



# THE WITNESS

## St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

**Volume 30, Issue 12**  
**The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor**

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

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Chapter XI of the Westminster Confession of Faith is titled "Of Justification." Someone once defined justification as "just as if I had never sinned." This is not a bad definition. We know that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but when we think of justification, we think of being declared righteous. The confession begins this chapter with these words: "Those whom God effectually calls, He also freely justifies; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone." Notice what God does for us. God pardons our sins and accounts us as righteous. Notice what we have to do to be justified – nothing! Romans 3:24 tells us that we "are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Romans 4:5 says, "And to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness." This verse is in the context of Paul arguing that Abraham was not justified by works but by faith. To prove his point Paul quotes from Genesis 15:6, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

The confession's next point is "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification." We can turn again to Romans for further support of this point. "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law." (Romans 3:28) "Therefore, since we have been

justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

The Confession then mentions the essential role Christ plays in our justification. "Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real and full satisfaction to His Father's justice in their behalf." God would not be a just God if He merely overlooked sin any more than we would consider an earthly judge just if he overlooked crime. Sin cannot go unpunished by a holy and just God. But Christ discharged our debt by paying the debt for us. Isaiah foresaw the day when Christ would do this. "But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:5-6) "...but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God." (Romans 5:8-9)

Question and Answer 33 of the Shorter Catechism sums up very nicely all that we have been saying about justification. Question: What is justification? Answer: Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoned all our sins, and accepted us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

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As we enter the Advent/Christmas season let us remember the greatest gift of all, our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us also give thanks to God for His priceless gifts to us of justification and eternal life.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mark*



### Worship Schedule

Every Sunday

9:30AM - Adult & Children's Sunday School

11:00AM – Worship



7:00PM – December 24 – Christmas Eve Worship

### DECEMBER SERMON TOPICS

During the month of December, for the Advent Season, we are going to put on hold our study of the book of 1 Corinthians, and look at the Old Testament Lectionary passages from the book of Isaiah that have to do with Christ's first and second coming. Advent is the beginning of a new liturgical year. The Lectionary passages follow a three-year cycle. If we were following the common lectionary, the end of Year C would be November 24, which is Christ the King Sunday. The New Year, Year A, begins on December 1 which is the first Sunday of Advent. Year A's Old Testament readings for Advent and the Christmas season are from Isaiah. I might also tie in some of the Gospel readings for Advent which are from Matthew in Year A.

December 1 Isaiah 2:1-5

*The Mountain of God*

December 8 Isaiah 11:1-10

*The Righteous Reign of the Branch*

December 15 Isaiah 35:1-10

*The Ransomed Shall Return*

December 22 Isaiah 7:10-17

*The Sign of Immanuel*

December 24 Christmas Eve Isaiah 9:1-7

*For to Us a Child is Born*

December 29 Isaiah 63:7-14

*The LORD's Mercy Remembered*

### November Session Minutes

**FELLOWSHIP:** Thanksgiving celebration will be held at church on November 17, 2019. Designated cleanup crew will consist of deacons, elders and volunteers.

**NOMINATIONS:** A new slate was presented to the session.

1. Nominating Committee - Wendy Smith (2020), Pat Robison (2021), Dwight Daub (2022); 2. Elders: Robert Buswell and Wendy Smith; 3. Deacons: Keith Seidemann and Robin Page.

**NURTURE:** Curriculum has been ordered for Sunday school. There will be no VBS this next year. Nurture is establishing dining hall rules for Way Day. These will ultimately be discussed with the table parents.

**OUTREACH:** The fall festival was well organized but not well attended. Discussions will continue to determine ways to improve attendance.

**WORSHIP:** Thanksgiving Day service will be held at 10:00AM. We will be offering service hours for high school choral students. Next communion is December 1.

**OLD BUSINESS:** Pictorial directory photos will be scheduled after the first of the year. Congregational meeting will be held December 8.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Hanging of the Greens will be November 30 at 4:00PM.

### SMALL GROUPS

Bible Study & Prayer – Sunday evening at Pastor Mark & Anne Bradford's – December 8 at 5:30PM.

Monday Prayer Group – December 2, 9, 16 & 23 at 12:30PM, church library.

Tuesday Bible Study – December 17.

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.

### Adult Sunday School

The library class is currently studying an R.C. Sproul lesson titled "*What Did Jesus Do? Understanding the Work of Christ.*" All are welcome to join in.

## Way Day Dates 2019

December 4, 11 & 18

### Greeters/Ushers

**December Greeters:** Jon & Dorothy Powell

**December Ushers:**

**December 1** – Michael Bassett, Christa & Sumish Charlie, Nancy Spradling

**December 8** – Ashley McCormick, Wendy Smith, Pat Robison, Nancy Spradling

**December 15** – Wendy Smith, Christa Charlie, Ashley McCormick, Nancy Spradling

**December 22** – Michael Bassett, Pat Robison, Becky & Randy Stateler

**December 24 – Christmas Eve**

**December 29** – Youth

### *Fellowship Hour Treats*

**December 1** – Margo Whiting, Laurie Daub

**December 8** – Pat Robison, Frank & Joan Miranda

**December 15** – Jim & Treva Gullett, Marilyn Hanson

**December 22** – Patsy Kuhn, Jean & Kent Larason

**December 29** – Erin Von Tungeln, Wendy Smith

### Thanksgiving Dinner

Thank you to our amazing **Fellowship Committee** for making our Thanksgiving Dinner a time of delicious food and great joy as we come together as the family of St. Stephen's.

### *Thanksgiving Offering*

Our special Thanksgiving Offering will be collected on Sunday, December 1. This offering will be given to *The CARE Center* and *Wings*. *The CARE Center* is an advocacy agency for child abuse victims. *Wings* provides programs for adults with special needs.



### CHRISTMAS OFFERING

We will be collecting our special Christmas Offering on December 22 and 29. This offering will be given to *Reaching Our City* and the *Salvation Army*.

**SEQUENCE – WILL RETURN IN JANUARY**



We will be selling Poinsettias again this year. The sizes are: 6” - \$8.00 and 10” - \$15.00. Watch for Christa Charlie in the hallway for signups on Sundays November 24 and December 1, 8 & 15.

### MAJOR MAINTENANCE FUND

St. Stephen's is very blessed that our church building was fully paid for over 15 years ago. However, our building is aging and with that comes occasional and unexpected major maintenance issues.

For those of you who are not aware, we have had to replace 4 A/C units over the past few months at a total cost of \$27,000. We do have designated funds budgeted every year for routine maintenance; however, this is for basic issues such as plumbing emergencies and lawn maintenance and is not intended to cover such major expenses.

The Session has determined that we need to develop a fund for major maintenance issues. Our goal is to raise \$50,000. We are asking that those members who can make additional gifts consider supporting this effort.

Respectfully,  
Lori Pickrell,  
Treasurer



### BE BORN IN US TODAY

In 1865, Phillips Brooks, an Episcopal preacher from Boston, went on a Holy Land pilgrimage. Riding horseback from Jerusalem to Bethlehem for Christmas Eve worship at the Church of the Nativity was so moving that he wrote “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” The hymn's final stanza addresses the town's most famous newborn:

O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;

O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!

## MEET OUR ST. STEPHEN'S FAMILY



*Don Lee, Sr.*

Don is a native of Oklahoma City – “born and raised,” and a graduate of Classen High School. He attended Oklahoma City University on a music scholarship, receiving a degree in marketing. He played French horn in the University band and orchestra.

Don lives in NW Oklahoma City in Glenhurst with his wife, Pamela, step-granddaughter Emma, and “Jaws”, a very old tabby cat. He met Pamela here at St. Stephen’s, thanks to the matchmaking skills of our own Joan Miranda. They were married in 2013. He is proud of two successful marriages to “two good women.” He and his first wife, Frances, were married 51 years until her death in 2009.

He is also proud of his children, son Don Lee, Jr., daughter Gwen in Chandler and daughter Lynn in Carrolton, Texas, 10 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Don retired after a long successful career in business. He says he still misses work, and his days at the office. He started work at Dowling Church and School supply, went on to own the company for 3 ½ years when Dowling failed, then started over with a reading lab for Oklahoma City school kids. In 1982 he founded his own software company, “The Learning System,” where he worked until his

retirement in 2015. He did a lot of business traveling throughout Oklahoma, Missouri, Kansas, New Mexico, and north Texas.

Don and his first wife, Frances, once owned a horse farm with their daughter Gwen and her husband in Agra, OK. They bred and trained prize-winning Quarter Horses for reining and cutting competitions. Don is a “born leader.” For seven years he served on the board of the National Audio-Visual Society, and was elected president in 1981. He represented the organization on trips to Japan, Mexico, Italy and all over the USA, as well as regular visits to national headquarters in Washington D.C. He also was president of Capitol Rotary, Oklahoma City University Alumni Association, and Kappa Alpha fraternity.

He says his favorite things are church and time with grandkids. He enjoys gardening, reading, and “puttering around” in the garage. He has always loved golf, and played regularly for many years. He is a Thunder fan, and follows NFL and college football, rooting for OU and OSU.

Don truly loves St. Stephen’s Church. He says: “All facets of our church are high quality” and “Everyone at church is a friend”. His sister, Joanne, in Texas told him “your church may be small, but God seems to answer your prayers.”

Don values fellowship with his church family, Bible study, prayer group, Sunday school and worship. He has dedicated many years of service to St. Stephen’s. Twice he has served as an elder and twice as a deacon.

Don’s life exemplifies the strength and accomplishments of a man of true Christian character. We are indebted to him for his many contributions to our church and the St. Stephen’s family.

From Ephesians 2:20-22

*“Together we are His house, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and the cornerstone of Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in Him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord...”*

*By Margo Whiting*

“Once in our world, a stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world.” *C.S. Lewis*

## HYMN OF the Month



### *Good King Wenceslas*

“Good King Wenceslas” is a traditional Christmas Carol that tells the story of a Bohemian king who braves a harsh winter storm on St. Stephen’s Day (December 26<sup>th</sup>) to give help and aid to a poor peasant (someone well below his own station in life). He is accompanied by a page, who is about to give up on the journey, but is able to continue on because he literally follows in the king’s footsteps. Through each verse a story appropriate for this time of year unfolds: help those less fortunate than you. This hymn, while not regularly heard or sung, bears a message of hope, healing, and charity. The story is based on the martyr, Saint Wenceslas I, Duke of Bohemia. Wenceslas lived from 907 until his assassination in 935. His legend had a great influence on what would become considered a “righteous king” – a kindly ruler whose power comes from their piety and princely vigor. While Wenceslas was only a Duke in his lifetime, he was posthumously given the regal title. (There is a King Wenceslas I of Bohemia, although this is a different person who lived nearly 300 years after our subject.)

In 1853, English hymnwriter John Mason Neale wrote the lyrics in collaboration with his publisher, Thomas Helmore. The words were set to a 1582 spring carol (ironic for a Christmas carol), “Tempus Adest Floridum” (The Time is Near for Flowering). The tune was originally published in a collection of 74 songs called *Piae Cantiones*. The book is unique in that it was a collection of songs intended for use not only in churches, but in schools as well. A German sister text, which started the same as *Piae Cantiones* was the basis of Carl Orff’s 20<sup>th</sup> century masterpiece, *Carmina Burana*. The hymn contains a total of five eight-line verses. It bears a rhyme scheme pattern of ABABCDCD. It is unusual that the very last word of each line is extended in its duration, causing a unique rhyme scheme.

John Mason Neale was born in 1818 in London, the son of a Reverend. He lived until 1866. In 1836 Neale went to Cambridge where he was awarded a

scholarship to study at Trinity College. Because of a lack of skill in mathematics, he was forced to obtain an ordinary degree rather than the sought-after Classical Honours. He graduated in 1840. (If he had waited one more year, he would have been able to receive Classical Honours as the rule mentioned above was revoked.) He became involved in the church movement during his time at Cambridge, and was ordained in 1842. In 1854 he founded the Society of Saint Margaret, an order of women dedicated to nursing the sick. He also helped found the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association, a religious organization founded as the Anglican and Eastern Orthodox Churches Union in 1864. He became most well known for his hymns and hymn translations. Neale made English-speaking congregations aware of the centuries-old tradition of Latin, Greek, Russian, and Syrian hymns. The 1875 edition of the Hymns Ancient and Modern contains 58 of his translated hymns; the English Hymnal (1906) contains 63 of his translated hymns and six original hymns by Neale.

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

### SSPC CHRISTMAS CHOIR ♪♪

We are seeking additional members to join the SSPC Choir through the Christmas season. Joining only for Christmas does not commit you to joining choir for the rest of the year. No previous musical experience or knowledge is required. Join us on Wednesdays after Way Day at 7:00PM for fellowship and music making. For more information, contact Kaleb, Valerie, or any other member of the choir.

PEACE LOVE HOPE JESUS PEACE LOVE HOPE JESUS

### ADVENT

Advent, which marks the beginning of the church year, is “the first gleam of Christmas,” writes W.E. Sangster. “It heralds the entrance of the Divine into human history; it is heaven descending to earth; it is a great event casting its brilliance before it.” Sangster adds: “It is as though a trumpeter had taken his stand upon the turrets of time and announced the coming of the King. ‘Get ready,’ he seems to say. ‘Get ready. He is coming!’”



**CHURCH OFFICERS**

**Elders**

**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

**Class of 2021**

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

**Deacons**

**Class of 2019**

Jaquelyn Kuhn	424-2123	Transportation
Kym Manning	426-7298	Van

**Class of 2020**

Christa Charlie	834-7031	Flowers
Nancy Spradling	206-5828	Ushers/Greeters
Randy Stateler	620-253-6431	Maintenance

**Class of 2021**

Michael Bassett	942-2074	Church Work Days
Robin Page	514-8240	Missions
Erin Von Tungeln	410-5901	Clerk

**WITNESS DEADLINE**

**December 16** is the deadline to submit articles for the January 2020 *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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1	Sarah Welte
3	Kent Larason
3	Mason Kuhn
5	Marcia Ledbetter
5	Steve Wilson
5	Benjamin McBride
5	Eleanor McBride
5	Karen Stillwell
9	Esther Jones
9	Michael Jones
13	Claire Wilson
13	Mariah Bailey
16	Jim Gullett
16	Cynthia Cortright Hermes
20	Alex Ballaré
21	Kathy Conn
23	Nikki Dawson
29	Linda Willis



28 Pastor Mark & Anne Bradford

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



**Special Dates**

First Sunday of Advent, *December 1*  
 Second Sunday of Advent, *December 8*  
 Third Sunday of Advent, *December 15*  
 First day of winter, *December 21*  
 Fourth Sunday of Advent, *December 22*  
 Christmas Eve, *December 24*  
 Christmas Day, *December 25*  
 New Year's Eve/Watch Night, *December 31*