



THE WITNESS

St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

Volume 31, Issue 4
The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor

April 2020
Church Phone (405) 843-5333

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Chapter XV of the Westminster Confession of Faith is "Of Repentance unto Life." Most of us have an understanding of what it means to repent. The New Bible Dictionary says, "In the New Testament the terms 'repent' and 'repentance' refer basically to a change of mind. It is all-important to note this signification. For repentance consists in a radical transformation of thought, attitude, outlook, and direction." Repentance is more than merely being sorry for our sins, although it includes this. The phrase "repentance unto life" used by the Westminster Confession comes from Acts 11:18 in the King James Version of the Bible. Acts 11:18 from the English Standard Version reads, "When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, 'Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.'" "Repentance that leads to life," makes more sense to our 21st century ears than "repentance unto life."

It should also be noted that in Acts 11:18 we are told that it is God who has granted repentance. In many ways repentance is a gift from God. It is the Holy Spirit working in a person's heart that brings the conviction of sin. It is the Holy Spirit working in our lives that causes us to have the "sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of" our sins. As a result we come to hate our sin and turn from all our sin unto God. Would that we would hate our sin more than we do. It is our sin that made it necessary for Christ to suffer and die on a cross. In Joel there is a wonderful call of God to His people for heartfelt repentance. "'Yet even

now,' declares the LORD, 'return to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.' Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.'" (Joel 2:12-13)

Paragraph III of Chapter XV of the Confession makes an important statement regarding repentance. "Although repentance is not rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God's free grace in Christ, yet it is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it." In other words, repentance is not the means of our salvation. We are not saved because we repent. Salvation is the free gift of God's grace. All... "are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:24) But repentance is the fruit of or a sign of the fact that God's Spirit is at work within us and that we have become new creatures in Christ Jesus. The Westminster Confession can speak of the necessity of repentance, because indeed Jesus says that unless we repent we will perish. Luke 13:3 says, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

I also really like what paragraph IV says, "As there is no sin so small, but it deserves damnation; so there is no sin so great, that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent." The first part may seem harsh, but the reality is, we know that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and that what we deserve for our sin is death. However, the second part is glorious, there is no sin, no matter

how great, that cannot be forgiven by God if we sincerely repent. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:7) "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1).

Matthew describes the preaching of John the Baptist in this way, "In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" (Matthew 3:1) Notice that Matthew describes the preaching of Jesus in the exact same way, "From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" (Matthew 3:17)

The proclamation of the church still needs to include a call for people to repent. As Lent comes to an end, let us learn to hate sin and to love the holiness that God alone can give. As we approach Holy Week let us remember that Christ died to pay the debt we owed and that in His Resurrection He defeated death and has assured us of our future resurrection.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mark*

Worship Schedule Every Sunday
9:30AM - Adult & Children's Sunday School
11:00AM - Worship

APRIL SERMON TOPICS

On the first and third Sundays of April we will be finishing our study of the book of 1 Corinthians. The second Sunday of April, Easter, we will be looking at one of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances from John's Gospel. The fourth Sunday of Easter I am going to begin a study of the book of Proverbs. Proverbs poses some challenges for the teacher and the preacher because much of Proverbs are individual sayings, some only one verse long, that have little connection to what proceeds or follows. Because of this, though, there are some passages in Proverbs we will look at as a unit, while other parts we will consider topically.

April 5 Palm Sunday 1 Corinthians 16:1-12
Collection for the Saints
April 9 Maundy Thursday Psalms 22:1-18
Why Have You Forsaken Me?

April 12 Easter John 21:15-19
Jesus and Peter
April 19 1 Corinthians 16:13-24
Final Instructions
April 26 Proverbs 1:1-7
The Beginning of Knowledge

March Session Minutes

NEW MEMBERS: The Session received Mike and Angela Jones as members of St. Stephen's.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Lori Pickrell provided a financial report that included a breakdown of current revenues and expenditures. She reported that Nelson Pickrell requested \$275 be spent to "camera" the church's aging sewer line and \$180 to install an automatic vent for the dishwasher line

FELLOWSHIP: Women's Fellowship has scheduled a pot-luck lunch for Sunday, May 3, which will include a silent auction.

NURTURE: Molly McBride and Erin Von Tungeln have agreed to be co-directors of Way Day beginning next fall.

OUTREACH: Plans are underway for the Easter Outreach event and for the Mother's Day brunch.

WORSHIP: There was a discussion on possible changes to the method of communion service in consideration of the Coronavirus pandemic.

OLD BUSINESS: Emily Emmanuel with Chosen People Ministries will present Tuesday, March 31.

SMALL GROUPS

Bible Study & Prayer - TBA

Monday Prayer Group - TBA

Tuesday Bible Study - TBA

Men's Prayer Group - Saturday mornings at 8:00AM via conference call. Call 405-359-4680.

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.

OUR SERVICE ONLINE

We will be live streaming our services until we join once again at church. We will have a small worship team that will be leading us in worship. The service will be at our usual time, 11:00AM. You will be able to watch the service on Facebook at facebook.com/StStephensOKC.



BETA FLOWER SALE

The flower sale is Friday, April 17 from 8AM-5PM and Saturday, April 18 from 9AM-12:00PM in the gym. The ladies will deliver your orders to your vehicles, like curbside service. If you are sick or unable to pick up your flowers, Debbie Roberts will deliver them so contact her.

Thank you for your support, *Marilyn Hanson*

LIBRARY NOW NEAT AND TIDY

Be sure and take a peek at our newly spruced up library. On the last Saturday work day, Christa Charlie straightened and re-stacked all the books so that they are now neat and tidy. Our library not only has an excellent collection of religious materials, but a sizeable group of current fiction with some of your favorite authors, which can be borrowed for home enjoyment. We will soon be adding a great collection of Ligonier DVDs with study guides. These have been used by the Sunday Library Class, and will be available to anyone who wants to borrow them. Because of their value, these DVDs will have to be "self-checked out." Hope you will take advantage of this wonderful opportunity, and give Christa a pat on the back next time you see her!

Joy Seekers

In northern Minnesota several years ago, some women formed a "joy circle." They settled into a routine of meeting every couple of weeks to share joys they've noticed. Their aim, amid our troubled world and chaotic lives, is to deliberately focus on the positive. The women don't simply hope to stumble upon good news among the outrage, bitterness and tragedy surrounding us; they actively seek out joy and report it to the group.

Joy is a fruit of the spirit named in Galatians 5:22-23. As Christians, we don't ignore or dismiss life's struggles and sorrows, and neither do joy-circle participants. But God promises that life is stronger than death, and Jesus' resurrection is proof. With the Holy Spirit's help, we can make a spiritual discipline of seeking and sharing joy — and thanking God for it. (Visit joycircles.network online to learn more.)

Heidi Mann

THANK YOU!

Have you had an opportunity to walk our halls and look at the many bulletin boards designed by Robin Page? I'm sure you noticed the one in Fellowship Hall – who could miss it? Beautiful!

Robin has completed her one-year commitment as Children's Ministry Coordinator. During the year she has been responsible for many duties including the very visible one of bulletin boards. The invisible duties which you may not be aware of included coordinating all Sunday School and Way Day activities.

She has done a fantastic job in all areas and her steady hand will be missed. She is a woman of many talents and I hope we will continue to enjoy a couple of them here at church.

If you see her around, please extend a huge Thank You for her dedication and hard work supporting our children.

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully."

(ROMANS 12: 6-8)

Thank you, Robin, for sharing your gifts!

Joan Miranda, Nurture Elder

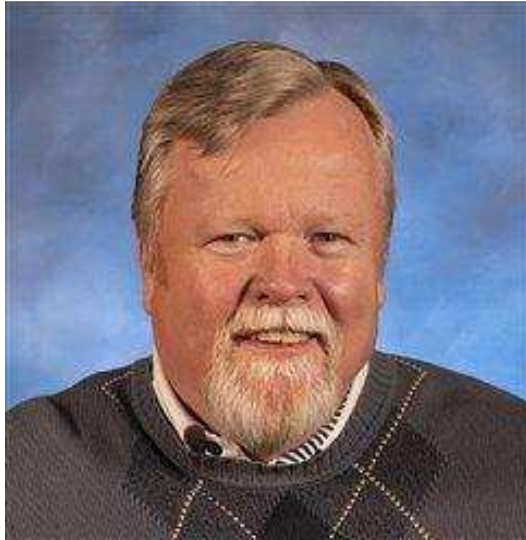
Ancient Guidance on Prayer

When we pray, we are not to pray for ourselves alone. We do not say, "My Father, who art in heaven" or, "Give me this day my daily bread"; we do not ask for our own trespasses alone to be forgiven; and when we pray that we may be delivered from evil, we are not praying only for ourselves either.

Our prayer is for the general good, for the common good. When we pray, we do not pray for our own single selves; we pray for all God's people, because they and we are one.

Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (third century)

MEET OUR ST. STEPHEN'S FAMILY



Matthew Stillwell

Matt was born in Amsterdam, NY, one of six boys. As a child he also lived in Connecticut and Ashaway, Rhode Island, where he graduated from high school. He went on to Northeast School of Broadcasting in Boston. After graduating, he worked in radio and T.V. as an announcer, newscaster, doing commercials, etc. He worked for stations in RI, Cumberland, Maryland, Keyser, West Virginia and Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. When the Ft. Lauderdale station closed down, he worked as a police dispatcher. He also was a D. J. at an 'oldies' bar there in Florida.

Through a Florida friend here in Oklahoma, he was offered his current job as Director of Public Safety Communications for Edmond, OK. He and his family relocated to Edmond in 2006 to take on this position. He oversees the 911 call center and emergency management for Edmond. He feels God made a clear path for him to make a difference in the lives of others through his work.

Matt met his wife, Karen, while working at a summer camp in Wilmot, NH (Karen's uncle was a Presbyterian minister and she was a camp counselor). Although they lived in different cities, they maintained a long-distance relationship for over five years. Their first date was a planned romantic meeting in New York City. They took in all the sites and shared their first kiss at the top of the Empire State Building. They have been married 36 years. They have two grown sons: Christopher in Kansas and Jonathon in Oregon. Christopher and his

wife, Christine, are expecting their first baby. Matt & Karen are looking forward to the joys of grandparenting. Matt still has three brothers in Rhode Island and Connecticut, and his father-in-law lives between homes in Missouri and Florida.

Matt is a Boston Red Sox and New England Patriot fan and he also supports the local Thunder. He was a "lefty" first baseman on his high school baseball team. Currently he and Karen play on a weekly bowling team, and compete in Southwest League tournaments. While in Florida, their bowling was halted when a hurricane destroyed their local alley. Matt enjoyed years of touring on his motorcycle, but is "ready to sell." (Anyone need a Harley?) He also "plays a little guitar" – "I can hold the rhythm for the real musicians" he says.

His mother taught him to cook so he is the family chef, preparing most of the meals.

Matt and Karen love to travel, and hope to spend more time on the coast of Mexico in the Puerto Vallarta area.

While searching for a new church, Karen found our St. Stephen's Church on the internet. They both like the friendly family atmosphere of a small church. Matt enjoys a personal connection with Pastor Mark. He says he appreciates the opportunity to encourage the pastor of a small church who takes on "responsibility for everything." He enjoys the men's prayer breakfast and the Sunday school class.

Matt says he "struggles in life to make it about the LORD, and not just about himself." He loves the Bible and "looks for God to speak to him through the scriptures." His goal is to invest more time in daily devotions and study of the "Good Book." He refuses to call himself a "biblical scholar," but has retained a lot of scripture over the years. Matt keeps a Bible with him at all times in his smart phone through an app called "You Version." He refers to it often and highly recommends this app to all.

Matt has dedicated his life to the LORD, his family, and his work helping others. He is devoted to studying and living by the Bible. We are proud to call him and Karen part of our St. Stephen's family. *Abraham Lincoln once said of the Bible, "Take all of this book upon reason that you can, and the balance upon faith, and you will live and die a better man."*

By Margo Whiting

HYMN OF the Month



Great Is Thy Faithfulness
It is #139 in our hymnal

Typically sung during Holy Week, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” is a hymn based in the realization that God is at work in our lives daily. Thomas O. Chisholm, author of “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” had the following to say, “My income has not been large at any time due to impaired health in the earlier years which has followed me on until now. Although I must not fail to record here the unfailing faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God and that He has given me many wonderful displays of His providing care, for which I am filled with astonishing gratefulness.” Through reflection on the text of this hymn, we are reminded that God’s work is not only done in miraculous or glorious ways, but in everyday, simple ways. We recall that Jesus never failed us in the past, and therefore have no reason to doubt his faithfulness in the future.

The text was written by Thomas O. Chisholm. Born in Kentucky in 1866, Chisholm was a school teacher and newspaper editor. He converted to Christianity at the age of 26, and was made business manager and office editor of the Pentecostal Herald in Louisville, Kentucky. He entered the seminary of the M. E. Church South in 1903. His pastoral career lasted only one year as a Methodist Minister before having to resign due to poor health. In 1909 he became a life insurance agent. He took it as his personal mission to incorporate as much scripture as possible in writings, taking care to avoid flippant or sentimental themes. He retired to the Methodist Home for the Aged in New Jersey, where he passed away in 1960. He is credited with writing over 1,200 sacred poems during his life.

The composer of “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” is William Marion Runyan. Runyan was born in 1870 in Marion, New York, to Methodist Minister William White Runyan. The family moved to Marion, Kansas in Runyan’s childhood, where he became a church organist. He became a Methodist Minister at the age of 21, and serve several congregations throughout Kansas. From 1895-1898,

he attended Northwestern University near Chicago. He began composing gospel songs in 1915 at the suggestion of D.B. Towner of the Moody Bible Institute. From 1924-1926 Runyan worked at John Brown University in Arkansas, where he pastored the Federated Church, and edited the Christian Workers' Magazine. He then moved back to Chicago to work at the Moody Bible Institute where he worked as editor for Hope Publishing Company, co-editing “The Service Hymnal” with Gordon Shorney. He retired to Galveston, Texas and passed away in 1957 in Pittsburg, Kansas. He was on faculty at four universities and wrote a large number of hymns. His family was able to establish a scholarship solely on the royalties from “How Great Is Thy Faithfulness.”

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

Looking ahead

Drama Camp

The Lion, the Switch and the Warm Robes

July 13-17 9AM-12PM

Performances

July 18 – 6PM

July 19 – 11AM

Salvation Army Request

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

Prescription Drugs Needed

If you have any prescription drugs to donate, please give them to Laurie. **No expired medications will be accepted.**

happy
EASTER

April 12



CHURCH OFFICERS

Elders

Class of 2020

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

Class of 2021

Lori Pickrell	503-9585	Treasurer
John Robison	627-3565	Outreach
Joan Miranda	210-1731	Nurture

Class of 2022

Robert Buswell	426-7429	Clerk/Stewardship & Memorials
Wendy Smith	850-6564	Fellowship

Deacons

Class of 2020

Christa Charlie	834-7031	Flowers
Nancy Spradling	206-5828	Ushers/Greeters

Class of 2021

Michael Bassett	942-2074	Church Work Days
Erin Von Tungeln	410-5901	Clerk

Class of 2022

Robin Page	514-8240	Missions
Keith Seidemann	474-5454	Transportation

WITNESS DEADLINE

April 20 is the deadline to submit articles for the *May 2020 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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APRIL Birthdays

1	Raymond Conn
2	Joy Bassett
3	Joshua Bradford
3	Lucas Jones
11	Ann Wilson
21	Jacques Lampin
22	Donna Urdahl
24	Hannah Hudson
24	Treva Gullett
24	Jenni Lowell
25	Miranda Von Tungeln

APRIL Anniversary

26	Fred & Nancy Thompson
28	Matt & Karen Stillwell

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

Special Dates

Holy Week, *April 5-12*
Palm/Passion Sunday, *April 5*
Maundy Thursday, *April 9*
Good Friday, *April 10*
Easter Sunday, *April 12*
Administrative Professionals Day, *April 22*

Needed: Donations of cheese and sausage for Sunday mornings would be greatly appreciated.

Easter is a time when God turned the inevitability of death into the invincibility of life.”

Craig D. Lounsbrough

