



THE WITNESS

St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

Volume 36, Issue 1 & 2
The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor

January – February 2025
Church Phone (405) 843-5333

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

At the beginning of the New Year I often think about what would be a good verse from scripture by which to live my life. There are many good possibilities. Recently I have been thinking about Micah 6:8, largely as a result of John Hermes' memorial service. Micah 6:8 reads, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

This verse is a correction to a misconception of what the LORD requires. There is nothing wrong with religious ritual and practice but here God is telling His people that how one lives one's life is more important. There is a rhetorical question in Micah 6:7, "Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" The answer is no, not if one's heart is not right and if one is not walking humbly with God.

In 1 Samuel 15 Samuel is frustrated with Saul for disobeying God and says to him, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22). And in David's great penitential psalm he writes, "For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Psalm 51:16-17).

In Micah 6:8 God narrows down what He requires to three things, two of which are similar to

the two great commandments, love God and love your neighbor. The first thing we are told is to "do justice." Broadened out this could include all the things we should not do. Don't oppress the poor, the widow, the orphan or the sojourner. Don't use false scales or weights. Don't bear false witness against your neighbor. Don't steal.

Next is to "love kindness." The word translated "kindness" in Hebrew is *hesed*, which is a common Old Testament word. Thomas E. McComiskey says, "*Hesed* is an attribute of God and is basic to his acts of redemption." In regards to God *hesed* is often translated "steadfast love." In Micah 6:8 the KJV and the NIV translate the word as "mercy," and in the RSV and in the ESV it is translated "kindness." According to the RSV and ESV footnotes the word can also be translated "steadfast love." To "love kindness" tells us what we are supposed to do. The people of Israel were to leave the gleanings of their fields, vineyards, and orchards for the poor. It was a means providing for the needs of the poor. Kindness (steadfast love) is not meant merely to be an emotion; it is to be an act. We are to show random acts of kindness.

Finally we are told to "walk humbly with our God." We are to show reverence to God and worship Him with our lives. Walking humbly with our God is not something we just do on Sunday mornings; it should be a way of life. Deuteronomy 10:12 expands on this, "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways,

to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

In 2025 let us work on doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with our God.

Yours in Christ, Pastor

Mark

JANUARY/FEBRUARY SERMON TOPICS

I will be out of town one Sunday in January and one Sunday in February. On January 5, Branden Dillard will be preaching. Branden grew up here at St. Stephen's. On February 16, Jared Chambers will be preaching for me. Jared was the pastor of Mayfair Church of Christ before they merged with Crossings. He is currently the Assistant Site Pastor at Crossings Mayfair. On January 12 I am going to begin a series of sermons on the Gospel of John.

January 5	Branden Dillard preaching
January 12	John 1:1-5 <i>In the Beginning Was the Word</i>
January 19	John 1:6-13 <i>The True Light</i>
January 26	John 1:14-18 <i>And the Word Became Flesh</i>
February 2	John 1:19-28 <i>The Testimony of John the Baptist</i>
February 9	John 1:29-34 <i>The Lamb of God</i>
February 16	Jared Chambers Preaching
February 23	John 1:35-42 <i>Jesus Calls the First Disciples</i>

DECEMBER SESSION REPORT

FELLOWSHIP: All going great. The dinner for Valerie went well.

NURTURE: Sunday school is going well.

OUTREACH: Our online service views remain consistent for YouTube and Facebook.

STEWARDSHIP/MEMORIALS: We have received a total of 12 memorials for Doris Cornell and all letters have been sent out to donors and recipients. Letters acknowledging a memorial for Jack High will be sent.

WORSHIP: Communion Sunday will be November 3 with Lori and Joan assisting Wendy.

Pastor Mark will be out of town December 15 (guest minister: Ed Bedrosian) and January 5 (Branden Dillard preaching).

OLD BUSINESS:

SANCTUARY CEILING REPAIRS: Conner Powell of Crown Construction will be replacing the needed ceiling panels.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Clint Williams has been hired as the new choir director. He will begin on November 1 and will provide the special music on November 3. Choir practice will begin on November 6 with bell choir (6:00 - 7:00pm) and vocal choir (7:00 - 8:00pm).

STAINED GLASS ROOM: Kent reported that progress continues on the room with the carpet removal. Still needed: finishing the flooring, priming and painting the walls, plumbing changes and hiring movers to move the materials and equipment from the second floor of the gym. Funds from the Kathy Garrett Willard memorials will be used.

SPRUCE-UP COMMITTEE REPORT: Committee members: Carla Pickrell (chair), Jean Larason, John Robison, Lori Pickrell, and Joan Miranda.

Carla distributed a list of potential church building needs to the Session for consideration. After much discussion regarding funding needed and what amount should be set aside for this work, motion was made to establish as starting priorities the library, outdoor entrances, and landscaping. Estimates will be obtained for these areas.

SMALL GROUPS

Thursday Bible Study – January 23 and February 13 & 27 at 2:30PM

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

Women's Fellowship

Women's Fellowship will meet Thursdays January 9 and February 13 at 1:00PM for regular meetings.

January Greeter Sarah Hudson

February Greeter John Robison

Sunday Worship Schedule

9:45 Adult & Children Sunday School

11:00AM – Worship
11:00AM – Streaming Online Worship
facebook.com/StStephensOKC



Meet Our St. Stephen's Family Clint Williams

Clint was born and grew up in Lawton, OK, an only child. His parents were immigrants from Trinidad. Father Egbert was career army, a meteorologist-engineer. Mother Annette was a nurse. Clint keeps in close touch with an uncle and two cousins in Fort Sill, OK and a cousin in Kentucky. His father was relocated a lot, but retired from active duty to the reserves after Clint was born. A bachelor, Clint currently lives in the Paseo District in Oklahoma City. He considers his paternal grandmother and both his parents his life's heroes. His grandmother was the first mayor of the Port Fortin burrow in Trinidad. A religious catholic, she was a woman of high moral standards. A strong respected leader, she avoided all government corruption throughout her time in office.

Clint speaks of his parents with pride. His father Egbert was also a man of exemplary values and morals. A great leader, Clint says "He accepted challenges and saw them through to the end." Clint's mother Annette dedicated her life to the care of the elderly as a nursing director of a senior care facility in Lawton. Clint remembers some of her patients were the older parents of his high school

teachers. Those teachers gave him special treatment, "going the extra mile to be sure I learned".

In 2004 after graduating from Eisenhower High School in Lawton, Clint went on to attend Cameron University where he received a Bachelor of Music degree in music composition. Later he attended Oklahoma City University earning a master's degree in music composition in 2020. Throughout high school and college Clint played tuba, percussion instruments and sang bass.

Clint has committed his life to his passion for music. He says "music is therapeutic, it is magic and can transport us to different times and places". Clint has participated in a variety of music programs and music related jobs. While still in Lawton he worked as a substitute teacher and a private tutor.

Before coming to us other positions included: vocalist in choir at Boston Ave Methodist Church in Tulsa; St. Andrews Episcopal choir section leader and soloist here in OKC; Chancel choir member and bell choir director at First Presbyterian in Norman; and resident composer for the Oklahoma Chamber Symphony. In 2022 Clint became a professor of music composition orchestration at Oklahoma City University. He also served as music director for First Presbyterian here in OKC. Clint currently works with an after school music program called EL-SI-STEMA for under privileged kids.

Clint's father taught him that riches are nice, but there is a price to pay, often sacrificing time and family. Clint says "I am not concerned about having an over abundance of riches, I just want to take care of myself and be happy."

Clint is pursuing the study of the romance languages, currently studying Spanish and Portuguese. He also takes Latin and African Kizomba dance lessons. Clint has fun with gaming and is interested in the sound tracks of movies and games. He says, "Every noise has its very special spot." He likes BBQ, American and Caribbean cuisine and follows the Cowboys, the Ravens NFL team, as well as the OKC Thunder.

Clint was raised Catholic but has been part of worship in Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches. Kaleb recommended St. Stephen's to

Clint for the music director position, and Valerie referred Clint to Pastor Mark and he began as our music director November 1, 2024. Clint says he “sees St. Stephen’s as a loving community” which he says is “hard to find”. He is “trying to look at all the talent here and come up with a system to use everyone’s gifts”. His philosophy is “trying to get people to relax, focus on what you are doing right and blend together”. What he calls his “singers and ringers” (choir and bell choir), he encourages to “enjoy the people around you and loose yourself in the music”. He loves the “support and adaptability” of our choir and bell choir members.

To quote a few St. Stephen’s musicians and vocalists: “Clint has a unique and creative approach to choir, yet in many ways brings traditional methods to our practices. Thoroughly enjoy his presence and methodology.” Kent Larason “He has a good sense of humor, helps us get the feel of the music and shapes our sound to emphasize the message of the words. Choir leads worship through music.” Jaquelyn Kuhn “He showed me how to use my voice.” Dennis Bryley

“Clint uses a calming demeanor to produce results. Both the handbells and the choir respond to this very positively. Good things are happening here!” John Robison

“Our new precious Clint is such an encourager, he wants us to enjoy each other as we play bells and sing...Each week he leads us in relaxation stretches...He shares assorted warm up exercises for our voices! Many delightful bell and regular choirs ahead I am sure!” Miss Butch

Colossians 3:16

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs of spirit, singing to God with gratitude of your hearts.

Clint reminded me that music during worship is praise to the Lord, and not a performance.

By Margo

Whiting

interview December 4,

2024

Special Dates for January

New Year’s Day, *January 1*

Epiphany, *January 6*

Baptism of the Lord, *January 12*

Martin Luther King Jr. Day, *January 20*

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity,

January 18-25

Special Dates for February

African American History Month

Valentine’s Day, *February 14*

Presidents Day, *February 17*

WOULDN’T IT BE HEAVEN

Wouldn’t it be Heaven

If all the world would live in peace

Wouldn’t it be Heaven

If all the wars would cease

Wouldn’t it be Heaven

If all the children would be safe today

Wouldn’t it be Heaven

If all weapons were tossed away

Wouldn’t it be Heaven

If we all lived like sister and brother

Wouldn’t it be Heaven

If we all lived loving one another

Wouldn’t it be Heaven

If we all shared God’s love, forgiveness and grace

Wouldn’t it be Heaven

God’s world would be a safer, wonderful place

*Lets pray for the world,
the Ukraine and the Middle East
Blessings & Love to all,
Anna May*

Have a Happy New Year

January Fellowship Treats

January 5 – Laurie Daub

January 12 – Wendy Smith

January 19 – Lori Pickrell

January 26 – Kent & Jean Larason

February Fellowship Treats

February 2 – Pat Robison

February 9 – Dorla Beaty

February 16 – Keith & Karin Seidemann

February 23 – Jaquelyn Kuhn

Study of Revelation

Bible Study Fellowship’s (BSF) vision is to magnify God and mature His people. They are studying Revelation and will return

January 7. You can attend online in a Zoom class or in person at various locations around the city. Find all these classes at BSFinternational.com. The study includes group discussion, a lecture, and study notes. All the lesson questions, notes and lectures are available online.

Susan Almen



Elders

Class of 2025

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

Class of 2026

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

Class of 2027

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

Deacons

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

Class of 2027

Kathy Boaz	850-3053	Clerk
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February 13 is the deadline to submit articles for the **March/April 2025 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) or Patsy Kuhn (405-820-2016).



5	Jacob Page
12	Glenn Pulley
12	Cadence Pulley
13	Keith Seidemann
16	Grady Hinline
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
16	Breanna Petty
17	Rebecca Buswell
20	Sarah Hudson
26	Dylan Smith

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