

### Early Morning Music



#### Spotlight on Crestwood

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As a normally late sleeper, I groan when the Sunday morning alarm screeches its wake-up call. Most of the time I resist hitting the snooze alarm as I realize that, if I make the 8:30 service, my day will start out fine. Hats off to pianist Cindy Abernathy, who is the musical talent who brings that early service to life.

I know little or nothing about music, but I know what I like. And I know that Cindy's vibrant and energetic chords draw me and others into the service. Her songs are sometimes lively, moving, and always inspiring. Perhaps the best word is "meaningful." After she plays the powerful prelude, there is usually a quiet silence as people take it in. And then the congregation breaks into applause and quiet cheers of praise, not caring that clapping is not common in our church services.

Sometimes my foot is tapping and I am excited by the church music which is familiar but different, so I was surprised to take Cindy's picture during the prelude and find a serious-faced, concentrating pianist. I realized then that she was "playing with meaning," a lesson I never understood during my elementary piano lesson days. She explains that she uses hymn arrangements for the prelude and postlude, so the words are always playing in her head. That allows her to put expression and emotion into the music. The meaning comes to life for us all.

Cindy chooses her own songs for the opening and closing pieces, as well as for the offering and communion, while Rev. Wilcoxson chooses the congregational hymns.

Cindy found her way to Crestwood in June, 2021, just after Maureen Howell left us as our long-time office administrator and early-service pianist. The Abernathys had earlier visited Crestwood and gotten acquainted with Rev. Wilcoxson. They became friends, and Kory was playing golf with Cindy's husband, Rev. Jim Abernathy. Kory was bemoaning the fact of losing Maureen. Jim mentioned his wife Cindy might be interested in the music position, and before long she was in place at the Steinway grand piano. It must be true that good deals are arranged on the golf course!

In getting Cindy, we also got Jim, who adds a wonderful baritone voice to the worship service about once a month.

The couple have been a long-time strong duo in their marriage, as well as in their music. They both grew up in the Baptist church (the liberal kind, they both insisted). Cindy was born in Franklin, Indiana, Jim in Western Kentucky. Jim moved frequently growing up, as his father was a minister, so changing locations was normal for him. They both went to the Baptist Seminary in Louisville where they met in an Old Testament class.

They got together when they both went to Scottsburg, Indiana, as student ministers. Jim was the minister of music and Cindy was the organist. A marriage made in Heaven, it might be said.

Jim explained that he was always interested in music and has a college degree in music and his master's degree in church music, but he changed lanes when he transferred into the Master of Divinity program and eventually earned a Doctorate of Ministry degree. He has been the senior minister in most of the churches they served. He is a member of the Lexington Chamber Chorus in his spare time.

Cindy entered the seminary and, like her husband, eventually changed her interests in a different direction from where she started. She received a Master's degree in Religious Education, but eventually switched her interests more towards music.

As she started out with an interest in church service, being a preacher's wife was an easy and excellent fit, she said. As they moved around, she was always able to find a job in music and has taught music at every level from age two through college. She has always been the organist in churches until Crestwood, where she has moved to the piano.

Cindy volunteers at the Best Friends Adult Day Care at Brannon Crossing, where she brings music into the program. Music is considered one of the most effective ways to reach Alzheimer's patients. She also volunteers with the Baptist Health Surgery Center, checking in patients.

In spite of their strong Baptist background, the talented couple has transitioned in recent years to the Disciples of Christ, where Jim has served as interim minister in several congregations. He explains that Disciples churches allow him to be himself, as he wasn't a typical Southern Baptist, and our denomination basically lets him do what he wants to do in his ministry.

The Abernathys have been increasingly active at Crestwood. I've gotten to know them through the book groups led by Rev. Wilcoxson and love their input and insightful takes on subjects we discuss. They have recently taken a big step in changing denominations and officially joined Crestwood as members on August 18. That's quite a benefit for us. However, Jim is going to be off for a while. He starts serving as interim pastor at Cynthiana Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) on September 8, but will return to us when that stint is over. Cindy plans to run to Cynthiana some days after the early service at Crestwood to worship with her husband and that congregation.

The Abernathys say they are here to stay. They moved to Lexington when Jim officially retired in 2017, to be near their son and daughter-in-law, who live here. They are excited to greet their first grandchild soon.

By the time this Spotlight comes out, hopefully the whole church will know of Cindy's talents. She will be playing for the 10:45 AM service during the two weeks Jane Johnson is gone on vacation. She will stick with the piano instead of shifting back to the organ, so you can see what I mean.

There is extraordinary talent at Crestwood and many interesting people. The Abernathys fall in that category. We are glad to have them officially among us.

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](mailto:gdholman@bellsouth.net).



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