



# THE WITNESS

## St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

**Volume 32, Issue 4**  
**The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor**

**April 2021**  
**Church Phone (405) 843-5333**

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Chapter XXVII of the Westminster Confession of Faith is "Of the Sacraments." The next two chapters are, "Of Baptism" and "Of the Lord's Supper." As to the number of the sacraments the Confession tells us, "There are only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord." The number is specified because not all Christians agree. The Roman Catholic Church holds that there are seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony. I once asked a Baptist minister friend of mine, "How many sacraments does the Baptist church have?" and to my surprise he said, "None." They view Baptism and the Lord's Supper as Ordinances, not Sacraments.

So is the distinction between an ordinance and a sacrament only a matter of semantics? No. The distinction between the two is well explained on the website, *gotquestions.org*. "A sacrament is often thought of as being a means of God's grace – as a worshiper performs a certain religious rite, he or she receives divine blessing, either for salvation or for sanctification. An ordinance is usually not considered a conduit of grace but simply a practice commanded to be performed by the Lord. In other words, a sacrament, at some level, involves a supernatural work of God. An ordinance is simply an act of man in obedience to God."

The Confession says, "Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and His

benefits; and to confirm our interest in Him." In the Old Testament we see God making covenants with His people in which the covenant is often sealed or ratified with a sign or token of the covenant. Thus when God established His covenant with Abraham and his descendants the covenant was sealed with the sign of circumcision. Circumcision then became the sign that a person was part of the covenant.

When we think of God instituting the sacraments that we now have, we think of Him doing so with baptism when He gives His disciples the great commission in Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." We view the institution of the Lord's Supper as taking place on Maundy Thursday, "Take, eat, this is My body...And He took a cup...saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:26-28).

Luis Berkhof says that three parts must be distinguished in the sacraments. The first is "the outward and visible sign," which would be the water, the bread and the wine. The second part is "the inward and spiritual grace signified," which would be the forgiveness, cleansing, salvation, and communion with Christ. The third part is "the union between the sign and the thing signified." Berkhof says that it is the third part that "really constitutes the essence of the sacrament." He goes on to say, "Where the sacrament is received in faith, the grace of God accompanies it."

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There will never be total agreement as to whether Baptism and the Lord's Supper should be viewed as sacraments or ordinances. However, there is much to commend in the understanding of the sacraments as held by the Reformers. In the Lord's Supper, in some way in which we do not fully understand, we are spiritually nourished and strengthened through the partaking of the elements. We believe with the Reformers that there is a supernatural work of God taking place in the sacraments.

As we partake of the sacraments, let us meditate on their meaning and their significance for us.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mark*

### **Worship Schedule**

Sunday

9:45 Adult Sunday School

11:00AM – Worship

11:00AM – Streaming Online Worship

### **MARCH SERMON TOPICS**

During the Month of April we will be continuing to look at the Gospel of Mark. On Thursday, April 1, we will be having a special service celebrating Maundy Thursday.

April 1 Maundy Thursday Mark 14:12-26  
*The Last Supper*

April 4 Easter Sunday Mark 16:1-8  
*The Resurrection*

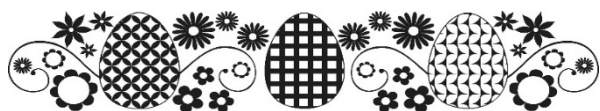
April 11 Second Sunday of Easter Mark 6:1-20  
*Power Over the Forces of Evil*

April 18 Third Sunday of Easter Mark 5:21-43  
*Power Over Sickness and Death*

April 25 Fourth Sunday of Easter Mark 6:1-13  
*Rejected*

### **OUR SERVICE ONLINE**

You will be able to watch the service on Facebook at [facebook.com/StStephensOKC](https://www.facebook.com/StStephensOKC)



### **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).

### **MARCH SESSION REPORT**

**FINANCIAL REPORT:** Lori Pickrell provided a financial report that included updates on the church's current financial position. January was a good month for giving. The church submitted an application and has received a check for the federal COVID-19 Relief Phase II program.

**FELLOWSHIP:** Wendy Smith reported that fellowship is going well and hoped that something special could be done for Thanksgiving.

**NURTURE:** Pastor Mark commented that the Session has made no decision regarding the restart of Sunday school, nursery, and Way Day due to concerns over the risk to teachers. We will have further discussion in the months ahead as COVID-19 vaccinations become more widespread.

**OUTREACH:** John Robison commented that the Sunday morning service is holding steady with 95 to 100 online viewers and about 40 participants in the sanctuary. He suggested that the church sponsor a spring outdoor activity similar to the fall's fire pit, BBQ, and movie.

**STEWARDSHIP/MEMORIALS:** Robert Buswell summarized year-to-date memorial giving in honor of Sarah Welte, Lucille Tilley, Marilyn Mae Preston, and Arden Gatlin.

**WORSHIP:** Matt Stillwell advised that they are in the process of tweaking the online audio quality and devising a better means to introduce the hymn of the month. He indicated that the Worship Committee has also discussed when the choir and our regular communion service might return to the worship service. Pulpit substitutions were discussed briefly as Pastor Mark is scheduled to be absent June 20, 27, and July 4.

**NEW BUSINESS:** It was reported that 14 of the church's air conditioning units had again been vandalized and stripped of their copper tubing. An estimate for repairs came in at \$35,000 because damage inside the individual units was extensive. Prior to making repairs to the AC units, the church needs to install some type of lockable security fencing. We have received one proposal for six-foot-high, pointed-top, wrought iron fencing with gates for \$8,500. Pastor Mark will pursue additional fencing proposals and report back to the Session at a later date.

## SMALL GROUPS

Bible Study & Prayer – Sunday evenings at Pastor Mark & Anne Bradford’s – April 11 & 25 at 5:30PM.  
Tuesday Bible Study – April 6 & 20 at 2:30PM  
Men’s Prayer Group – Saturday mornings at 7:30AM

### *Fellowship Hour Treats*

**April 4** – Lori Pickrell & Miss Butch Derrick  
**April 11** – Wendy Smith  
**April 18** – Jaquelyn Kuhn  
**April 25** – Laurie Daub

### *Greeter for April*

**Michael Bassett**



### **Easter Offering**

We will be collecting our special Easter offering on April 4. The offering will be given to the *Infant Crisis Center* and *Manos Juntas Clinic*.

## MAJOR MAINTENANCE FUND

In the fall of 2019, after several large and unexpected maintenance expenses, the Session saw a need to raise funds specifically to prepare for future major maintenance needs. The congregation responded generously – over the past 18 months we have managed to raise almost \$30,000 of our \$50,000 goal.

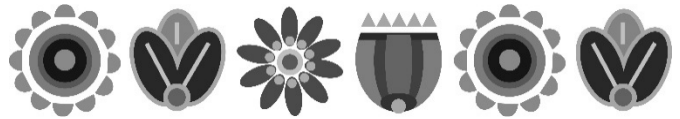
We have recently had extensive vandalism to our air conditioning units, as well as the recent plumbing issue in the men’s bathroom due to the winter weather. In addition to the bathroom repairs and the insurance deductible for the A/C repairs, we are also looking into ways to secure the A/C units to reduce the risk of this happening again. This will be costly. It is a blessing that we currently have funds available for these significant expenses.

We thank you all for your generosity in supporting this endeavor. Please continue to consider the Maintenance Fund for future giving.

*Lori Pickrell*

“The very first Easter taught us this: that life never ends and love never dies.”

Kate McGahan



## BETA FLOWER SALE

The flower sale is Friday, April 16 from 8:00AM-5:00PM.

Most of the flowers sold this year will be hanging baskets as well as a few 6” pots. Most sales were made by pre-orders but we always order a few extra plants to sell on the above date. The profits from the sale go to provide scholarships to local students and to support our Literacy programs.

Thank you for your support, *Marilyn Hanson*



## EASTER LILIES

There is still time to order your Easter lilies. They are \$10 each and can be taken home immediately following our Easter worship.

## HOLY HILARITY

More churches lately have been resurrecting (pardon the pun!) the early-church tradition of celebrating the second Sunday of Easter as Holy Humor Sunday, affirming the season’s joy. Need some jokes for April 11? Try these:

Easter is the only time when it’s perfectly safe to put all your eggs in one basket.

Knock knock. *Who’s there?* Hatch. *Hatch who?* God bless you!

What should you do after eating so many Easter treats? *Eggs-ercise!*

Why shouldn’t you tell an Easter egg a joke?  
*It might crack up!*

An irate subscriber called the newspaper, demanding to know where her Sunday edition was. “Ma’am,” said the employee, “today is Saturday. The Sunday paper isn’t delivered until Sunday.” After a brief pause, the caller spoke with a ray of recognition: “So *that’s* why no one was in church today.”



**Meet Our St. Stephen's Family**  
**PATRICIA M. ROBISON**

Pat was born in Belleville, IL, the youngest of four children. When she was in first grade, her father retired from the US Air Force, and the family moved to Moore, OK where Pat grew up. After graduating from Moore High School, she went on to OU, where she met John. (They have been married for 34 years.) She transferred to UCO in Edmond, received her teaching degree and continued on to Oklahoma City University for a master's degree in teaching gifted and talented children. She currently teaches gifted children in two elementary school.

She and John have two boys: Christopher, pursuing a degree in geography, and William, pursuing a degree in biology. Both are attending UCO. She is very proud of their two sons. She says they love serving their church, and give 110%.

The family enjoys John's traveling pet cat Atticus who stays with John while he is working in Muskogee and otherwise resides at the Robison's Edmond home.

Pat's parents are now both deceased. Her beloved Japanese mother, Mineko Mason of Edmond, died in 2019. Pat is grateful her death preceded COVID-19.

In 2007 the family took a memorable trip to Japan to Mineko's childhood home. They spent time with her two sisters and their families. Pat still has one aunt and cousins in Japan.

Pat has a brother in Baltimore, MD, a sister in Dayton, OH, and a sister in Kansas City, KS, as well as a number of nieces and nephews.

In her leisure time, Pat loves reading mysteries – crime novels, walking for exercise and baking. (She is known as the "Cookie Queen.") She plays games

on her phone for fun and says it helps "stimulate her brain." She supports our Thunder Team, and enjoys watching college basketball, especially during "March Madness."

Pat's favorite Bible verse is John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life."

Pat and her family first came to St. Stephen's about 12 years ago in search of a location for a Cub Scout Troop. John and Pastor Mark had a previous friendship in Boy Scouts. They began attending St. Stephen's and have been with us ever since.

Pat has been an Elder and Deacon, and has worked with Way Day for several years. She currently assists son William with tech support during worship. She says they love Pastor Mark and Anne, and fellowship with a close friendly congregation at St. Stephen's. Pat believes that everyone in our church genuinely cares about everyone else.

This brings to mind a quote I read by Tracy Eldridge: "When we come together in the church assembly, as Paul wrote, we need to help each other to stir up love and good works. We need love and good works to be able to reach the unsaved in this world. At times, we need to just surround ourselves with the love of one another and encourage each other, knowing that our hope for all things is in our Savior Jesus."

I believe that "love and good works" describe Pat and indeed the entire Robison family, who joyfully give so much to their church, inspiring us all with their example.

*By Margo Whiting*



*An Easter Prayer*

From the grave's depths, Lord Jesus Christ, You emerged, breaking the hold of sin, death and hell, that those who trust in You might share in Your righteousness, life and beloved community with God the Father and all God's children. We bow in awe before Your majesty, giving thanks for Your grace extended so bountifully to us. By the power of Your Spirit who lives within us, may we share the astonishing news of Your resurrection with others, that they also may know Your saving grace. Amen.



## HYMN OF the Month



*The Lily of the Valley*  
It is #626 in our hymnal.

The hymn “The Lily of the Valley” (also known as “I Have Found a Friend in Jesus”) has its roots as a hymn for the Salvation Army. Author Charles W. Fry penned the lyrics after reflecting on his experience with the Salvation Army. In 1878, the Salvation Army was receiving much grief when they attempted to establish their mission in Salisbury, where Fry lived. He believed much of this criticism to be unfounded and offered to guard the Salvationists. Fry and his three sons arrived with two cornets, one trombone, and a tuba. The Fry family played their instruments, drawing a large crowd for the Salvation Army preachers. This event is credited with being the first Salvation Army Brass Band.

Fry took the term “Lily of the Valley” from the book of Song of Solomon 2:1. He used this verse of scripture to represent the message of the preacher William Booth to the people during the protests of 1881 describing a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus. Those words were first published in the December 29, 1881, edition of the Salvation Army national magazine, *The War Cry*. American evangelist Ira D. Sankey adapted Fry's words to the music of “The Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane” composed in 1871 by Will Hays for a secular minstrel show.

Charles William Fry was born in 1831 in England. He was raised a Methodist. A bricklayer by trade, he was an accomplished musician, playing the violin, cello, piano, cornet, and harmonium. He served as leader of the band and orchestra at the Wesleyan Chapel in his hometown. Fry is credited with forming the first Salvation Army Brass Band, and his family band eventually accompanied Salvation Army founder William Booth on his evangelism campaigns. Other musicians soon accompanied the Salvation Army Band, and then, when William Booth saw how effective band music was, encouraged the formation of other Salvation Army Bands. Fry died at Glasgow, Scotland in

1881, the year after writing his hymn “The Lily of the Valley.”

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

### ANTICIPATING LIFE’S WAVES

Joni Eareckson Tada, who was paralyzed after a diving accident, described swimming in the ocean as a child. Because the waves looked so high, her first inclination was to swim away from them. That, however, just left her tossed about and sometimes held underwater. “The best thing,” she discovered, “was to swim fast *toward* [the waves] and dive *under* them before they had a chance to break on top of you.”

That’s true with life’s “waves of crisis or difficulty” too, says Tada. “The best way to beat those waves of trials and tough challenges is to *face* them. Head-on. Almost anticipating them. Sometimes I find myself literally diving into the middle of a problem before it has a chance to crash on top of me.” When problems are about to break on top of you, what helps you face them and stand your ground?

—adapted from *The Wired Word*



### Believing In

Sometimes we get caught up in thinking we need to understand God in order to have faith. But faith is more about trust than knowledge; it’s more about believing in someone than believing information. A child, for instance, doesn’t have to know the precise roads to Grandma’s house; he only needs to believe *in* his parents and their ability and desire to get him there safely. Similarly, we need not understand all the intricacies of how God works; we can take a cue from the disciples and let belief *in* the risen Christ transform and empower us.

In the words of Madeleine L’Engle (*The Rock That Is Higher*): “The disciples did not bother to try to understand the resurrection body. They doubted, and then they believed. They believed something so wonderful that it changed this broken, fragmented, beaten-down little group of men and women in a moment from depression to enthusiasm, from despair to new life, vibrant and unafraid.”

## CHURCH OFFICERS

### Elders

#### Class of 2021

Lori Pickrell 503-9585 Treasurer  
John Robison 627-3565 Outreach

#### Class of 2022

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

#### Class of 2023

Dwight Daub 618-7497 President of  
Corporation/  
Nominating  
Kent Larason 808-3971 Nurture  
Matt Stillwell 520-7276 Worship

### Deacons

#### 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

#### Class of 2023

Linda Prince 215-1991 Flowers  
Margo Whiting 229-3344 Ushers/Greeters

### WITNESS DEADLINE

**April 19** is the deadline to submit articles for the May 2021 *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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**Oklahoma City, OK 73112 405-843-5333**  
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[www.ststephensokc.org](http://www.ststephensokc.org)  
[facebook.com/StStephensOKC](https://facebook.com/StStephensOKC)



## APRIL



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

## APRIL



26 Fred & Nancy Thompson  
28 Matt & Karen Stillwell

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

### Special Dates

Maundy Thursday, April 1

Good Friday, April 2

Easter Sunday, April 4

Administrative Professionals Day, April 21

