

The South Florida Avenue MESSENGER

A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.
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SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

HOME OF

Florida School of Preaching

MISSION FIELDS

Dub Hill.....Russia
Don Iverson.....India
Marc Veary.....Malawi, Africa
Graham McDonald..Scotland
J. Paguaga....Honduras, C.A.
Joey Treat.....Pacific Islands
Ted Wheeler.....Ghana, W.A.

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IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY

Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

Stephen

A Faithful Witness to the End

Brian R. Kenyon

Memorial Day is about remembering those Americans who lost their lives in war. Those of us on this side of life can only say thank you to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice to secure and maintain the freedoms we enjoy. It took faithfulness to the cause of freedom for them to have given their lives. However, there is an even greater cause than that of political freedom — the Cause of Christ! We can all be encouraged by those we find in Scripture who paid the ultimate price for that Cause. Stephen is one such example. The characteristics he displayed will also enable us to live for the Lord, even if that means paying the ultimate price in this life for our faithfulness. Like Stephen, we must be ...

Willing To Serve Tables

Stephen first appears in Acts 6. The Jerusalem church was concerned about helping people in need, as should all Christians (Jas. 1:27; Gal. 6:10). As their present situation stood, this church could not see to the needs of the Grecian widows (Acts 6:1). The apostles could not leave their work in “the word of God” to “serve tables” (Acts 6:2). Thus, they told the congregation, “Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:3-4). Stephen was among the seven men that the congregation chose (Acts 6:5). He met the qualifications. First, he was of “good reputation [honest report, KJV],” which meant that his peers thought well of his integrity. Second, he was “full of the Holy Spirit.” We know that for Stephen this involved miraculous powers (Acts 6:8). Third, he was “full ... of wisdom” (Acts 6:3). Stephen was willing to do what many in our day would think is too menial — serve tables! Would we be willing to do this for the Cause of Christ? We would if we possessed those same qualifications. We must be of “good reputation” (3 Jn. 12). Although Christians today are not miraculously “filled with the Holy Spirit,” we are still commanded to be “filled with the Spirit,” non-miraculously (Eph. 5:18). Stephen may have had a miraculous type of wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 12:8), but we receive ours from asking God (Jas. 1:5). Does our character allow us to “serve tables,” if that is what the Lord needed?

A Fearless Teacher of God's Word

Though he was selected to serve tables, Stephen did not hesitate to take advantage of the opportunities he had to teach others the word of God. It may have been that his work of serving tables took him among people and that providential opportunities arose for him to teach. His teaching was plain, clear, and irrefutable. Even the most learned men of the synagogue “were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke” (Acts 6:10). As a result of his uncompromising teaching, he met opposition from those who did not like the truth. He was falsely accused and framed. “Then they secretly induced men to say, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.’¹² And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. ¹³They also set up false witnesses who said, ‘This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; ¹⁴for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us’” (Acts 6:11-14).

Stephen, however, was ready to answer (Acts 6:15), and answer he did! He gave a brief history of God's people (Acts 6:2-36); he showed that Christ was that Prophet whom Moses said would come (Acts 6:37-38); and he showed how the Jews of his day, like their ancestors, have not kept the law (Acts 6:39-53). Christians today must also be fearless teachers of God's word. We may not preach publicly, and we may not be “scholars,” but all of us must take advantage of the opportunities we have to teach God's word. As parents, we must teach our children God's word (Eph. 6:4). This means, of course, that we must know God's word (2 Tim. 2:15). No matter what our position in life, it takes courage to teach and live God's word. Do we have that courage?

Faithful unto Death

Stephen had spoken the truth, but instead of his hearers being “cut [pricked, KJV] to the heart” and seeking forgiveness, as those on Pentecost (Acts 2:37), “they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth” (Acts 7:54). Stephen's death was a direct result of his preaching. Some preaching puts the listeners to sleep, but with Stephen's preaching, the listeners put him to sleep — permanently (until Jesus comes again, 1 Thes. 4:15-17). Stephen's preaching affected him personally. He was slandered by false witnesses (Acts 6:13), brought before the High Priest (Acts 7:1), and died a cruel and heartless death (Acts 7:54-60). Stephen's death affected the church. It brought great sorrow (Acts 8:2), and it caused the church to be “scattered abroad” (Acts 8:3-4 cf. 11:19). Stephen's death affected the Cause of Christ. All except the apostles left Jerusalem, and what might have seemed like the end of the church, resulted in the expansion of the church — they went everywhere, preaching, teaching, and planting the church (Acts 8:4)! At his death, there was significance in what Stephen saw and in what he said. He saw “the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56), which showed the concern and involvement of Jesus when His disciples suffer death. Stephen said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59), which showed his complete confidence in Christ, and “Lord, do not charge them with this sin” (Acts 7:60), which showed his Christ-like attitude (cf. Lk. 23:34).

Stephen's death sheds light on Jesus' statement, “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). This does not simply mean be faithful until the day we die, but it means be faithful, even if our faithfulness costs us our life! Jesus said, “do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him [God] who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mt. 10:28).

Conclusion

Stephen gave his life for the Cause of Christ. He stands as an example to us. Do we have the disposition that we would even serve tables if that is what the Lord asked of us? Are we fearless in teaching the word of God? Are we faithful unto death? May the Lord give us strength to give our lives to Him, to always be willing to do what He says, and to “not grow weary in well doing.” ♥ Brian

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. (1 Pet. 4:12-16)

SFA FAMILY MATTERS

Prayer List

Our Members: It was good to have Ron Ford back with us. Please continue to pray for Jim Turner, Ginny Hamby, Kenny French, Bob & Grace McAnally, Margaret Coone, Sharon Mathis Washington, Josephine Bowman.

Relatives: Sandy West, Christy Wright and Benny Martin, (Carla Moore's uncle, who has cancer).

Shut In Members: Virginia Plumlee, Dick & Joyce Burbage, Don Starks, Sharon Edler and Duane Nelson.

Others: Joyce Stearsman, Chrissi Fuesner, Connie Hyer, Johnny King and Jack Pinckert.

Upcoming Events

Sunday May 28th: Graduation party for Lorelly Enamorado in the fellowship hall from 3:30 to 5:30. Come help us celebrate.

Sunday June 4th: Fellowship In Service following evening services. Please bring finger foods.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Chaz & Molly Hine on the birth of their daughter, Adeline Grace, on Tuesday May 16th. She weighed 8 lb. 2 oz. Everyone is doing fine.

Response

Madison Caffee responded to the invitation last Wednesday evening and would like to rededicate her life to the Lord! Please encourage her and keep her in prayer.

Hither, Thither and Yon

Bob & Grace McAnally will be moving Tuesday, May 31st to Athens, Alabama. They are moving to be closer to family due to health issues. We will surely miss them! Their new address will be 400 Santana Dr. Athens, AL. 35611. Also Wally and Gerri Lawrence have gone back to Indiana for a few months. Please pray for safe travels for all of them.

Visitors

Mr. & Mrs. Frank Welch, Mrs. Toney Wilson and Tiffany Hash, Megan and Samuel.

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

June

Bobby Sheumaker **Table** C.J. Grimes
Ken Walker **Assist** Tucker Sweeney

Sunday, May 28, 2017

9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class Ken Walker
Opening Prayer C.J. Grimes

10:30 A.M.

Announcements Bobby Sheumaker
Song Leader Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer Ken Walker
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Tucker Sweeney

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader Kyle Williams
Opening Prayer Kenny French
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Jimmy Sweeney

Greeters The Williams
Att. Cards Paul and Sebastian
Open & Close Building C.J. Grimes

Wed. May 31, 2017

Song Leader Stacey Paulin
Opening Prayer David Anderson
Closing Prayer Jimmy Sweeney

Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Chuck Wyatt so he can get a replacement - (863) 602-9005

Sunday, June 4, 2017

9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class Jim Turner
Prayer Ken Walker

10:30 A.M.

Announcements Matt Willcut
Song Leader Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer Bobby Sheumaker
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Tim Croson

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader David Williams
Opening Prayer Charles Paulin
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Jeff Bingle

Greeters The Edmonsons
Att. Cards Quadarius & Ian
Open & Close Building Tim Croson

Wed. June 7, 2017

Song Leader Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer Charles Paulin
Closing Prayer Ken Walker

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

Apr. 30	\$5,226.35
May 07	\$4,888.61
May. 14	\$5,484.25
May. 21	\$5,163.29
Contribution Average	\$5,385.60
2017 Weekly Budget	\$4,716.51



Tune into AM 1330 (station WWAB) with your friends and neighbors every Monday from 5:00-5:30 p.m. for the "Way of Truth" program. This is a joint effort to evangelize involving Terrance Brownlow-Dindy (6th Street) and Hiram Kemp. Let's point our community to the Bible!

“Be Not Weary in Well Doing,” The Lord Knows!

Last summer, I visited an old family cemetery that was established in 1840, and opened to the public shortly after. As I walked through, I noticed two graves in particular. William H. Eddy was born 1841. After identifying him as a member of Company H in the 20th Michigan Volunteer Infantry, his marker read, “Fell In The Battle of Fredericksburg, Dec. 12, 1862.” The grave of Mark E. Dunn was identified with a plain small marker that simply read, “Nov. 18, 1943 – Jan. 25, 1965,” but underneath the small flag was an acknowledgment that he served in Vietnam. The same reality crossed my mind at the sight of each grave: such young lives tragically lost and what unbearable grief their families must have suffered, yet hardly anyone has even heard of these men or their personal sacrifice. After this experience, and others like



it, I often think of the great work and sacrifice faithful Christians have made, past and present, yet hardly anyone knows or everyone who once knew have been dead for years. It is encouraging to know, however, that though people can forget and be totally unaware, God knows and never forgets! Jesus praised the church at Pergamos because they “did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells” (Revelation 2:13). Were it not for this verse, we would not know a thing about Antipas or even that he existed, yet God holds him up as a great example of faithfulness. Antipas paid the ultimate price. Sometimes we may *(continued below)*



South Florida Avenue
CHURCH OF CHRIST
 1807 South Florida Avenue
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Return Service Requested

The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .

Continue praying for our YES II campaign to Penonome, Panama, July 1-9, 2017. Our young people and their chaperones will be passing out tracts, inviting people to the Gospel meeting, and conducting personal Bible studies.



(continued from above) become discouraged because no one acknowledges the sacrifices we make. However, it is comforting to know that God always notices, and He is really the only one that matters! Because God knows our every sacrifice (Matthew 10:42), and will greatly reward us (Matthew 25:31-40), let us “not grow weary in doing good” (2 Thessalonians 3:13). ❤️ Brian



C.J. Grimes will serve as our summer intern. We appreciate our elders and their support and encouragement!

VBS
Saturday,
July 29th



PLEASE PRAY for **HIRAM** and **BRIAN** who leave for Ghana on May 29. They will work with brethren from Orange Street.
GHANA MISSION TO EVANGELIZE