

Community Builder: Diamond to be honored by Yantis Masons for ministry work

Written by By FAITH HUFFMAN, News-Telegram News Editor
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Yantis Masonic Lodge 382 will honor a local pastor and Hopkins County native with a Community Builder Award in recognition of his service to the community during his 59 years in ministry.

James Diamond, pastor of Cedar Crest Christian Church, will be presented with the prestigious award during a service at 3 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 13, by Yantis Masonic Lodge leaders and members.

The Community Builder Award was designed by the Grand Lodge of Texas to enable local lodges to recognize outstanding non-Masons who have distinguished themselves through their service to the community, to local or state government, to their church or synagogue, or to humanity. Thus, the awards are presented to non-Masons who have followed the same precepts, ideals and standards that have been established for Masonic behavior.

“He’s been a minister for 50-something years, preaching in churches that aren’t able to afford a full time minister,” said Al Golden, a member of Yantis Masonic Lodge who also attends Cedar Crest Christian Church. “He’s in it for the right reasons, not in it for the money, that’s for sure. He doesn’t get paid what he’s worth.”

Diamond has been in ministry for 59 years, having preached his first sermon while a high school junior in Como. He has spent 42 of those years as a pastor at a number of churches, and his entire ministry working with churches that could not afford to have a paid full-time minister.

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Diamond has lived in Hopkins County and the Yantis area for most of his life, but has preached all over Texas and even in the Kiamichi Mountains in Oklahoma. He lived in Como from his birth in 1936 to April 1941.

“When his mom and dad moved back to Como, they insisted that he go with them,” notes Melba Diamond, who he will have been married to for 58 years on Sept. 2.

Diamond preached his first sermon during his junior year of high school. He graduated from Como High School in 1955, then attended Dallas Christian College in Dallas full time for two full semesters then part time for the next four years. He and Melba lived in Dallas, where James worked for Dr. Pepper Co. when they married in 1956.

He pastored a church in McKinney for two years while continuing his studies part time. He was also pastor of a church south of Rockdale for five years while they lived in Dallas and even after the Diamonds moved to Yantis to help Melba’s mom run the family grocery store in 1960. On June 1964, Diamond left the Rockdale Church in order to begin his 14 years as pastor of Como Christian Church.

During that time, Diamond began a nearly 40-year career with City National Bank, too. He started as a bookkeeper in 1961, and retired 37 1/2 years later. His final 18 years at CNB he served as senior vice president of loans.

He resigned from Como in 1978 and did not preach for 18 months, until First Christian Church in Royse City called him to serve as their pastor. He served the Royse City church for nine years before deciding to retire from occasionally preaching, but did fill in for his college preaching buddies at various times from 1979 to 2003.

Diamond also held many revivals for churches in the Kiamichi Mountains in Oklahoma, and held 10 revivals at Rockdale Church after leaving.

Aware of his connection to Como Christian Church, an elder at Sulphur Springs Church of Christ approached Diamond to see if the Como church would be interested in buying SSCOC’s

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property at Davis Street and Airport Road. The Como church bought the property, changed its name to Cedar Crest Christian Church and moved to Sulphur Springs. Melba and James attended Cedar Crest with their family.

In 2003, Diamond accepted Cedar Crest's request to serve as interim pastor until a more permanent replacement could be found for the minister, who returned to Missouri. He has continued to serve as minister of Cedar Crest for the past 11 years.

He hopes to soon "pass the torch" at Cedar Crest Christian to another minister, allowing him to "retire," which for Diamond means making himself available to periodically fill in for any of his "minister friends who want a little time off."

In addition to his work in ministry, Diamond also while living in the local community also helped start Yantis Volunteer Fire Department, as well as many of community projects and service, Golden noted.

"He's done a lot for Yantis. He is a dedicated servant, down to earth and well liked too. He is worthy of this award, I believe," Golden said.

Diamond's family and friends are invited to join the Yantis Masons Saturday, Sept. 13, at 3 p.m. as they present him with the Community Builder Award during a special service, accompanied by a meal. Those planning to attend and show their support for Diamond are asked to contact Golden at 903-440-0014 prior to the event to help the Lodge properly prepare.