



THE WITNESS

St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

Volume 37, Issue 1 & 2
The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When I was growing up one of the traditions in my family took place on New Year's Eve. As a family we would spend the evening together playing games, drinking hot chocolate, and eating snacks. At some point in the evening, we would each spend some time alone writing "New Year's Resolutions." We would then come back together and share our resolutions with the rest of the family.

At some point along the way I decided that New Year's Resolutions should be measurable. As a result, I began writing very measurable resolutions such as: earn a certain G.P.A in school, exercise a certain number of days a week, read the Bible in a year. This contrasted with what I considered to be unmeasurable resolutions such as: be more patient, or more loving, or more kind. After making my resolutions I would then make a chart to keep track of how I was doing.

As the years rolled by there came a time when I stopped making New Year's Resolutions because I realized that my resolutions really fell into two categories. On the one hand there were resolutions I made that were things I was going to do with or without making them a New Year's resolution. On the other hand, there were resolutions that sadly, I more than likely would not keep even if I made them New Year's resolutions. Though, who knows, at some point in the future I might again make a New Year's resolution. Whether I do or not, the start of a New Year is a good time to take stock, to think about where I have come from and where I am going. To ask the question: What progress have I

made and in what areas of my life do I still need work?

For me the things that are now most important are hard to measure. They have to do with spiritual maturity which in my mind is measured by love for God, love for our neighbors, and the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Growth in these areas at times seems painfully slow. Sometimes our growth from year to year seems minuscule and yet if we think back ten or twenty years, we realize that, yes growth has taken place. I genuinely believe that I am less anxious, more patient, and more trusting in God than I was twenty years ago. But even in these areas and in so many more I have a long way to go.

If Jesus is the standard, then we will never fully arrive in this life. Paul puts it very well in Philippians 3:12-14, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

What a wonderful passage! The great apostle Paul recognizes that he is not perfect but still has a long way to go. And what about the thought that Christ Jesus has made us his own! And with all this in mind to press on toward the goal. The goal is the finish line of life. If this is true the important thing becomes not the finish line, we will all obtain that, but the way in which we run the race. The prize for

January-February 2026
Church Phone (405) 843-5333

us as Christians is the blessings and rewards in the age to come.

As we press on toward the goal, how are we going to run the race? Maybe we should set a couple of unmeasurable goals for 2026. To be less selfish, to grow in our love for God, and to grow in our love for others. Let us run this race together rejoicing in the fact that God has begun a good work in us and will bring it to completion.

Yours in Christ, Pastor Mark

JANUARY/FEBRUARY SERMON TOPICS

I will be out of town on the first two Sundays of January. Beginning on the third Sunday of January we will be resuming and journey through the Gospel of John. February 18 we will be having a special service for Ash Wednesday.

January 4	Nathan Carroll preaching
January 11	Ed Bedrosian preaching
January 18	John 11:1-16 <i>The Death of Lazarus</i>
January 25	John 11:17-27 <i>The Resurrection and the Life</i>
February 1	John 11:28-44 <i>Jesus Raise Lazarus</i>
February 8	John 11:45-57 <i>The Plot to Kill Jesus</i>
February 15	John 12:1-11 <i>Mary Anoints Jesus</i>
February 18	Ash Wednesday Isaiah 58:1-12 <i>God's Chosen Fast</i>
February 22	John 12:12-26 <i>The Triumphal Entry</i>

Sunday Worship Schedule

9:45 Adult & Children Sunday School
11:00AM – Worship
11:00AM – Streaming Online Worship
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SMALL GROUPS

Thursday Bible Study – January 15 & 29 and February 12 & 26 at 2:30PM
Men's Prayer Group – Saturday mornings at 7:30AM

DECEMBER SESSION REPORT

FINANCIAL REPORT: The parking contract with Crossings is automatically renewed as of May 1st of each year. An invoice needs to be sent to them by our treasurer each year. The quarterly insurance was paid this month.

FELLOWSHIP: (Smith) This Sunday, December 14th, we will be having a fellowship dinner. The Fellowship Committee will provide soups and bread. Church members may bring side dishes or desserts if they wish.

NOMINATIONS: Dwight Daub has filled the slate of officers for the coming three-year term. The congregational meeting will be held after church on December 21st for election and December 28th for installation. For Elders - Kathy Flanagan and Carla Pickrell, and for Deacons - Shirley Hampton and Michael Bassett will continue in their current positions. The Nominating Committee congregation position will be filled by Lori Pickrell for 2027 and Dwight Daub for 2028.

NURTURE: Sunday school is going well.

OUTREACH: Glenn Beaty has continued to talk to people about the Lord. We are thankful for the groups who use our church during the week to provide outreach. John Robison reported to Pastor Mark that we have 313 daily views online.

WORSHIP: The Tuesday Worship Committee meeting last week went well. Discussion centered around special music, and bell choir. The Christmas Eve service will be at 6:00pm. The following individuals will be helping with worship service in Pastor Mark's absence: January 4 - Nathan Carroll preaching; January 11 - Ed Bedrosian preaching. Communion will be held on January 18th. Servers will be determined at the next session meeting.

OLD BUSINESS: Pastor Pao expressed appreciation for President Daub addressing the Myanmar congregation.

Handrails: Kent has been researching types of handrails for the steps in front of the altar/choir loft. We discussed placement, size, wood vs other material, and that they be removable. **Stained Glass Room:** Kent and hired movers moved everything down into the gym last Saturday.

January Greeter Nelson Pickrell

February Greeter Robert Simon

Meet Our St. Stephen's Family



Kathleen (Kathy) Elizabeth Flanigan

Kathy was born in Germany (her father active military). Her parents were James and Marilyn Flanigan. James was a native New Yorker, mom a "Jersey Girl". She has a younger sister, Patricia Anne. While Kathy was in kindergarten the family lived in Victorville, CA. They moved to Murfreesboro, TN during Kathy's 1st and 2nd grades. During 3rd grade they relocated to Painted Post, NY. She went on to complete her school years in Ridgewood high school in 1974. She now lives here in OKC not far from our church.

Kathy was common law married to Steve Bryson for 22 years. Sadly, Steve died of throat cancer in 2020. She is currently engaged to Joey Martinez "a very kind widower neighbor". They plan to marry next year here at St. Stephen's with Pastor Mark officiating.

Kathy loves cats. She cares for six inside cats and four outside cats. She loves genealogy and has traced her family roots back to the 1600's. One ancestor was part of a plot to blow up Parliament and was executed in the 1600's. She has traced her mother's family back to "William the Conqueror". Her ancestors were among America's first settlers and fought in the Revolutionary War. Her grandmother's ancestor was a stone mason who laid the cornerstone for the Old Dutch Church in Kingston, NY.

Kathy says she was a "shy military kid from New Jersey". After graduating from high school, she decided to escape the conflicts at home and go west to school. She attended Northern Arizona University and studied art for several years. Confused about her future, she returned to New Jersey where she found

a job as a clerk and learned bookkeeping. In 1991 she came to Oklahoma City where her sister worked for a division of Hertz. She found a job as a bookkeeper here in OKC in payroll for Eldorado Motors for a few years. She was unfortunately laid off. She attended OSU tech and received two associate degrees in horticulture and worked as a bookkeeper at OSU in OKC. She worked a variety of jobs for various industries in various locations, mostly as a bookkeeper but also in trailer park management and in recycling and waste management. Her last job was as a bookkeeper for WW Steele from 2012-2023 in OKC. She retired in 2023. Over the span of her career, she lived and worked in cities in NJ, TX, AZ, CO and OK. In 1999 Kathy made OKC her permanent home.

Kathy, a talented artist, pursues a wide variety of hobbies and creative activities. She collects "Calico Critters" (miniature fuzzy plastic toys). These adorable little doll-like creatures were designed to promote kindness, family values, friendship and love. Her goal is to assemble a miniature village including all her "critters". Kathy "dabbles in pen and ink drawings and paintings. Some of her favorite things include needle work, Renaissance festivals, historical costumes, cooking, gardening and all things Downton Abbey.

Kathy has an appreciation for the numerous little blessings in her life. Directed by faith, Kathy believes in helping others. Her favorite Bible verse is John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life."

Although Kathy's early religion-related experiences were difficult, she has always believed God was with her. There were several little miracles where God made His presence known in her life. As a small child Kathey became very ill while traveling with her family through a remote part of TX. They spotted a "way station" offering assistance to military families. There a medic or PA appeared, examined Kathy and diagnosed tonsilitis, and administered the appropriate treatment. Later her father tried to find this "way station-clinic" in military records. There was no record of such a place in that area. The family determines it must have been an angel sent by God in a time of need for little Kathy.

Another time during high school, curious about things “occult” Kathy brought home a library book on the supernatural. She heard a loud and clear voice telling her to immediately return the book. She took it back to the library, believing that the divine message came from heaven. From teen years on, Kathy said she “never felt worthy”. She believes God led her back to church in 2012 when she attended Calvin Presbyterian. She grew confident that she was worthy of His love and started feeling valued. Past fears melted away! Unfortunately, Calvin closed and around 2017 she transferred membership to Covenant Presbyterian. Later due to deep conflicts dividing the congregation and controversy with the Presbytery and a change in pastors, in 2022 18 members left. It was then that Kathy and several others found a new church home here at St. Stephen’s. She loves small churches, is inspired by Pastor Mark’s sermons, our worship services and our welcoming congregation. Kathy found God’s love and acceptance in her return to church where she was able to cast away past fears and negative feelings.

“... we must face what we fear most. We realize we can’t go it alone. We need other who can be God’s hands to open the door and hug us”. Ronnie Gray
God bless Kathy and the caring spirit of St. Stephen’s.

By Margo Whiting 2026

Special Dates for January

New Year’s Day, *January 1*
Epiphany, *January 6*
Baptism of the Lord, *January 11*
Martin Luther King Jr. Day, *January 19*

Special Dates for February

Black History Month, *February 1-28*
Groundhog Day, *February 2*
Valentine’s Day, *February 14*
Presidents Day, *February 16*
Ash Wednesday, *February 18*

Women’s Fellowship

Thursday, January 8 and Thursday, February 12
at 1:00PM. 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) or Patsy Kuhn (405-820-2016).

Jesus the Shepherd

Jesus is our shepherd
We are all his sheep
Jesus is loving and kind
He will never leave his sheep behind

We follow him wherever he goes
He leads us all, as a shepherd he knows
We need him even when we sleep
He keeps us safe we are his beloved sheep

Where would we be without our shepherd Jesus
Terribly lost – we need him to lead us
Jesus is the best shepherd of all
We can follow faithfully when he calls.

Inspired by Pastor Mark’s sermon on Jesus the shepherd.

*Blessings & Love,
Anna May*

PRAISE

To you Heavenly Father all Glory and Praise
To you our hands we shall raise
With our hearts it is certainly a way
To show love and praise as we pray

Let us praise always your Holy name
From you we know that Jesus came
Let the Holy Spirit also be praised
The miraculous birth of Jesus keeps us amazed

When we praise Father Son & Holy Ghost
It is what we surely believe in most
To believe in all three we can be assured
God blesses us back with love and so much more
Have a Happy Healthy New Year

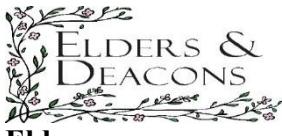
*Blessings & Love,
Anna May*

January Fellowship Treats

January 4 – Wendy Smith
January 11 – Pat Robison
January 18 – Keith and Karen Seidemann
January 25 – Lori Pickrell

February Fellowship treats

February 1 – Marta Clay
February 8 – Dorla Beaty
February 15 – Laurie Daub
February 22 – Joan Miranda



Elders

Class of 2026

Dwight Daub	618-7497	President of Corporation/ Nominating
Kent Larason	808-3971	Fellowship

Wendy Smith 850-6564 Treasurer

Class of 2027

Glenn Beaty	795-3393	Outreach
Keith Seidemann	474-5454	Worship

Class of 2028

Kathy Flanigan	885-7309	Clerk/Stewardship & Memorials
Carla Pickrell	819-6494	Nurture

Deacons

Class of 2026

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

Class of 2027

Kathy Boaz	850-3053	Clerk
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Class of 2028

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

February 16 is the deadline to submit articles for the **March/April 2026 Witness**.

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5	Jacob Page
12	Glenn Pulley
12	Cadence Pulley
13	Keith Seidemann
16	Grady Hineline
21	Anne Bradford
24	Judi Dawson
25	Ron Chris Howard
27	Carla Pickrell
27	Shirley Hampton
30	Sarah Blakeman
31	Zoë Gifford



12	Joe & Ava Young
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5	Larry Wilson
15	Seth Von Tungeln
16	Aaron Bradford
17	Rebecca Buswell
20	Sarah Hudson
26	Dylan Smith

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

