



# THE WITNESS

## St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

**Volume 31, Issue 9**  
**The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor**

**September 2020**  
**Church Phone (405) 843-5333**

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

After discussing the Law of God in chapter XIX, the Westminster Confession of Faith moves on to discuss “Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience” in chapter XX. Liberty is a good thing; it conveys a sense of freedom. The Confession talks about what Christian liberty is and is not. In terms of what Christian liberty is, it consists of two major things, the first of which is truly wonderful. This is how the chapter begins:

“The liberty which Christ has purchased for believers under the Gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, and condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law; and, in their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin; from the evil of afflictions, the sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation; as also, in their free access to God, and their yielding obedience unto Him, not out of slavish fear, but a child-like love and willing mind.” Wow! We have been set free from a lot of bad things!

One would be hard pressed to decide which of the things we’ve been set free from is the greatest blessing. We would also need to use the entire church newsletter to show all of the scriptural proofs for what the Westminster Confession is claiming. Let me just mention a few. Galatians 1:4 speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ says, “who gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.” Colossians 1:13-14 says, “He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the

kingdom of this beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The second thing which Christian liberty consists of is “freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law.” The 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts describes a council held in Jerusalem to discuss whether or not Gentiles who had become Christians needed to be circumcised. This was an issue of great importance to the Jews. The decision was a definitive “no.” Peter in his argument stated this: “Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will” (Acts 15:10-11).

What Christian liberty is not is a license to sin. “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who have died to sin still live in it?” (Romans 6:1-2) We have been set free from the bondage of sin so we do not want to resubmit to the hard taskmaster of sin.

The Confession also speaks on the topic of the liberty of conscience. It says, “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to His Word; or beside it, in matters of faith, or worship.” God has revealed in His word how we should and should not live, what we should and should not do. But human beings have often added their own rules to God’s rules. This was very apparent in the time of Jesus and often got Him into conflict with the religious leaders, particularly the

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Pharisees whom Jesus accused of “teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” (Matthew 15:9) James tells us that “There is only one lawgiver and judge, He who is able to save and to destroy” (James 4:12). Unfortunately, there are times when we must obey God rather than man when the two are in conflict. When Peter and John were charged by the Jewish Council not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus, they responded by saying, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20).

Let us rejoice today, and give thanks to God for the great liberty we have in Christ. We have certainly been set free from some very bad things.

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mark*

### **Worship Schedule**

Sunday

9:45 Adult Sunday School

11:00AM – Worship

11:00AM – Streaming online Worship

### **SEPTEMBER SERMON TOPICS**

We will be continuing our study of the book of James during the month of September.

- September 6 James 1:22-27  
*Hearing and Doing the Word*
- September 13 James 2:1-7  
*The Sin of Partiality*
- September 20 James 2:8-13  
*The Whole Law*
- September 27 James 2:14-26  
*Faith Without Works is Dead*

### **OUR SERVICE ONLINE**

We will continue to live stream our services at our usual time, 11:00AM. 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.

### **August Session Minutes**

**FINANCIAL REPORT:** Lori Pickrell provided a financial report that included updates on the church’s current financial position.

**FELLOWSHIP:** Wendy Smith reported that participation in fellowship prior to the worship service is going well. She indicated that a decision had been made to lift the requirement that food items only be store-bought.

**NURTURE:** Pastor Mark reported on behalf of Joan Miranda and recommended that adult Sunday school remain at one class offering rather than attempting to return to the pre-COVID offering of two. There was also a discussion that resulted in a decision to cancel Way Day for the fall, but plan for a tentative restart in January 2021.

**WORSHIP:** Mark McBride, John Robison, and Wendy Smith led a discussion on the consideration of an outdoor Sunday evening service being held on a once-a-month basis during the fall. The idea was well received by the other session members; a plan will be finalized for later consideration.

**OLD BUSINESS:** The pictorial directory is nearly completed. Pastor Mark will be gone October 14-18.

### **SMALL GROUPS**

Bible Study & Prayer – Sunday evenings at Pastor Mark & Anne Bradford’s – September 13 & 27 at 5:30PM.

Tuesday Bible Study – September 15 at 2:30PM

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

### *Fellowship Hour Treats*

**September 6** – Keith & Karin Seidemann

**September 13** – Patsy Kuhn

**September 20** – Jaquelyn Kuhn

**September 27** – Pat Robison



### *Women’s Fellowship*

Women’s Fellowship is starting back up. The ladies will meet on Tuesday, September 8 at 11:00AM in the small fellowship hall. All women from St. Stephen’s are welcome to join them.

## MEET OUR ST. STEPHEN'S FAMILY



**Joan Miranda**

Joan was born in Nebraska City, NE and grew up on a farm in Syracuse, NE. She attended a two-room country schoolhouse as a child. In high school she was the lone snare drum player in her school's marching band during football season. After graduation she went to a community college in Lincoln, NE and received a dental assistant certificate. She worked in several dental offices, as well as for an orthodontist in Lincoln.

After relocating to Oklahoma City in 1974, Joan took a job at the OU College of Dentistry, managing the school's Faculty Practices. It was there she met Frank and they went on to marry in 1976. She also worked as a private dental assistant in the Oklahoma City area.

She attended UCO receiving both a bachelor's degree in Allied Health and a master's in Education. She later earned an associate's degree in Dental Hygiene at Rose State College. Joan spent years of hard work balancing career, schooling, marriage and family.

She taught for 27 years at Rose State College and was coordinator for the Dental Assisting program until 2007. She also worked part time as staff for the Western Regional Examining Board, which organizes and conducts dental and dental hygiene exams at dental schools throughout the U. S. She continues her

contributions to dentistry with community volunteering at the Kings Clinic here in OKC twice a month. She has always been a strong proponent of preventative care, and has dedicated her life's career to the dental health of others.

Joan's family includes husband Frank; son Cory, daughter-in-law Berrit and two grandsons (Sven and Oliver); and daughter Erin, son-in-law Seth and three more grandchildren (Madison, Miranda and Hudson). Cory is a pediatric anesthesiologist at the University of South Carolina in Charleston and Erin is a claims specialist with Farmers Insurance here in OKC. Erin and her family are well known here at St. Stephen's.

Joan has two brothers who live in Nebraska with their families. Michael ("Mick") is eight years older and Doug is eight years younger. They all enjoy holiday get-togethers "back home" in Syracuse.

Joan loves to travel, and she and Frank have been to Europe several times. Once a year she reunites with ten girlfriends from high school. She meets twice monthly with her Edmond Beta Sigma Phi group, which plans yearly trips together. In addition to travel, Joan enjoys reading and relaxing on her patio, yoga, cooking and entertaining friends. She has attended Bible Study Fellowship for 12 years and was a group leader for three years.

While participating in classes at the Pacer Fitness Center (now YMCA Healthy Living Center,) she met our own Laurie Daub and eventually was able to recruit her for our church secretary job.

Joan and Frank first came to St. Stephen's through a friend named Judy Caldwell (now deceased) in 1982. Since joining our church, Joan's contributions have been numerous: Deacon, Elder, Way Day Coordinator, Stephen's Ministry and Women's Fellowship. She is currently on the Session as the Elder in charge of Nurture.

She loves Pastor Mark (especially his frequent smiles), our diverse and loving congregation, and the preaching and teaching from the Bible, here at St. Stephen's.

Spending time with Joan calls to mind a quote from Mother Teresa's Book of Essential Wisdom: "*Joy is the token of a generous personality, a mantle that clothes a life of self-giving....A person who has this gift is like the sun in a community.*"

Our Joan...an example of Christian joy bringing sunshine to our St. Stephen's family, and so many others in her life.

*By Margo Whiting*

## HYMN OF the Month



*Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken*  
It is #603 in our hymnal

For the month of September, our Hymn of the Month is “Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken.” This hymn was composed in 1825 by Scottish clergyman and poet Henry Francis Lyte. Not much is known about the history of the hymn. Rather, one has to draw their conclusions directly from the text. The hymn opens with a declaration of “I, My Cross Have Taken.” This implies the loss of everything and the need to relinquish all worldly possessions to follow Christ. The hymn originally contained a fourth verse that stated, “Go, then, earthly fame and treasure. Come disaster, scorn, and pain. In Thy service, pain is pleasure. With Thy favor, loss is gain.” The gravity of this lyric may lead one to question the validity of this statement. Does one welcome disaster, scorn, and pain? Through this hymn, we can come to discover that his loss was gain. Indelible Grace, the Nashville group that recovers historic lyrics through new music (and first breathed new life into Lyte’s hymn), describes this hymn as “singing in two minds.” Part of us believes and deeply wants the kind of radical life the lyrics portray, while part of us knows we’re not yet there. As we sing, we plead, ““Help my unbelief” (Mark 9:24). Jesus, make me more like this!”

Born near Kelso, Scotland in 1793, Lyte was the son of Captain Thomas Lyte. He studied at the Royal School of Enniskillen and Trinity College, Dublin, graduating in 1814. During his studies he was awarded the English Prize Poem on three separate occasions. His original schooling was in medicine, but he abandoned this course for holy orders, which he took in 1815. His first position was in Wexford. In 1817 he was moved to Cornwall. There, in 1818, he underwent a great spiritual change, which shaped and influenced the whole of his later life, the immediate cause being the illness and death of a brother clergyman. Lyte says of him, “He died happy under the belief that though he had deeply erred, there was One whose death and sufferings would atone for his delinquencies, and be accepted

for all that he had incurred;” and concerning himself he adds, “I was greatly affected by the whole matter, and brought to look at life and its issue with a different eye than before; and I began to study my Bible, and preach in another manner than I had previously done.” In 1819, Lyte moved to Lymington, where he composed his *Tales on the Lord's Prayer* in verse (pub. in 1826); in 1823 he was appointed Perpetual Curate of Lower Brixham, Devon. He held this appointment until his death on Nov. 20, 1847. His *Poems of Henry Vaughan, with a Memoir*, was published in 1846.

For Hymn of the Month requests, contact Kaleb at [kalebbenda@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://okchambersymphony.com) for more information.



### **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. These funds are designated for use by the Pastor and Deacons to assist members of our congregation with special and emergency financial needs.

Please remember 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.

## GO FUND ME

Many members of our congregation have gotten to know and love Jack and Jonna High through the years. Jack's mother, Harriett High, was a charter member of St. Stephen's as were Jonna's parents, Jon and Dorothy Powell. Two years ago Jack had surgery to receive a new bladder. When he woke up from surgery he discovered that something had gone wrong and he was no longer able to see. Jack never recovered his sight. Jack and Jonna have had some added expenses as a result of Jack's blindness which has included some special training he is receiving to help him learn how to live with his blindness. As a result of this they have set up a GoFundMe account to help defray expenses. If any of you who know them would like to help out, the link is [www.gofundme.com/f/blindness-relief](http://www.gofundme.com/f/blindness-relief).

## THANK YOU

Thank you to Debbie Roberts for transplanting and providing pots for plants from Dean Mikkelson's memorial service. The planters are on the entrance table by the back doors for all to enjoy.

*Thank You!*



During our period of distraction with my surgery, we have been so blessed by all the cards we received from our brothers and sisters in Christ. We thank you for all the prayers that have been lifted up on our behalf. Lastly, thank you for the wonderful meals we have been blessed with. We hope to see you all soon.

*Love, Jon & Dorothy Powell*



"Every tomorrow has two handles. We can take hold of it with the handle of anxiety or the handle of faith."

*Henry Ward Beecher*

"When we long for life without difficulties, remind us that oaks grow strong in contrary winds and diamonds are made under pressure."

*Peter Marshall*

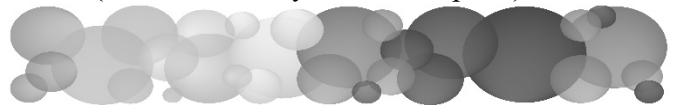
"Youth is the gift of nature, but age is a work of art."

*Stanislaw Jerzy Lec*

## WHEN GOD CROSSES OUR PATH

Pastor and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "God will be constantly crossing our paths and canceling our plans by sending us people with claims and petitions." Last spring, the whole world had plans canceled, first by Covid-19 and then by God "sending us people with claims and petitions." Some needed prayers for healing or for coping with grief. Medical staff, teachers, pastors and others serving long hours needed support: meals, check-in calls, "thinking of you" cards. Parents working remotely while helping kids with distance-learning needed encouragement. Crucial nonprofit work still required donations.

Pre-pandemic, you may not have realized that staying home or wearing a face mask could be a ministry. Or that sending a card expresses love in Jesus' name. Or that buying takeout from a local restaurant can be a gift to the owners. When our calendars empty, God "crosses our paths" in new ways — both to be with us and to nudge us toward others (even if virtually, or 6 feet apart!).



## TIME FOR A POP QUIZ

Tests don't end once you finish school. Churchgoers of all ages can regularly conduct these quick assessments:

- The worship test: Do I faithfully attend worship services and Bible studies?
- The weather test: Am I a "fair weather" Christian? Do conditions that wouldn't keep me from work keep me from church?
- The work test: Am I willing to put my talents to use for my church? Can the congregation count on me to help however possible, or am I too busy elsewhere?
- The wallet test: Do I regularly contribute or tithe? Am I giving my "first fruits" to God so the church can conduct his work?

## Salvation Army Request

Reminder that we are collecting small soaps like the ones you get at hotels or motels. Bring them to the church office.

## CHURCH OFFICERS

### Elders

#### Class of 2020

John Hermes	202-9621	President of Corporation/ Nominating Worship
Mark McBride	410-2003	

#### 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	

### 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

**September 18** is the deadline to submit articles for the October 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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[www.ststephensokc.org](http://www.ststephensokc.org)

[facebook.com/StStephensOKC](https://www.facebook.com/StStephensOKC)



## SEPTEMBER Birthdays

1	Ava Young
2	Chris Robison
2	Angela Jones
4	Abigail Jones
6	Patsy Kuhn
7	Will Robison
8	Sandy Gifford
10	Rodney Barnes
11	Timothy Bradford
15	Aaron Hinline
16	Robin Page
19	Gary Catron
19	Richard Urdahl
20	Corey Dutcher
22	Brett Murphy
24	Joe Young
28	Miranda Almen

## SEPTEMBER Anniversaries

12	Jon & Dorothy Powell
13	John & Patricia Robison
19	Richard & Donna Urdahl
30	James & Treva Gullett
30	Mark & Molly McBride

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

### Special Dates

Labor Day, *September 7*

Patriot Day, *September 11*

National Grandparents Day, *September 13*

Hispanic Heritage Month, *Sept. 15–Oct. 15*

First day of autumn, *September 22*

