



meditate

ON MY WORD

*Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.
Worship the LORD with gladness;
Come into his presence with singing.*

*Know that the LORD is God.
It is he that made us, and we are his;
We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
And his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his name.*

*For the LORD is good;
His steadfast love endures for ever,
And his faithfulness to all generations.*

Psalms 100

FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Welcome Back, Welcome Home

Dear Church Family,

We are excited to welcome you back and welcome you home as we approach the kick-off of our program year on Sunday, September 12. In this newsletter, you'll find all the details for our "Welcome Back, Welcome Home" Sunday. I know that many of you have been traveling, and some folks are still a bit reluctant to return to our community in person, but we hope and pray that our entire church family will begin to reengage this fall.



First and foremost, I want you to know that we are planning a full and robust program year. All of our ministries will be offering a complete array of activities and engagements, with many opportunities for hybrid participation, both in-person and virtual. For those traveling and folks who are still a bit cautious around in-person gatherings, you'll be able to participate in a whole host of Church offerings that you can locate on our new website under the banner "God's Acre On the Go." This will include a new worship podcast that you can listen to wherever you are and whenever you want! With that said, the Church of Jesus Christ is a physically gathering body of people, and the lion's share of our efforts this year will be to regather in person as has been our tradition on God's Acre for nearly 300 years.

We all have questions about what this year will look like and how we continue to be nimble in the midst of a pandemic. I was in a UCC clergy meeting recently at which all the talk was Covid, and I finally had to say, "we need to begin talking more about Christ than Covid...if churches make Covid central instead of Christ, those churches are likely to get sick and die." I believe that to be true, and I believe we are entering a dynamic moment in our church's life where we will actually thrive, in no small measure, to all we have learned and accomplished amid a pandemic. We will follow all state and local health guidelines again this year, and our children and youth programs will continue to be guided by the best thinking and practices in our schools. We will be careful and safe, while remembering who we are called to be, Christians who are courageous and loving and committed to proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ in an aching world. Throughout this year, what that looks

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Fellowship is Back!

We had a fantastic end-of-summer Sabbath Picnic on the acre this past Sunday. Seeing all your beautiful faces enjoying our campus and gathering again was a true blessing.



The Fellowship Team looks forward to hosting coffee hour and a light breakfast in our tent after the 10:00am worship service on Welcome Back Sunday, September 12. All are invited, we hope to see you! If you would like to serve coffee in the tent in September or October, please reach out to our Fellowship Chair, Linda Williams, mrswilliams@worldcontact.com.

Meet Shean-Mei Sheu

We welcome Shean-Mei Sheu, Director of Finance, to our church staff.

She holds an MBA, CMA®, CMC® and is a certified QuickBooks ProAdvisor. She is also a certified Medicare Counselor and has volunteered her service at the Town of New Canaan.



Shean-Mei comes to the Church with a few decades of experience as a finance and accounting executive at two great multi-billion-dollar companies – Reader’s Digest and IBM. During her IBM career, she held various finance management positions to develop budgets, forecasts, and managed revenue, cost and expense performance. Prior to IBM, she was the Assistant Controller at Reader’s Digest Corporation and responsible for the General Accounting, Accounts Payable, Payroll and Cash Operations.

Her responsibilities as the Director of Finance for the Church include all financial management aspects of the Church and improve / maintain a robust set of internal controls.

Shean-Mei lives in New Canaan with her husband, Alan, and their poodle, Etro, who is a certified therapy dog.

Shean-Mei Sheu, Director of Finance
(203) 966-2651, x823, finance@godsacre.org

From the Pastor’s Study

Continued from page one

like may need to adjust at times, but our mission and ministry will not waver, our Lord will be faithful, and God will continue to provide.

I believe this will be an extraordinary year for us, and our study plan is nothing short of prophetic! Our “Meditate on My Word” guidebooks are stunning, and I can’t wait for you to receive yours on Sunday, September 12! We will spend some time meditating on and memorizing scripture so that it becomes part of us. In times of crisis, we are often tempted to forget who we are and who we are called to be. When God’s word, will, and way for us is instilled in our lives, we can draw on the continual reminder of our identity as people of faith - courageous, resilient, loving! We will take some time to literally get God’s word in us this year so that God’s desires for us can sustain us even more completely.

I am also mindful that we have a stunning number of new families who have moved into our community. You have new neighbors, and I have new neighbors. There are so many new people, and many of these families are struggling to find their way into different activities and programs in our town. Many folks would love to be a part of our church and would benefit greatly from our fellowship. So, be neighborly. Extend an invitation. Share your church with others who might only need the slightest encouragement!

I know the pandemic has been exhausting on so many fronts, and I am aware that it may feel as if we are a long way from getting through this difficult moment, but we are in a better place now than we were. We have an enormous opportunity in front of us. And we follow a Lord and Savior who has promised to be with us always. We have all so much to be thankful for...

...now, all we need is you.

I hope you’ll join us for worship on our “Welcome Back, Welcome Home” Sunday, September 12, at either 8:00am or 10:00am. It will be a delight to see you, and you will love being here!

It is time to come home.

Yours in Christ,
Chapin

Beginners' Bible Study

with Kibbie Laird and BJ Flagg

Sundays from 9:00am - 9:45am, Parlor

We will look at the scriptures being used in Sunday worship. Don't be embarrassed by your lack of biblical knowledge. You will be right at home in this class. Bring your booklet and a Bible if you have one. The parlor and library are now equipped to accommodate those joining from home or travel.

Contact BJ Flagg, bj@nurenu.com for a Zoom invite.



Isaiah! Monday Morning or Tuesday Morning

Monday from 7:00am - 8:00am, Library

Tuesday (Women's Group) from 9:30am - 10:30am, Parlor

This fall with our all-church emphasis meditating on God's word. We will study the most quoted prophet of the Bible, Isaiah. Come find out why! Two groups meet weekly to study books of the Bible with the Yale Divinity School's Yale Bible Study which began in this church. Both groups can now accommodate those traveling or joining from home.

Contact Marianna Kilbride, marianna@godsacre.org for a Zoom invite.



Wednesday Morning Bible Study

with Rev. Dr. Stephen Chapin Garner

Wednesday from 9:30am-11:00am, Parlor

Chapin invites the group to look at the scriptures used in worship a couple of weeks in advance. Your input and the discussion informs the sermon on each given text. The discussion is always interesting and provocative. The parlor and library are now equipped to accommodate those traveling or joining from home.

Contact Chapin Garner, chapin@godsacre.org for a Zoom invite.



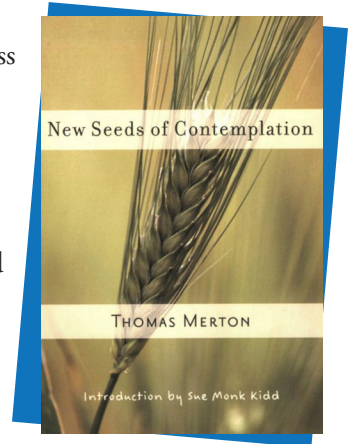
Men's Small Group Fellowship BBQ
Monday, September 27
6:30pm, Church Tent

Fridays with Merton

Friday from 8:00am - 9:00am
Zoom

Please join us to read and discuss short essays from contemplative Trappist monk and author, Thomas Merton's *New Seeds of Contemplation*. We meet Friday mornings at 8:00am via Zoom. New members are welcome and encouraged to this thoughtful group.

Contact Marianna Kilbride, marianna@godsacre.org for a Zoom invite or more info.



Women's and Men's Small Groups



Small Groups within our church are essential to deepening our engagement with others and growing in our faith. Join us to explore together our all-church curriculum for the year, Meditate on My Word. Groups will begin gathering at the end of September and will meet monthly.

Participation is both in person and via Zoom.

To learn more about Women's Small Groups contact:

Marianna Kilbride, marianna@godsacre.org or Jill Robey, jillgrobey@gmail.com.

To learn more about Men's Small Groups contact:

Chapin, chapin@godsacre.org or Steve Case, scase135@gmail.com.

PASTORAL CARE

What is Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care is your church caring for you in all of the stages of life, through all of the joys and challenges. What does pastoral care look like at our Church?

- Giving others rides to church
- Flower delivery by Deacons
- Flower Ministry
- Card Ministry
- Making sure our neighbors are not alone
- Our Prayer Chain
- Visitation Ministry
- Stephen Ministry
- Calling a friend
- Prayer Shawl Ministry

In short, we are the hands and feet of Christ, doing Christ's work in this world. If you would like to join one of these important ministries or you know someone who needs a little extra care and love, please email Rev. Kibbie Laird at kibbie@godsacre.org.



Come As You Are!

All are welcome on God's Acre!













We know as people of faith we belong to God but we also belong to the beloved communities we gather in – like youth groups! This fall, jump into the group for your grade and be surrounded by unconditional love, lean into covenantal relationships, and participate in something larger than yourself. The fall is a great time to try out a youth group and bring a new friend. We can't wait for all the adventures ahead!

As we launch into the program year, we are committed to offering faith formation to our youth to its fullest extent. Our plan is to be outdoors in God's creation when able, but when we are inside we will be following the New Canaan Public Schools guidelines on Covid safety. Masks will be required when we are indoors for both our youth and staff.

“Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”
1 Timothy 4:12

Youth Group Weekly Offerings

Our program year will launch on Sunday, September 12 with our MSYG Pool Party (3:00pm-4:30pm at the Petitjean's house) and YG Carnival (6:00pm -7 :30pm at church)!

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
 <p>Church School During 10:00am Worship Services</p>	 <p>Guppies Grades 3 & 4 4:00pm – 5:00pm</p>	 <p>Junior Youth Group Grades 5 & 6 4:00pm – 5:15pm</p>	 <p>Spirit Singers Grades 1-4 4:00pm – 5:00pm</p>	 <p>Minnows Grades K-2 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the Month 4:00pm - 5:00pm</p>
 <p>Middle School Youth Group Grades 7 & 8 4:00pm – 5:30pm</p>	 <p>Grace Notes Ages 2-4 w/parent 4:00pm – 4:30pm</p>		 <p>Joyful Noise Grades 5-8 5:00pm – 6:00pm</p>	
 <p>Youth Group Grades 9-12 7:00pm – 8:30pm</p>	 <p>Cherubs Ages 4-K 4:30pm – 5:00pm</p>		 <p>Confirmation Confirmation Discernment Meeting - Wednesday, September 29, 7:00pm</p>	
				 <p>Quest Details to Come</p>

Church School is Back!

We are thrilled to be welcoming our students and teachers back to Church School this fall! Join us in the classroom during the 10:00am Worship Service for fellowship and faith development starting Sunday, September 12. Classes will be offered for children ages 3 through Grade 7 along with nursery care for age 2 and under. We plan to follow all NCPS Covid guidelines. Register your child today at www.godsacre.org!



Children's Choirs

Children's choirs start Monday, September 13 or Wednesday, September 15. Mrs. Jody and Ms. Sydney will follow the New Canaan Public Schools Covid guidelines so children will stay safe and healthy.

Grace Notes, ages 2-4 with a parent/guardian Mondays, 4:00pm – 4:30pm

Cherubs, ages 4-K Mondays, 4:30pm – 5:00pm

Spirit Singers, grades 1-4 Wednesdays, 4:00pm – 5:00pm

Joyful Noise, grades 5-8 Wednesdays, 5:00pm – 6:00pm

For More Information:

Jody Blaine Davis, (203)966-2651, x827 music@godsacre.org

Sydney Anderson, (203)966-2651, x821 sydney@godsacre.org

MSYG POOL PARTY

at the home of the Petitjeans
3:00pm - 4:30pm
245 West Hills Road, New Canaan

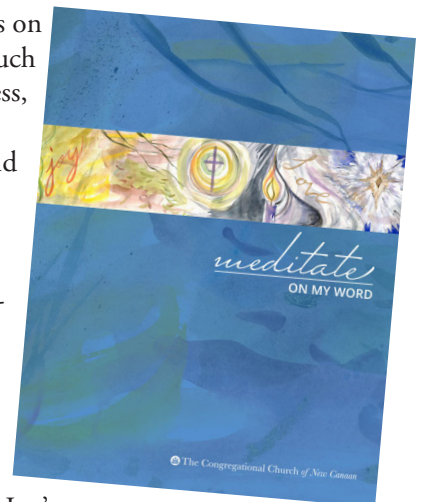
- 7th graders - bring individually wrapped snacks or treats (chips, snack bars, cookies etc.)
- 8th graders - bring lemonade or iced tea



PICK UP YOUR PROGRAM BOOK AT THE CHURCH!

Ancient philosophers and theologians sought by their words to guide the soul. Today newspapers, social media, television and more, seek to do the same, and with much success. What we read and hear influences who we are. As our world reopens, let's choose to be influenced by this sacred library, the Bible. The words of the Bible are a divine collaboration between humans seeking to understand God, creation, and our place in it, and God revealing Godself through the ages. The words of the Bible teach us who we are meant to be, in God's image. Over and over the scriptures call us to meditate on these words (See Ps. 1:2, 119:15, Joshua 1:8, Job 22:22, 1 Timothy 4:15). To meditate is to think deeply, to focus one's mind and consider. A result of this is often memorization without really trying. Likewise, trying to memorize can help with understanding. It is no coincidence we use the phrase, memorize by heart. When we know something by heart we hold it close, let it work on us, guide us, support us.

Each month we will focus on one theme of the Bible, such as love or joy or forgiveness, with one representative passage to meditate on and memorize. Each of these scriptures will add to our store of riches, a personal library to call on in everyday life. Weekly sermon passages and church school lessons will echo those themes, and add options to select for the sacred libraries within us. Let's saturate our souls with this ancient yet living wisdom and see how it shapes the rebirth of our lives.



Choirs Resume This Program Year

After 18 months of an empty choir loft, fully vaccinated adults are invited to Chancel Choir. Singers' masks are available in the choir room upon request. Chancel Choir begins Wednesday, September 8 (an evening change for the first week only) at 7:30pm.

Children's choirs start Monday, September 13 or Wednesday, September 15. Mrs. Jody and Ms. Sydney will follow the New Canaan Public Schools guidelines so children will stay safe and healthy.

Grace Notes , ages 2-4 with a parent/guardian	Mondays, 4:00pm – 4:30pm
Cherubs , ages 4-K	Mondays, 4:30pm – 5:00pm
Spirit Singers , grades 1-4	Wednesdays, 4:00pm – 5:00pm
Joyful Noise , grades 5-8	Wednesdays, 5:00pm – 6:00pm
Chancel Choir , high school and adults	Thursdays, 7:30pm – 9:00pm
Joyful Ringers , bells for adults	TBA

For More Information:

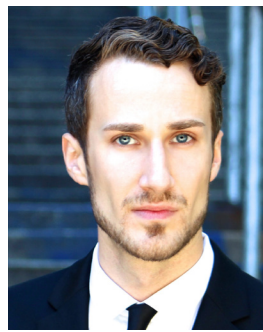
Jody Blaine Davis, (203)966-2651, x827 music@godsacre.org
 Sydney Anderson, (203)966-2651, x821 sydney@godsacre.org

Welcome to Sydney Anderson, Director of Children's Music and Drama

Please welcome Sydney Anderson as our new Director of Children's Music and Drama! Sydney begins Tuesday, September 7, and will team with Mrs. Jody. She attended The American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York City, received a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Music Education at The Hartt School in Hartford, and a Master's degree in Vocal Performance at the University of Houston. Sydney is certified in Preschool and Elementary church music programs and has taught elementary music and Kindermusik in Connecticut and New York public schools. Sydney has served as Children's Music Director in churches in Texas and Connecticut, where small children's choirs blossomed into large programs with her leadership. Sydney is a renowned soprano and returns from the summer singing with an opera company in San Diego. She is a pedagogue and enjoys teaching voice and piano to all ages. Welcome, Sydney!



Sydney Anderson



Hans Tashjian

Congratulations to Hans Tashjian

This summer Hans Tashjian, our Chancel Choir Scholar in the bass section, sang the role of Figaro in The Barber of Seville. This was Teatro Nuovo's first production since Covid and it was outside at Lincoln Center's Damrosch Park. Hans received rave reviews and a

few days afterwards he received a contract at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. Congratulations Hans.

Welcome Back Sunday September 12 at 10:00am Service

The Chancel Choir returns to the choir loft! Hear Franz Josef Haydn's "The Heavens Are Telling" and John Rutter's "All Things Bright and Beautiful." Along with guest organist, Christopher DeVage, they will be accompanied by trumpets and trombones directed by Scott Cranston, Director of Bands at New Canaan Public High School. Come early for a 10 minute prelude and a festive postlude.

Welcome Greer Lyle, Soprano

Welcome to soprano Greer Lyle, the new Soprano Section leader for the Chancel Choir. Greer is a graduate of Georgia State University and will be a 3rd year Masters student at Yale University's Opera Department. Her sacred repertoire is vast and she has sung in church choirs continuously as well as performed with opera companies across the country. You will be blessed with her beautiful voice and endeared by her Southern personality.



Greer Lyle

Visitors Night with the Chancel Choir

Thursday, September 23
7:30 PM – Music Room

All fully vaccinated singers are invited to sing with the Chancel Choir. You will be seated with helpful singers to rehearse music that will be sung in upcoming weeks. After a short rehearsal everyone will go to the home of Jody and Ray Davis for refreshments and a Get Acquainted Time.

September Plate Collection: Inspirica

Moving people from homeless to home is the motto of Inspirica in Stamford, our September plate offering recipient and longtime partner. Inspirica seeks to break the cycle of homelessness by providing the programs and services that help clients achieve and maintain permanent housing and stability in their lives. Of the clients placed in permanent housing, 83% have remained housed and are paying rent a full year later. Programs include career, education, children's services, parenting, job retention, healthcare, and many others. Meal provision and homework help are some of the ways available to volunteer. Contact Marianna Kilbride, marianna@godsacre.org for more information.



Inspirica Sneaker Tree

Back to school means pencils, pens, and new school sneakers! New sneakers in the right size, such a given for most of us, are an incredible gift for a homeless child. Take a sneaker from the tree on Welcome Back, Welcome Home Sunday to sign up and buy for your chosen child. Sneakers may be returned to the box in Smith Hall. Contact Marianna Kilbride, marianna@godsacre.org.



Inspirica Kids Snack Collection

On Welcome Back Sunday, September 12, would you please bring nonperishable items such as box drinks, individual snacks, and fruit cups to church that day? This will help provide the children of Inspirica with snacks for their school lunches. Donations can be dropped off at the northeast end of Smith Hall.

Contact Marianna Kilbride, marianna@godsacre.org for more information or to help deliver.



HomeFront Day

Saturday, September 18, 9:00am

Join us to repair and rehab a Norwalk neighbor's home who cannot do so for health, age, or financial reasons. No experience is necessary, and lunch is included! Ages 14 and up are welcome. Contact Marianna Kilbride, marianna@godsacre.org to sign up.



Building & Grounds

Welcome Back

We look forward to welcoming you back so you can enjoy what was accomplished throughout the summer. We are pleased with how beautiful our campus is looking.

The landscaping has never looked better. After our long-time contractor resigned in the spring, we reached out to our local Gregg's Garden Center & Landscaping. The expertise in which our grounds are being cared for is truly artful.

Water plays a vital role in keeping the grounds looking beautiful. Updates to our irrigation system include a new drip system in the Memorial Garden and beyond to reach beds suffering over the years with a lack of proper watering. The Pollard House, at 7 St. Johns now has a sprinkler and drip system to enhance and protect our landscaping investment.

Exterior paint and repairs have taken place at both Parsonages, and both are looking fresh and dazzling.

A significant window replacement has taken place. Windows installed in the 50s, throughout the school wing and offices, have been replaced. We look forward to operable and energy-efficient windows.



OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY

Ministers

The Rev. Dr. Stephen Chapin Garner, x1
Senior Minister

The Rev. Kathryn Kibbie Laird, x2
Acting Associate Minister of Children,
Youth, and Families

Staff

Sydney Anderson, x821
Director of Children's Music and Drama

Kelly Leather Antonson, x824
Senior Youth Director

Erik Burns, x834
Youth Director

Laurel Carr, x833
Director of Communications

Dr. Jo Deen Blaine Davis, x827
Director of Music Ministries

Anthony Jones
Sexton

Marianna Kilbride, x832
Director of Missions and Outreach

Caroline Leather, x835
Director of Children's Formation

Marianne Perry, x822
Director of Operations

Shean-Mei Sheu, x823
Director of Finance

Church Lay Leadership

David Carlson
Chair, Board of Trustees

Hoyt Davidson
Chair, Board of Deacons

Barbara Clayton
Chair, Nominating and Governance

Lonnie deMarco
Chair, Personnel



The Congregational Church
of New Canaan

23 Park Street
New Canaan, CT 06840
(203) 966-2651
www.godsacre.org

We are a Stephen Minister Church

Newsletter Submissions

If you are planning on contributing to the September newsletter, please submit by September 20.
Email submissions to: laurel@godsacre.org.

myConnect Corner

Become part of myConnect, our online church community!

Within myConnect you can:

- view an online directory
- interact with groups
- set up and manage your online giving
- view giving statements
- register for events
- find ways to volunteer

Two ways to login:

1. Visit www.godsacre.org/myconnect
2. Go to www.godsacre.org and click "myConnect@God's Acre" in the upper left corner.

Need an Account?

Click "Sign Up Here" on the login page, enter your info, and look for our email to get started.

Questions?

Contact marie-ange@godsacre.org