



Spotlight on Crestwood The Children's Program

I have been away from children too long. I have no grandchildren so I am seriously out of touch with the reality of church and children today. I began to look around and question: Why do the little ones have labels on their backs? What is going on in the colorful section of rooms behind the Welcome Center? Where do the children go when they leave the second service after the children's sermon?

I heard we have a new enthusiastic and talented children's minister in Missy Wallace [seen in image with Clara Wallace (left) and Kaila Monzon (right)]. Children are playing handbells in church and signs about upcoming Vacation Bible School have appeared. It is time to spotlight the children's program.

I started with my puzzlement about the labels which turned out to be a low-key but effective check-in security system. Each child and parent go to a kiosk near the visitor's desk where their phone number is entered, and a machine spits out a sticker with a child's name, number, and any allergies. The parents are given a matching sticker. "Think of it like a claim check for a coat," explained Missy. It's a safety check to make sure each child is returned to the right person should an unfortunate situation ever arise.

Visiting the area last Sunday, I found Sunday School programming has changed a lot since "back in my day." The facility and equipment at Crestwood are outstanding. I cannot over-state the amazing array of colorful toys, learning items, and resources available in the children's section. There is an art room, music room, nursery, large gathering space, and classrooms for the Little Shepherds (toddlers to 3), Lambs (pre-school and kindergarten) and Lions (grades 1 and 2). Grades 3 to 5 go to the Bridge program in the Chapel every other week during the school year. Curriculum is Montessori-based and mirrors adult worship with songs, story (sermon), and reflection time. There is too much to explain here. I admit I had forgotten how fidgety some little ones are, how shy some are, how talkative others are, how sweet and cute they all are.

I will not try to describe who goes where and when, because I'm not sure I fully understand it myself, but the children are involved from 9:30 to 11:45 in various activities and rooms. The nursery is open at 8:30 to help parents wanting to attend first service. Covid disruptions and the end of the school year have made attendance unpredictable I'm told, but during a recent Sunday visit, it looked like things were well in-hand.

I found a touching tribute in the children's "Keeley's Music Room." The room was sponsored by Keeley Hollingsworth's parents, Patty and Berkeley Hollingsworth when the children's wing was renovated. There is a large cross with handprints from Keeley's friends and people at Crestwood memorializing her life, which ended much too soon.

The children's Sunday program is staffed by interesting (and interested) parent volunteers who were friendly and willing to give me a tour and answer questions even while they were busy. They emphasize they need more church volunteers in all areas. You don't even have to be a "kid-person" to serve in the children's ministry, I was told. Just give Missy a call to discuss possibilities.

Missy Wallace

I can tell why our staff and leadership are quite pleased with the new addition of Children's Minister Missy Wallace. She is a friendly, perky, and enthusiastic red-head. She brings much to the Crestwood table in terms of experience, training, and background. Missy has been in children's ministry for years, serving at Second Presbyterian and United Methodist Church in Versailles. Missy shared that she started out studying social work but switched over to business management which honed her obvious skill set of organization and building relationships. Missy is still getting her feet wet, being with us less than two months, but I have the impression she is the right person to help us rebuild our children's program after the long Covid break. It looks like she will bring clear paths and excitement to our children as they grow and learn at Crestwood.

"I love God. I love people," she says.

I emailed Missy for some basic personal details. Her response so clearly reflects her fun personality that I don't dare rewrite it.

"I am married to my wonderful husband Kevin who's been my sidekick in ministry for over 16 years. Our family consists of our son Jacob who is a freshman at Woodford County High School, and we have adult children (my stepchildren but I washed their dirty socks, so I claim them as my own), Lacy, Rachel and Madison. We have three dogs, Chewy (our old man Lhasa Apso), Curly (our little Wheaten Terrier rescue who's afraid of everything) and Abigail Fluff-bottom "Abby" (our Aussiedoodle who failed therapy dog training). Needless to say, we've gone to the dogs."

In our conversation, on a more serious note, Missy shared her philosophy that has stuck strongly with me since. She said that her childhood was a broken, sad place, but her church was where she found joy.

"God redeemed my story with beautiful people He placed along my path." That led her to discuss her approach to children's ministry. "These are foundational years for the children. They may not remember every detail of what we taught them, but they will always remember the way they felt walking into church."

Our children's program is a crucial part of the commitment our congregation makes during the dedication of each baby born into our midst. With sincerity we promise to help and be with them as they grow and become our future. Missy and all the member-workers in this area are fulfilling that promise.

Take a look again at the children's program. Are there ways that you can help? Vacation Bible School is coming up. Talk to Missy who is at church thirty hours a week. She is in the office Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, and of course, on Sunday. You can email her at Missy@crestwoodchristian.org or call the church and ask for her.

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.

Gaye Holman: gdholman@bellsouth.net.

