



THE WITNESS

St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

Volume 31, Issue 11
The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor

November 2020
Church Phone (405) 843-5333

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Chapter XXII of the Westminster Confession of Faith is entitled, "Of Lawful Oaths and Vows." The title suggests that there are two types of oaths and vows, lawful and unlawful. The reason the Westminster divines chose to add this chapter in the Confession might have been a result of some who believed (as some still do today) that one should never make an oath or vow. This claim has been argued in the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:33-34, "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all..." So there are some Christians even today that believe that Christians should not even swear on the Bible in a court of law. But the point Jesus is making is that a person's word should be enough, "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No.'" There are also examples in scripture of lawful oaths. The writer of Hebrews notes that even God Himself takes an oath when He "swears by Himself."

Chapter XII of the Confession begins, "A lawful oath is part of religious worship, wherein, upon just occasion, the person swearing solemnly calls God to witness what he asserts, or promises, and to judge him according to the truth or falsehood of what he swears." In the Old Testament law people were not commanded not to swear by God's name, but not to swear by His name falsely. In 2 Corinthians 1:23 Paul says, "But I call God to witness against me..." There are times as a part of worship when we take oaths or vows. The times that come readily to mind

are at baptisms, weddings, the ordination of church officers, and even at the time of receiving new members.

The Confession goes on to state that it is "the name of God only is that on which men ought to swear." And so Jesus specifies those things by which we should not take an oath, "Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black" (Matthew 5:34-36). Since it is by the name of God only which we ought to swear, "therein it is to be used with all holy fear and reverence."

Thus the Confession points out that when we take an oath we need to "duly consider the weightiness of so solemn an act." Oaths should not be taken half-heartedly. When we pledge as a community of faith to raise the children we are baptizing in the fear and admonition of the Lord, do we take these words to heart? When we take an oath to faithfully perform the duties of the office we are being ordained or installed to, do we take these oaths seriously? We should always be aware of the solemnity of what we are doing.

The final paragraph of the Confession begins, "No man may vow to do anything forbidden in the Word of God, or what would hinder any duty therein commanded, or which is not in his own power, and for the performance whereof he has no promise or ability from God." The first part of the sentence might seem obvious, but we should probably never

take anything for granted. The second half of the sentence is worth taking into consideration. We should be careful that we do not take an oath to do something we do not have the ability to do or are not gifted to do.

When we make an oath in the life of the Church we are making a commitment to God and to one another. Such commitments should not be entered into lightly but with all seriousness and reverence.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mark*

Worship Schedule

Sunday

9:45 Adult Sunday School

11:00AM – Worship

11:00AM – Streaming online Worship

NOVEMBER SERMON TOPICS

During the month of November we will be finishing our study of the book of James. If I am able to stay the course we will finish the book of James on Christ the King Sunday, November 22, the Sunday before the start of Advent. We will also have a special service in November on Thanksgiving Day at 10:00AM.

November 1 James 4:13-17

Boasting About Tomorrow

November 8 James 5:1-6

Warning to the Rich

November 15 James 5:7-12

Patience in Suffering

November 22 James 5:13-20

The Prayer of Faith

November 26 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

The Cheerful Giver

November 29 Mark 13:28-37

No One Knows the Day or Hour

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.

October Session Minutes

FINANCIAL REPORT: Lori Pickrell provided a financial report that included an update on the church's current financial position.

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

NOMINATIONS: John Hermes asked board members if they had recommendations and a number of good suggestions were offered.

OUTREACH: John Robison provided an update on viewership of the Sunday service broadcast and indicated that they were considering putting Pastor Mark's adult Sunday school class online as well. He also said that plans were moving ahead for some sort of church-wide outdoor activity... outdoor film, campfire, etc. for later this month.

WORSHIP: John Robison reported that Mark McBride has purchased and donated two new microphones for use in the sanctuary.

OLD BUSINESS: Pastor Mark reported that final touches are being made to the church's pictorial directory. He also reported that he will be out of town on Sunday, October 18 with Ed Bedrosian taking his place in the pulpit.

SMALL GROUPS

Bible Study & Prayer – Sunday evenings at Pastor Mark & Anne Bradford's – November 1 & 15 at 5:30PM.

Tuesday Bible Study – November 17 at 2:30PM

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

Fellowship Hour Treats

November 1 – Patsy Kuhn

November 8 – Jaquelyn Kuhn

November 15 – Pat Robison

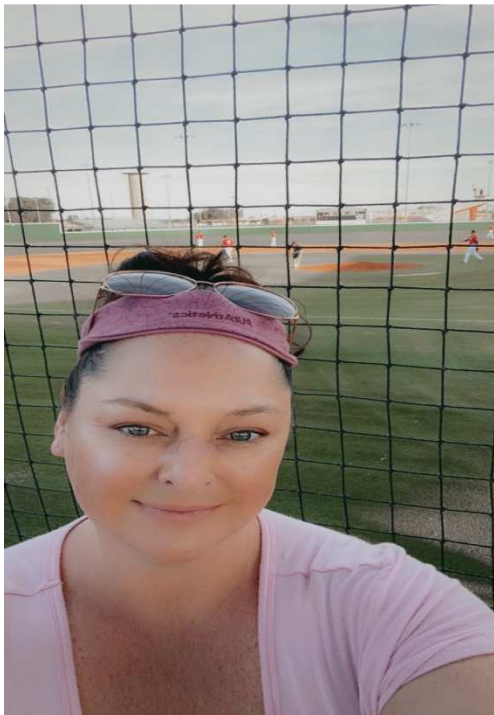
November 22 – Keith & Karin Seidemann

November 29 – Jean & Kent Larason



Change your clocks – Fall Back Sunday, November 1

“Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love.”
St. Therese of Lisieux



ROBIN PAGE

Robin was born and grew up here in the OKC metro and graduated from Midwest City High School. She attended Rose State and received an associate's degree in Occupational Studies, and training in Massage Therapy from Heritage Associates.

She worked as a home school teacher and was director of Classical Conversations of Midwest City (a home school organization).

Robin is currently a very busy mom, managing home and family. She and husband, James, live in Edmond with five children and three dogs. Their son Devin, is 16. Hunter (13), Kendall (12), Jacob (10), and Mariah (now 20) are all adopted. Robin says she "likes to rescue kids and dogs". Two of Robin's favorite "mom quotes" directed at her children are: "You've got to work hard to play hard" and "Instant gratification may bring long-term consequences."

Robin's parents, Dan & Shelley Dutcher, and her brother Corey live in Midwest City. She had a sister, Candace, who died at only 18 months of age.

Some of her favorite activities include knitting, crocheting and scrapbooking. She loves camping, the outdoors and sitting by a campfire. She also enjoys grilled food and Chinese food.

She is an active member in the local women's PEO chapter, attending meetings once a month.

Robin once worked as a tire and oil mechanic and knows her way around a work shop. She spent a lot of time with her handy-man father, once building a complete two-story house with him. She takes pride in being an independent and self-reliant woman.

Robin has been at St. Stephen's since birth! She used to live close to church and walked to Sunday school. She loves being part of a small "family-oriented" congregation. She has been coordinator of most all of the children's activities and events, and has taught Sunday school to all grades of school children. She has dedicated numerous hours to decorating, keeping up the church bulletin boards, singing in choir and participating in bell choir. She is serving her second term as Deacon. She says she loves "working behind the scenes".

Robin exemplifies a life of Christian service and has brought an abundance of blessing to our St. Stephen's Family!

Her favorite Bible verse: James 1:2-4

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

By Margo Whiting

IN OUR *Thoughts and Prayers*

Our dear **Sarah Welte** went home to be with our Lord on Friday, October 9. Please keep her children, grandchildren, brother and sisters and all the extended family in your prayers.



Thanksgiving Offering

Our special Thanksgiving Offering will be collected on Sundays November 22 and 29. 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.

"The thankful receiver bears a plentiful harvest."

William Blake

HYMN OF the Month



Will return next month.

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

Oklahoma Chamber Symphony Couch Concerts

In lieu of in-person concerts, the Oklahoma Chamber Symphony is launching a series of 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.

GREETINGS TO OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Just a note to say that we miss all of you during this Covid-related absence. We understand that lives continue and that during this time, cares and concerns can be missed without direct contact. We have been trying to learn/accept two things during this time. We knew that we were not in charge before this time, and are glad that we are not. And, that our life-long battle with impatience is formidable and ongoing though the LORD has convicted us of the need to step back. Each of you are important to us. We are appreciative of the work involved with bringing the worship time to us through Facebook and we enjoy making out faces each week. Our thoughts and prayers are with you always.

Peace,
Jean and Kent



“I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder.”
G.K. Chesterton

GREET GOD

A Facebook acquaintance who's in the ministry shared an interesting bit of culture from his time in Germany. By way of greeting, instead of “Guten Morgen” or “Hallo,” locals often said “Grüße Gott” — literally, “Greet God.” My friend took it to be a vestige of old, much as the English “goodbye” emerged from “God be with ye.”

Though most people probably say “Grüße Gott” without much thought, my friend pondered: How might our encounters change if we heard in our greetings an invitation to “greet God” in the other person and in our shared interactions? What if we truly believed God was present in others and in the space between us? Jesus said when we welcome another, we welcome Him. If Jesus came physically to our door, how would we welcome Him? Can we treat the person before us that very way?

Heidi Mann

Simplest Prayer

An eccentric blind man nicknamed Joybubbles reportedly loved Mr. Rogers so much he listened to 10 hours of the TV show daily until he'd heard them all. One night, when Joybubbles was in a kind of awake dream state, he said Mr. Rogers visited him and offered to teach him how to pray.

Joybubbles protested that he couldn't pray because he always forgot the words. To which Mr. Rogers said not to worry; the prayer he'd teach had only three words. “What kind of prayer has only three words?” Joybubbles asked.

“Thank you, God,” Mr. Rogers replied.
adapted from *The Wired Word*



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

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

November 23 is the deadline to submit articles for the December 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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NOVEMBER Birthdays

9	Mary Marshall
11	Pat Robison
11	Wanda Meeks
11	Mark McBride
18	Michael Bassett
23	Randy Stateler
25	Chris Willis
26	David Dawson

NOVEMBER Anniversaries

13	Robin & James Page
13	Brennan & Toni Stateler

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

Special Dates

All Saints' Day, *November 1*
Daylight Saving Time ends, *November 1*
Election Day, *November 3*
Veterans Day, *November 11*
Thanksgiving Day, *November 26*
First Sunday of Advent, *November 29*

And let the
peace of Christ
rule in your hearts...
and
be thankful

Colossians 3:15

