



Spotlight on Crestwood #60

Ready to Van-Go

They have traveled many miles, heard and experienced fascinating things. One of them occasionally bumps and creaks as it gets older.

Granted, that could describe a lot of us, but instead, the Spotlight lands today on the church vans. They sit in the shade, partially hidden at the north side of the Mission Center, unnoticed by many. But if you are part of a group that needs to get somewhere, they become the center of attention. Only recently have I paid any attention to them.

You would think that finding out about church vans would be rather straight-forward, but it's strange how much we take things for granted and rely on shadowy memories to piece the history together.

Crestwood was gifted its first van sometime in the 1970s (maybe 80s). One of the well-known active Elders purchased it for the children of Crestwood to facilitate their getting more easily to activities. I was given his name, but it was suggested I don't use it as he didn't want it advertised when he was living – and there is a small chance memories have faded on details. Perhaps others were involved? Deceased now, this person started a valuable service that has grown and is much used today.

Things are vague between then and now. I don't know when we expanded to two vans. And which stories belong to which van get confused. So, please be tolerant if I've mixed it up or one person's memories don't quite match yours. The end result is the same: Scouts and youth have been delivered to camp and mission activities throughout Kentucky and neighboring states. The Childcare Center uses it for outings. Lately, led by Jeanette Knowles, the SRO group climbs on and heads out on their monthly adventures. The uses of the vans continue to expand. Now, on the first and third Sundays, residents from Legacy Reserve and Sayre Village are picked up to allow them continued attendance at Crestwood. Thanks to Dave Blondell and David Allen for driving.

Fran McKinney laughs as she remembers the first van which she recalls was stolen and the Crestwood logo painted over. The police were called and it was found in another county otherwise unharmed. It was repainted and kept tightly chained after that – for a while. She said it became such a hassle with keys and locks, that soon the precaution fell by the wayside and it has been unchained for years. Sure enough, I found a sturdy metal pole planted near the vans with holes in it for a chain. I love finding these surprising things around our church, never noticed as years pass. That same van got stuck in a parking garage, scraping the top when the vent would not clear the opening. They had to let the air out of the tires to get it out without creating further damage.

Rev. Steph Wallace tells a suspenseful story about one of the current vans. Parents and staff drove both vans on a mission trip. She and Doug Wilkinson were with one group of youngsters when they were faced with a metal grate in the road out of place at an angle which they couldn't avoid. It flattened one tire completely but they were still moveable as they had dual rear wheels. It was at night and they were on their way to a ballgame after working all day. Together they called the tire stores in the city – all closed. At some point they got in touch with a man who could not speak English, but he managed to communicate an address. After dropping Steph and the kids at the ballgame, Doug drove the van to the address, and found a house with several men with tires everywhere. They wanted \$60 cash. Steph and the kids were at the game where they waited two hours while she was worrying about Doug. But he finally appeared with the replaced tire and with the adventure over, they were able to drive back to Lexington the next day.

According to Jim Christi, our facilities manager, both vans are Ford Econolines. The one referred to as "the red van" is a 2006 model and has 93,000 miles on it. It is designated by the red stripe on the side. It was purchased from Transylvania's sports department according to memories. It reportedly has a leaky roof and is creaky and bumpy, but is well-maintained by Jim according to schedule. The "white" van is from 2015 with 47,000 miles. Jim handles the scheduling and records of drivers, etc. Each group is expected to clean the van after use and occasionally the scouts will wash them. There is a pre-trip sheet to complete as well as a log sheet at the end of the trip.

Each bus holds 15 people. They both sport big windows, nice leg room, seat belts, air conditioning, and safety amenities like back-up screens.

To drive the bus, one must be 21 years old and have a copy of their license on file in the church office. The church carries insurance, but Jim says there have been no accidents since he has been at Crestwood. But those on our SRO trip (with long Crestwood memories) claim the vans have had their share of nicks and scrapes over the years.

As the "red" van is getting long in the tooth, I asked Rev. Wilcoxson what happens if it needs replacing. He said there are no funds in the budget for van replacement and no plans to get a newer one at this time.

But for now, the vans are perking along, well-used, well cared for. When things are working well, we don't notice or think about them. But clearly, the vans are an important part of our church's activities and mission.

If there is some area of the church you would like to know more about, contact me, Gaye Holman at gldholman@bellsouth.net. Let's explore together.