



THE WITNESS

St. Stephen's Church Newsletter

Volume 28, Issue 6
The Rev. Mark Bradford, Pastor

June 2017
Church Phone (405) 843-5333

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today we are going to consider the third commandment: "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain." (Exodus 20:7) How many times in our lives have we heard the LORD's name taken in vain? I remember in school often hearing people use the phrase "God damn". Hollywood is often guilty of taking God's name in vain. In how many movies has one heard the phrase "Jesus Christ"? Are these not two ways in which God's name is used in vain in our modern society?

The Heidelberg Catechism asks the question, "What is God's will for us in the third commandment?" The answer is, "That we neither blaspheme nor misuse the name of God by cursing, perjury, or unnecessary oaths, nor share in such horrible sins by being silent bystanders. In a word, it requires that we use the holy name of God only with reverence and awe, so that we may properly confess him, pray to him, and praise him in everything we do and say." Jesus would not have us swear at all. He says, "But I say to you, Do not swear at all", and "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil." (Matthew 5:34a, 37) This is a general principle that should be used by all of us. This does seem a bit contradictory to the Catechism's third question on this subject, but we will explore shortly.

The Heidelberg Catechism then asks, "Is blasphemy of God's name by swearing and cursing really such a serious sin that God is angry also with those who do not do all they can to help prevent it and to forbid it?" The answer is: "Yes, indeed. No sin is greater, no sin makes God angrier than blaspheming

his name. That is why he commanded the death penalty for it." To us this seems a bit extreme, but that is because we do not grasp the seriousness of this sin. We view it as a sin that does not hurt anyone, so can it really be that bad? What we forget is that every sin is first and foremost a sin against God. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight, so that thou art justified in thy sentence and blameless in thy judgment." (Psalm 51:4) Breaking the third commandment is an offense against God himself. When Moses inquired of the LORD what should be done with one who blasphemes the name of the LORD he was told: "Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. He who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall be put to death." (Leviticus 24:15b-16a) I do not believe anyone is advocating the death penalty for this sin in the pluralistic society in which we live, but it should be a reminder to us of how serious a matter this is.

The third question the Heidelberg Catechism asks in regards to this commandment is: "But may we swear an oath in God's name if we do it reverently?" The answer is: "Yes, when the government demands it, or when necessity requires it, in order to maintain and promote truth and trustworthiness for God's glory and our neighbor's good. Such oaths are approved in God's Word and were rightly used by Old and New Testament believers." This question and answer was a response to the Anabaptists who believed that one should not take an oath of any kind, anywhere, not even in a court of law. But the rule of scripture is not that we should never take an oath but that we fulfill whatever oath that we take. (Though in most matters our 'yes' or 'no' should be sufficient.) There are numerous examples in the Old Testament where

people are permitted and even commanded to swear by the LORD. Several times in the New Testament the apostle Paul calls God to bear witness that he is speaking the truth.

The Heidelberg Catechism's final question is: "May we swear by saints or other creatures?" The answer is: "No. A legitimate oath means calling upon God as the one who knows my heart to witness to my truthfulness and to punish me if I swear falsely. No creature is worthy of such honor." Going back to Jesus' discussion about the law of oaths in Matthew 5, Jesus makes it clear that we should not swear by anything other than God. He says, "But I say to you, Do not swear 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 swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black." (Mathew 5:34-36)

God's name is sacred, so we need to be careful how we use His name in our everyday conversation. God's name represents His person and needs to be viewed with reverence and awe. Let all of our words be to the glory of God. "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee...Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from Thee."

Yours in Christ, *Pastor Mark*

Worship Schedule

Every Sunday

9:30AM - Adult & Children's Sunday School

11:00AM - Worship



June Sermon Topics

We will continue our study of the book of Hebrews during the month of June. There are a couple of special Sundays in June including June 4 (Pentecost Sunday), June 11 (Trinity Sunday) and June 18 (Father's Day).

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| June 4 | Hebrews 12:12-17
<i>Exhortation to Endurance</i> |
| June 11 | Hebrews 12:18-29
<i>Final Warning Against Apostasy</i> |
| June 18 | Hebrews 13:1-6
<i>Christian Obligations</i> |
| June 25 | Hebrews 13:7-17
<i>Service Well Pleasing to God</i> |

May Session Report

FINANCIAL REPORT: Both receipts and disbursements are short of projections for the first ten months of this fiscal year, but there is nothing of major concern in the church's fiscal position at this time

NURTURE: Pastor Mark noted that the number of children that participated in Way Day was higher than the previous year. The dates for Vacation Bible School will be June 19-23.

OUTREACH: Easter Celebration expenditures were approximately equivalent to budget projections. Not counting church participants and volunteers, the event attracted about 105 adult and children visitors. The Mother's Day Brunch will be held on Sunday, May 14.

WORSHIP: Tim Pool was well received as substitute preacher on May 7; Stanley Balch will be preaching on May 14. (Pastor Mark will be in North Carolina May 10-16 for daughter Lydia's graduation.) On Sunday, May 21, our graduating seniors will be recognized and Rory Stateler will be baptized. Patrick Larsen and Valerie Pulley will be out on Sunday, May 28; we will have a guest pianist in attendance. The next regular communion service will be on Sunday, June 4.

OLD BUSINESS: SOUTH DOORS: Work on the handicapped-accessible south doors is still in progress. We are awaiting parts to complete the installation.

NEW BUSINESS: TELEPHONES: Our current phone system is very old, contains more lines than are actually needed, and is beginning to have operational problems. Pastor Mark and Dwight Daub will check with Cox Communications about options/service costs with a goal of reducing our phone lines to two or three. COMMITTEE MEETINGS: The Personnel and Budget Committees will hold meetings prior to the June Session meeting to address their respective charges. The Personnel Committee (Dwight Daub, Kent Larason, Dana Wilson, and Pastor Mark) will conduct 30-minute meetings with the church's employees on May 31. The Budget Committee (Robert Buswell, Dwight Daub, Frank Miranda, and Nelson Pickrell) will meet sometime in early June to prepare a budget for presentation/approval at the July Session meeting.

SMALL GROUPS

Bible Study & Prayer – Sunday evenings at Pastor Mark & Anne Bradford’s – June 11 & 25 at 5:30PM.
Monday Prayer Group – June 5, 12, 19 & 26 at 12:30PM, church library.
Tuesday Bible Study – June 20 at 2:30PM.
Men’s Prayer Group – Saturday mornings at 7:30AM.

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.

Ushers/Greeters

June Greeters: Nelson & Carla Pickrell

June Ushers:

June 4 – Michael Bassett, Patsy Kuhn, Nancy Spradling, Sandy Gifford

June 11 – Pat Robison, Kym Manning, Wendy Smith, Sandy Gifford

June 18 – Kym Manning, Pat Robison, Nancy Spradling, Sandy Gifford

June 25 – Youth

Fellowship Hour Treats

June 4 – Jean & Charlie Mighton, Laurie Daub

June 11 – Carla & Nelson Pickrell, Jaquelyn Kuhn

June 18 – Father’s Day Brunch

June 25 – Patsy Kuhn, Jean & Kent Larason



PENTECOST June 4
Wear Your Red!!

Pentecost Offering

We will be collecting our special Pentecost offering on June 4 and June 11. This offering will be given to *City Rescue Mission* and *The Urban Mission*.

FATHER’S DAY BRUNCH **JUNE 18**

For: St. Stephen’s Church family and friends

Time: Serving begins 9:30AM and ends 10:45AM

Sunday School Time: 9:50-10:30AM

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to **Peter Bradford’s** homeschool baseball team the Oklahoma City Broncos who took second place in the Homeschool World Series in Auburndale, Florida. Congratulations also to Peter for being named to the Homeschool All-American team for the second year in a row.

Congratulations to **Miranda Almen** for completing her Girl Scout Gold project, “Book Buddies”. Book Buddies is a literacy community service project to increase and encourage reading skills of at-risk children and families in Edmond and Oklahoma City.

Congratulations to **Shannon Larsen** who was announced first runner-up for OKC District Teacher of the Year!

Congratulations to **Lydia Bradford** for receiving the 2017 James Rolleston Prize for Best Literary Honors Thesis in a Foreign Language for her honors thesis, “*Lavi Pwezi Kreyol Ayisyen Soti Nan Lane 1975 Rive 2000: Yon Vitrin Idante ak Rezistans Lengwistik*.” It is an award given each year by Duke’s Trinity College of Arts and Sciences. It was the first thesis ever written in Creole at Duke (and possibly in the nation).

SPIRITUAL SUBMARINES

Author Steve Farrar encourages Christian fathers to be spiritual submarines under the surface of their children’s lives. “Through your prayers you have the ability to affect situations where you are not physically present,” he writes in *Standing Tall*. “You may be undetected, but that does not mean that you are ineffective.”

A man who puts on the armor of God and goes to war on his knees for his children is a force to be reckoned with, Farrar adds. “When it comes to battle ... understand that you have been given awesomely powerful weapons.”

COOKBOOKS

Women’s Fellowship cookbooks: *Love, Laughter and Good Food*. We have two books left if you would like one. They are \$20 each and may be purchased in the office.

CHURCH OFFICERS

Elders

Class of 2017

Frank Miranda	802-1731	Clerk/Stewardship & Memorials
Wendy Smith	691-8830	Fellowship

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	President of Corporation/ Nominating
Kent Larason	808-3971	Worship

Deacons

Class of 2017

Michael Bassett	942-2074	Maintenance
Sandy Gifford	947-7226	Ushers/Greeters
Terianne Wood	657-2213	Flowers

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

WITNESS DEADLINE

June 19 is the deadline to submit articles for the July 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

Pentecost, *June 4*

Trinity Sunday, *June 11*

Flag Day, *June 14*



Father's Day, *June 18*

First day of summer, *June 20*



JUNE BIRTHDAYS

2	Anna Welte
5	"Miss Butch" Derrick
11	Jaquelyn Kuhn
19	Jon Powell
19	Dan Wilson
27	Elijah Morgan
30	Frank Miranda



JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

6	Kent & Jean Larason
23	Glenn & Valerie Pulley
30	Dave & Judi Dawson

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

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

VBS June 19–23, 6–8PM



&

Drama Camp July 10–14, 9AM–12PM

A Not So Terrible Parable

**the mysterious
whodunit
about the
good
samaritan**