



THE WITNESS

St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

Volume 36, Issue 7 & 8
The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor

July-August 2025
Church Phone (405) 843-5333

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Years ago, I memorized a number of Bible verses using what is known as the Topical Memory System which was developed by a Christian group known as the Navigators. The first five verses I learned all had to do with assurances: Assurance of Salvation, Assurance of Answered Prayer, Assurance of Victory, Assurance of Forgiveness, and Assurance of Guidance. These assurances are all based on promises from Scripture.

The first assurance is the Assurance of Salvation. 1 John 5:11-12, "And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life." As believers we never need to say or think, "I hope I make it." If we have put our faith in Jesus, we can know with a certainty that we have eternal life. Those who believe that it is possible to lose one's salvation can never truly have this assurance. But in the Reformed tradition we believe that God will preserve all those who are His. God has adopted us as His children and He will never disown us. This is something that we will see clearly as we continue through the John's gospel.

The second assurance is the Assurance of Answered Prayer. John 16:24, "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." We can have the assurance that God hears and answers our prayers. We do understand that scripture places some conditions on this promise. We often end our

prayers, "in Jesus's name. Amen." This is not merely a postscript, the idea of praying in Jesus's name is to pray according to His character and will. This is an important condition to answered prayer.

The third assurance is the Assurance of Victory. The victory here has to do with victory over sin. 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." Even though we are new creatures in Christ we still struggle with temptation and sin. We should remember two things. First, whatever temptation we face there are others who have faced the same temptation before us. Second, God promises to provide a way of escape, a promise to help us when we face temptation.

The fourth assurance is the Assurance of Forgiveness. 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This verse is written to believers. In 1 John, John makes it clear that even followers of Christ are prone to sin. The wonderful promise is that if we confess our sins we will be forgiven. God's mercies are new every morning. (Lamentations 3:22-23)

The fifth assurance is the Assurance of Guidance. Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not leaven on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths." Duane A.

Garrett commenting on this verse says, "To 'make straight' one's 'paths' means to continually progress toward a goal." I believe that God does make our paths straight, and that when we stray from the path God has set out for us, in His love, God will bring us back to the right path. He is the Good Shepherd.

There are many other wonderful promises and assurances in scripture. These particular five are important to our Christian walk and to our continued growth in the faith. Let us take them to heart.

Yours in Christ, Pastor
Mark

JULY/AUGUST SERMON TOPICS

During the month of July and August we will be continuing our journey through the fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John. I will be out of town on the second Sunday of July.

July 6	John 6:28-40 <i>The Bread of Life</i>
July 13	Jared Chambers preaching.
July 20	John 6:41-59 <i>The Living Bread</i>
July 27	John 6:60-71 <i>The Words of Eternal Life</i>
August 3	John 7:1-13 <i>Jesus at the Feast of Booths</i>
August 10	John 7:14-24 <i>Do Not Judge By Appearances</i>
August 17	John 7:25-36 <i>Can This Be the Christ</i>
August 24	John 7:37-52 <i>Rivers of Living Water</i>
August 31	John 7:53-8:11 <i>The Woman Caught in Adultery</i>

Sunday Worship Schedule

9:45 Adult & Children Sunday School
11:00AM – Worship
11:00AM – Streaming Online Worship
facebook.com/StStephensOKC



SMALL GROUPS

Thursday Bible Study – July 3 & 24 and August 14 and 28 at 2:30PM

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

JULY SESSION REPORT

FINANCIAL REPORT: Lori Pickrell presented the budget for FY2025-2026. This budget estimated total receipts of \$250,500 and total disbursements of \$258,860 leaving a possible deficit of \$8,366. All staff were given 4% raises, and funds were allocated for a part-time secretary. This position will be sought through word-of-mouth at this point with the understanding that no church member will be considered. Insurance has risen significantly and was estimated as well.

FELLOWSHIP: All is going well - Michael Fresonke approached Pastor Mark about doing a concert for the church. An ice cream/pie social was suggested for some time in August (possibly August 16th) and that he be contacted to do a concert in conjunction with it. There will be a potluck dinner on July 20th. The church will provide fried chicken and will ask the congregation to provide the other dishes.

NURTURE: Joan Miranda reported that the new smart TV is being used for summer Sunday school for all children in the library. She and Carla Pickrell are giving time to reviewing the series content with the children and relating it to what parts are scriptural and what parts are "painting a picture" of what it could have been like during those times.

OUTREACH: Outreach is going well. Glenn Beaty was glad to hear of the outreach with the Fellowship Committee plans being made.

WORSHIP: Communion on July 6. Clint Williams is planning a vocal choir retreat and a bell choir retreat.

OLD BUSINESS: We have several awning issues, including work still needed on the new portico. The roofer who worked on the portico needs to come back and change some of the ends of the downspouts as he has them draining on top of concrete rather than extending to the end for proper draining onto the pavement. Stained Glass - Kent Larason reported that plumbing for the room needs to be done.

Landscaping - Kent pointed out the need for removing and replacing landscaping in the front of the church. He said that he and Jean have ideas and will take on this project.

****No Meet Our St. Stephen's Family**

Special Summer Offering

This year, our Summer Mission Offering will go to our missionaries in Thailand, Derek and Camille Porter. Each Christmas they fill small bags (about the size of a paper lunch bag) to give the families in their neighborhood. They fill the bag with small items that both adults and children can use and enjoy. Derek tells me that the cost of each bag is about \$5.00.

I talked with the Deacons and with Derek about calling this offering "Christmas in July" (which goes back to my Baptist upbringing). I plan to decorate one bulletin board with a Christmas theme, have special "Christmas in July" offering envelopes available and also a small note card with a "gift bag" printed on it to allow anyone who wants to contribute to add a small note of encouragement to the Porters. Their children's names are Emmaus and Jubilee. The notes will be sent to the Porters at the end of July. (I will mail these.)

I hope that you will pray for the Porters and their mission work in Thailand and consider contributing to their Christmas tradition of giving gifts in the name of Jesus.

From Shirley Hampton

July Greeter Ruby Ochoa
August Greeter Adam Mendenhall

If you have missed prayers or would like to be added to the Women's Fellowship prayer chain, please call Treva Gullett (405-735-9908) or Patsy Kuhn (405-820-2016).

Special Dates for July
U.S. Independence Day, *July 4*

POTLUCK - JULY 20

Join us following the worship service, for our luncheon. We will provide the fried chicken so **please bring a dish or dessert to share.**

Concert & Ice Cream Social

Saturday, August 16 at 4:00PM
Guitar concert by Michael Fresonke

JOY

Who would think a baby boy
Born on earth would bring us Joy
Jesus is who I'm thinking about
Makes me want to sing and shout

Jesus came to us from heaven above
Showering us with so much love
Joy with him has no limit
Born for us by the Holy Spirit

Joy that won't leave us day by day
Joy that will never go away
Jesus truly God truly human truly divine
May our hearts always be thine

Blessings & love
Anna May

July Fellowship Treats

July 6 – Jaquelyn Kuhn

July 13 – Pat Robison

July 20 – Laurie Daub

July 27 – Joan Miranda



August Fellowship Treats

August 3 – Marta Clay

August 10 – Keith & Karin Seidemann

August 17 – Miss Butch Derrick

August 24 – Jean & Kent Larason

August 31 – Lori Pickrell

TRUST IN THE LORD *and do good.*

PSALM 37:3



Elders

Class of 2025

Joan Miranda	210-1731	Clerk/Stewardship & Memorials
Lori Pickrell	503-9585	Treasurer

Class of 2026

Dwight Daub	618-7497	President of Corporation/ Nominating
Kent Larason	808-3971	Nurture
Wendy Smith	850-6564	Fellowship

Class of 2027

Glenn Beaty	795-3393	Outreach
Keith Seidemann	474-5454	Worship

Deacons

Class of 2025

Michael Bassett	200-7995	Maintenance
Shirley Hampton	831-4852	Missions

Class of 2026

Dennis Bryley	664-3640	Flowers
Ruby Ochoa	301-9047	Ushers/Greeters
John Robison	627-3565	Work Day

Class of 2027

Kathy Boaz	850-3053	Clerk
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August 18 is the deadline to submit articles for the
September/October 2025 Witness.

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5	Elizabeth Garrett
6	Joan Miranda
7	Carol Davis
8	Branden Dillard
8	Margo Whiting
11	Nelson Pickrell
12	Gentrie Hine
18	Christa Ringering
19	Matthew Stillwell
25	Hudson Von Tungeln
25	Dan Dutcher
25	Laurie Daub
29	Pat Tsoodle
29	Kym Manning
29	Mark Ringering
30	Mark Bradford
31	Peyton Hine



7	Seth & Erin Von Tungeln
15	Glenn & Dorla Beaty
26	Michael & Joy Bassett
29	Dan & Shelley Dutcher



2	Jean Larason
3	Wendy Smith
5	Erin Von Tungeln
10	Madison Von Tungeln
10	Clint Williams
17	Nancy Chotkey
20	Katherine Boaz
21	Lora Koetsier
22	Teresa Lampin

29 Curt Almen
31 John Robison



1 Dwight & Laurie Daub
11 Robert & Rebecca Buswell
27 Nelson & Carla Pickrell

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

