



THE WITNESS

St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

Volume 35, Issue 7 & 8
The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor

July - August 2024
Church Phone (405) 843-5333

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we go through the liturgical year, the colors of the paraments that hang on the pulpit and are laid on the communion table change. How different groups define the meaning of the various colors is not always consistent. In one of the searches I did the meaning of the colors were given as follows. Purple is associated with repentance from sin and the sovereignty of Christ. This is the color used during the seasons of Advent and Lent. White represents purity, joy and the brightness of day. White is the color used between Christmas and Epiphany and between Easter and Pentecost. Green symbolizes growth and life. This color is used from Epiphany to Lent and from Pentecost to Advent. The time of year in which the color green is used is often referred to as ordinary time. You will notice in our bulletin we do not refer to the nth Sunday of Ordinary Time but rather to the nth Sunday after Pentecost.

As we go through the church year we normally think of the seasons of purple as times of preparation and self-examination, the seasons of white as times of celebration, and the seasons of green as times of growth.

Growth, that is spiritual growth, is an important part of the Christian life. There are parallels between physical growth and spiritual growth. When a baby is born we understand that there are certain things that a baby needs to progress from infancy to childhood, to adolescence, and ultimately to full adulthood. These things include a healthy diet, exercise, and a proper amount of rest. We know

that there are also environmental and social factors including love and affection that are also important to physical development.

In the same way there are important factors in our spiritual growth. We begin as spiritual infants at the time of our new birth. In John 3 Jesus speaks of the need to be “born again” and of being “born of the Spirit.” Ephesians 2 speaks of the fact that we were once dead in our trespasses but now we have been “made alive together with Christ.” Having been born again or born of the Spirit, the goal is now to grow spiritually until we reach full spiritual maturity. Romans 8:29 says that God predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son. The goal of our spiritual growth is to become more and more like Jesus. Our understanding is that we will never reach this full maturity, this full Christ likeness, in this life, but this is the direction we want to be moving.

In order to mature spiritually there are certain things we need. In 1 Peter 2:2 we read, “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation.” What is the pure spiritual milk that Peter is referring to? It is likely a reference to God’s Word. In Hebrews 5 the writer of Hebrews seems a bit frustrated by the lack of spiritual growth among his readers. In Hebrews 5:12 he writes, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food.” Here milk appears to be the basic teachings of the Christian faith. God’s word is a key element in what is needed for Christians to

grow spiritually. It is like the healthy diet a child needs to mature physically.

There are additional things we need to aid our spiritual growth including prayer, worship, and fellowship with other believers. We do not want to be stuck in spiritual infancy as the believers in Corinth apparently were when Paul wrote, "I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it" (1 Corinthians 3:2). As we enter the sanctuary during "ordinary time" and see the green paraments on the pulpit and Lord's Table, may they remind us that we have new life in Christ and that we need to continue to grow in our Christian faith.

Yours in Christ, Pastor Mark

JULY/AUGUST SERMON TOPICS

I will be finishing my sermon series on the Apostles' Creed the first three Sundays in July. I will be out of town on July 28. Ed Bedrosian will be preaching for me. In August I am going to begin preaching through the book of 1 John.

July 7	Psalm 103:1-12 <i>The Forgiveness of Sin</i>
July 14	1 Corinthians 15:35-44 <i>The Resurrection of the Body</i>
July 21	John 20:30-31 <i>Life Everlasting</i>
July 28	Ed Bedrosian
August 4	1 John 2:1-4 <i>The Word of Life</i>
August 11	1 John 1:5-10 <i>Walking in the Light</i>
August 18	1 John 2:1-6 <i>Christ our Advocate</i>
August 25	1 John 2:7-14 <i>The New Commandment</i>

Worship Schedule

Sunday
9:45 Adult & Children Sunday School
11:00AM – Worship
11:00AM – Streaming Online Worship
facebook.com/StStephensOKC

SMALL GROUPS

Thursday Bible Study – July 11 and August 8 & 22
at 2:30PM

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

July Greeter

John Robison

August Greeter

Ruby Ochoa

NO SESSION REPORT

Special Summer Offering

On Sundays, August 18 and 25 we will be collecting our special Summer Offering. This offering will be going to *The Jesus House* and *The Homeless Alliance*.

OUR PRESENT HOPE

Christian hope involves more than a sunny, cheerful attitude. It is more than a general kind of optimism. It is more than hope in hope, or faith in faith. Christian hope is tied to the goal of history and the purpose of each person's existence. It is the unshakeable confidence of the sovereignty of God and God's eventual triumph over all the forces that stand against truth, righteousness, faithfulness, love and mercy.

And in the great contest between good and evil, Christian hope declares God as winner. ... Christ is the hope not only in the world to come; He is the hope of the world right now.

Oswald Bronson

JOIN US

All women are invited to a *crafting night* at church on Saturday, July 13 from 5:00-7:00PM. Bring something crafty to work on and a snack to share if able!

Questions: Anne Bradford 405-436-5485



Meet Our St. Stephen's Family Dennis Bryley

Dennis was born in Memphis, Texas. His mother Severa unfortunately died when he was only four years old. He never knew his father.

Dennis has seven sisters. Four sisters live in Oklahoma: Jean, Elizabeth and Alberta in OKC and Ollie Mae in Norman. When Dennis was only six years old, he and Alberta were sent to live with Aunt Birdie and Uncle L.C. in Los Angeles, CA. Alberta soon moved out on her own leaving Dennis alone in a strange new city. It was a difficult adjustment for a young boy. He endured bullying in school and frequent nightmares. However, Aunt Birdie and Uncle L.C. made good "parents". Aunt Birdie taught Dennis to cook and Uncle L.C. taught him how to work on cars and develop mechanical skills.

After many years of the single life, Dennis married our own Linda Merriweather on May 20, 2023. Pastor Mark presided over the ceremony. They met through Dennis's niece, Lisa, who knew Linda while serving as a police officer at the school where Linda was a teacher.

Dennis has a son, Dennis Junior, in Anaheim, California. He and Linda are planning a trip this summer so that Linda can meet him, and while in CA also visit with Linda's son.

Dennis recently found out about the identity of his birth father. He was a highly respected land owner,

who managed his own auto shop. He was known in the town of Memphis to be an amiable "storyteller". Dennis believes he has inherited some of his father's traits. Once during a visit to a local café in Memphis, people thought that Dennis bore a remarkable resemblance to a "Mr. Wheeler", well-loved and known in their town. Dennis discovered later that "Mr. Wheeler" was indeed his real father.

Dennis graduated from George Washington High School in Los Angeles. He went on to study nursing and became a medical assistant and a certified nurse assistant. He worked in the medical field for 25 years: in the E. R., medical surgical patient care floors of a hospital, in a nursing home and with patient transport. Most recently before relocating to OKC, Dennis worked as a supervisor for a company called "Urban Alchemy" a social enterprise working with the homeless on the streets of Los Angeles. His responsibility was to send daily claim reports to the L.A. mayor's office. He visited homeless sites helping with the needs of the homeless, directing them to resources. He had to utilize his medical training, delivering emergency treatment to drug victims, even performing CPR on at least five persons. One of his rescues was later able to rehabilitate and go on to work for Dennis. The demands of this job were emotionally draining and living in L.A. was becoming increasingly stressful and even dangerous. Because of his love for Linda, and a desire to be close to his sisters and their families, Dennis relocated to OKC on December 4, 2022. He finds life here much "happier and so much more peaceful". Using the mechanical skills Uncle L.C. taught him, Dennis now works for H.T.C. Drivetrain, rebuilding motors and transmissions for car dealers. He believes God had directed his steps, and he tries to offer Christin support and guidance to fellow workers.

Dennis is a former bachelor turned "dream husband." Growing up in Aunt Birdie's kitchen, he learned to cook and clean, and now prepares most of the meals and cleans house for him and Linda.

The couple love road trips and watching mysteries on T. V. especially "Brit Box" and Father Brown mysteries. Dennis is a Thunder fan, follows the L.A. Rams in football and the Dodgers in baseball.

Dennis's favorite Bible verse is John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that

whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

When asked about heroes in his life, Dennis says: “Linda is my hero! She has changed my life and made me a better man.” He also considers Aunt Birdie and Uncle L.C. heroes, for they raised him as their own.

As a school boy Dennis attended the Village Baptist Church in Los Angeles. However, for over 30 years Dennis did not attend church at all. Our own Linda brought him to us here at St. Stephen’s when he first moved to OKC. He said for the first time in his life when he heard Pastor Mark preach, he felt the “Holy Spirit.” He says he feels he has “missed out” on so much and is seeking to learn and grow as a Christian. Dennis says he loves our “St. Stephen’s family” and “all the good here all through the church.” He is currently serving as a Deacon, is active in Sunday school and the men’s prayer breakfast (he serves as the substitute cook). Dennis says he has searched for years for happiness and fulfillment, and he has found it in his new life with Linda, and his newly found faith. He believes he is now a different person, and that it is all part of God’s plan for his life.

Dennis’s story is one of double blessings. He is a blessing to St. Stephen’s Church, and his church is a blessing to his life. God sends people to make a positive difference in His church. Dennis is one of those people. He brings to our St. Stephen’s family encouragement, service, Christian example, love and a spirit of unity.

To quote A. W. Tozer: “Unity is necessary among the children of God if we are going to know the flow of power to see God do His wonders.”

By Margo Whiting
interview June 7, 2024

OAKLEY IS ON THE WAY

*Join us for a Baby Sprinkle honoring
CHRISTA AND MARK*

*Saturday, August 10 at 11:00AM
2829 NW 159th St., Edmond, OK*

RSVP to Lizzy by July 28 at 918-764-6112

Your presence is present enough.

(Registered at Amazon,

if you would like to buy a gift.)

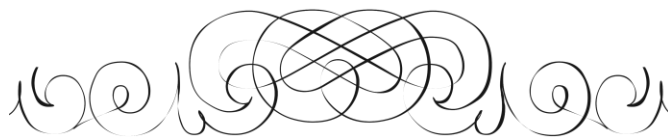


LET US SING

Music is delightful to our ears
Praising the Lord he really hears
When a song comes along you have no choice
Lift up your hearts and sing with your voice

So many hymns through ages long
Inspired by God to reveal a song
Glory be to our God above
As we sing with our souls full of love

So many blessings we can bring
To our Father in heaven when we sing
He blesses us back to him we belong
His precious love fills our hearts with song
*Blessings to all who provide us
with the music we sing in church.*
Anna May



Prayers

When we come to God the father with our prayers
We know he is listening because he truly cares
When prayers are answered with a Yes!
We know it’s God we don’t have to guess

Prayers are powerful from the start
Especially when they come from the heart
We don’t have to wonder what to say
He knows what we are thinking any way

When he answers prayers to our delight
We should praise him back that is only right
Thank him and love him be sure to let him know
That we belong to him here on earth below

Blessings & Love,
Anna May

WHAT IS DEACON'S SUNDAY AND WHY DO WE OBSERVE IT?

Deacon's Sunday is observed on the first Sunday of each month. This is an opportunity for us to donate to the Deacon's fund. Funds given are designated for use by Pastor Mark and the Deacons to assist members of our congregation with special and emergency financial needs as determined by our pastor and our serving Deacons.

Please consider Deacon's Sunday and these special needs as you consider your charitable giving.

To give to the Deacon's Fund just place your donation in one of the Deacon's envelopes in the pew racks on the first Sunday of the month.

July Fellowship Treats

July 7 – Miss Butch Derrick

July 14 – Laurie Daub

July 21 – Joan Miranda

July 28 – Pat Robison

August Fellowship Treats

August 4 – Marta Clay

August 11 – Jean & Kent Larason

August 18 – Keith & Karin Seidemann

August 25 – Dorla Beaty

Special Dates for July

U.S. Independence Day, *July 4, 2024*



Elders

Class of 2024

Nelson Pickrell	650-6431	Treasurer
Pat Robison	620-7863	Outreach

Class of 2025

Joan Miranda	210-1731	Clerk/Stewardship & Memorials Fellowship
Lori Pickrell	503-9585	

Class of 2026

Dwight Daub	618-7497	President of Corporation/ Nominating
Kent Larason	808-3971	Nurture
Wendy Smith	850-6564	Worship

Deacons

Class of 2024

Jaquelyn Kuhn	245-6479	Clerk
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Class of 2025

Michael Bassett	200-7995	Maintenance
Shirley Hampton	831-4852	Missions

Class of 2026

Dennis Bryley	664-3640	Flowers
Ruby Ochoa	301-9047	Ushers/Greeters
John Robison	627-3565	Work Day

August 19 is the deadline to submit articles for the **September/October 2024 Witness**.

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If you have missed prayers or would like to be added to the Women's Fellowship prayer chain, please call Treva Gullett (405-735-9908) and Patsy Kuhn (405-820-2016).



JULY Birthdays

- 5 Elizabeth Garrett
- 6 Joan Miranda
- 6 Dorothy Powell
- 7 Carol Davis
- 8 Branden Dillard
- 8 Margo Whiting
- 11 Nelson Pickrell
- 12 Gentry Hine
- 16 Micah Morgan
- 18 Christa Ringering
- 19 Matthew Stillwell
- 21 Hunter Page
- 25 Hudson Von Tungeln
- 25 Dan Dutcher
- 25 Laurie Daub
- 29 Pat Tsoodle
- 29 Kym Manning
- 29 Mark Ringering
- 30 Mark Bradford
- 31 Peyton Hine

JULY Anniversaries

- 7 Seth & Erin Von Tungeln
- 8 Aaron & Gentry Hine
- 26 Michael & Joy Bassett
- 29 Dan & Shelley Dutcher



AUGUST Birthdays

- 2 Jean Larason
- 3 Wendy Smith
- 5 Erin Von Tungeln
- 9 Kendall Page
- 10 Madison Von Tungeln
- 14 Shane Murphy
- 17 Nancy Chotkey
- 20 Katherine Boaz
- 21 Lora Koetsier
- 22 Teresa Lampin
- 23 Konnor Jones
- 29 Curt Almen
- 31 John Robison

AUGUST Anniversaries

- 1 Dwight & Laurie Daub
- 11 Robert & Rebecca Buswell
- 27 Nelson & Carla Pickrell

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

