministry to the people of Gilmer County.