

SAF NEWS



Start 2021 in Prayer!

Join the Alliance family as we bring our hearts and hands together for a 40 Days of Prayer focus that will begin January 3, 2021. Each day will offer a thematic devotional reflection and prayer points authored by an Alliance leader or family member. Beginning January 10th, our Sunday sermons will also align with this six-week prayer focus.

The devotionals within this study will be arranged in six weekly categories with application for adults, youth, and kids. To sign up to receive the devotionals via email, you can go to cmalliance.org and click on the "40 Days of Prayer" picture, or use this link: <https://mailchi.mp/cmalliance.org/40daysofprayer-signup?ref=homepage-pos2>

Church-Wide Assessment

On Sunday, January 3rd, Dennis Turner, Central District Director of Church Mobilization, will join our morning service to lead us in a church-wide assessment meant to help us determine where God wants to take us as a church body. Those who attend the service in person will receive a copy of the assessment that they will complete on-site. Everyone will also receive a copy via US mail, as well as a link to an online version, so that those who normally attend virtually can also participate. More detailed information is available in the mailer. Contact the church office if you have questions.

December Happenings

MOPS: Mothers of Preschoolers will meet this month on Tuesday, January 12th at 9:30 a.m. Invite a mom you know to spend some time in fellowship with other moms. Childcare is provided.

NAOMI Women: Ladies of all ages are invited to grab a cup of your favorite warm beverage and bring it to SAF on Thursday, January 14th. We will meet in the Seasons room to enjoy fellowship and talk about plans for the upcoming year.

Thank You!

Thanks to your very generous hearts, SAF was able to bless 14 families with the means to purchase Christmas gifts through the Share the Joy outreach. In addition, you provided 44 coats, as well as other clothing items, and 100 gifts to those in need at Haven of Rest. Thank you for being the loving arms of Jesus!

Senior Adult Retreat

The 2021 Deeper Life Retreat will take place on March 17-19 at the Carlisle Inn at Sugar Creek. Registration is open now and due by February 20th. For more information, go to <http://cdcma.org/events/senioretreat2021>.

Bible Reading Guide

Included with this newsletter is the 2021 Bible Reading Guide. You are encouraged to spend some time each day with God in His Word!

2021: Is it really a New Year?

By Pastor Phil Chapman

So a question I've been wondering about for much of the end of 2020 is this: I know 2020 will end according to the calendar on December 31, but does that mean it's really ending? I say this because what has happened and the implications we all have been experiencing and have been part of this year do not just go away. A switch doesn't flip on January 1, and everything that was 2020 just gets packed away into a box, and stuffed on a shelf in an attic, garage, or basement. In some ways, at least for me personally, it seems 2020 is going to bleed over into 2021. Crises, challenges, problems, and hurts, or concerns--they don't just "go away" because there is a new year.

Honestly, I come to you today with more questions than answers. I come to you as a brother in Christ with a heart of someone who is just trying to humbly follow the Savior. My primary question: How do we actually make this a "new year" and not just 2020 2.0? First, a scripture from the Psalms which is providing some perspective for me in these days: "Preserve my life from dread of the enemy." (Psalm 64:1B) There are enemies all over the place. I've been talking with our body, and when I do I find there are enemies we're all facing. Are we going to allow these enemies to overwhelm us or overtake us?

Another question for us: What do we consider to be enemies of our hearts? While these may or may not be an enemy of your heart, they are certainly enemies of those we know and care about, even if we're not experiencing them ourselves.

Fear is a known enemy. It never ceases to amaze me what we can be afraid of in this life. Fear can come at us in a variety of ways, from places we would never expect. People are walking among us paralyzed by fear regarding a circumstance or situation. They're doing the best they can to hold it together, but fear remains an enemy. Fear is relentlessly stalking us. Fear seeks to cripple our effectiveness and impact for the kingdom of God.

Complacency is a known enemy. We have rhythms all around us. We fall into habits and structure, whether it is good or bad. Even chaos is a structure in its own way. (It's not the optimal structure, but it is still a structure nonetheless!) Are we going to be okay with the status quo that was begun for us and we're continuing in? Perhaps there have been good things which have developed during this past year, and yes, we certainly would want to keep those things going. We know what complacency is, though. Complacency develops when we get stagnant.

Apathy is a known enemy. This one is a wild card, and could potentially be the most dangerous of all. When we become apathetic, we do not even care anymore. We have pushed whatever it was

that we were invested in, participated in, or were part of, and we say, "I don't want to do that anymore." Apathy doesn't just arrive. Apathy creeps in after a long battle. Apathy settles in when fatigue comes and we're tired and beat down.

Maybe not for you personally, but possibly for someone in your circle of influence, 2020 has been a nightmare. In more ways than one, it was not what they expected. It was not what you and I expected. It was the hand we were dealt, and now we're playing it. What I sense and see as I talk with people is that we are tired. I'm not talking about maybe you as an individual, but collectively, we are tired. There has been heaviness and a weight in 2020 which we have been carrying around. Maybe even now as you read this, you've thought, "Why does all of this even matter? I don't care anymore." That is the voice of apathy--an enemy from within.

There are many more enemies than just these three. Sit before the Lord. He'll reveal to you in his time and in his way what might be some enemies you're facing which are trying to destroy you. All of these enemies we have talked about have something in common. They seek to distract us and to take us off of our mission and purpose. They come around us, pulling at us, and dragging us down. None of us are immune from fear, complacency or from apathy. The switch does not flip just because the calendar says it is supposed to do so.

Remember our verse from Psalm 64:1. David asked the Lord to preserve his life. The Savior is the one who preserves our souls. Preservation happens internally and externally. Different types of food experience preservation in one form or another. Their job is underlying, it is beneath the surface. When examining the ingredients, they're the items which I have no idea what they are, but they are there to make the food last longer. Their value is internal preservation.

There is also external preservation. When you take a ride on a boat or ship, what might you see hanging on the wall? You see a life

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Youth & Young Adult Ministry

Happy New Year!

"I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King." Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:15-19)

Finally! 2020 is over, right?! I think we all hope this is true. When I look back at everything that happened in 2020, it's easy to focus on all the negative and painful memories. It's easy to become jaded by these memories we hold onto. One thing I learned in 2020 is that even in the midst of uncertainty God is still at work! Isaiah 43:15-19 became a verse that I often prayed over and asked the Lord to reveal to me the "New" He was doing now.

As we begin a New Year let's look forward to what God has in store for Stow Alliance and for the Kingdom! God is doing something new! Have you seen it? Are you ready for it? Take some time this month to seek the Lord for the "New" He is doing right here and now. Let Him show you all the wonders of His good work! God Bless.

*In Christ,
Pastor Chris Miletti
Ph. 234.901.0193 / Email: cmiletti@stowalliance.org*

Upcoming Youth Events

(details in BAND):

New Year's Bash—1/8/21, 7-10 pm. Our young adults are going to host a night of fun and festivities as we celebrate the New Year. Junior high and senior high students are encouraged to sign-up and come have a night of fun!

Sunday school plans

Jr. High Zoom Sunday School—9-9:40 am Sundays

Still not on Band?

All Youth activity and calendar activity are in the Band app. If you are a student or parent and are not getting Youth Group info, please contact Pastor Chris!

Is it really a New Year? (cont.)

preserver. Individuals on the boat or ship may be wearing a life jacket. These are visible, tangible signs of preservation. There is no way to hide a life jacket. If you're wearing one it is visible. It is noticeable.

The Savior is our life jacket; he is our life preserver. The Lord is the one we have to go with us and through us. The Lord is the one who can keep us on mission for Him in 2021. The Lord is the one who can keep us despite the enemies of fear, complacency or apathy which may be trying to ride along with us into 2021. He can preserve us. He will preserve us.



Communion for the month of January will take place on the 2nd Sunday, January 10th, to allow time on January 3rd for our Church-wide assessment. If you usually worship from home via live stream, plan to have your communion elements prepared in advance.

Stewardship Update Thru Dec. 16, 2020:

	<u>Month</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Tithes & Offerings		
Actual	\$27,150	\$644,825
Budget	<u>26,422</u>	<u>660,550</u>
Amount	\$ 728	\$(15,725)
<i>Over/(Under)</i>		
Great Commission Fund		
Actual	\$ 4,855	\$136,988
Promises	<u>2,528</u>	<u>63,182</u>
Amount Over/(Under)	\$ 2,327	\$ 73,806

Year End Giving

As a reminder, all check or cash gifts need to be received at SAF by December 31st, and all online giving needs to be completed by December 20th, to count toward 2020 giving. Those with recurring online gifts will NOT need to make any changes for the new year.

JANUARY

Birthdays

Michael McAmis	1/2	Bret Moore	1/12	Carolyn Campbell	1/23
Gideon Coop	1/4	Karen Trowbridge	1/13	Katie Armentrout	1/24
Lizzy Gavin	1/5	Peter Trowbridge		Becky Caplinger	
Thomas Chapman	1/6	Leah Rapp	1/14	Aaliyah Ruppel	
Michael Hall		Cheryl Crowe	1/16	Michael Meloy	1/26
Noah Parker	1/7	Rick Rhodes		Bill Alvarez	1/27
AnnaLia Dye	1/8	Ashley Smith		Larry Ruppel	
Bill Crowe	1/9	Michael Collins	1/17	Terri Sawders	1/28
Pastor Phil Chapman	1/10	Sadie Lohmier		Pastor Don Miller	1/29
Diana Meloy		Debbie Koyle	1/19	Zach Oles	
Maggie Masl	1/11	Fred Thomason			
		Amy Cervone	1/21		

Happy Anniversary!



Pat & RaeJean Wilson 1/9

Harold & Mary Miller 1/24

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...

Harold Rowland on the home going of his beloved wife, Theda, on December 11th.