

6/2/2020

Hed: Parking Lot Music Aids Easter Service

By: Matthew Musacchia

When Easter Sunday rolled around this year, coronavirus restrictions caused church services across North Dakota to become silent. However, musician Seth Waddington, of Regent, North Dakota, and his brothers still found themselves playing church music and hymns to a large crowd, using a radio transmitter and a parking lot.

A bluegrass musician, Waddington, 32, plays the guitar in a regional band, The Waddington Brothers, and describes the music as both traditional but with Western music influences, closer to both the “cowboy” songs that became popular in the 1940s and 1950s and bluegrass rather than to the “country-western” genre.

Appropriately enough to the name, this group consists of himself and his brothers: twins Ethan (banjo) and Jacob (mandolin), both 29, and Job, 15, on bass. Originally from Montana, the band has toured parts of the United States and Canada, but before that they traveled extensively with his family’s band, often playing churches and bluegrass festivals.

Waddington said he was initially skeptical of playing when local pastor Cory Warner, asked him to perform a “drive-in” concert on Easter Sunday. Originally, the idea was pitched that they would play with speakers, and cars would roll down their windows and listen. However, given his long experience on stage, Waddington thought that idea would not work because without an “incredible amount” of speakers they could not get decent coverage for the entire crowd.

The idea, inspired by Christmastime and suggested by Waddington’s wife, Rachel, was based on lights synchronized to music so that a listener could tune in using his or her car’s radio.

“So we were pondering it- we liked the idea but I didn’t really think it was feasible until the idea of the FM transmitter came up” Waddington said. “I had never seen one.... we looked around a little bit online and sure enough they were pretty readily available.”

The service took place on Easter Sunday at the fairgrounds at Mott, North Dakota. Based on photos and estimates from a friend, Waddington believes that about 60-65 cars were present, and could have equaled about a crowd of 125 people.

The event generally followed a similar format to most Sunday Easter services. In this case, two pastors gave the readings and the sermon, and Waddington said that he and his brothers played about thirty minutes of music, featuring hymns such as “As He Lives,” and “Where is the Lamb?” and “The Gift to Believe.” Instead of applause, cars would honk their horns, even the ones about 8 to 10 feet from the stage, which Waddington described as “pretty loud” and “kinda funny.”

“That was one that kind of caught us off-guard, as a surprise,” he said. “It lightened the mood and was a nice way for the crowd to respond to let us know they were enjoying or approving of what we were doing... I told my brothers we should do this all the time- I kind of like that.”

Waddington said the turnout was better than expected, and the positive response included many phone calls and text messages.

After having to cancel their own concerts, Waddington said the concert was a “very good experience.”

“I was very honored I guess that that many people would want to come out to listen to us sing while they sat in their cars” said Waddington. “It was an honor to be able to play for people even though they couldn’t come sit in a chair and I couldn’t see them right in the face and speak to them, I guess it was a blessing to be able to go out and still share our music and get to... have an Easter service with the community.... and fellowship which is what everyone enjoys and is used to.”