



# THE WITNESS

## St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

**Volume 30, Issue 1**  
**The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor**

**January 2019**  
**Church Phone (405) 843-5333**

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We regularly recite the Apostle's Creed during our worship services as a public profession of what we believe as Christians. We say that we believe "in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary." This statement is an important doctrine of the Christian faith: the incarnation, God becoming a man. This is what we celebrate during the Christmas season as well as during Epiphany. Though John does not tell the story of the birth of Christ the truth of the incarnation is clearly stated in the prologue to his Gospel. John 1:1, says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John goes on to tell us that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:14) Thus we are reminded that Jesus was both fully God and fully man.

The Heidelberg Catechism states it this way: "What does it mean that He 'was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary'?" "That the eternal Son of God, who is and remains true and eternal God, took on himself, through the working of the Holy Spirit, from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary, a truly human nature so that he might become David's true descendant, in all things like us his brothers except for sin." The New Testament speaks of both Jesus' human nature and His divine nature.

Paul speaks of Jesus' divine nature in Colossians 1:15, "He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation." And in Hebrews 1:3 we read, "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact

imprint of his nature, and upholds the universe by the word of his power."

The Catechism speaks of Jesus' human nature when it says, He "took to himself, through the working of the Holy Spirit, from the flesh and blood of Mary, a truly human nature". The angel told Mary that "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God." And when an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream he was told "that which is in her is from the Holy Spirit." Paul tells us in Philippians 2:6-7 that "though he was in the form of God... (he) emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."

That Jesus was descended from David was also viewed as an important fact by the New Testament writers. It was important first in order to fulfill God's promise to David, and second to fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament. That Jesus was descended from David is seen in the genealogies of Matthew and Luke. Paul makes one of the clearest statements of this in Romans 1:3 where he says that Christ Jesus was "descended from David according to the flesh."

We are also told that in all things He was like us. "Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." (Hebrews 2:17). Jesus was like us in every respect. He grew tired, He got hungry and thirsty, and He was tempted with the same things that tempt us. However, there

is one exception, one way in which He differed from us. He was without sin. “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)

The Heidelberg Catechism then asks the question, “How does the holy conception and birth of Christ benefit us?” The answer is, “He is our mediator, and with his innocence and perfect holiness he removes from God’s sight my sin – mine since I was conceived.”

We often hear, “Jesus is the reason for the season”. But what is it that we are actually celebrating? As we finish celebrating the Christmas season and as we celebrate Epiphany, let us remember that we are celebrating Jesus’ birth, we are celebrating the fact that He was born of the Virgin Mary, we are celebrating the eternal Word becoming flesh, we are celebrating God’s incarnation. Let us never forget the wonder of it all. And as we begin a New Year let us remind ourselves that He is Emmanuel, “God with us.”

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mark*



### JANUARY SERMON TOPICS

Several months ago someone asked me about the book of Philemon, and in our conversation it came up that this little book is too often overlooked. So I thought, why not preach a sermon or two from the book of Philemon! We are going to begin the New Year doing so.

For the last several years I have committed myself to preaching a series from the Old Testament. From my list of possibilities and after much thought I will begin a series from the book of Habakkuk, starting on the third Sunday of January.

- January 6 Philemon 1-7  
*Philemon’s Love and Faith*
- January 13 Philemon 8-22  
*Paul’s Plea for Onesimus*
- January 20 Habakkuk 1:1-11  
*Habakkuk’s Complaint*
- January 27 Habakkuk 1:12-2:5  
*Habakkuk’s Second Complaint*

### December Session Minutes

**FELLOWSHIP:** The Thanksgiving Sunday pot luck was very well attended and deemed a great success.

**NOMINATIONS:** The Session discussed nominees for deacons and elders. Suggestions were made for potential candidates for each position. The Nominating Committee will continue to contact possible candidates. The goal is to have a complete slate for discussion by the elders, as soon as possible.

**NURTURE:** All nurture is going well at this current time.

**OUTREACH:** Outreach conducted a critique meeting to discuss all aspects of the fall celebration. The overall feeling is that the celebration went very well.

**STEWARDSHIP/MEMORIALS:** We have received a donation from the Loeffler family. A thank you letter has been sent to the family.

**WORSHIP:** Christmas Eve service at 7:00PM. Discussion of reinstating readers of the scripture during Sunday service. The elders felt this would be a very good idea. Next Communion-January 6, 2019.

**OLD BUSINESS:** Once the elders have had an opportunity to discuss the potential list of new deacons and elders a congregational meeting will be scheduled.

### Worship Schedule

Every Sunday

9:30AM - Adult & Children’s Sunday School  
11:00AM – Worship

### Way Day Dates 2019

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

### SMALL GROUPS

Bible Study & Prayer – Sunday evenings at Pastor Mark & Anne Bradford’s – January 6 & 20 at 5:30PM.

Monday Prayer Group – January 7, 14, 21 & 28 at 12:30PM, church library.

Tuesday Bible Study – Bible study will resume January 15.

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

**January Greeters:** Rebecca & Randy Stateler

**January Ushers:**

**January 6** – Rebecca & Randy Stateler, Pat Robison, Nancy Spradling

**January 13** – Christa & Sumish Charlie, Wendy Smith, Nancy Spradling

**January 20** – Michael Bassett, Ashley McCormick, Wendy Smith, Nancy Spradling

**January 27** – Youth

## *Fellowship Hour Treats*

**January 6** – Margo Whiting, Laurie Daub

**January 13** – Lori Pickrell, Sarah Welte

**January 20** – Doris Cornell, Miss Butch Derrick

**January 27** – Treva & Jim Gullett, Marilyn Hanson

## FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY

Classes 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>.

Kits can be purchased at [www.daveramsey.com](http://www.daveramsey.com); click on Courses, Individual/Family, Financial Peace University, Give as Gift. The cost is \$109 per family. *Prizes awarded for best Dave Ramsey answers.*

For questions contact Susan Almen at [susanalmen@gmail.com](mailto:susanalmen@gmail.com).



“As the Deer,” #548 in our hymnal is a church member request.

“As the Deer” is a popular praise and worship hymn by contemporary musician Martin Nystrom. This hymn was composed in 1984, with text based on Psalm 42:1, which says “As the deer pants for water, so my soul pants for You.” Nystrom took this simple line and expanded upon it to write a moving hymn

of three verses. The hymn is meant to be a devotional to the Lord. The composer related the following in depicting the story behind the hymn:

In 1984 I was a school teacher in Seattle. Since I had the summer off, I decided to go back to bible school at Christ For the Nations Institute in Dallas, TX. My roommate at CFNI challenged me to go on a fast, a period where one gives up solid food in exchange for giving more time to the bible and prayer. On day 19 of the fast, I was trying to compose a song. I was sitting at the piano and noticed a bible opened to Psalm 42 on the music stand. My eyes fell to the first verse and I sung its message right off the page. I wrote the first verse and the chorus of the song straight through – the whole song was composed in a matter of minutes. I then repeated the song so as to seal it in my mind. I didn't intend on sharing the song with anyone, but before I left for Seattle I did share it with one person, my colleague David Butterbagh. David shared the song with the students of CFNI and it instantly became a favorite. Since this time, it has been translated into many languages and has been performed across many mediums.

Martin Nystrom is a songwriter based out of Seattle, Washington. He was born in 1956 to a mother who was raised in the Christian Reformed Church, and a father who was brought up in the Evangelical Covenant Church. He is a music education graduate of Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, OK. After college, he worked as the Music Director for the New York campus of Christ For the Nations Institute. In recent years, he has served as a song development manager for Integrity Music, for which he has composed more than 70 songs. Nystrom is the featured Worship Leader on five Integrity “Hosanna” tapes. He lives with his wife and two children in Seattle.

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

## SEQUENCE PLAYERS

*Sequence* January 22. Any questions, please call Doris Cornell at 605-6172.

### IN OUR *Thoughts and Prayers*

We express our deepest sympathy to the Wilson family at the passing of their newly adopted son, Jacob Jeremiah Wilson, on November 27, 2018.

#### ENTER IN

Tired of making small talk at church about the weather or sports? Then follow Edward Welch's advice to "enter in" to the lives of your fellow worshipers.

A churchgoer once asked Welch, author of *Caring for One Another* (Crossway), two simple yet profound questions: "What was the best thing about your week, and what was the worst thing about your week?" About a month later, when some issues were weighing heavily on Welch's heart, he wondered who'd be willing to pray for him. Immediately, the person who'd asked him those two questions came to mind.

When worshipers are willing to enjoy one another's blessings and be burdened by one another's difficulties, Welch says, the body of Christ gets built up.

#### RECOGNIZING A STROKE

*Ran this article over a year ago so thought to re-print.* Thank God for the sense to remember the '3' steps, "STR". Read and Learn!

**Now doctors say a bystander can recognize a stroke by asking three simple questions:**

**S** \*Ask the individual to SMILE.

**T** \*Ask the person to TALK and SPEAK A SIMPLE SENTENCE (coherently).

**R** \*Ask him or her to RAISE BOTH ARMS.

If he or she has trouble with ANY ONE of these tasks, call an emergency number immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.

New Sign of a Stroke -----Stick out Your Tongue!  
NOTE: Another 'sign' of a stroke is this: Ask the person to 'stick' out his tongue. A tongue that is 'crooked' (if it goes to one side or the other) is also an indication of a stroke.



#### Kingfisher Faith

In a video on his publisher's website, Eugene Peterson tells of watching a kingfisher repeatedly dive for fish in a lake. Peterson counted 37 dives before the kingfisher caught its supper! "And he's the king fisher!" Peterson chuckles. From that bird-watching episode, he gleaned a ministry lesson: It may take a long time and many attempts — maybe dozens! — before something works out.

God calls us to live out his love faithfully, even when we don't seem to be accomplishing anything. Maybe we extend 36 invitations to worship, work 36 monthly shifts at a food bank or utter 36 prayers without seeing results. "What's the point?" we wonder. But the kingfisher urges us on: "Maybe number 37 is the charm!"

In the words of St. Paul (and mixing fishing and farming metaphors): "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9, NIV).



"Learn to light a candle in the darkest moments of someone's life. Be the light that helps others see."

*Roy T. Bennett*



## 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

**January 21** is the deadline to submit articles for the February *Witness*. You may bring items to the church office or e-mail them to: [secretary@ststephensokc.org](mailto:secretary@ststephensokc.org).

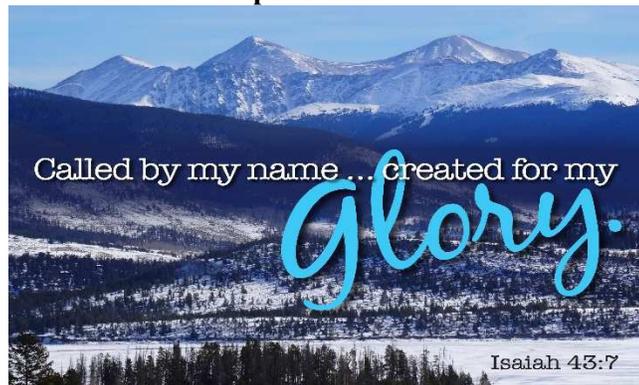
Thanks! Laurie Daub, St. Stephen's Secretary

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5	Jacob Page
7	Sumish Charlie
12	Glenn Pulley
12	Collin Pulley
13	Keith Seidemann
16	Mary Catron
16	Grady Hinline
21	Anne Bradford
24	Judi Dawson
25	Gloria Stanley
25	Chris Howard
26	Pamela Lee
27	Carla Pickrell
27	Elijah Morgan
27	Dana Wilson
31	Zoë Gifford



12	Joe & Ava Young
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*\*\*If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please contact the church office.*

### Special Dates

New Year's Day, *January 1*

Epiphany, *January 6*

Baptism of the Lord, *January 13*

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity,  
*January 18-25*

Martin Luther King Jr. Day, *January 21*

