



THE WITNESS

St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

Volume 29, Issue 10
The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor

October 2018
Church Phone (405) 843-5333

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This fall I began teaching an eighth grade New Testament class at the Academy of Classical Christian Studies. Last week after a class in which we had been discussing the origin of our Christian Bible one of my students came up to me and asked whether a person has to believe in the Bible to be a Christian. Unfortunately, I did not have a chance to clarify what he meant by “believe in the Bible”, but it is a great question which I hope to discuss at some point with my class, and one I would like to address in this article.

I would like to begin by expressing what I think a Christian should believe about the Bible in general and then what I think is permissible for a Christian to believe or not believe about certain parts of the Bible.

For me a Christian should have the same view of scripture that Paul had. In 2 Timothy 3:16 he says, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, or correction, and for training in righteousness.” Notice the word “all”. Paul believed that all of scripture (at that time the 39 books of the Old Testament) was inspired by God. This is the same view held by Jesus and the other apostles.

One of the questions that arises among Christians has to do with when to take a passage literally and when to take a passage figuratively. Most people would agree that certain genres, such as poetry, should not be taken literally. An example would be Psalm 23. God is not literally a shepherd nor does

He have a literal rod and staff, so we view this as figurative language.

But what about prose, particularly the historical books of scripture? Are they always to be viewed literally? Let us consider a few examples of things not all Christians believe.

There are those who do not believe that the first 11 chapters of Genesis are historical, or that the story of Jonah is to be taken literally, particularly the part of him be swallowed by a giant fish or surviving inside the fish for three days. There are those who do not hold the stories in Daniel of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace and of Daniel in the lion's den, as being literal. There are also those who do not believe that Job was a real person.

I believe all of these things actually did happen. But I would not say that a person who denied these things could not be a Christian. In my opinion, those who do not believe that these miraculous things happened, or who feel a need to explain away the miracles of the Bible are limiting God. This, however, does not necessarily mean that these people are not Christians. It is important to remember that we are saved by grace and that being a Christian has to do with being born of the spirit and being a new creature in Christ, not with whether one believes Jonah got swallowed by a great fish or not.

With this said, I do not want to downplay the importance of what we believe. What we believe does matter. While there are many minor points of

doctrine that we may disagree about, what needs to be determined are the essentials and the non-essentials of the Christian faith. We must be careful not to make our list of essentials too long.

As the number of essentials increases, the number of people we view as true Christians will decrease. If what we believe to be the essentials of our faith increase too much we become like the groups that get to the point where they believe they are the only ones who are going to be saved.

In Ephesians 4, Paul gives a wonderful call to unity. "I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

As Christians we should focus on what we have in common, not on our differences.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mark*

OCTOBER SERMON TOPICS

We will hopefully finish up our series on the book of Philippians this month.

October 28 is Reformation Sunday. Two years ago on Reformation Sunday I preached a sermon on Sola Scripture (Scripture Alone). My intention then was to preach five sermons on the five solas of the Protestant Reformation, doing one each year on Reformation Sunday. It was a bit of a long-term goal! Anyway, I missed doing it last year, so this year I am planning to preach on Sola Fide (Faith Alone) on Reformation Sunday.

- October 7 Philippians 3:12-4:1
Straining Toward the Goal
- October 14 Philippians 4:2-9
Exhortation, Encouragement and Prayer
- October 21 Philippians 4:10-23
God's Provision
- October 28 Romans 3:21-31
Sola Fide

September Session Report

FINANCIAL REPORT: The financial report for the new fiscal year was discussed.

FELLOWSHIP: The September Potluck was well attended and went well.

NOMINATIONS: Session discussed a list of possible candidates to replace the outgoing elders (3) and deacons (2).

NURTURE: Way Day began Wednesday, September 5.

OUTREACH: Fall Festival is scheduled for Saturday, October 20.

WORSHIP: Next Communion - October 7, 2018.

OLD BUSINESS: The large tree in the playground area has been removed. OG&E's LED light rebate program has been discontinued by OG&E for the remainder for the year. Consequently the session has postponed replacing the current lights with LEDs.

NEW BUSINESS: We have replaced one of the air conditioning units and two furnaces.

Worship Schedule

Every Sunday

9:30AM - Adult & Children's Sunday School

11:00AM – Worship

SMALL GROUPS

Bible Study & Prayer – Sunday evenings at Pastor Mark & Anne Bradford's – October 14 & 28 at 5:30PM.

Monday Prayer Group – October 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 at 12:30PM, church library.

Tuesday Bible Study – October 16 at 2:30PM.

Men's Prayer Group – Saturday mornings at 7:30AM.

Prayer Requests

If you have missed prayers or would like to be added to the Women's Fellowship prayer chain please call Doris Cornell 605-6172 or Treva Gullett 735-9908.

This past month we lost a member and dear friend, **Jean Collins Mighton**, who was called home on September 1. Our prayers and condolences go out to all her family and friends.



Ushers/Greeters

October Greeters: Carla & Nelson Pickrell

October Ushers:

October 7 – Michael Bassett, Pat Robison, Wendy Smith, Nancy Spradling

October 14 – Rebecca & Randy Stateler, Ashley McCormick, Nancy Spradling

October 21 – Michael Bassett, Pat Robison, Wendy Smith, Nancy Spradling

October 28 – Youth

Fellowship Hour Treats

October 7 – Patsy Kuhn, Jean & Kent Larason

October 14 – Pat Robison, Erin Von Tungeln

October 21 – Jaquelyn Kuhn, Carla & Nelson Pickrell

October 28 – Joan & Frank Miranda, Wendy Smith

Way Day Dates 2018-2019

October 3, 10, 17 & 24

November 7, 14 & 28

December 5 & 12

January 9, 16 & 23

February 6, 13 & 20

March 6, 13 & 27

April 3, 10 & 17

BETA SORORITY ANNUAL GARAGE SALE

Friday, October 5, 8:00AM - 5:00PM

Saturday, October 6, 8:00AM - 12:00PM

If you have items you would like to donate, please contact the church office to make arrangements to store items in the gym.

SEQUENCE PLAYERS



Sequence will meet October 23. Any questions, please call Doris Cornell at 605-6172.

DID YOU KNOW?

Pastor Mark competed in the Oklahoma Senior Games Swim Meet in Norman on Saturday, September 15. He took three 1st and two 2nd places! That qualified him to go to the National Seniors Games in Albuquerque in June 2019. Well done!

1st Annual Family Fall Festival

Saturday, October 20 5:00-7:30PM



We are trying something new this fall.

First, we are trying a new time, in the evening.

Second, there will be games in every room throughout the church.

Third, we will still have Trunk or Treat for those of you still excited about decorating your vehicles.

We are in hopes of the neighborhood coming, and of course your family and friends. This is a way for the neighborhood to come see what our church looks like inside and it will be a way for them to meet us, and see our faces in a fun atmosphere as we delight in their children.

There will be cupcake walks, pumpkins, putt putt, face painting, games galore and soooooo much more.

Please watch for a signup because we will need lots of St. Stephen's people to help with games and to be smiling faces to greet our guests. It will be a fun time for all.



Chris Howard is going to be participating in a walk-a-thon for The Meadows on October 13. The Meadows is the place where Chris works. They do shredding of documents and data destruction. He is looking for pledges; if you can help, find Chris and support him.

♪♪♪Music Notes♪♪♪

- Hand Bell Choir starts in October. You do not have to be in the choir to participate! If you are interested in joining, contact Kaleb.
- Anyone is welcome to stay after Way Day and participate in choir every Wednesday at 7:00PM. Lots of exciting things are happening, come join us in making a joyful noise unto the Lord!
- For any questions or inquiries, Kaleb can be contacted at Kaleb.B.Benda@gmail.com or (405) 410-9331.

Hymn of the Month

This month's Hymn of the Month

is a church member's request:

"You Are My All in All,"

#583 in our hymnal.

"You Are My All in All" was composed on September 12, 1989 by Oklahoman Dennis Jernigan. In his podcast, Dennis describes the composition of the hymn. Every Monday through Friday from 6:00AM-7:00AM, he would lead a prayer service at the church from the piano. He used the model of The Lord's Prayer for the services, beginning with worship ("Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name..."). Then they would pray "...Thy kingdom come, thy will be done..." in all aspects of their life. A transitional song would move the service to the next aspect, "Give us this day our daily bread..." where members were encouraged to pray for God's provision and intercession in their daily lives. During the times of prayer, Dennis would continue to play the piano to keep an aura of worship and reverence. He kept manuscript paper near in case the Lord inspired him with a song. After beginning the "Thy kingdom come..." portion of the service, Dennis meditated on the fact that only a year prior, he had begun sharing his own testimony publicly. He meditated on the fact that the Lord could take his most shameful moments and bring good to Dennis and glory to Himself out of it. Dennis realized that the enemy had tried to bring him back to his old ways, but as long as he sought Jesus, he would be the "Pearl of Grace." After all this meditation, he penned the song "You Are My All in All".

The hymn is meant to be depicted as a personal prayer to Christ, to praise Him for all that He is and does. The verses describe situations and settings in rhyming couplets, always ending with the proclamation "You are my all in all."

- your strength in my weakness and the treasure that I seek
- Christ as a precious jewel and my foolishness to give that up
- forgiver of my sin and shame, I rise to bless Christ's name

- if I fall, Christ picks me up; if I am dry, Christ fills my cup

The verses of the hymn feature faster, shorter note values, while the refrain utilizes long, flowing rhythms with the affirmation of "Jesus, Lamb of God, Worthy is Your name!" Because the verses and refrain are of equal length in measures, and the same harmonic progression, they can either be sung in sequence or as a round.

Dennis Jernigan was born in Sapulpa, Oklahoma in 1954. He is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University and a successful Christian singer-songwriter, although he refers to himself as a "song receiver," writing down his songs as the Lord speaks to him. His primary instrument is the piano. He now lives in Muskogee with his wife, Melinda, and their nine children. Although "You Are My All in All" was written in 1989, it is considered his signature song and it remains his most popular and most frequently performed song.

For more information on Dennis Jernigan's testimony, see the bulletin board outside the choir room. For Hymn of the Month requests, contact Kaleb at Kaleb.B.Benda@gmail.com or (405) 410-9331.

STICK WITH IT!

"If I've learned anything about friendship, it's to hang in, stay connected," says journalist Jon Katz. "Don't walk away, don't be distracted, don't be too busy or tired, don't take them for granted. Friends are part of the glue that holds life and faith together."

This applies to church life too. When we're annoyed by some aspect of congregational life or caught in conflict with other members, it's tempting to drift away to another church — or no church. Even when all is fine, we sometimes let church take a back seat. But our bonds with the family of God are "part of the glue that holds life and faith together." For the sake of the benefits we gain and give, may we "hang in [and] stay connected" with our church family. May we not "walk away [or] be distracted, ... be too busy or tired." May we not take one another for granted but thank God for this "glue" — even when things get a bit sticky!



Minister to your Ministers

In honor of Clergy Appreciation Month, use these alphabetical reminders of how to treat your pastors:

Accept them as people.

Build them up. Say “thank you”.

Communicate with them.

Defend them when someone tries to run them down.

Entertain them. They like to have fun, too!

Family. Allow them to have a family life.

Genuine. Be honest with them. Be yourself around them.

Honor them. Don’t put them on a pedestal, but respect them.

Income. Pay them enough so money isn’t a concern.

Judge not! Avoid being critical.

Kind. Treat pastors as you want to be treated.

Love. See 1 Corinthians 13.

Maintain. Their families have the same needs as other families.

Nurture. Help them grow in grace.

Offer to help. The list of things you can do is endless.

Pray for them. Lift up their names to God daily.

Quelch not. Encourage instead.

Rejoice in and with them.

Surprise them – in little and big ways.

Trust them. Believe in them.

Understand them. Put yourself in their place.

Vacation. They need time away.

Welcome them into your home. Don’t wait for an invitation.

eXpend yourself, not them.

Yoke. Help them bear their burdens with grace and dignity.

Zap all gossip!

“Looking back over a lifetime, you see that love was the answer to everything.” *Ray Bradbury*

Salvation Army Request

Reminder that we are collecting small soaps like the ones you get at hotels or motels. Please bring them to the church office

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

From Christ’s perspective, a true leader is a servant, committed to the success of each individual in the group. Jesus did not criticize His disciples’ desire to lead; He just showed them how to do it by washing their feet. The essence of spiritual leadership, therefore, is following Jesus and serving people. People rebel against controlling leaders, but it is impossible to rebel against a servant.

Geoff Gorsuch, *Brothers! Calling Men Into Vital Relationships*

WILL HEAVEN BE BORING?

As a youngster, I imagined heaven as a big, dim room with thick carpet, and worried that filling an *eternity* of days would be boring. I never dreamed anyone shared that concern until I read Sam Storms’ words: “Heaven is not one grand, momentary flash of excitement followed by an eternity of boredom” (*One Thing*).

So, what *is* heaven like? Scripture offers only a few intriguing glimpses: Ezekiel’s vision of four fiery creatures and the hem of God’s garment gleaming in rainbow light; Jesus’ parable of the rich man and Lazarus, depicting heaven within shouting distance of Hades; Jesus’ mention of many rooms in His Father’s house; Stephen seeing Jesus at God’s right hand; John of Patmos’ view of the new Jerusalem, descending from God.

We can’t know exactly what heaven looks like — or how we’ll fill all our “free time”! (Doubtless, worship around God’s throne will be a big and joyous part.) But we know there will be no hunger, thirst, tears, death or pain (see Revelation 7, 21 and 22). All peoples and languages will be included, with healing for all nations. “There will be a new episode of divine grace every day!” Storms writes. Most importantly, Jesus will be there — the Lamb of God, our Shepherd, sheltering us with His presence. For now, that’s *all* we need to know.

Heidi Mann

PRAYER

The more we pray, the more we come to the heartbeat of God.” *Richard J. Foster*

CHURCH OFFICERS

Elders

Class of 2018

Robert Buswell	426-7429	Treasurer
Jon Powell	470-0230	Outreach
Dana Wilson	706-3191	Nurture

Class of 2019

Dwight Daub	618-7497	Clerk/Stewardship & Memorials
Kent Larason	808-3971	Fellowship

Class of 2020

John Hermes	202-9621	President of Corporation/ Nominating
Mark McBride	410-2003	Worship

Deacons

Class of 2018

Lori Pickrell	503-9585	Clerk
Pat Robison	879-2762	Missions

Class of 2019

Jaquelyn Kuhn	424-2123	Church Work Days
Kym Manning	426-7298	Van/Transportation

Class of 2020

Christa Charlie	834-7031	Flowers
Nancy Spradling	206-5828	Ushers/Greeters
Randy Stateler	620-253-6431	Maintenance

WITNESS DEADLINE

October 22 is the deadline to submit articles for the November *Witness*. You may bring items to the church office or e-mail them to: secretary@ststephensokc.org.

Thanks! Laurie Daub, St. Stephen's Secretary
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secretary@ststephensokc.org

www.ststephensokc.org

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1	Patty H. Robison
8	Hope Hudson
8	Devin Page
8	Seth Wilson
9	Arden Gatlin
9	Joy Jones
12	Brianna Jones
17	William Larason
18	Doris Cornell
22	Molly McBride
22	Shelley Dutcher
23	Lucy McBride
23	Brayden Murphy
23	Audrey Daub
26	Holly Welte
28	Jimalee Murphy
30	Linda Merriweather



5	Curt & Susan Almen
5	Jason & Kari Kosanke
7	Frank & Joan Miranda

***If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please contact the church office.*

Special Dates

World Communion Sunday, *October 7*

Reformation Sunday, *October 28*

Reformation Day, *October 31*

