



Stow Alliance
Fellowship

NEWS

Open Arms . . . Open Hearts . . . Open Hands

December 2017

SHEPHERDS AND KINGS

**Saturday, December 9th @ 7:00pm
& Sunday, December 10th @ 7:00pm**

Come and join us for a great night out this Christmas season as the Worship Choir presents the dramatic musical: *Shepherd and Kings*. Invite your friends and family! There are postcard invitations and posters available for you in the lobby.

This performance is free, with refreshments served afterwards.

On Saturday, December 9th from 5:00-6:15pm in the gym, the youth group will be serving a soup and salad dinner as a fundraiser for LIFE 2019. Suggested donation is \$10 per person with a \$30 max per family. There will also be a small silent auction with gift baskets. Come ready to get a treat for yourself or use it as a Christmas gift! All proceeds will go to LIFE 2019.

Tickets will be sold in the lobby through December 3rd.



John Kitchen, Senior Pastor

Planning for the Future

Retirement planning is big business these days. And the market is ripe. Baby boomers currently enter retirement at a rate of 10,000 per day. And estimate 33 million more will join the ranks of the retired over the next seven years!

Heading into 2017 there was a surge of confidence in people's sense of preparedness to enter retirement. In 2011 only 24% felt such confidence; today the percentage has risen to 41%. Whether that confidence is well-founded is, of course, yet to be seen. But it seems people are giving more and more attention to preparing for their retirement future.

Those in their 20's are being urged to begin now to store away for their retirement years. The magic powers of compounding interest are paraded before their eyes with dollar signs dancing through their dreams of a better tomorrow, free of work and the stress it brings. Those in their 30's are warned that their window of opportunity is fast passing them by. Left feeling like dullards they are shamed into obtaining professional help and getting a "plan" together. For those in their 40's the time for warning is past and embarrassment is the tool of choice. If you are in your fifth decade of life and haven't been working a wise investment plan you are not just foolish, but destining those around you to a life of taking care of you. And, heaven forbid, you are in your 50's ... well, we have funeral services for you. Survival in retirement years is simply (*ahem!*) unrealistic.

Am I counseling not being intentional about preparing for retirement? Not at all. Of course there is some wisdom in this. It's just that a related, but significantly different thought ran through my head the other day. I want to start asking people: [What are your post-retirement plans?](#) What are you doing to be ready for that transition? How long have you been concerned and preparing for your post-retirement future? How comfortable are you with your preparations for your post-retirement period?

In fact, the next time someone asks me what I do, I think I may just answer: *"I am a post-retirement counselor"*!

Jesus—the ultimate post-retirement counselor—advised, ["lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal"](#) (Matthew 6:20). Peter counseled us to make certain of ["an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you"](#) (1 Peter 1:4). Solomon counseled, ["However many years anyone may live, let them enjoy them all. But let them remember the days of darkness, for there will be many"](#) (Ecclesiastes 11:8, NIV).

As we prepare for the 2017 year to give way to 2018, as we enter the gift-buying, gift-giving season, as all the while we all move toward our post-retirement existence ... let's take steps to make certain that we're ready for our post-retirement experience, by the mercies and grace of God through Jesus.

¹<http://www.investmentnews.com/article/20161227/BLOG05/161229964/2017-will-be-year-of-change-for-retirement-industry>

You're invited to



**Red-Letter
Christmas**

Presented by
our Kids Choir
in both
worship services
on Sunday, December 17th
(9 am & 10:30 am)

Share the joy this Christmas season!

There are many families within our church and community who are going through hardship. This outreach is a wonderful opportunity for you to help provide Christmas gifts for these children. There are several ways you can be involved in this ministry:

- **By nominating a family!** Nomination forms can be obtained in the office and must be submitted by Sunday, December 3rd.
- **Contribute financially.** Monetary contributions will be used to purchase gift cards redeemable for families to purchase gifts for children. A special envelope is included in the worship folder. Fill in your name on the envelope to receive giving credit.
- Finally, we need help delivering Christmas cookies, cards, and gift cards to the nominated families! Check **“Share the Joy Delivery Team”** on the Communication Card or call the church office at 330-688-7433 if you are interested in serving in this way.

Stewardship Update Through November 19, 2017:

	<u>Month</u>	<u>Year-to-Date</u>
TITHES & OFFERINGS		
Actual	\$ 42,402	\$619,641
Budget	<u>39,720</u>	<u>622,280</u>
Amount Over/(Under) Budget	2,682	(2,639)
GREAT COMMISSION FUND		
Actual	\$ 11,600	\$168,651
Promises	<u>3,987</u>	<u>62,463</u>
Amount Over/(Under) Promises	7,613	106,188

PRAISE Plan

Thank you for supporting the Praise Plan! Your continued gifts will help us with future projects.

For Adults



LIFE Groups - LIFE Groups will be taking a break during the month of December to celebrate the holidays and participate in the many Christmas programs. Our last meeting will be Friday, December 1st for Friday evening groups and Sunday, December 3rd for Sunday evening groups. We will resume on Sunday, January 7th and Friday, January 12th. If you would like to sign up for a life group, please contact Pastor Miller at 330-688-7433.

Winter Coat Drive - Haven of Rest is in need of winter coats of all sizes. If you have any new or gently used coats that you would like to donate, please bring them to church and place them on the coat rack in the lobby designated "Haven of Rest Coat Drive." Coats will be collected through December 3rd. Winter scarves, hats, mittens, gloves, and warm footwear are also needed.



Christmas Giving Tree - Take an ornament off the Haven of Rest Christmas Giving Tree located in the lobby and purchase a Christmas gift for a Haven of Rest/Harvest Home resident! Return the gifts, *unwrapped*, to the tree area no later than December 3rd.



Poinsettias - Would you like to help decorate the sanctuary for the Christmas season by purchasing red or white poinsettia plant(s) in memory of a loved one or in honor of someone special? We will be taking orders through Sunday, December 17th in the church office. Cost is \$8 per plant. Please pay for your plant when you place your order. You may take your poinsettia(s) home after the morning Christmas Eve service or evening Christmas Eve service that you attend.

Prime Timers - The Prime Timers will be having a catered Christmas Luncheon on Thursday, December 21st at 12:30pm. Donations of canned regular or decaf coffee will be collected for Haven of Rest. Lunch cost is \$8. Please contact Donna Malm (330-688-9427) or Jerry Hurd (330-784-9559) by Sunday, December 10th to sign up.

Christmas Eve Morning Services - On Sunday, December 24th, we will have normal Sunday morning services and Sunday school classes at 9:00 and 10:30am.

Christmas Eve Service - will begin at 7:00 pm on Sunday, December 24th. The entire family is encouraged to join in worship in the sanctuary. Childcare for children birth through 2 years old will be provided.



Office Holiday Hours - The church office will be closed Friday, December 22nd, Monday, December 25th, Friday, December 29th, and Monday, January 1st to celebrate the holidays.

Remember Nhu Christmas Parties - We want to make Christmas a special time for the children of our Remember Nhu homes in Kenya. Because so many of you generously supported our effort to raise money to purchase bicycles for our homes this summer, we will be using the extra funds to provide special food, fun and games for them this Christmas! Thank you!

Year End Giving - All cash or check gifts for 2017 must be received or postmarked by December 31, 2017 to be counted in the 2017 giving year. All online giving for 2017 must be done by Wednesday, December 20, 2017 to be counted in the 2017 giving year. Due to differences in bank processing it may take over a week for the money to be deposited in our bank. Thank you for your generosity and faithful giving throughout the year! We are truly blessed.



JuBELLation Ringers Needed - JuBELLation, our handbell choir, is in need of 3 new ringers beginning January 9th. Practices are on Tuesday evenings at 7:00pm in the music room. If you are interested in joining or need more information, please contact Terese Gavin at 330-926-0329 or Julie Kitchen at 330-688-7433.

For Adults Cont.

Nominating Committee - Please pray for the 2017 Nominating Committee as they complete their work. The members are Pastor John Kitchen, Bill Davis, Perry Gopp, Cheryl Parker, and Steve Williams. They also welcome your questions or input as they seek to nominate those God would like in positions of elected service in Stow Alliance Fellowship. Feel free to contact any one of them with your questions or thoughts.

Youth Pastor Search - Please pray as we seek God's provision for our next Youth Pastor. If you have questions about the search process please see Pastor Kitchen.

Sound Desk Volunteer - Help is needed at the sound desk! If you are interested in assisting at the sound desk 1 Sunday a month (no previous experience needed) please contact Jim Adams at: safsounddesk@gmail.com.

Office Volunteers Needed - We are currently looking for 1 volunteer to serve in the office on Sunday mornings on the 3rd Sunday of the month during 2nd service. We also are looking for 1 volunteer to serve at the welcome center on the 4th Sunday of the month during 2nd service. If you are interested in helping out our office ministry, please contact Karie Gilley at 330-688-7433.




Lost & Found - The lost and found is getting full! Please check the cabinet located in the mailroom and the coat racks for lost items. There is also a number of dishes that have been left from various events. If you are missing a dish, please check the seasons room kitchen. All remaining dishes and items will be donated at the end of the year.

Especially for Men


Men's Gathering - Men of all ages are invited to join us for breakfast and fellowship on the first Saturday of each month. We will meet on Saturday, December 2nd at 7:30 am in the Seasons Room. Come and bring a friend!

Especially For Women

 **MOPS - Mothers of Pre-Schoolers** - MOPS is a group offering hope, encouragement, community, and mothering support to mothers of children from birth through 5 years old. Come join local moms on Tuesday, December 12th from 9:30 - 11:30 am. Childcare will be provided.


Ladies Wednesday Evening Bible Study - The Wednesday evening ladies Bible study will begin a new series in January called *Stepping Up: A Journey Through the Psalms of Ascent* by Beth Moore. This study provides an in-depth Bible study of Psalms 120-134. "Traveling pilgrims sang these psalms both on the way to the great festivals of the LORD and as key elements of the worship at those festivals. Just as a song or poem can express feelings of fear, doubt, hope, and joy, these 15 psalms model how we can voice our own petitions and praises to our God, who is always available and ready to hear us. Explore the major feasts of Israel and journey with Beth through this 7-session study. Themes of unity, joy, gratitude, redemption, repentance, the power of blessings, facing ridicule, and more are explored in detail. Modern-day believers in Jesus Christ can learn much from these treasured Psalms in their journey toward greater intimacy with God." The approximate cost is \$13 for the workbook. Please contact Sue Armentrout at 330.474.1311 or armentrouts84@yahoo.com to sign up or with any questions you might have.

For Children

 **Kid's Christmas Craft Day** - Come make some Christmas gifts for mom, dad, grandma, and grandpa on Saturday, December 16th from 10:30am-12:00pm (right after Kid's Choir practice). Kids Kindergarten-5th grade are invited to a morning of crafts and fun. Please RSVP to Darlene Risjan by Wednesday, December 13th

Service in Children's Ministry - There are several positions that are needing to be filled! We are looking for a volunteer to help out on Sunday mornings in the nursery and in the Waddlers & Toddlers room. Please contact Darlene Risjan at: 330-688-7433 or drisjan@stowalliance.org if you are willing to help.


Stow Alliance Preschool

 **SAP Christmas Program** - All are welcome to join us on Friday, December 8th for the Stow Alliance Preschool Christmas Program at 7:00pm in the sanctuary. There will be a time of fellowship following the program in the Gym. If you would like to provide cookies (no nuts please), please bring them to church by Thursday, December 7th.

Acme Receipts - The preschool is collecting Acme receipts as a fundraiser. SAP will receive 5% cash back on all Acme brand purchases. You can turn your receipts into the designated box at the preschool or church office through December 30th, 2017. Thank you for your support of SAP!

Youth Ministries

Christmas Party - All current Jr. & Sr. High students are invited to our Christmas Party on Wednesday, December 13th in the youth wing from 7:00-8:30pm (*note, there will be no cafe that day.) . Bring a white elephant gift for our crazy gift exchange game! Please also bring a snack or dessert to share and be sure to invite a friend!

 **Cookie Outreach & Overnighter** - All Sr. High students are welcome to come and hang out all night at church on Friday December, 15th beginning at 7:00pm through Saturday, December 16th at 8:00am. We are going to make cookies and then deliver them to local police and fire stations (that night!). Feel free to bring a snack to share. Sign up in the senior high room.

No youth group on Wednesday, December 20th or 27th. We will resume on Wednesday, January 3rd.

*Please note. There is NO New Year's Eve Party for youth this year. We WILL have a New's Year's Bash on Friday, January 5 from 6 - 9 pm. Details to come.

Sports Ministries

Men's Basketball – plays on Saturdays from 9:00—11:00am. Come and join us!

Co-Ed Volleyball - will play on Saturday, December 2nd, 16th, & 30th from 7:00-9:00pm. Come and join us!

Our SAF Family



December Birthdays...

Barb Ruppel	12/1	Toni Kuno	12/9	Bill Azzarello	12/20
Jason Lohmier	12/2	Jason Wedo	12/10	Rick Donze	12/21
Diane Dias	12/3	Mary Smith	12/12	Ezekiel Chapman	
Jerry Dorton		Carol Sumner		Darlene Risjan	12/24
Rita Thomas	12/4	Gloria Thompson	12/17	Jen Wedo	
Michele Collins	12/5	April Trowbridge		Paul Trowbridge	12/28
Walt Thompson	12/6	George Utterback	12/18	Graham Alvarez	12/29
Dan Trowbridge	12/8	Chuck Williams		Amy Donze	
		Steve Williams	12/19	Doris Steele	
				Jennifer Maxfield	12/30

December Anniversaries...

Cory & Ann Smith	12/3		Chuck & Pam Whittington	12/21
Rob & Marlene Osborn	12/7		Hulan & Patricia Hedrick	12/23
Harold & Theda Rowland	12/11		Norm & Sue Armentrout	12/30
Pastor John & Julie Kitchen	12/17			



If you are not currently on our birthday and/or anniversary list and would like to be, please call the church office and let us know!

Our Christian Sympathy To...

Sam Cameron and family on the death of Sam's wife, Shirley, on November 8th.