



THE WITNESS

St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

Volume 29, Issue 12
The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor

December 2018
Church Phone (405) 843-5333

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A few years ago a pastor friend of mine did an Advent sermon series on the women in Jesus' birth narratives. What a great idea! Maybe someday I will do it also, but for now I will limit my comments to a brief *Witness* article. The women in question are Elizabeth, Mary and Anna. Luke is the only Gospel that mentions either Elizabeth or Anna. This is not surprising since it is Luke that shows a special interest in women throughout his gospel.

Interestingly, the first woman to appear on the scene in Luke's gospel is not Mary but Elizabeth. Elizabeth was descended from Aaron and was the wife of the priest Zechariah. She is described as being righteous and walking blamelessly before God in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. We are told that she had no children because she was barren and advanced in years. However, like Sarah and Hannah before her she received a promise from God that she would conceive and bear a son who would be great before God and man. He would be the one who would prepare the way of the Lord, the Messiah, as had been foretold by the prophets. In Luke 1:43 we are told that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit at the time that Mary came to visit her. Elizabeth recognized Mary as the mother of her Lord and greeted Mary with these words: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" Elizabeth was indeed a wonderful woman who lived her life for and with God.

The second woman to appear on the scene in Luke's gospel is Mary. Mary was from the city of Nazareth in Galilee. She was betrothed (a legally binding engagement, breakable only by divorce) to a carpenter by the name of Joseph. When we first meet Mary she is being visited by the angel Gabriel who greets her with these words: "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" What a wonderful greeting, to be told that one is favored by the Lord and to be given the assurance that God is with you.

"O favored one" is the translation of the Greek word which means "having been favored." It happens to be the same Greek word used in Ephesians 1:6 where it says, "to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed (lit., *favored*) us in the Beloved." The reason I point this out is to say that I believe if an angel were greeting you as one of God's children the same greeting could be said to you: "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you."

Even though Mary is young and not barren the promise made to her is even more miraculous than the promises made to Sarah and Elizabeth because Mary was going to conceive and give birth to a son as a virgin. Mary's son was to be conceived by the Holy Spirit and was to be the Messiah, the Savior of the world. Mary's response to the angel is truly remarkable. She says, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." In essence she was saying, "Thy will be done."

The third woman in Luke's birth narrative is Anna. The name "Anna" means grace in Hebrew. She was the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. Anna was 84 years old. She had been a widow since seven years after her marriage. Anna is referred to as a prophetess and we are told that she spent her time in the temple, worshipping, fasting and praying. She was one of the pious people who at the time of the birth of Jesus was looking for the redemption of God's people. We are not told what, if anything, she said to Mary and Joseph. What we do know is that she recognized the 40-day old Jesus as the Christ, gave thanks to God for Him and spoke about Him to the other faithful in Jerusalem.

Three women, three wonderful examples of godly living. Each of these women sets before us a life worthy of emulation. Like Elizabeth let us be righteous before God, walking blamelessly and filled with the Holy Spirit. Like Mary let us be willing to say, "Not my will, but thy will be done." Like Anna, let us devote ourselves to worship, prayer with thanksgiving, and speaking of Jesus to others.

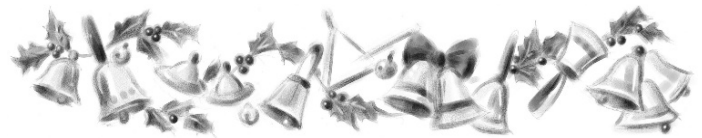
Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mark*

DECEMBER SERMON TOPICS

I will only be preaching three of the five Sundays in December. On the first Sunday in December Ed Bedrosian, a retired Baptist minister, will be preaching for me; on the third Sunday the children will be performing their Christmas musical. On the second and fourth Sundays I will be preaching from two famous poems/songs from Luke's Gospel. They are known as the Benedictus and the Magnificat. The Benedictus is from Luke 1:67-80 and is spoken by Zechariah the father of John the Baptist at the time of John's birth. Benedictus is Latin for "Blessed" which is the first word of Zechariah's prophesy, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel." The Magnificat is from Luke 1:46-80 and is spoken by Mary during her visit with Elizabeth. Magnificat is Latin for "magnifies" which is the third word of Mary's song (In the Latin it is the first word.). "My soul magnifies the Lord." On the fifth Sunday of December I will be preaching from Colossians 3:12-

17 which seemed to me to be a good passage for the coming New Year.

- December 2 Ed Bedrosian preaching
- December 7 Luke 1:67-80
Zechariah's Prophecy
- December 16 Children's Musical
- December 23 Luke 1:46-56
Mary's Song of Praise
- December 24 Luke 2:1-14
The Birth of Jesus Christ
- December 30 Colossians 3:12-17
Put on the New Self



Worship Schedule

- Every Sunday
- 9:30AM - Adult & Children's Sunday School
- 11:00AM - Worship
- 7:00PM - December 24 - Christmas Eve Worship

Way Day Dates 2018-2019

December 5 & 12

January 9, 16 & 23 February 6, 13 & 20
March 6, 13 & 27 April 3, 10 & 17

SMALL GROUPS

- Bible Study & Prayer - Sunday evening at Pastor Mark & Anne Bradford's - December 9 at 5:30PM.
- Monday Prayer Group - December 10 & 17 at 12:30PM, church library.
- Tuesday Bible Study - Bible study will resume in January.
- 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.

Ushers/Greeters

December Greeters: Nelson & Carla Pickrell

December Ushers:

December 2 – Rebecca & Randy Stateler, Pat Robison, Nancy Spradling

December 9 – Michael Bassett, Sandy Gifford, Wendy Smith, Nancy Spradling

December 16 – Ashley McCormick, Pat Robison, Wendy Smith, Nancy Spradling

December 23 – Christa & Sumish Charlie, Ashley McCormick, Nancy Spradling

December 30 – Youth

Fellowship Hour Treats

December 2 – Jim & Treva Gullett, Marilyn Hanson

December 9 – Patsy Kuhn, Jean & Kent Larason

December 16 – Wendy Smith, Erin Von Tungeln

December 23 – Carla & Nelson Pickrell, Jaquelyn Kuhn

December 30 – Joan & Frank Miranda, Pat Robison

YOUTH



We are going to have a *Youth Christmas Party* on Sunday, December 23 from 4:30-7:00PM.

6th Grade through College.

Dirty Santa – Bring a gift, \$10 or less.

Please bring a snack or drink to share!

90th BIRTHDAY



Please come celebrate Miss Marcia and wish her a very Happy 90th Birthday!
December 1 at St. Stephen's
from 1:00-4:00PM.



We will be selling Poinsettias again this year. The sizes are: 6” - \$7.00 and 10” - \$15.00. Watch for Christa Charlie in the hallway for signups on Sundays November 25 and December 2, 9 & 16.

SEQUENCE PLAYERS

Sequence will resume in January. Any questions, please call Doris Cornell at 605-6172.



CHRISTMAS OFFERING

We will be collecting our special Christmas Offering on December 23 and 30. This offering will be given to *Reaching Our City* and the *Salvation Army*.



THANKSGIVING BAKE SALE

Thank you to Women's Fellowship for hosting their annual bake sale. They made over \$1,400 to be used toward refurbishing the fellowship hall. Women's Fellowship is **very thankful** to the congregation for supporting their efforts.



Rehearsals will be:

Saturdays: 10:00AM-12:00PM

December 8 & 15

Children's Christmas Program

Saturday, December 15 6:00PM

Sunday, December 16 11:00AM



WELL DONE!!!

Dylan Smith, son of Wendy, was honored recently with "Teacher of the Year" at Bodine Elementary School in Oklahoma City by his peers. This is quite an honor due to the fact that he is in his fourth year of teaching.

"Beautiful music ... is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us."
Martin Luther



FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY

Great Christmas gift idea for those special grandchildren or adults! Send your family to FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY and give them a life of financial security. Classes include instruction by Dave Ramsey in Cash Flow Planning, Dumping Debt, Insurance, Retirement, College Planning and Real Estate. Dave teaches how to manage money God's way using wisdom he gained when he rebuilt his financial life. Dave now devotes himself to teaching others how to be responsible with their money so they can retire with dignity and give generously to others. Kits can be purchased at www.daveramsey.com; click on Courses, Individual/Family, Financial Peace University, Give as Gift. The cost is \$109 per family.

Our St. Stephen's class will begin on Wednesday 1/9/19 from 5:30PM to 7:00PM. The link to enroll in this class is <https://www.financialpeace.com/classes/1075696>. For questions contact Susan Almen at susanalmen@gmail.com.



“Silent Night” #253 in our hymnal.

“Stille Nacht,” or “Silent Night” was written by an Austrian Catholic Priest, Joseph Mohr, with music by school teacher and church musician Franz Gruber. Originally set in German, “Silent Night” is the only hymn by Fr. Mohr translated into English. The poem was written in 1816; it is thought to have been written while Mohr was traveling to visit his elderly grandfather who lived near a church that Mohr served at the time. It was set to music with guitar accompaniment by Gruber for Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve of 1818. The original performance of the work took place at St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf, Austria. The performance featured Mohr and Gruber as vocal soloists, backed by Mohr's guitar and the church choir. Mohr and Gruber would sing the first half of each verse, with the choir repeating the last two lines of each of the six verses in a four-part harmony. There is much speculation as to why this new hymn was

accompanied by guitar rather than organ, but the true reason is not known. An old legend gives the simple story that Mohr wanted a new, original hymn for Christmas Eve Midnight Mass that could be accompanied by his favorite instrument, the guitar. Another story tells that mice had chewed through the billows of the church's organ, rendering the instrument useless. We do know, however, that after an organ repairman by the name of Karl Maurcher heard the carol, he took a manuscript of it with him back home to the Tyrol region of Austria. From there the carol was taken by various traveling musical acts throughout Europe. It received its American premiere in New York City in 1839. By the 1840s the song had gained in popularity and had become a holiday favorite. At this time, the melody was slightly changed to become the tune that we know today. Although the original transcription has been lost to time, many original arrangements by the authors still exist.

Joseph Franciscus Mohr was born in 1792 in Salzburg to an unmarried seamstress. His father was a mercenary and military deserter who left Mohr's mother before the birth. Johann Nepomuk Hiernle, vicar and director of music at the Salzburg Cathedral, enabled Mohr to have an education and encouraged him in music. As a child, Mohr served simultaneously as a singer and violinist in the choirs of the University Church and the monastery church of St. Peter. From 1808 to 1810, Mohr studied at the Benedictine monastery of Kremsmünster in the province of Upper Austria. He then returned to Salzburg to attend the Lyceum school, and in 1811 he entered the seminary. Since he was of illegitimate birth, a special dispensation was required in those days for him to attend seminary. On August 21, 1815, Mohr graduated and was ordained as a priest.

This year's Christmas Eve is the 200th anniversary of this piece. To celebrate this occasion, a new arrangement has been composed and dedicated to our church.

For Hymn of the Month requests, contact Kaleb at Kaleb.B.Benda@Gmail.com or (405)-410-9331.



Silent Night, Holy Night

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

December 17 is the deadline to submit articles for the January 2019 *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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Oklahoma City, OK 73112 405-843-5333**

secretary@ststephensokc.org

www.ststephensokc.org

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MERRY CHRISTMAS

From the Staff



1	Sarah Welte
3	Kent Larason
3	Mason Kuhn
5	Marcia Ledbetter
5	Steve Wilson
5	Benjamin McBride
5	Eleanor McBride
9	Kyler Kosanke
9	Esther Jones
9	Michael Jones
13	Claire Wilson
13	Mariah Bailey
16	Jim Gullett
20	Alex Ballaré
21	Kathy Conn
23	Nikki Dawson
29	Linda Willis



4	Shane & Jimalee Murphy
28	Pastor Mark & Anne Bradford

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



Special Dates

- First Sunday of Advent, *December 2*
- Second Sunday of Advent, *December 9*
- Third Sunday of Advent, *December 16*
- First day of winter, *December 21*
- Fourth Sunday of Advent, *December 23*
- Christmas Eve, *December 24*
- Christmas Day, *December 25*
- New Year's Eve/Watch Night, *December 31*

