



#### **Dr. David Blondell, Crestwood's Second Minister**

Crestwood is unique. We have had only four ministers in our sixty-five-year period, and three of them are still at our church!

Today the Spotlight is on Dr. David Blondell, our second minister, who served from 1968 to 1996. He took over after the retirement of James Lollis, now deceased. Dr. Blondell was the minister when I was a Crestwood member years ago, so it was quite a treat to spend several hours talking with him recently at his new home at High Grove at Tates Creek.

I considered where to start our conversation. Should we reminisce about the days I was at Crestwood? Should we talk about the Joe B. Hall days at our church when the coach and basketball team sat in our pews? Or should I figure out what makes this always gentle, humorous, and kind man tick?

I decided to ask first what brought him to the ministry, as I sometimes wonder why someone would take on such an arduous task. The story went way back. His great-grandfather and uncle on his father's side were both ministers, and there were a lot of churchgoers on his mother's side, as well. When David was in junior high school, he was loaned a book his great grandfather had written about his years in the ministry. The title must have filled the cover: *"Following the Trails of a Mountain Pioneer Minister Through the Hills of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee for Forty-seven Years."* He claimed to have worn out four horses. The book, written many years before, inspired young David.

I got sidetracked in writing as I googled John Wesley (JW) Masters (1854-1924) and found his most extraordinary story on-line. Here is the link, if you are interested in fascinating personal and church history.

[https://www.therestorationmovement.com/\\_states/kentucky/masters.html](https://www.therestorationmovement.com/_states/kentucky/masters.html).

Years later David Blondell wrote his thesis on his great-grandfather and later published the thesis under the title, *They Called Him Brother Masters*. I found the book still available on Amazon.

I digress. David was active in his youth group at the First Christian Church in Middlesboro

and was exposed to a strong youth revival plea to encourage young people to enter Christian service. He was encouraged to preach a sermon as a youth and then was guided to Johnson Bible College (now Johnson University) outside of Knoxville. He eventually earned a Doctorate of Ministry degree from the Lexington Theological Seminary.

Dr. Blondell's first church was in Williamsburg, Kentucky, which was the home church of a young, intriguing woman named Julia. They met in 1957 and married only six months later on Christmas Day. He admits that wasn't a very long courtship, but it was a successful partnership – they were married almost 64 years. I mentioned a minister's marrying on Christmas Day, one of the busiest times of a minister's year, is a strange thought. David laughed, saying they accused him of choosing that day because the church was already decorated!

The Blondells had three children, who were raised at Crestwood – David Bryan, Barry, and Margaret. There are four grandchildren, whom David has enjoyed watching grow up here in Lexington.

I feel I should spend time talking about Julia Blondell, who was such an important light at Crestwood and a significant partner in their ministry, but I would never finish here. When she died in 2021, we all lost very much.

The Blondells moved to Lexington and Crestwood in 1968, but not without trauma on the way to their new home. When a truck stopped in front of them, David's car plowed into it and came to a stop underneath the truck! They weren't hurt, but they arrived in Lexington with one less car and all the family and belongings crowded into Julia's car, which was following with daughter Margaret and other possessions.

I asked David what was the best thing about being Crestwood's pastor. He said "the best thing was meeting some of the best people in town – they were friendly, cordial, and always supportive. I don't know there were ever any issues in the whole twenty-six years."

I asked what was the least pleasant thing about being a pastor. He thought carefully and said there were two things: Learning about people he knew and loved who were not able to make it as a couple and trying to stay neutral in the situations. The second was having to go to the home of a family member to inform them about the death of their child. He recounted the tragic death of the young Lafferty boy, when he went to their home in the middle of the night to inform them their son's body had been found after a fall. The story is recounted in detail in another Spotlight article about the Lafferty Garden. His pain in both tellings was palpable.

One of David's claims to fame in my mind was that he was the "unofficial" chaplain to the UK basketball team during Joe B. Hall's years as coach. Hall was a Crestwood member, and during those years Crestwood was clearly "Blue." We never planned church activities without first checking the UK basketball schedule!

It's a long story how it started, but David was asked to come talk to the team, and that experience expanded to more and more contacts. Whenever he was with the team, David explained he tried to speak inspirationally to them, both individually and as a team. He went to practices. He spoke and gave invocations at pregame meals. He was at all home games and laughed, explaining what he said there was "half pep-rally, half come-to-Jesus." Individual players turned to him at times of trouble. He took them to lunch to talk, met with them individually if there were troubles at home or personal issues or family deaths. He performed a few weddings and renewal of wedding vows for players and staff.

On Sundays a number of the basketball players attended Crestwood and sat at the back of the church. They talked about moving up front, but David told them to stay put – no one could see over them if they were at the front! One year the players dressed in our choir robes and stood in our choir loft for their annual team picture.

Generally, ministers leave their church when they retire, as there can be many complications if they remain. David talked first with good friend, Guy Waldrop, an influential man in the Disciples denomination, and then talked seriously with incoming minister, Rev. Bill McDonald, and then later with Rev. Kory Wilcoxson about his involvement. All encouraged him to stay. He wanted to make it clear to everyone that he

was no longer their minister but was their friend.

Always with knowledge and permission from the current pastor, David sometimes would visit with parishioners in the hospital. When they approached the end of life, he appropriately stepped back, so that they would not confuse his role, which was no longer as pastor. David said it is hard to keep differences straight between being your pastor and being your friend. He tried to stay away from such potential conflicts.

How did he feel about new changes in the way he had done things when he was minister? If the changes pleased him, he said he tried to compliment them. If he didn't like it, he tried to keep his mouth shut. "If I didn't like it, tough luck," he said. "I just got used to it, because I didn't want to change churches."

David has been an active member of Crestwood since his retirement and is regularly seen in the choir along with his successor, Rev. Bill McDonald. I mentioned to Rev. McDonald about spotlighting Dr. Blondell and added I would get to him soon to do his own Spotlight article. He said I can interview him when he turns ninety like David!

Dr. Blondell praised our Rev. Dr. Kory Wilcoxson, who voiced similar sentiments in return. "David has been one of my biggest supporters and cheerleaders since the day I arrived at Crestwood. He's been a fountain of institutional knowledge and a great resource on the church's history. He's also a good friend to me. I count myself as very lucky to have him at Crestwood!"

I think we all feel the same way. Rev. Blondell's legacy is strong and ever-lasting at Crestwood.

If there is some area of the church you would like to know more about, contact me, Gaye Holman, [gдохolman@bellsouth.net](mailto:gдохolman@bellsouth.net). Let's explore together.

Let's continue to explore together. If you have ideas for future Spotlights, contact me, Gaye Holman at [gдохolman@bellsouth.net](mailto:gдохolman@bellsouth.net).



Crestwood Christian Church | 1882 Bellefonte Dr. | Lexington, KY 40503 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!