

# *Blooming Grove United Methodist Church - Sharing our Story*

9/20/2021



**Physical location:**

43089 180th Street, Morristown, MN

**Mailing Address:**

P.O. Box 171 Medford, MN 55049-0171

**Website:** [www.bloominggroveumc.org](http://www.bloominggroveumc.org)

**Email:** [bloominggroveumc@gmail.com](mailto:bloominggroveumc@gmail.com)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/Blooming-Grove-United-Methodist-Church-102762953095215/](https://www.facebook.com/Blooming-Grove-United-Methodist-Church-102762953095215/)

Blooming Grove United Methodist Church, known as The Two Steepled Church on the Prairie, is located 7.2 miles west of the I-35 Exit at Medford, MN. We are part of the Southern Prairie District, as one of three churches in the Prairie Lakes Parish: Blooming Grove UMC, Janesville UMC, and Waterville Evangelical UMC. Pastor Kathy King serves our 3-point charge.

BGUMC is living into our vision of open hearts, open minds, and open doors. We have pondered how we might better serve our congregation and surrounding community in the future. We have made commitments:

- To continue proactive maintenance of our current structure in order to remain a viable partner in our wide-reaching rural neighborhood, as well as surrounding towns.
- To make our building more accessible and welcoming to all.

We journey forward in faith, filled with hope for the new opportunities these bold plans will provide, as we follow the call to share God's love with our community and our world.

## *A Brief History*

In March of 1856, a German Methodist missionary began preaching in homes in the rural area southwest of Faribault - now known as Blooming Grove Township. In the fall of that year, 14 members were accepted into the mission, and it was made into a self-supporting preaching establishment.

Out of these humble beginnings, two Methodist congregations were created - Bethel and Immanuel. Through the years, they built churches, established cemeteries, shared a pastor and a parsonage. The two congregations also developed programs that nurtured the rural community and emphasized mission giving to the world.

The first Immanuel Church was built in 1862, and a replacement was built in 1863 - both at a site 3.5 miles west of where BGUMC currently stands.

The Bethel Church was built between 1870 and 1873 - at the current BGUMC site.

In 1951, a merger symbolizing the unity of the Bethel and Immanuel congregations took place. The two congregations voted to take the name Blooming Grove Methodist Church. That same year, the Immanuel building was moved to the Bethel site and the buildings were joined together. (Immanuel on the south and Bethel on the north.) Both church steeples were kept as a physical symbol of cooperation, compromise and trust.



Site of original Immanuel Church

Over the years, we have cared for the physical integrity of BGUMC with ongoing repairs/improvements. In the early 2000's, we committed to a long-term presence in our community, as well as improved energy efficiency, with the completion of numerous interior improvements and major structural improvements: roof re-shingle, south steeple repair and re-shingle, circle window stained-glass restoration, foundation work, electrical upgrades and rewiring, siding upgrade to permanent steel, insulation upgrades, storm window replacement (Immanuel portion of building), total window replacement (Bethel portion of building).

In 2020-2021, we again stepped out in faith - to construct a south addition that provides accessibility for all. Our multi-level building has steep steps up to the sanctuary and Sunday School rooms, and steep steps down to a basement fellowship hall, kitchen, and outdated restrooms, limiting opportunities to provide an inclusive gathering space for our congregation, our neighborhood, and any district or conference UMC activities. The new entryway includes a 3-level lift, ground-level restrooms, and a ground-level gathering space. It incorporates the architectural style and heritage of both the Immanuel and Bethel buildings, as well as stained-glass windows from Immanuel. Our two steeples remain - standing tall and welcoming on the prairie.

1951 Merger of Bethel, (upper left) and Immanuel, (upper right) to create the two-steepled church.



While removing old siding in preparation for the 2020-2021 addition, we discovered square nails, used in the 1863 construction of the second Immanuel Church. For 158 years, they helped hold together a place in which generations of people gathered to soak in stories of God's love, and from which, generations went back out into the world to carry that love to others. One of our BGUMC artisans converted these nails into 30 Limited-Edition Keepsake Crosses, to be sold at \$50 each as a Building Project Fundraiser. They were almost sold out before they were even fully packaged! In their new form, the nails remind us of our forebears who built well - and of their dreams and intentions. They encourage us, and call us, as we live into new dreams in our ongoing journey with God.

### *Our Building Project Progress*

Our path to identify accessibility options has been long and winding, with brainstorming beginning in the 1990's and early 2000's. We explored renovation ideas for the current structure - but kept running into roadblocks involving church location/elevation and/or structural idiosyncrasies.

This led to eventual consideration of building an addition to address our needs.

- June 2019: Members of BGUMC formally voted to proceed with exploration of a handicap-accessible addition.
- June 2019 - March 2020: Our Building Project Team worked with an architect to develop detailed plans for construction of a ground-level entrance to include handicap-accessible restrooms, a small gathering area, and a lift that will provide access to the sanctuary as well as the basement. The team also chose local contractors (showing support and commitment to our community), secured bids, and calculated a detailed estimate of cost. The Building Project Team kept our Church Council, congregation, District Superintendent, and Southern Prairie District Board of Church Location and Building updated along the way.
- March 2020: Southern Prairie District Board of Church Location and Building completed their final review of our project and gave their formal approval.

- April 2020: Our BGUMC Church Council determined that we were ready to present our project information to BGUMC members for a final and formal vote to move forward with construction. See separate proposal document: 4/9/2020 Proposal for Final Congregational Vote.
- May 2020: BGUMC members voted 49 to 1 in favor of moving ahead with construction of the ground-level addition as well as the maintenance project of re-shingling the north steeple.



Left: September - November 2020: Construction work began, meeting our goal to have all demolition, excavation, footing/foundation/cement slab work completed prior to the hard winter freeze.

Right: January - February 2021: Construction work resumed, with framing and roofing of the new addition so that contractors could work inside during the winter months.



Above: March 2021: Steel roof and front doors installed.

Right: April - July 2021: Construction continues. We've experienced COVID-related delays in materials and manufacturing along the way. Steel siding and windows are now in place. Sheet rock was installed in late July!





August - September 2021: New Septic System lines and tank installed, outside grading and leveling completed, gravel added to parking lot, sidewalks and handicap-accessible entrance pad poured.



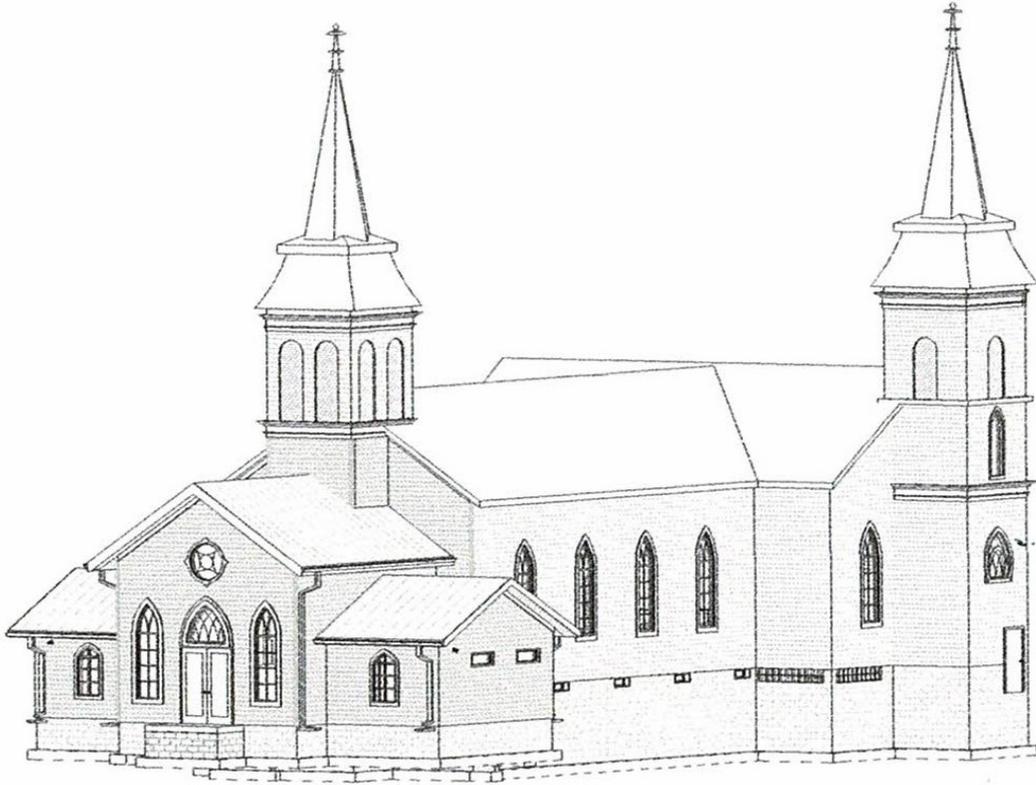
August - September 2021: Sheetrock mudded-taped-sanded, walls painted, electrical work continued, and stained-glass windows installed (originally in the bell tower of our south steeple).

The majority of construction work will be completed by October 9th, with the remaining finishing work ongoing in the weeks following.

B  
G  
U  
M  
C  
  
U  
N  
D  
E  
R  
  
C  
O  
N  
S  
T  
R  
U  
C  
T  
I  
O  
N



**02/21/2020 Architectural Drawing: Addition Exterior**



**02/21/2020 Architectural Drawing: Addition Interior**

