



THE WITNESS

St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

Volume 31, Issue 8
The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor

August 2020
Church Phone (405) 843-5333

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Chapter XIX of the Westminster Confession of Faith is entitled "Of the Law of God." Often when we read Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy we are confused by all the laws that God gave to His people through His servant Moses on Mt. Sinai. The question is always raised, should all of these laws continue to be kept? And if not, which ones should be and which ones not. To teach that because we are saved by grace and not by works these laws do not apply to us, would be to deny the clear teaching of the New Testament that there is a clear moral standard by which Christians should live their lives.

The Westminster Confession classifies the Old Testament laws into three different categories: ceremonial laws, judicial laws, and moral laws. As we shall see, the first two (ceremonial and judicial laws) no longer apply to us, but the third group, the moral laws, do.

With regard to the ceremonial laws the Confession says, "God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, His grace, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly, holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the New Testament." Colossians 2:16-17 says, "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ." We

know that because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross animal sacrifices are no longer needed. In fact, to offer any other sacrifice for our sins would be to deny the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice. Under the heading of ceremonial laws would also include circumcision and laws regarding clean and unclean animals.

Of the judicial laws, the Confession says, "He gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the State of that people; not obliging under any now, further than the general equity thereof may require." To seek to set up a theocracy based on the judicial laws of the Old Testament would not be wise. However, our law makers and judges could learn much from studying the judicial laws prescribed by God for His people. As I have read these judicial laws through the years they have always greatly impressed me.

With regard to the moral law, the Confession says, "The moral law does forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that, not only in regard to the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator who gave it. Neither does Christ, in the Gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthens this obligation." In other words, the moral laws of the Old Testament are still things we should follow. Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matthew 5:17-18).

What always needs to be made clear is that we are not justified or condemned by keeping or not keeping the moral law. We are justified by faith. The Confession stresses this as well. “Although true believers are not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly.” So though we are not saved by keeping the law, the moral law does instruct us in terms of what is right and wrong and how we should live our lives. Jesus said, “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me” (John 14:21)

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:8-9, “Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him.” This also should be our aim. Do you want to know what is pleasing to God? A good place to begin is in the keeping of the moral law.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mark*

†††

Worship Schedule

Sunday

9:45 Adult Sunday School

11:00AM – Worship

11:00AM – Streaming online Worship



AUGUST SERMON TOPICS

This month I will be starting a new sermon series. I am going to be preaching through the book of James. Many people see James as the closest thing in the New Testament to Hebrew Wisdom literature. It contains many similarities with the book of Proverbs. It is a wonderful little book on practical Christian living.

August 2 Stanley Balch preaching
 August 9 James 1:1 *Address and Greeting*
 August 16 James 1:2-11 *Trial and Integrity*
 August 23 James 1:12-18 *The Gifts of God*
 August 30 James 1:19-27 *Religion in Word and Deed*

OUR SERVICE ONLINE

We will continue to live stream our services at our usual time, 11:00AM. You will be able to watch the service on Facebook at facebook.com/StStephensOKC.

July Session Minutes

FINANCIAL REPORT: The Session was provided a financial report that included updates on the church’s current financial position and the Budget Committee meeting with the proposed 2020/2021 budget. Motion was made to accept the financial report. Motion unanimously passed. Motion was made to accept the proposed 2020/2021 budget. Motion unanimously passed.

WORSHIP: Mark McBride led a discussion on the live streaming of St. Stephen’s worship service. Indications are that it has been very well received with hopes that it will continue.

OLD BUSINESS: The pictorial directory is moving ahead very slowly.

NEW BUSINESS: The recognition of high school graduates was placed on the calendar to be held during the July 26, 2020 worship service.

SMALL GROUPS

Bible Study & Prayer – Sunday evenings at Pastor Mark & Anne Bradford’s – August 9 & 23 at 5:30PM.

Monday Prayer Group – TBA

Tuesday Bible Study – August 18 at 2:30PM

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.

Fellowship Hour Treats

August 2 – Lori Pickrell

August 9 – Miss Butch Derrick

August 16 – Don Lee

August 23 – Wendy Smith

August 30 – Laurie Daub

“A friend is one of the nicest things you can have, and one of the best things you can be.”

Douglas Pagels

DIRECTORY PICTURES due August 15! If you haven’t submitted yet please send to church office.

MEET OUR ST. STEPHEN'S FAMILY



Lora Koetsier

Lora was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As a child she lived in the Dallas area, Bluffton, Limon and Cincinnati, Ohio, and Marion, Indiana where she graduated high school. She has also lived in Germany, and Lawton and Grandfield, Oklahoma in Tillman County. At age 12 she and her sister spent time in the Netherlands with her father's Dutch family. She now resides in Edmond (since 2006).

Lora was married for 21 years before divorcing her husband. She has a son, Marcos, and daughter-in-law, Christina, in Tampa, Florida. A daughter, Kayla, and son-in-law, Rusty, live here in Oklahoma City. They are the parents of a precious 18-month-old granddaughter, Emma.

Lora's mother lives in Idaho along with her brother, Steven. She also has a sister, Patty, in Florida, and many nieces and nephews.

After graduating high school at only 17, Lora joined the Army. She served three years, spending 18 months in Germany, and then being stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. After being discharged she remained in the Lawton area, working several jobs, including for two defense contractors.

While raising two children, Lora attended Cameron College in Lawton, receiving a bachelor's degree in Engineering Design Technology in 1996, and a master's degree in Behavior Science, completed in 2002. Her master's thesis "Calvinist Political Theory" was published. This book is still available on Amazon, and a copy is in the library at Princeton

University. Having her own literature published was a longtime dream!

In 2006 Lora relocated to the Oklahoma City area to begin her current job as a Transportation Specialist for the Oklahoma State Department of Transportation. She also taught "night school" classes in Technology and Ethics from 2007-2016 at I.T.T. College here in Oklahoma City.

Lora once served as county chairman of the Republican Party of Tillman County, Oklahoma. She was once asked to run for the state house of representatives.

Lora enjoys reading, bike riding, playing piano, and painting with acrylics. Her own version of the Garden of Eden on canvas is on display in her home in Edmond.

She is a fan of classic rock music (The Eagles, Billy Joel, etc.). Her father was related to a cousin by marriage to the rock group Van Halen.

Lora came to St. Stephen's with a friend in 2009, after an unhappy experience at another church. She taught Sunday school for several years. Pastor Mark's sermons are especially important to her and she values the friendly members of our St. Stephen's family.

Lora's favorite Bible verse is Philippians 4:8, "*Finally beloved whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*"

Her dedication of service to her family, her church, her community, her state and her country is admirable and inspiring. She says her future goal in life is "to be a better Christian." Lora is a valued member of our St. Stephen's family, and a blessing to all the lives she touches.

By Margo Whiting

Treasure the Present

Patience asks us to live the moment to the fullest ... to taste the here and now, to be where we are. When we are impatient, we try to get away from where we are. We behave as if the real thing will happen tomorrow, later, and somewhere else. Let's be patient and trust that the treasure we look for is hidden in the ground on which we stand.

Henri Nouwen

HYMN OF the Month



I Am His and He Is Mine
It is #748 in our hymnal

The text for “I Am His and He Is Mine” was written in 1876 by George Wade Robinson, with the music being added to it in 1890. The text communicates a love and knowing of the Lord while speaking of Heaven. Robinson talks about this full and perfect peace which he obviously received from the Lord. The text is full of imagery, specifically in verse two which shares what a believer can see that Christ-less eyes can never experience, and in verse three where the image of a child of God is sheltered in the arms of the Father while the wild alarms of life are around. The words of the fourth verse are even more powerful when one realizes that the author was ill and just a year away from death but realizing that nothing could part him from the Lord.

George Robinson was born in Cork, Ireland in 1838. Very little is known about him. Records do indicate that he studied at Dublin’s Trinity College and later at New College in London. In Dudley, UK he became a Pastor at St. John’s Wood. He later had to resign this duty due to a mysterious illness that eventually led to his death in 1877. He contributed five hymns to J. Leifchild's *Original Hymns* (1842) and published two volumes of poetry; *Songs in God’s World* and *Loveland*. His hymn, "Strangers and Pilgrims Here Below" (Jesus Only), from his *Songs in God's World*, is in Horder's *Congregational Hymns*, 1884, in an abridged form; and “Weary with My Load of Sin” (Contrition), is in the *1874 Supplement* “When to the New Congregational Hymn Book - Exiled Seer were Given” (New Jerusalem).

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



Prescription Drugs

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

The “WOW” Factor

After the final notes concluded at a recent symphony performance in Boston, the conductor hadn’t yet lowered his baton when a child exclaimed, “Wow!” The break in protocol, magnified by excellent acoustics, didn’t upset the participants or audience, however. Instead, several later said it brought them great joy. One even called the moment life-changing.

The incident was especially meaningful because the child, a nine-year-old named Ronan, has autism and is generally nonverbal. Music, his family says, tends to attract his interest and make him happy. When symphony officials learned Ronan’s identity, they arranged a private performance so he could meet some musicians.

How often do you shout “Wow!” — in a good way — at what you see and hear? You may tend to do so on vacation or while observing God’s natural wonders, but what about during your day-to-day life? Think about the people you encounter and their talents — and your own. When have these sparked a “Wow!” of thanks to God?

Every blessing, large or small, is a wow-moment — a gift from God that warrants our praise.

adapted from *HomeTouch Ministry*

GO FUND ME

Many members of our congregation have gotten to know and love Jack and Jonna High through the years. Jack’s mother, Harriett High, was a charter member of St. Stephen’s as were Jonna’s parents, Jon and Dorothy Powell. Two years ago Jack had surgery to receive a new bladder. When he woke up from surgery he discovered that something had gone wrong and he was no longer able to see. Jack never recovered his sight. Jack and Jonna have had some added expenses as a result of Jack’s blindness which has included some special training he is receiving to help him learn how to live with his blindness. As a result of this they have set up a GoFundMe account to help defray expenses. If any of you who know them would like to help out, the link is www.gofundme.com/f/blindness-relief.

“Every saint has a past. Every sinner has a future.”

Stanley Hauerwas

CHURCH OFFICERS

Elders

Class of 2020

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

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

August 24 is the deadline to submit articles for the September 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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secretary@ststephensokc.org

www.ststephensokc.org

facebook.com/StStephensOKC

Trust in the LORD
with all your heart,
and do not lean
on your own
understanding.

Proverbs 3:5



AUGUST Birthdays

2	Lydia Bradford
2	Jean Larason
3	Wendy Smith
5	Erin Von Tungeln
9	Kendall Page
10	Madison Von Tungeln
11	Glen Crumpler
14	Shane Murphy
17	Nancy Chotkey
21	Lora Koetsier
22	Teresa Lampin
23	Konnor Jones
27	Jesse Wilson
29	Curt Almen
31	John Robison

AUGUST Anniversaries

1	Dwight & Laurie Daub
5	Michael & Angela Jones
11	Robert & Rebecca Buswell
15	Sumish & Christa Charlie
27	Nelson & Carla Pickrell

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

