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PATHWAYS

JANUARY 2023

*You show me the path of life. In
your presence there is fullness of joy.*
Psalm 16:11

Find us on social
media @FCCStow!

Sketti & Skits, Sunday March 10th, 5 p.m.

Prepare for this year's Sketti & Skits! Sign ups are still available! Tell your friends and invite your neighbors for this night of fun, food, and fellowship!

Stow Community Bunny Trail Hop – Donations Needed!

We're expecting to serve 400 to 500 children on March 23rd. Donations will need to be brought to the church by **Sunday March 17th!**

All-Church Basketball Outing

Kent St. vs. Central MI, 3:30 p.m., Saturday, March 2nd

RSVP at the link below! Tickets are just \$10 per person.
The game will start at 4 p.m. and is at the MAC Arena at Kent State.

Master Singers Chorale Recruitment Night

January 22nd, 7 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Need more choir in your life? MSC is hosting an informational night of introductions, a short rehearsal, and a quick talk from the artistic director of the choir about their performances and the organization! Refreshments included.

Camp Christian Summer Camp Schedule!

See below for more information about this upcoming summer at Camp Christian!

Youth Group Goes Bowling!

January 21st, after Sanctuary Service

See inside for more information about their upcoming activity! RSVPs required!

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry

January 17th, 4-6 p.m.

End of year recap enclosed!

January 2024

Pastor's Pen

Is it just me or is life speeding up every year? Every year I think, “*Is it really (fill in the year)? Am I really turning ## this year!?*” You might have similar thoughts—maybe not at the New Year, but sometime throughout it I suspect, because we humans tend to race through life without even having time to catch our breath, or barely have time to eat or use the bathroom, until something jumps up and reminds us of the year, our age, or something that makes us shockingly aware of reality. (And personally, I have found when it comes to raising kids, the years fly even more incredibly fast.)

Still though, whether you are a parent or not, or if your kids are now raising their own kids, life shows no signs of slowing down for us, which is not healthy for our minds, bodies, or spirits. And the research to back this truth up is well established, showing that when we move through life at a high rate of speed for too long without slowing down, we end up living in a constant state of low-grade fight-or-flight. Our stress and cortisol levels increase. Good thinking and problem solving degrade substantially because we are just trying to survive. All of this means then, if we are headed in the wrong direction, continuing at a high rate of speed will only take us further away from where we want to go.

Bottom line... Life isn't going to slow down for us. Which means, we have to “*get out of the fast lane, pull over, and study a map.*”

Clinical psychologist, Dr. Parker Houston speaks to this concept of getting out of the fast lane, pulling over, and studying a map in his blog, writing, “*Every year, my wife and I set aside one full day to spend together looking at our Life Plans from the prior year, assessing how we did in following it, and then writing a new plan for the upcoming year. We discuss our annual calendar, personal goals, our financial plan, parenting strategies, vacations, health issues, and anything else that might require our attention. This is a great activity to do with your partner to learn about what they want and ensure you are on the same page with the big stuff.*”

Some common life plan areas or accounts include: health (mental and physical), finances,

marriage/relationship, parenting, spirituality, work/professional, fun/hobbies, friends/family, and personal growth. But don't be limited to just these, find the ones that work for you. Next, craft your life plan, writing a vision statement for each area and identifying goals for each. Pro tip though, the more goals you set, the less your chances of achieving them, so pick your most important and realize you cannot do every life goal this year.

Dr. Houston concludes his “Life Plan” encouragement saying, “*A life plan is like a road map or GPS. You pick the destination, then follow the instructions to stay on course. If you hit a roadblock, you are re-routed so you can still arrive at your intended destination. But you must enter the coordinates, or it won't take you there. And we must keep looking at and listening to the GPS or map in order to arrive. But a map or GPS will only help you if you have a destination in mind.*”

With so many choices in the modern world, we need a way to stay focused on what is most important, a way to prioritize what to spend our time on. The options today are virtually limitless and overwhelming. A life plan, a vision, an open heart to what God is calling you to do and be can help you get a clear perspective on life's non-negotiables and avoid the painful sting of regret while also setting you up for service to God and God's children that will inevitably fill your heart, and the hearts of others, with the hope, peace, joy, and love of God.

Yes we are all busy. Yes, the days, weeks, months, and year go by in a flash. But none of that means we must forgo living out our core values or living the life that will bring us and those we love joy and happiness, the meeting of priorities, the making of cherished memories, and love. So, let's stop making excuses. Let's decide right now that we will go a different way, follow a different plan, and achieve a better outcome before the ball drops on 2024. Let's not go rushing into this new year at the same frantic pace. Let's pull over, check the map, and proceed along the road God wants us to take. Happy New Year everyone.

Your Pastor and Friend,
Jonathan

Sketti & Skits, **Sunday March 10th, 5pm**

Make plans to be at this year's St Patrick's Day Sketti & Skits, Sunday March 10th at 5pm. Sketti & Skits is a time-honored tradition of FCC Stow where the food is great and the entertainment is even better!

Cost for Sketti & Skits is \$8 for adults, \$4 for children, and kids under 3 are free. All proceeds will go towards Christian Education and the Youth Activity Fund.

Do you have a talent, magic trick, song, skit or something else you would like to perform? Sign-up will be available in February.

Stow Community **Bunny Trail Hop** **Easter Candy Donations**

The Christian Education Team will be participating in the Stow Community Bunny Trail Hop again this year at Silver Springs Park on Saturday March 23rd. There will be 400- 500 kids and their families participating and we will have treat bags to give to each of them.

We are asking for donations of individually wrapped Easter candy to help us fill the treat bags. There will be a bin in the Gathering Area beginning in February for candy donations – Donations will need to be brought to the church by **Sunday March 17th**. Thank you!

All-Church Basketball Outing – **Kent St. vs. Central MI** **3:30 p.m., Saturday, March 2nd**

Mark your calendars! On March 2nd, we're headed to the MAC Arena in Kent to see the Golden Flashes play the Central Michigan. Tickets are \$10 per person. Game is at 4 p.m. Please let Bill or Cora Dowey know if you want tickets! Contact them at coradowey@yahoo.com or call at 330-813-0050.

Sign up at the link below!

<https://forms.gle/eHdsaWCtAXTMmayXA>

OUTREACH

Loaves & Fishes + Pantry 2023

Recap

December capped off a tremendous year for our Loaves & Fishes + Pantry. During 2023 we served 545 families consisting of 1,474 individuals. Compare that to 2022 when we served 370 families consisting of 959 people.

You read that right: we had a 47% increase in families served and a 53% increase in people served.

In 2023 we spent \$3,584 on grocery items at the Food Bank, which works out \$2.43 for each person who received groceries.

One senior couple who came in December said that they usually make our groceries last 3 weeks; our groceries are a big help for those who come to us in need.

Let's not forget all the donated paper towels and toilet paper. It would have cost us \$295 dollars to buy a similar amount of paper products from the Food Bank. Plus, let's be frank, the quality of paper towels and toilet paper that you donated was better than the generic stuff available at the Food Bank.

This was all made possible by your support...your prayers, your donations, and your time volunteering.

With your continued support we look forward to successful 2024.

The next Loaves & Fishes Meal this month is January 17th 4-6p.m. Baked pasta and sides. Many thanks to Mike Kostensky for his contributions for the December meal!

Ash Wednesday February 14th **More Information Forthcoming**

Look forward to Ash Wednesday services on February 14th. This is, as Jonathan reminded us on Sunday, also your save the date notice for Valentine's Day!

Think Pray Connect from **December – January**

Please continue to support these members of our church family from our TPC's of December and January.

Mrs. Betty Lappin
4309 Newcomer Rd.
Kent OH 44240-1839

Jim Hindel
2675 Prescott Downs, Stow, OH 45224
Please note the change of address!
Feel free to send housewarming cards!

Dave & Dorothy Robinson
3555 Marsh Rd. #312
Stow OH 44224
Send love and encouragement to the Robinsons as Dorothy is facing severe vertigo, and Dave is improving, but is still in the hospital with COVID.

Michael & Wanda Deiwert
3168 Peterboro Dr
Stow OH 44224-5910
Pray and support the Deiwert family in the loss of Wanda's father, Lester.

2024 Summer Camp Schedule **At Camp Christian**

The Christian Church in Ohio is excited to share with you the 2024 Summer Program Schedule!

There are Summer Programs at Camp Christian for Children and Youth from Kindergarten through 12th grade, as well as Advance Conference for Young Adults. You will also note the two Disciples Fellowship Retreats which are open to all ages. We have also included Adult Conference, which is open to all adults and is held at Northwest Christian Church in Columbus. Registration and more details about all of this coming this Winter.

We hope you'll save the dates and share this schedule with folks from your Congregations, Families, and Communities!! The first campsite event to kick off the summer schedule is the Disciples Fellowship Retreat on Friday, May 24th – Sunday, May 26th. The Regular season of camps begins with Grandparent's Camp – Elementary on Thursday, June 6th.

The full schedule can be viewed at the following link, <https://www.ccinoh.com/camp-christian.aspx>, as well as each date on the Regional Calendar. We hope you'll be able to participate in this great annual tradition of retreat, refocusing, and reverence.

Master Singers Chorale of **North East Ohio** **Get to Know the MSC!** **Monday, January 22nd, 7 p.m.**

The Master Singers Chorale invites interested singers to an evening of music, information, fellowship and refreshments. If you're looking for a fun-loving, community-based choral ensemble with a commitment to fine literature from the past and present, pay them a visit! Master Singers Chorale rehearses from our very own Sanctuary! The plan for them is to sing together in an abbreviated rehearsal, hear from the MSC Artistic Director and Board members, and enjoy refreshments as you meet current and other prospective members! Anyone who's looking for more information can contact Dr. Jon C. Peterson at

Jon.Peterson@mastersingersinc.org

Another Amazing Night! Ingathering 2023 Wrap Up

The 2023 Ingathering program was another success. I want to thank all of you who participated/supported this amazing ministry. Whether you donated food, money, or time; went shopping for food or gifts, wrapped gifts, bagged gifts, baked cookies, put food boxes together, put cookie plates together, picked up gifts, delivered gifts, delivered blankets, bought and organized coats or socks and underwear, donated used items, made scarfs, tied blankets, broke down boxes, put bikes together or any number of other things that make Ingathering amazing - WE THANK YOU. It is truly an entire church and community outreach. A special thank you to our outside sponsors - please acknowledge the generosity of Marhofer Chevrolet, Cascade Imports, Redmon Funeral Home, Harvest Realty, and Hudson United Methodist Preschool. Through your generosity, we provided a very special holiday for 54 families that would otherwise have very limited reason to celebrate.

While we often do not hear back directly from families served, we do get glimpses of the struggles that some are facing: a couple examples from that night included a family that was unable to pick up their items because everyone in the family was sick, and a family that was unable to come because Mom was in the hospital. (We were happy to deliver their items to their homes.) We are confident that our Ingathering program does provide vital assistance to the families and their children at this point in their lives. A little hope can go a long way to improve the life of a family that is struggling. Thank you for helping us to provide a little hope to the 54 families served- families which included 110 children. We distributed over 85 coats, and 128 fleece blankets in addition to the 54 food boxes with Aldi gift cards and gifts for those 110 children. Your support is what makes this ministry happen. Thank you and may God bless all who make this ministry so amazing!

Ann Halpin, World Outreach

Cascade Auto Group's Support of The Ingathering Outreach

In an effort to help local families in need, Cascade Auto Group has purchased toys for children in connection with the Christmas Ingathering Outreach program of the First Christian Church of Stow. This is the 16th year Cascade has participated in the outreach program.

The program assists families in need by providing Christmas presents for children and adults as well as gift certificates to grocery stores to help families get through the holidays.

Ann Halpin, ministry coordinator, said 112 children from 44 families will receive gifts this year.

Another ten families will receive food baskets and gift cards.

Many Cascade employees make a cash donation to the program, and the funds raised are matched dollar for dollar by Cascade Auto Group owners. The money collected is used to sponsor families, some of whom have five children, for Christmas.

Pat Primm, owner and Internet marketing manager, explains how the program works. "We do not know the identity of the families, but we're given guidance as to what the kids want, their ages, clothing sizes if appropriate, and things like that," he said. Cascade also buys presents for the parents to further enhance the Christmas spirit.

Cascade's employees who volunteer for the program shop for the families, and then follow it up with a gift-wrapping party in the Mazda showroom. "The participation we get is incredible," continued Pat, "and staffers really get excited to be part of this gift-giving program." Nick Corlett, Subaru brand manager, is shown above wrapping his gifts and getting into the Christmas spirit.

Cascade delivers the wrapped presents to the church, which then distributes them to the families in need. This year's distribution date is December 19.

"We're pleased and proud to participate in this program for the past 16 years," said Pat. "A key focus of our mission is to be a positive force in our community. What could be more at the heart of that mission than to help children and families that are struggling at Christmas? It's the right thing to do."

Youth Group Goes Bowling!
Sunday, January 21st, 12:45 p.m.,

From Director of Youth, Emily Sanko

“This is a very exciting week as the youth chose bowling for their activity! We will be meeting in the gathering area after Church this Sunday, January 21st to head over to Station 300 in Akron.

To ensure we book enough space, please reserve you, your child, and their friends by responding to Emily by 6 p.m. on Friday. When you do, give her the total number of adults (People over 18), and the total number of students (People 17 and under).

Thank you and have a blessed week!”



You are invited

GET TO KNOW THE MSC

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The Master Singers Chorale of Northeast Ohio invites interested singers to an evening of music, information, fellowship and refreshments.

Monday, January 22 | 7pm
First Christian Church of Stow
3493 Darrow Rd | Stow, Ohio

If you're looking for a fun-loving, community-based choral ensemble with a commitment to fine literature from the past and present, come check us out!

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On January 22, we will:

- Sing together in an abbreviated rehearsal
- Learn about the MSC from the Artistic Director & Board Members
- Enjoy refreshments and get to know current & prospective members

For more information, contact Dr. Jon C. Peterson:

- Jon.Peterson@mastersingersinc.org