



Spotlight on Crestwood #29

Do You Remember?

I have been walking down Memory Lane lately as I have been asked to write something for a long-time friend who is having a significant birthday. I have been chuckling over the many amusing experiences that we shared with church friends over the years.



And thus, the Spotlight subject for today was born. Crestwood has a unique situation in that we have had only four ministers in the past sixty-four years, and three of them are still active members of our congregation. I set out to pick their brains about a few memorable things that happened at Crestwood over the years in hope that the tales would bring back some warm memories to you.

Do you remember?

1959-1968 – Dr. James Lollis

Rev. Lollis, our first minister, is no longer with us, of course. But I recently heard Eleanor Congleton say that she joined the church during his tenure so I gave her a call. Like everyone else, she first said she couldn't think of anything special that happened back then, but soon came up with a great tale as she reminisced.

Do you remember the days when the minister would go calling at the homes of prospective members, often without notice? Eleanor was a brand-new mother, just home from the hospital with her newborn. A knock came on the door, and Dr. Lollis and Mr. Bradford had come visiting. She didn't complain to me about it, but I can imagine the horror of seeing the minister and church elder while dealing with the chaos of a new baby. While the two men visited with her, they noticed a mirror propped up against the wall. They cheerfully offered to put it up for her, and did just that! A few Sundays later was Mother's Day and Eleanor and family joined the church that day, holding their new baby. A new baby, a new mother, and a minister who hangs mirrors – can't get better than that.

1968-1996 – Dr. David Blondell 1968-1996

During Dr. Blondell's tenure, Crestwood hosted a live Nativity scene each Christmas. They say when making movies, animals present the most challenge. The same, it seems, is true of church Nativity Scenes. As Dr. Blondell recalled, one year, arrangements had been made with a farmer in a neighboring county to use one of his sheep for the presentation. Men from the church headed out with a truck to pick up the loan, but when they got there, the farmer was not home. They saw the sheep nearby, so, city slickers that they were, they loaded the animal and headed to Crestwood where it was tethered in its place of honor.

Later that day the farmer, in a panic, skidded into the Crestwood parking lot. It seems the helpful members picked up a new lamb, not the intended adult sheep. They were told that if the lamb missed even one meal, it could be very dangerous for the baby. The farmer immediately rescued his lamb and, it is assumed, he forgave our volunteers, but later supervised the second loading of his animal.

The animal stories don't stop there. Dr. Blondell chuckled as he remembered the year when a sheep broke loose, tore across the large field where the Mission Center, drainage basin, and parking lot are now. It finally jumped over a wall into a neighboring yard with Dick Stuckey tearing after him the whole way. I'm not sure how they got the poor critter back over the wall, or if they had to walk him around through the neighborhood, entertaining the residents. But it is assumed he looked appropriately humble later that night in the stable.

These years covered my first period at Crestwood, and I remember great chaos that suddenly occurred at the church when they were building the children's wing. Emergency vehicles arrived with sirens from every direction. The deep ditch one man was working in collapsed on him, and he was trapped in dirt and mud almost up to his neck. He could not move. As Dr. Blondell remembers it, the man's son was also on the crew and he covered the workman's head to protect it from damage as the machines and responders worked frantically to get him out. It's not a funny story at all, but important things are built on sweat and tears as well as laughter. All mixed together, they make our history meaningful. I could reminisce more, but will move on.

1996-2008 – Dr. William McDonald

I'm not sure what it is about skylights and Crestwood (if you remember the recent storm-related Spotlight), but I may look upward more often when in the building. Dr. McDonald recounted that one Sunday morning during the service, a skylight came crashing down on the pews, almost hitting one of the icons of the church. It landed practically in Anne Karsner's lap, and she really could have been killed or seriously hurt, he said. But while everyone else was shaken up, she continued to laugh about it and assure everyone she was OK. A day to remember, that's for sure.

2009-Present – Dr. Kory Wilcoxson

Dr. Wilcoxson is better at telling tales than I, so here are a couple of doozies in his own words:

"During one worship service, we had a young gentleman visiting us for the first time. During the invitation to communion, I said something like, 'Everyone is invited to come to the table and share in this meal together.' While I meant it metaphorically, this young man took me literally! As soon as I finished the invitation, he got up from the pew, came up to the table before the deacons had a chance to take the trays, and got a piece of bread and cup of juice, then sat back down! I bet he was shocked when he saw the deacons start to pass out the trays to the congregation. He was expecting self-serve, we offer full-serve!

"My favorite memory happened just a few years ago in 2021. It was the Sunday before Christmas, one of the biggest Sundays of the year. The sanctuary was packed and we were having a great worship service. Then, right in the middle of the invitation to communion, the fire alarm goes off. Nobody moves for about 10 seconds, then we realize we'd better do something! So, we began moving people out to the Children's Wing parking lot. On a lark, I grabbed the communion plates, and once we were all out of the building, we circled up and served communion as the sirens of the fire trucks grew louder. Turns out, someone cooking in the kitchen had let a little too much smoke build up, which triggered the alarms. Everyone was fine and we had the most memorable Christmas Sunday ever!

That brings us to the present and onto the future. None of these stories are earth-shattering, but they do give us pause to think over the many memories Crestwood members have shared over the years. It is fun to look back, and it is comforting to know there will be more shared experiences in the future. It is the little smiles and making of memories that weld us into a meaningful church. May there be many more memories made, and members can ask "Do you remember?"

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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@bellsouth.net



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