

# COVID-19 prompts innovation at Georgetown church

August 10, 2020

GEORGETOWN—Crestview Baptist Church in Georgetown enjoys some distinctive advantages in terms of facilities and resources that have helped it thrive during a global pandemic. But Pastor Dan Wooldridge believes its greatest assets are creativity and commitment.



Dan Wooldridge

“We’re not going to close down and hide under the bed until this is over. That’s just not in the DNA of this congregation,” Wooldridge said.

Instead, the church has continued to discover new ways to adapt and meet needs in a changing environment—from providing an online version of its summer day camp to making its building available for remote learning sites once school resumes.

Like many congregations, Crestview Baptist suspended in-person worship services in mid-March. Crestview focused on expanding its online presence through streaming worship services on Facebook, YouTube and the church’s website.

“We offered online services with a band, praise team and preaching on Sunday morning, Sunday evening and Wednesday,” Wooldridge said. The church also began posting daily video devotionals and promoted online Bible study opportunities.

## **Church began to ‘regather’ on Mother’s Day**

The church’s PieceMakers quilting ministry created masks for people who needed face coverings—first for health care workers, and later for worshippers when Crestview began to “regather” on-site on Mother’s Day.



Members of Ablaze, a youth choir at Crestview Baptist Church in Georgetown, and their parents work at Liberty Baptist Church in Voca during a one-day mission trip. Youth and parents traveled in a caravan as family units to

maintain social distancing.  
(Photo courtesy of Corey Ash)

At that point, the church benefited from a decision made several years ago to equip its facility for livestream worship in multiple on-campus venues so it could accommodate overflow crowds.

“At the time, we wanted to delay building a new worship center until we retired our indebtedness,” Wooldridge said. “Instead of satellite campuses around town, we set up our whole campus here like a satellite.”

More than 300 have gathered most Sundays for in-person worship since it resumed at Crestview. Even blocking every other pew and maintaining at least six feet between worshippers from different households, the church could accommodate twice that number if necessary by opening additional on-campus worship sites, Wooldridge noted.

Hand sanitizing stations are set up throughout the facility, and the worship centers are disinfected between services.

Worship leaders give a “gentle nudge” to encourage worshippers to wear masks, and all greeters and ushers wear them, Wooldridge said.

While mask-wearing is encouraged throughout the building, it is only mandated in one venue—the fellowship hall—which is designated for those who want to be in an environment where everyone is wearing face coverings.

## **Resuming Bible study, thriving financially**

Since most of the educational space at Crestview is divided by movable walls, the church has been able to make adjustments for on-campus Bible

studies while allowing for social distancing, Wooldridge added.



When COVID-19 forced Crestview Baptist Church in Georgetown to cancel its in-person weeklong summer day camp, the church created Camp Crestview Reimagined as an at-home, online alternative experience. (Photo courtesy of Robert Stephens)

Between worshippers who gather in-person and those who view online services and Bible studies, attendance is significantly larger now than before the pandemic—and the church reached a high attendance of 956 in Bible study not long before the mid-March lockdown. More than 20 people have joined Crestview since that time.

While some churches have suffered financially during the pandemic, giving at Crestview surpassed budget requirements for the first half of the year and has continued at a record pace, Wooldridge reported.

Many members give online or mail checks to the church office during the week. Others place their offerings in receptacles at the exits of the worship centers.

“At some point, I do want to get back to passing the offering plate during the service,” Wooldridge said. “I see giving the offering as an act of worship.”

## Camp Crestview Reimagined

In May, the church put on hold its popular Camp Crestview weeklong summer day camp, originally scheduled in June. However, it was rescheduled for early August as a virtual event.



Children participate at home in Camp Crestview Reimagined. (Photo courtesy of Robert Stephens)

Camp Crestview Reimagined includes age-appropriate activities for children in kindergarten through second grade and third through sixth grades presented either on the Internet or a DVD. Every child who is enrolled receives a packet of camp supplies.

More than 1,000 children are participating—including children out of state

who have family connections to Crestview and are able to join this year due to the online format.

The virtual format also enabled Crestview to share the day camp experience with Maranatha Baptist Church, a congregation in the New York borough of Queens that primarily serves immigrants from Romania and other Eastern European countries.

When school starts, Crestview hopes to make space available throughout its campus for remote learning.

Since the church has quality Wi-Fi throughout its facility, it will provide learning space for students who have laptops but lack reliable Internet access at home—or who have noisy preschool siblings and need a quiet place to do their schoolwork, Wooldridge explained.

“I am blessed with the most creative staff anywhere,” he said. “They continue to create additional ways for us to intersect with our community.”