



THE WITNESS

St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

Volume 32, Issue 5
The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor

May 2021
Church Phone (405) 843-5333

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Last month Chapter XXVII of the Westminster Confession of Faith dealt with the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Chapters XXVIII and XXIX continue with these two sacraments. Chapter XXVIII begins with a rather lengthy definition of baptism. "Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for a solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church; but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in the newness of life."

When we think of Jesus ordaining or instituting baptism the classic verse in the New Testament is 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." The Confession speaks of baptism as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace. When God made covenants with people in the Old Testament they were accompanied by a sign. So when God made a covenant with Noah never to flood the entire earth again, the sign of the covenant was the rainbow. When God made a covenant with Abraham, the sign was that of circumcision.

In Romans 4 Paul comments on this when he says in regards to Abraham, "He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised" (Romans 4:11). One of the things Paul stresses in Romans 4 is that Abraham was saved by faith not

through the ceremony of circumcision. And so Paul argues that "faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness...not after, but before he was circumcised" (Romans 4:9-10). Circumcision was a sign and seal of Abraham's righteousness and God's covenant with him and his descendants.

The Reformed understanding, as is expressed in the Confession, is that baptism has replaced circumcision and is the sign and seal of the New Covenant or "the covenant of grace." Paul seems to suggest this in Colossians 2:11-12, "In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were raised with Him though faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

There are three other things about baptism that the Confession points out that are worth noting. I might also add that not all Christians are in agreement about these three points. They have to do with the mode of baptism, who may be baptized, and the relation of baptism to salvation.

As to the mode of baptism the Confession says, "Dipping of their person into the water is not necessary; but Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person." The water of baptism does not cleanse us from our sins but is symbolic of the cleansing we have through the blood of Christ. So the Confession would argue that the amount of water used is not what is important.

As to who may be baptized the Confession says, "Not only those that do actually profess faith in and

obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized.” The Confession does give the arguments for this point. Here is the quick version of the argument for infant baptism. First is the understanding that baptism has replaced circumcision as the sign of the covenant. Secondly, following this argument, Isaac was circumcised on the eighth day as a sign that he was a part of the covenant community, so we should baptize our infants as a sign that they are a part of the covenant community.

Finally, what is the relation of baptism to salvation? I am not going to quote from the Confession because the language on this subject is a bit tedious. The Confession makes two points about the relation between baptism and salvation. First, it states that though we should not neglect the sacrament of baptism, baptism and regeneration are not so closely connected that one cannot be regenerated or saved without baptism. Second, just because a person has been baptized does not mean they are saved.

Let us never forget what our baptism is a sign and seal of. God has made a new covenant with us, a covenant of grace that was ratified through the blood of Christ. We have been ingrafted into Christ, we have become a new creature, our sins have been forgiven, and we can walk in newness of life!

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mark*

Worship Schedule

Sunday
 9:45 Adult Sunday School
 11:00AM – Worship
 11:00AM – Streaming Online Worship

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).

MAY SERMON TOPICS

During the month of May we will be continuing our journey through the gospel of Mark. We will be having a special Ascension Day service on Thursday, May 13.

- May 2 Mark 6:14-29
The Death of John the Baptist
- May 9 Mark 6:30-44
Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand
- May 13 Ascension Day Acts 1:1-11
The Ascension
- May 16 Mark 6:45-56
Jesus Walks on Water
- May 23 Mark 7:1-13
Traditions and Commandments
- May 30 Mark 7:14-23
What Defiles a Person

APRIL 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.



Graduation Sunday, May 16

Miranda Almen

Oklahoma State University on May 8
Bachelor of Industrial Engineering

Hope Bradford

Georgia State University on May 13
Master of Music with a concentration in choral conducting

Madison Von Tungel

University of Oklahoma on May 16
Bachelor of Interior Design
with an Architecture Minor

PENTECOST OFFERING

On May 23 and 30 we will be collecting our special Pentecost Offering which will be given to the *City Rescue Mission* and the *Urban Mission*.



SMALL GROUPS

Bible Study & Prayer – Sunday evenings at Pastor Mark & Anne Bradford's – May 11 & 23 at 5:30PM.

Tuesday Bible Study – May 4 & 18 at 2:30PM

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

Fellowship Hour Treats

May 2 – Jean & Kent Larason

May 9 – Lori Pickrell, Karin & Keith Seidemann

May 16 – Pat Robison

May 23 – Margo Whiting

May 30 – Laurie Daub

May Greeter

Miss Butch Derrick



Happy Mother's Day

May 9

"If you find it in your heart to care for somebody else, you will have succeeded."

Maya Angelou



EGR

During a conversation over coffee, a friend mentioned an "EGR." I had to interrupt and ask for a definition: **Extra Grace Required** — in other words, people who can seem tough to love. Often, they're the most in *need* of love because they're hurting. Perhaps Jesus was referring to EGRs when He said, "If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much" (Matthew 5:46, NLT).

Truly loving others — even EGRs — might not be as tough as we think. Simple gestures such as smiling, truly listening, sending a note or extending an invitation go a long way toward expressing care and softening hearts.

At times, we all require extra grace. Thankfully, God has an unlimited amount to extend *to* us and then *through* us. Out of joy, we can find ways — even simple ones — to share God's grace and love with people who need it.

Janna Firestone



Meet Our St. Stephen's Family
DORIS CORNELL

Doris was born in Austin, Texas. She tragically lost her father when she was only ten years old. Her only sibling, a brother, died suddenly at the age of 11, when she was only five.

She grew up with her mother living in her aunt's garage apartment. After graduating high school at age 16, she went to the University of Texas, where she studied geology and graduated with a B. A. degree. She later completed postgraduate journalism courses here in the Oklahoma City area.

In 1950 she married her first husband Leroy, a geologist. His work meant many relocations for the couple.

Doris lived in Lewistown, MT and Mexico City on the gulf, moved to Oklahoma City in 1952, then to Corpus Christie, TX before returning to Oklahoma City. She currently still lives in NW Oklahoma city. Doris was married to Leroy for 19 years, until the marriage ended in divorce. She later married George Cornell. They were happily married 12 years until his death. Doris has three daughters: Allyson here in Oklahoma City, Zetta in New York and youngest daughter Arden (now deceased). She also has three stepchildren from her marriage to George.

Her family also includes two grandchildren in Dallas, five in OKC, one in Washington D.C. and one in North Carolina. She has seven great-grandchildren. She also keeps in touch with a cousin in Texas.

When it comes to sports, Doris cheers for her University of Texas team, especially during the Texas-Oklahoma football "Red River Rivalry."

Interesting to note, Mrs. Abe Lemons is one of her best friends.

Some of Doris' favorite things are: reading, history, and playing bridge regularly. She collects Acoma Indian pottery, and has happy memories of trips to the Acoma Indian reservation in New Mexico. She loved traveling and cherishes memories of many trips, mostly work related. Doris loves cats. She lives with two "inside" cats and three "outside" cats. Throughout her long career, Doris has worked a lot of interesting jobs, and mastered them all! She started with a job at the water department in Austin, then worked as secretary to a bank president in Lewistown, MT. While living in Mexico, she worked as a paleontologist, learned to speak fluent Spanish and taught Sunday school in Spanish.

Doris's OKC jobs included: society editor for the Oklahoma City Advertiser weekly newspaper, and oil reporter and garden columnist for the Daily Oklahoman. She was public relations director for Lyric Theatre, and Oklahoma Department of Libraries public relations director. She worked for a homeless center in downtown Oklahoma City and was in charge of developing a publicity campaign for Kerr McGee Company. Between jobs she was a busy stay-at-home mom.

Out of personal early life experiences in the WWII years, Doris has always been a strong advocate for war vets. The sacrifices of military men and women and their families are dear to her heart. She once wrote a passionate "letter to the editor" published in the Daily Oklahoman protesting the "bars" around the WWII Museum in Washington D.C. restricting close access for vets.

Doris says she has enjoyed all her jobs, and the opportunities that came with them. She had a number of impressive positions and accomplishments during her professional career but remains very humble. She was recognized with numerous awards and accolades, which she humbly declined to enumerate.

1 Peter 5:6 You who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you with humility for one another, for God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Doris joined St. Stephen's after attending with daughter Arden, in the "pre-Pastor Bradford years." She was on the board that selected Pastor Mark.

Doris has been an Elder, a Deacon, clerk of the Session and long time Sunday school teacher. She has been involved in Way Day and Women's Fellowship and started our prayer chain.

Her favorite Bible verses are from Romans 8:26-28, "the Spirit helps us in our weakness, we do not know what to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us... in accordance with God's will ... in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called to His purpose."

How fortunate we are that Doris has devoted her time, her talents, and her heart to her church! She is indeed held in high esteem. I have been witness to universal praise and respect for Doris from our St. Stephen's family.

Proverbs 27:21 *Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but a person is tested by being praised.*

By Margo Whiting



May the Mind of Christ, My Savior

It is #568 in our hymnal.

Composed in 1925 by Kate B. Wilkinson, "May the Mind of Christ, My Savior" is an older hymn themes derived from Philippians 2:5, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." Typically, hymns ask that we learn to have a heart like Jesus, or eyes like Jesus. Rather, in this hymn, we plead to have a mind like Jesus. The second verse continues this strain of older themes, asking that the word of God be within our hearts. The third verse continues in the theme of heart, but asks that the peace of God rule our hearts. Some assert that the fourth verse references back to Philippians 2:5, but adds verses 6-8, alluding to Christ's humbleness. The fifth verse is on endurance, referencing the struggle in pursuing Christ. The sixth and final verse is an odd one, asking for the beauty of Christ. Again, some hymnologists believe this is in reference to making the preaching of His word beautiful to the lost, referencing the humility from verse four, when we say "may they forget the channel (us), seeing only him."

The text is attributed to Kate B. Wilkinson, which she wrote in 1912 in six verses. The *Psalter Hymnal*

Revision Committee omitted the final stanza when they published it in their hymnal and changed verse five to "we/us" to provide a more collective finale. The hymn was first published in 1925 in London's children's hymnal *Golden Bells*. In recent years it has risen in popularity. Little information is known of Wilkinson. We do know she was a member of the Church of England. She was involved in a ministry for girls in London and a participant in the Keswick Convention Movement, but it is unknown in what capacity.

"May the Mind of Christ, My Savior," is most frequently set to the tune ST. LEONARDS. This is the original tune with which the text was published in *Golden Bells* in 1925. It is believed this tune was composed specifically for this hymn by Cyril Barham-Gould, who composed the tune while living in St. Leonards-on-Sea, hence the title of the tune. St. Leonard was a 15th century French Bishop who is the patron saint of pregnant women and prisoners of war. Barham-Gould lived in Cambridge and was ordained a priest in the Church of England in 1928. He served many churches in and around London, and was Vicar of St. Paul's, Onslow Square, from 1936 until his death in 1953.

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



A BREATH OF FRESH PRAYER

Norwegian theologian Ole Hallesby described prayer as simply letting God into our lives. God "knocks," he said, "not only in the solemn hours of secret prayer" but "in the midst of your daily work, your daily struggles, your daily grind ... when you need Him most."

Prayer, added Hallesby, is as essential to life as air. "As impossible as it is for us to take a breath in the morning large enough to last us until noon, so impossible is it to pray in the morning in such a way as to last us until noon," he said. "Let your prayers ascend to [God] constantly, audibly or silently, as circumstances throughout the day permit."

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

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

May 24 is the deadline to submit articles for the June 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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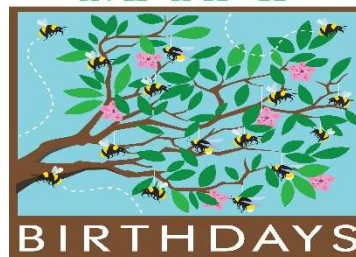
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MAY



1 James Page
1 Kinley Stateler
3 Lori Pickrell
7 John Hermes
7 Cindy Bowden
7 Josiah Morgan
10 Fred Thompson
11 Peter Bradford
14 Eli Nichols
15 Toni Stateler
18 Hannah Wilson
18 Karen Ballaré
20 Robert Buswell
22 Rory Stateler
28 Susan Almen
28 Dwight Daub

MAY



4 John & Cynthia Hermes
26 Steve & Ann Wilson

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

Special Dates

National Day of Prayer, *May 6*

Mother's Day, *May 9*

Ascension Day, *May 13*

Pentecost, *May 23*

Victoria Day (Canada), *May 24*

Trinity Sunday, *May 30*

Memorial Day, *May 31*