



THE WITNESS

St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

Volume 32, Issue 1
The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor

January 2021
Church Phone (405) 843-5333

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

According to Dirk Jellema, the Westminster Confession is, "One of the most influential creeds of Calvinism, a creedal standard for all Presbyterian churches, drawn up at Westminster (1643-46)." Indeed, for over 400 years it was the doctrinal standard for most Presbyterian denominations worldwide. One wonders at what point the largest Presbyterian denomination in the United States stopped believing it. Chapter XXIV of the Confession is entitled "Of Marriage and Divorce." These are two topics that have become quite controversial in the past fifty years. The Westminster's view of marriage is quite clear: "Marriage is to be between one man and one woman: neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband, at the same time."

God's original intention for marriage can be traced all the way back to Genesis 2:24 where we read, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Jesus affirms what is written in Genesis in a discussion He has with the Pharisees on the topic of divorce. We read in Matthew 19:4-6, "He answered, 'Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. 'What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.'"

At this point, let me jump a little bit ahead of myself and of the Confession to say a bit more about divorce. The Confession allows for divorce on two grounds, the first is in the case of adultery, which would not be a surprise to anyone. The second one has to do with desertion.

Another surprise for some is that the Westminster Confession allows for the innocent party not only to sue for divorce but also to remarry. In Matthew 19:8 Jesus said, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." Because we live in a fallen world and we are sinful creatures, there are grounds for divorce permitted both by scripture and in traditional Christian confessions (hopefully being informed by scripture), but we must recognize this was not God's intention when He created Adam and Eve. The Confession's discussion on divorce comes in paragraph's five and six of chapter XXIV. But let us return to the second paragraph.

The second paragraph states the purpose of marriage. "Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the Church with a holy seed; and for preventing of uncleanness." Notice that the first purpose stated is not procreation but "for the mutual help of husband and wife." God in His love created marriage for our benefit. Again we can return to the very beginning, to Genesis 2:18, "Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.'" Eve was created to be a

helper for Adam as Adam was also to be a helper for Eve. When things are all working as they should, what a blessing marriage is for both partners. In any marriage there are difficulties, but as these are worked through, what a wonderful blessing marriage is from God.

One final thing. The Westminster Confession says, "It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry, who are able with judgment to give their consent. Yet it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord." When it says, "to marry only in the Lord," it is stressing that Christian believers should only marry other Christian believers. In 2 Corinthians 6:14 Paul says, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers." In 1 Corinthians 7:39, where Paul is discussing the remarriage of widows, Paul says that it is permissible to remarry, but "only in the Lord."

Let us give thanks to God for the institution of marriage and strive within marriage (or outside of marriage, whichever the case may be), to live to the glory of God.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mark*

JANUARY SERMON TOPICS

Thomas à Kempis begins his book *The Imitation of Christ* with these words, "He who follows Me, walks not in darkness," says the Lord. (John 8:12.) By these words of Christ we are advised to imitate His life and habits, if we wish to be truly enlightened and free from all blindness of heart. Let our chief effort, therefore, be to study the life of Jesus Christ." In January we are going to begin a study of the book of Mark. Prayerfully, it will be for us a study of the life of Jesus Christ.

January 3 Mark 1:1-13

The Herald in the Wilderness

January 10 Mark 1:14-20

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

January 17 Mark 1:21-34

Jesus' Healing Ministry

January 24 Mark 1:35-45

Jesus Preaches in Galilee

January 31 Mark 2:1-12

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

OUR SERVICE ONLINE

You will be able to watch the service on Facebook at facebook.com/StStephensOKC

DECEMBER SESSION REPORT

FINANCIAL REPORT: Lori Pickrell provided a financial report that included updates on the church's current financial position. The church has received forgiveness for repayment of the federal COVID-19 Relief.

FELLOWSHIP: Wendy Smith reported that Sunday fellowship is going well, though on a much down-sized basis.

STEWARDSHIP/MEMORIALS: Robert Buswell summarized year-to-date memorial giving in honor of Dean Mikkelsen, Sarah Welte, Dale Hampton, and Kris Bruce.

WORSHIP: The Christmas Eve service will be held at 7:00PM. Communion will be offered in the service on January 3, 2021.

OLD BUSINESS: The session viewed a final mock-up of the church's new pictorial directory and everyone was very pleased with the results. It was decided that printing of the directory will be completed in-house.

Worship Schedule

Sunday

9:45 Adult Sunday School

11:00AM – Worship

11:00AM – Streaming Online Worship

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).

SMALL GROUPS

Bible Study & Prayer – Sunday evenings at Pastor Mark & Anne Bradford's – January 10 & 24 at 5:30PM.

Tuesday Bible Study – January 19 at 2:30PM

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



Fellowship Hour Treats

January 3 – Kent & Jean Larason

January 10 – Pat Robison

January 17 – Keith & Karin Seidemann

January 24 – Patsy Kuhn

January 31 – Jaquelyn Kuhn



Meet Our St. Stephen's Family TREVA GULLETT

Treva was born in Maytag, OK. Her dad was a cowboy-farmer who broke horses, worked as a barber, was a member of the school board, and served his country in the government's Commerce Department during WWII. Her mother was active in their church, and in administration with Campfire Girls. (She feels blessed to have been raised in a strong Christian home.) The family lived briefly in Spade, TX, moving to Durant, OK when Treva was in second grade. She went on to graduate from high school in Durant and received a BS in Elementary Education with a minor in music from Southeastern State College. She spent a memorable six weeks studying vocal music at the International Cultural Center in Chautauqua, NY. She cherishes memories of this time, visiting New York City and the Statue of Liberty.

As a young woman, Treva worked a variety of jobs. She was a house-mother matron for 18 girls at the Indian Academy in Hugo, OK, a Campfire Girl's instructor, a lifeguard at Lake Texoma Lodge, a school teacher in Hobbs, New Mexico and she worked for a music company here in OKC. Later in life, when her children were junior-high age, she took a teaching job for the Moore school system. She taught 2nd grade at Kingsgate Elementary and for 18 years taught 1st grade at Red Oak School. Many of her former students have kept in touch with

her. She has attended numerous weddings and celebrations for those former students.

Treva divorced her first husband after 19 ½ years of marriage. She married Jim, who she considers to be her soulmate, 38 years ago. Together they have five children: Randy (deceased 2013), Kim, Jeff and Diane, all in the Oklahoma City area, and Jamie in Choctaw, OK. Their grandchildren are: Brett, Hailee, Jason, Robert, Cody, Nikki and Calli, and there are eight great-grandchildren. Treva & Jim once shared their home with four children and one grandchild. At Christmas the family gathering may include 25 people.

Treva has two sisters, Martia in Shreveport, Louisiana and Judy in Irving, Texas. She had a brother Harold who died from diphtheria when Treva was still a baby.

Treva enjoys traveling with Jim, loves gardening flowers and she loves to cook with her specialties being chicken and dumplings and lasagna. She also likes decorating, collecting Willow figurines and shopping in quilt stores. She has crafted many quilts for family gifts, featuring family members' photos transferred to fabric.

Jim and Treva came to St. Stephen's in 1985, after a search for a church. They loved the friendly welcoming congregation. She loves her St. Stephen's family for their "love & kindness." She has served as a Deacon, sang in the choir, and helped with Way Day and Bible school.

Her favorite bible verse is Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

Treva is dedicated to prayer ministry for St. Stephen's as co-chair of the prayer partners calling chain. When communicating with others, she assures them that requests are lifted up in prayer. She believes God hears and answers the prayers of our church family.

"Praying brings us closer to Jesus, praying for others is good and pleasing in the sight of our Savior. Jesus honors the prayers of those who love Him. He unleashes hope, healing, mercy and grace for those that we pray for."

Katie Minter Jones

Treva's contributions to our church have been valuable and numerous. Her work in prayer ministry has touched many lives. We are blessed to call her part of our St. Stephen's Family!

By Margo Whiting

HYMN OF the Month

Moment by Moment
It is #545 in our hymnal

“Moment by Moment” is another hymn where there is not an abundance of information regarding its inception. I was able to find the following story about the hymn, as told by Ira D. Sankey, an American Gospel Singer from *hymntime.com*:

While I was attending the World's Fair in Chicago, Henry Varley, a lay preacher from London, said to Major Whittle: "I do not like the hymn 'I need Thee every hour' very well, because I need Him every moment of the day." Soon after Major Whittle wrote this sweet hymn...[He] brought the hymn to me in manuscript a little later, saying that he would give me the copyright of both the words and music if I would print for him five hundred copies on fine paper, for distributing among his friends. His daughter, May Whittle, who later became the wife of Will R. Moody, composed the music. I did as Mr. Whittle wished; and I sent the hymn to England, where it was copyrighted on the same day as at Washington. In England the hymn became very popular. Falling into the hands of the well-known Rev. Andrew Murray, of South Africa, then visiting London, he adopted it as his favorite hymn. A year later Mr. Murray visited Northfield [Massachusetts], and while holding a meeting for men in the church he remarked, "If Sankey only knew a hymn which I found in London, and would sing it, he would find that it embraces my entire creed." I was very anxious to know what hymn it was, and when he had recited it I said to him: "Doctor, that hymn was written within five hundred yards of where we are standing." For years Dr. Murray had his wife sing this hymn in nearly all his meetings. It also became a great favorite in South Africa during the war.

The composer of this hymn, Daniel W. Whittle, was born in Massachusetts in 1840. Throughout his life

he served as an American Gospel Song Lyricist, Evangelist, and Bible Teacher. In 1861 he married Abbie Hanson, the night before his company was deployed in the American Civil War. During the war, he was wounded at the Battle of Vicksburg, marched with General Sherman on the March to the Sea through Atlanta and Savannah, Georgia, and was promoted to the rank of Major. After the war, he lived in Chicago and worked as a watchmaker. He became closely associated with Dwight Lyman Moody, who encouraged him to go into his evangelistic work. Whittle passed away in 1901. One of Whittle's war experiences served as the basis for the gospel song "Hold the Fort" by Philip Paul Bliss, of whom Whittle edited a biography. Whittle wrote mostly under the pseudonym "El Nathan" although editors of later hymnals routinely credit his actual name. Of his approximately 200 hymns, "I Know Whom I Have Believed" and "Showers of Blessing" are among the most familiar. The tune for Whittle's "Moment by Moment" was composed by Whittle's daughter Mary "May" Whittle Moody.

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

Oklahoma Chamber Symphony Couch Concerts

These concerts, designed for at-home viewing, will feature a small string ensemble performing a string repertoire. The performances will be 30 minutes or less and feature an introduction by the conductor or special guests, providing insight into the composer and piece. Performances will be broadcast every other Saturday and will be available on Facebook and YouTube. Go to okchambersymphony.com for more information.



A THANK YOU!

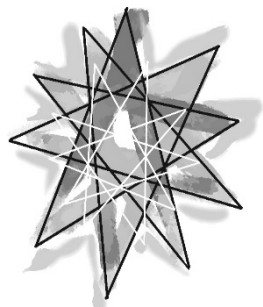
OUR DEAR FRIENDS AT ST. STEPHENS:
THANK YOU for all of your PRAYERS, CARDS and CALLS, after my fall. My lower back is still not back to normal, but I am getting there. Jim and I love our St. Stephen's family and we miss seeing you and being with you. We PRAY that the New Year will bring us back to our normal lives. Jim and I wish all of you a HEALTHY and HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Love and thanks, Treva Gullett

Greetings Folks,

As I wander into my new Session position with Nurture, I'm wondering what everyone is doing for spiritual growth at home during this isolating time. I do not know if your study time is any different now than before March 2020, but I know mine has changed. I have an app on my phone that provides me a verse of the day. I am working from home and the rest of the day can slip into a hole and that verse is often my slim link, other than early morning prayer. So, if you have discovered a new method of spiritual growth (computer access, paper study guide, etc.) or, even if you have a tried and true spiritual study plan, I would appreciate it if you would share it with me. I will attempt to set up an anonymous "best practices" list and share it with everyone in the coming months. You can send your thoughts to me at ocasesyspot6@att.net.

Peace, Kent



Epiphany, from the Greek word *epiphaneia*, means an appearance or manifestation. Christians celebrate this festival each year on January 6, the 12th day after Christmas. Epiphany ends on Ash Wednesday, when Lent begins.

Epiphany marks the coming of the Magi, or wise men, to worship the baby Jesus. Because the Magi were Gentiles, Epiphany symbolizes the first recognition of Christ by non-Jews. It's a reminder that Christ came as the light — and Savior — of the whole world.

The traditional color for Epiphany is green, indicating life, growth, hope and eternity. Symbols for the season include a light, candle or star; a crown or three crowns; three gifts; and a globe. In the modern church, Epiphany has become a time to focus on reaching out and "showing" Jesus as the Savior of all people. It's also a reminder to engage in Christian community and to heal divisions among God's children.



Still searching for a New Year's resolution? None is more worthy than becoming Christ-like. In fact, 19th-century evangelist Henry Drummond calls it "the only thing in the whole world worth caring for." Two modern-day authors offer more insights. Stormie Omartian points out that we're either making progress or backsliding on this goal. "There is no neutral position in the Lord," she writes. "You are either becoming more like Christ every day or you're becoming less like him." And followers of Jesus must keep the goal always in focus. Christ-likeness is our "eventual destination," writes Rick Warren, but the "journey will last a lifetime."

We're often taught that prayer is speaking to God. And of course, that's part of it. It's good to pray for the well-being and needs of others — even Jesus prayed for his disciples. It's okay to pray for our own growth in faith and love. It's a wonderful, powerful thing, modeled especially by the Psalmists, to give God thanks and praise. And God welcomes our cries of pain and sorrow, offering the Spirit's help when words fail us (Romans 8:26).

But through the ages, many deeply faithful followers of Christ have practiced contemplative prayer, centering prayer and other forms of stillness before God. Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) expressed it this way: "To pray does not mean to listen to oneself speaking. Prayer involves becoming silent, and being silent, and waiting until God is heard."



"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

Mahatma Gandhi

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
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

January 25 is the deadline to submit articles for the February 2021 *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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JANUARY



5	Jacob Page
12	Glenn Pulley
12	Cadence Pulley
13	Keith Seidemann
16	Grady Hineline
21	Anne Bradford
24	Judi Dawson
25	Gloria Stanley
25	Ron Howard
27	Carla Pickrell
27	Elijah Morgan
31	Zoë Gifford

JANUARY



12	Joe & Ava Young
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***If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please contact the church office.*



Special Dates

New Year's Day, January 1

Epiphany, January 6

Baptism of the Lord, January 10

Religious Freedom Day, January 16

Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 18

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18-25

Inauguration Day, January 20