



Spotlight on Crestwood: A Blessing with a Little Curse

I thought I was nearly out of ideas for the Spotlight until I walked past the table in the back of the sanctuary and viewed it with different eyes. The table is covered with complicated looking technical boards covered with multiple switches and buttons and cords. I walk pass it each Sunday but hadn't given it much thought.

Scott Wallace, his teenaged son Carter, and Rev. Kory Wilcoxson have tried to bring my understanding of Crestwood's technology up to date. This was not an easy task. I learned that table involves more than just a few microphones and cameras, and it's soon going to become more complicated.

Our technology's complicated beginnings started about a year before Covid hit, according to Rev. Wilcoxson. In the beginning, with active help from Jason Taylor, sometime in 2019 we began streaming our Sunday services through the church's Facebook page. It was a relatively primitive set-up, with one camera in the back that took care of the whole service, but it gave us a little head-start for what was to come.

In 2020 Covid hit and original solutions were needed as the sanctuary was closed. Crestwood began a drive-in service – first as Wednesday evening vespers, and then as Sunday morning outdoor worship services. Griffin Allen reportedly was the mastermind behind the idea, with Scott Wallace adding his expertise. Families came and worshiped in their cars. Crestwood had an FM transmitter which allowed people to listen through their car radios. Scott Wallace remembers this time as a constant challenge with weather-related issues. There were problems with the wind and audio and, on Sundays when the weather was rainy and threatening, it actually became dangerous for those outside.

Our innovative leaders then decided to try something different. They divided the service into segments and pre-recorded each segment separately. The parts were then pieced together and aired on Sunday. Griffin Allen, a college student at the time, handled the technical end of putting the parts together and was "the mastermind that made all that happen," according to the minister.

Rev. Wilcoxson clearly doesn't want to go back to those times. "That was such a weird time! I would preach my sermons from the pulpit to an empty sanctuary with a camera about three feet in front of my face. It was almost eerie!" he remembered.

This was about the time I arrived back in Lexington, and my first reacquaintance with Crestwood was through the TV. It also explains some of the strange things that came across on the camera. The one I remember most is seeing the ladder on the floor behind the choir chairs. Now I understand how up-side-down everything was. I do, nevertheless, remember being impressed with the beautiful, changing pictures of the exterior of Crestwood.

During that time of closure, the church significantly upgraded its live-stream capabilities in the sanctuary. An A/V company was hired to install three cameras, a new sound board, and a video system. We are able to use those upgraded systems today to live-stream the services on our YouTube channel. Sound is now fed into the chancel area to help the Elders and Deacons with their duties during the service. It was the beginning of a technological journey that is still continuing.

Scott Wallace says we are getting a custom-made new desk and cabinet that will replace the table they use now. In addition, they are rolling out a new system with which people with hearing loss can tune into the audio of the sanctuary through their hearing aids. The hearing aids will connect directly to the system or will transmit by Bluetooth. We will also have functional headphones. That process is currently in the pricing stage. Also underway, the microphones in the sanctuary will be modernized and the hardware which runs under the stage will be replaced.

There are three cameras attached up high around the sanctuary that I'd never noticed before. They are able to rotate and zoom in and out as needed. They have occasionally accidentally caught people napping or fidgeting through the sermon, so BEWARE!

Currently most of the technical work on Sunday mornings is done by Scott Wallace, chair of our Technology Committee. Scott works for WTVQ, Channel 36, where he is the IT manager. He is also the husband of our youth minister, Steph Wallace. Scott is teaching their teen-aged son Carter to take over the tasks as needed, so we are happy to have this talented and dedicated family in our midst. When the Wallaces are on vacation, David Miller or Bob Wheeler skillfully takes over. Doug Wilkinson also fills in at the sound board.

The live streaming of the service does offer Crestwood a mixed bag of blessings and has its pros and cons, according to Rev. Wilcoxson. "It allows people to connect with Crestwood in a way they might not be able to do otherwise. For example, I know of the sister of a church member who's been regularly worshipping with us from out of state. And several of our new families that have recently joined initially found us through our live stream. The downside is that it makes it convenient not to attend in person, which I strongly believe should always be the first choice. As a church family, we should be present with each other whenever possible."

Each week 100-120 viewers join Crestwood in worship on-line. About two-thirds of those watch sometime during the week other than at the regular worship time. One shortcoming of the system is that we can't know who the visitors are.

Rev Wilcoxson continues, "As for the future, I want to do more with our live stream, adding graphics and text. I would love to display Scripture passages and hymn lyrics as those things happen in worship."

It will be interesting to follow the developing technology, as it undoubtedly will continue to push changes in the community and at Crestwood.



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