



THE WITNESS

St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

Volume 29, Issue 1
The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor

January 2018
Church Phone (405) 843-5333

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This month we are going to consider the tenth and final commandment of the Ten Commandments. It is a commandment I can confidently say we have all been guilty of breaking, since it can be broken without doing anything, a sin that occurs in our thoughts. The tenth commandment is, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." (Exodus 20:17) What more needs to be said?

The Heidelberg Catechism asks the question, "What is God's will for us in the tenth commandment?" The answer is, "That not even the slightest thought or desire contrary to any one of God's commandments should ever arise in my heart. Rather, with all my heart I should always hate sin and take pleasure in whatever is right." It is of interest that in discussing covetousness the Heidelberg Catechism stresses thoughts and desires, as opposed to actions. It has been said that if we kept the tenth commandment we would be keeping all the other commandments. In some sense this is true. If a person did not covet he would not steal, commit adultery or seek other gods.

What then is the antidote to covetousness? Contentment! If we are truly content with what we have we will not covet. In 1 Timothy 6:6-8 Paul says, "Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content

with these." We live in a world that seeks to make us discontent. At times it is referred to as "Madison Avenue". Advertisers try very hard to make us think we need or want things we do not have. We need to block out advertisers, the world, the Joneses, and be content with what we have. Do you have food? Do you have clothing? (It does not need to be the latest fashion; last decade's or last century's styles will do.) Then we should be content.

In closing our study of the Ten Commandments allow me quote one more question and answer from the Heidelberg Catechism. The question which follows "What is God's will for us in the tenth commandment?" is, "But can those converted to God obey these commandments perfectly?" Notice that the question does not pertain to everyone but to those who are "converted", who are new creatures in Christ Jesus. The answer is, "No. In this life even the holiest have only a small beginning of this obedience. Nevertheless, with all seriousness of purpose, they do begin to live according to all, not only some, of God's commandments."

In Romans 7, Paul talks about the inner struggle and conflict of the Christian with sin. "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate...but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members." Our struggle with sin continues as long as we are in this life. But that does not mean we should throw in the towel and just give in. We need to continue to strive

to live holy lives in obedience to God's commands. We need to do what Paul did, "press on to make it our own, because Christ Jesus has made us his own" (Philippians 3:12). Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mark*

Worship Schedule - Every Sunday
9:30AM - Adult & Children's Sunday School
11:00AM - Worship

JANUARY SERMON TOPICS

The first Sunday of January I will be starting a series of sermons from the book of Titus.

January 7 Titus 1:1-4
Salutation
January 14 Titus 1:5-9
The Appointment of Qualified Elders
January 21 Titus 1:10-16
The Refutation of False Teachers
January 28 Titus 2:1-10
Instructions for Different Groups

WAY DAY DATES 2018

January 10, 17 & 24 February 7, 14 & 21
March 7, 14 & 28 April 4, 11 & 18

Remember the congregation is invited to dinner at 6:00PM on Way Days. Call the church office by noon on Wednesday if you wish to dine with us.

Prayer Requests

If you have missed prayers or would like to be added to the Women's Fellowship prayer chain please call Doris Cornell 943-1732 or Treva Gullett 735-9908.



DECEMBER Session Report

FINANCIAL REPORT: Fiscal Year-To-Date Disbursements (\$83,968) exceeded Receipts (\$79,327) by \$4,641.

NOMINATIONS: With all elder and deacon positions now filled, the Nominating Committee has completed its activities for the year. Dwight Daub thanked the members of the Nominating Committee for their service. This year the Nominating

Committee was restructured to include members who would serve three-year terms in the interest of continuity. Initial terms were staggered to ensure committee replacements on a regular basis. In addition to Dwight Daub (chair), the members of the Nominating Committee and their terms of office are Don Lee (2018), Frank Miranda (2018-2019), and Wendy Smith (2018-2020). The St. Stephen's bylaws will be modified to reflect this change.

NURTURE: All nurture-related activities (nursery, Sunday school, and Way Day) are functioning smoothly. The November service project (20 backpacks for Feed The Sheep ministry) was a great success; had more backpacks been purchased an additional 20 backpacks could have been assembled. It has been suggested that another adult Sunday School class be developed to cater to adults in the 30-40 year age group. To take advantage of the nursery on Sunday morning that would be an optimal time for such a class. This suggestion will be more fully explored and a report presented at the next Session meeting.

OUTREACH: A Mission Statement regarding the purpose/goals of Outreach should be developed and finalized. Two examples of such a statement (one from the original bylaws and one from our website) were distributed for review and discussion.

WORSHIP: Since Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year, there will be two services that day: our traditional worship service at 11:00AM and the Christmas Eve service at 7:00PM. The next regular communion service will be on Sunday, January 7.

NEW BUSINESS: CHAIRS: Mayfair Church of Christ is replacing their fellowship chairs and has offered them to St. Stephen's at no cost. After a comparison with the chairs in our fellowship hall it was decided that we would retain our current chairs but request 48 of Mayfair's chairs for use in our Sunday School classrooms.

PATRICK LARSEN: Pastor Mark announced that after a nine-year tenure as St. Stephen's music director, Patrick Larsen will resign his position effective December 31, 2017. He is being transferred by his job and will relocate with his family to Colorado. During the search for his permanent replacement, Valerie Pulley will be asked to serve as interim music director along with her current duties as church organist.

SMALL GROUPS

Bible Study & Prayer – Sunday evenings at Pastor Mark & Anne Bradford's – January 14 & 28 at 5:30PM.

Monday Prayer Group – January 8, 15, 22 & 29 at 12:30PM, church library.

Tuesday Bible Study – January 16.

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

Ushers/Greeters

January Greeter: Sandy Gifford

January Ushers:

January 7 – Michael Bassett, Patsy Kuhn, Pat Robison, Sandy Gifford

January 14 – Kym Manning, Pat Robison, Wendy Smith, Sandy Gifford

January 21 – Michael Bassett, Patsy Kuhn, Wendy Smith, Sandy Gifford

January 28 – Youth

Fellowship Hour Treats

January 7 – Patsy Kuhn, Jean & Kent Larason

January 14 – Doris Cornell, Miss Butch Derrick

January 21 – Treva & Jim Gullett, Marilyn Hanson

January 28 – Joan & Frank Miranda, Pat Robison

Manos Juntas

As we told you last month, the Board at Manos Juntas elected to cease receiving **expired medications** so we will no longer be accepting prescriptions or over-the-counter meds that have expired here at church. Check your local law enforcement because many have drop boxes in their lobbies for all prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

If you have any prescription drugs to donate, please give them to Laurie

The Brotherhood Tour

This music concert will be held Sunday, January 14, at 3:00PM at the First Moore Baptist Church. The performers are: *Signature Sound, Booth Brothers* and *Ernie Haase*.

Tickets are \$25 by calling 1-800-965-9324. If there is enough church interest, the church van can be used to transport. Please contact Doris Cornell if you have any other questions.

Best wishes as you journey on.

The Session, choir and congregation of St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church wish to thank Patrick Larsen for nine years of faithful service. What a blessing Patrick has been to us. When we hired Patrick nine years ago he was a student at UCO working on his undergraduate degree in music. We never dreamed that we would enjoy and benefit from his work among us for this long. Since coming to us, Patrick has earned a Master's degree and has progressed beautifully in his competency as a choir director and director of music. Patrick is truly going to be missed. It should also be mentioned how much Men's Prayer Breakfast is going to miss Patrick. His weekly presence with us and the input he always had in our Bible study discussions will be truly missed. Though we are sad to see him go we also view this as a sending out. We are sending Patrick to do important work in a new place knowing that he will touch the lives of those he will be working with in the future. We are confident that he goes nowhere by accident and that God will continue to fulfill His purpose for Patrick. Patrick, Shannon and Abigail are headed to Colorado to take on new jobs and start another chapter in their life together. We wish them God's richest blessings on this new journey. God bless you, Patrick and family.



SEQUENCE PLAYERS

Sequence will meet January 23. Any questions, please call Doris Cornell at 943-1732.

IN OUR *Thoughts and Prayers*

This past month we lost charter member and dear friend, Patty Almen, who was called home on December 6. Our prayers and condolences go out to the Almen family.



“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”
Martin Luther King Jr.

CHURCH OFFICERS

Elders

Class of 2018

Robert Buswell	426-7429	Treasurer
Jon Powell	470-0230	Outreach
Dana Wilson	706-3191	Nurture

Class of 2019

Dwight Daub	618-7497	Clerk/Stewardship & Memorials
Kent Larason	808-3971	Fellowship

Class of 2020

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

Deacons

Class of 2018

Lori Pickrell	503-9585	Clerk
Pat Robison	879-2762	Missions

Class of 2019

Jaquelyn Kuhn	424-2123	Church Work Days
Kym Manning	426-7298	Van/Transportation

Class of 2020

Christa Charlie	834-7031	Flowers
Nancy Spradling	206-5828	Ushers/Greeters
Randy Stateler	620-253-6431	Maintenance

WITNESS DEADLINE

January 22 is the deadline to submit articles for the February 2018 Witness. You may bring items to the church office or e-mail them to: secretary@ststephensokc.org.

Thanks! Laurie Daub, St. Stephen's Secretary

St. Stephen's Church

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Special Dates

New Year's Day, *January 1*

Epiphany, *January 6*

Baptism of the Lord, *January 7*

Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday

Observance, *January 15*

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, *January 18-25*



5	Jacob Page
7	Sumish Charlie
12	Glenn Pulley
12	Collin Pulley
16	Mary Catron
16	Grady Hinline
21	Anne Bradford
23	Chris Ochoa
24	Judi Dawson
25	Gloria Stanley
25	Chris Howard
26	Pamela Lee
27	Carla Pickrell
27	Dana Wilson
31	Zoë Gifford



12	Joe & Ava Young
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***If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please contact the church office.*

WINTER GIFTS

“God ... does great things beyond our knowing. He says to the snow, ‘Fall to the earth’; likewise to his heavy, drenching rain. He shuts up all humankind indoors, so that all people may know his work” (Job 37:5-7, NABRE).

Snow, ice and cold can make winter a hassle. “Snow days” due to a blizzard may thrill students but usually inconvenience parents. But now and then, winter blankets the earth so heavily that it seems to quiet everything. We’re granted permission to hunker down at home, snuggle close with family or pets, enjoy a book or movie, make cocoa or cookies, and rest. It’s like a surprise sabbath — the gift of grace-time — when no one’s expected to get out the door or the driveway.

Perhaps indeed, as Job declared, God sees fit on such days to put our busyness on hold and shut us all indoors so we pause and remember his work — his place — in our lives. Praise God for snow days!

Heidi Mann