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Spotlight on Crestwood Margaret Buchanan

This week the Spotlight shines brightly on Margaret Nevius Buchanan, the last living adult charter member still at Crestwood. If it weren't for her and the merry band of determined and dedicated Disciples, Crestwood wouldn't be what is it today. It might not even be.

Talking with Margaret was interesting and delightful. Her humor was evident. In the past, the remaining charter members met together for lunch and to chat about old times, she said. "We used to joke about which of us would be the last one left. I guess it is me," she added.

The beginnings of Crestwood started with Dr. Myron Hopper, a professor at the Lexington Disciple's seminary and a member of Central Christian Church. As the city was expanding into the suburbs, another church was needed, he argued, and he began selling the idea to others. According to Margaret, Arlington,

Lafayette, Woodland, Central, and S. Elkhorn congregations joined in the conversation. Not all sent new members in the end, but were supportive of the move.

In the Buchanan's case, Margaret and her husband George and three children were members of Arlington Christian. They had just moved to Glendover Road, in a neighborhood they chose because their children could walk to school. The minister at Arlington knew they would be eager to have a church closer to their home when he approached them. "We were ready," Margaret said. Others had a harder time leaving their home churches, but everyone was enthused about the task. They started planning meetings in September of 1958 and became official on January 25, 1959.

On that Sunday in 1959, all at the same time, Central, Arlington, Woodland, and Lafayette each held commissioning ceremonies for their members who were leaving to form the new church. "It was almost like a wedding ceremony," Margaret remembers. At the conclusion of the commissioning, the newly blessed members processed from their separate sanctuaries, got in cars, and met together at Glendover Elementary. There, with their children, they sang, prayed, and shared communion to bind their commitments together as a new congregation.

I don't know what I expected to learn about the first years of Crestwood, but they were more fun years than I had anticipated. I thought there would be cliques and difficulties as members from different Disciple's churches merged their practices and beliefs. Apparently, I was wrong. "We got along beautifully," Margaret said.

At first, they met in the gym at Glendover Elementary, beginning a cooperation with the school that continues today. They had folding metal chairs and hung a picture of Jesus for each service. Margaret remembers one day after service, walking across the road, one of the little boys became alarmed and yelled, "We left Jesus at school."

Very soon, they began a search for a pastor to lead them in their new adventure. Jim

Lollis was the minister at Danville at the time, and some of them traveled there to hear him preach. They liked what they heard, and another amazing couple joined them in the new endeavor.

There was much work to be done and each person jumped in to take care of needs as they arose. "We had a 'rule' that if you were asked to serve in an office, you had to say yes," Margaret remembered. She was an early Membership Chairperson and sang in the choir.

I asked Margaret about the role of women at the beginning of the church, a question that seemed to surprise her. "We were right there, included in everything." Then she realized that females hadn't been deacons in the early years but that didn't bother her at the time. I looked over the early documents and found the first service was definitely male-run. But as committees and formal positions were established, I found Margaret was correct - there was close to an even participation of male and females in leadership positions.

One hundred and forty-four men, women, and children participated in the first service at Glendover Elementary. A year later, on January 24, 1960 the membership had swelled to 445 (281 adults). Those people became the official "charter members." There is a plaque with all their names on it hanging outside the back wall of the sanctuary. For the next several weeks there will also be a large picture of the very first Crestwood service at Glendover Elementary on Jan. 25, 1959 placed besides the plaque. You should stop by, look at it, and think of the day of our birth.

Margaret Buchanan, who will turn 95 on May 5, remains the only current member of Crestwood who was an adult when charter membership was designated. A few others – mostly the children – are still living and will be spotlighted at a later time when we look at the new church from a youngster's perspective. Margaret's son Brian who was a big help with this article is still a member of Crestwood, but was born a few years too late to be considered "charter."

It is frustrating leaving out so much of this interesting history and Margaret's detailed memories. Ben Cowgill's history of the church is fascinating reading and has pictures and copies of the bulletins from those important days. I encourage you to visit the Crestwood website and locate "Our Story" under the "about" tag. I predict it will give you a new appreciation of Crestwood and those who made it possible.

We thank you, Margaret Buchanan, and all your friends, who made our church home possible. Thousands of people have benefitted from your efforts. The blessings you brought us extend outward in never-ending waves.

If there is some area of the church you would like to know more about, please share your ideas with me. Let's explore together.

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