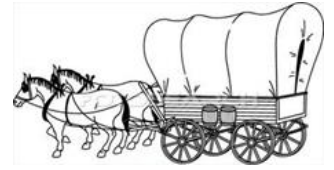


## Wagons, Ho! BGUMC Hosts Friendship Wagon Train



(Excerpts taken from Mike Parry's story about The Friendship Wagon Train in the May 2019 edition of "The Good News Magazine-Waseca")

On Monday, June 24<sup>th</sup>, BGUMC received an unforgettable visit from the 2019 Friendship Wagon Train during their 116-mile trip from Northfield to Kiester, running from Saturday, June 22<sup>nd</sup> – Saturday, June 29<sup>th</sup>. This dedicated group of volunteers sets out each year on a week-long wagon train to raise funds for children and adults with developmental disabilities. This year, 100% of all donations collected during their ride goes to Special Olympics of Minnesota.

This is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Friendship Wagon Train, led by Wagon Master, John Davis, age 73. His son, Dustin, just back from Afghanistan, is now working with his Dad to help take over the reins. Participants in the Wagon Train come from all over the United States. This year's riders and wagons hail from Alabama, Louisiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota, and Minnesota!

The Friendship Wagon Train route changes from year-to-year, but generally follows back-roads throughout southern Minnesota and Northern Iowa. As they travel along the way (at approximately 5 miles per hour) local communities and volunteer groups (i.e. churches, FFA, 4-H, American Legions) volunteer their support through providing meals and places of shelter and rest.

(Our BGUMC story.)

On June 24<sup>th</sup>, during their journey from an overnight stay in Morristown to their next overnight stay in Waseca, the Friendship Wagon Train circled camp on the south lawn of BGUMC for a scheduled noon rest break.

It was an incredible experience of holiness and awe as the 18 covered wagons, their teams of mules and horses, 13 horseback riders, and a total of 70 participants moved silently, slowly, and reverently into the church grounds and circled together in formation. There was only a slight breeze, and just a few birds were singing under left-over raindrops in the cloudy sky, but the only other sound was the steady clip-clop of horse hooves and the rumbling crunch of wagon wheels on the gravel road. Even the spectators fell silent and stood at attention as the Wagon Train moved in. We could sense that they were not traveling alone – but were enveloped and encircled by the Holy Spirit and by the spirits of the generations that have gone before us who first arrived on this land in covered wagons themselves. All members of the wagon train remained silent and in position until all participants had arrived and found their place in the circle. Then, at the sound of the wagon master's call, the "camp" began spilling over with joy and laughter and life and stories shared between the wagoners and the people of BGUMC.



20 total BGUMC volunteers came together to provide a sloppy joe lunch and a welcome respite from the cool and drizzly day. Other members of the church, as well as our BGUMC neighbors, also came to be in the midst of the adventure and to mingle and visit with the wagoners.

We share on the next page some of the incredible sights and sounds from the day.

(Also check out our BGUMC Facebook Page for a future Photo album of this incredible adventure.)

Continued





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1. What a sight to see as the Friendship Wagon Train wended its way from the north toward BGUMC!

2. Wagons and horses gathered in circle formation on the south lawn of BGUMC.

3. Wagon Train participants came in the form of all ages and all numbers of legs!

4. BGUMC Volunteers in Wagon Train T-Shirts.

5. Wagoneers expressed sincere appreciation for our lunch and hospitality—and donated \$231.25 in a free-will offering toward making BGUMC handicapped accessible.

6. After a good lunch and a stretch break, the Wagon Train reassembled and headed out together, continuing southward to end up in Waseca on Monday overnight. They also gifted us with a thank-you plaque.

7. When they left our parking lot, all that was left behind were hoof-prints.



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nothin' left behind but the hoofprints.....

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