



meditate

ON MY WORD

hope

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:37-39

FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Dear Church Family,

Sometimes in January and February, I like to take a step back and look at the big picture. Yesterday I ran across an article by a dear friend and mentor, the Dean of Yale Divinity School, The Reverend Dr. Gregory Sterling. Some people wonder if ministers have a minister, and I am grateful to claim Greg as mine. He helped me navigate the job search, which led me to accept this call here on God's Acre. Greg assured me over several phone calls and lunches in New Haven that The Congregational Church of New Canaan has historically been very healthy, vibrant, and vital. I remember asking him point-blank, "is it a good place?" And without hesitation, he responded, "yes, if they offer it to you, you should go there."



In 2018 Dean Sterling invited me to serve on his advisory board, which I consider one of the great honors of my ministry because I get to give back to Yale Divinity School, the place that formed and shaped me. Before COVID, our Dean's Advisory Council gathered twice a year on our beloved campus and sat around a large U-shaped table. There were ministers at big steeple churches like ours and headmasters, doctors, lawyers, and financial advisors. It didn't take me long to realize I was receiving the baton passed by Rev. Skip Masback, representing the less common category of ministers who call children and youth their calling. Many people start out in children and youth ministry, but it is a rare bird that sticks with it after 10-20 years or more. (For the record, I love it now more than when I first started.) And when people ask me, "Why?" which they inevitably do, accompanied by a quizzical look that seems to doubt my sanity. I tell them that we get to be a part of the "molding and shaping process" of our children and youth and that how faith begins for them will shape who they become and how they respond to life. Will faith matter to our kids? Or will faith not matter at all?

Continued on page two

From the Pastor's Study

Continued from page one

Dean Sterling wrote a letter to the YDS community at the beginning of COVID and said:

Faith neither wishes for the impossible nor unrealistically ignores the fact that tragedy can happen to my family and me. Faith is the quiet confidence that no matter what we face, God will give us the strength to face it. But faith is more than confidence in God and God's love; faith is a life motivated to serve based on that confidence.

What does a faith that matters look like now? It means praying for those who are ill and scared and suffering. It means praying for medical workers and all who give care. It is helping those who are economically disadvantaged and those who have lost their jobs and suffer in silence. It means sharing what we have with others. It means reaching out to loved ones and acquaintances so we can make sure people are not feeling isolated, anxious, overwhelmed. It means making sure those in our community of faith and beyond get food, medication, and the medical care they need. Does faith matter? Yes, it matters immensely. Make no mistake your faith defines who you are. (Rev. Dr. Greg Sterling, "Why Faith Matters")

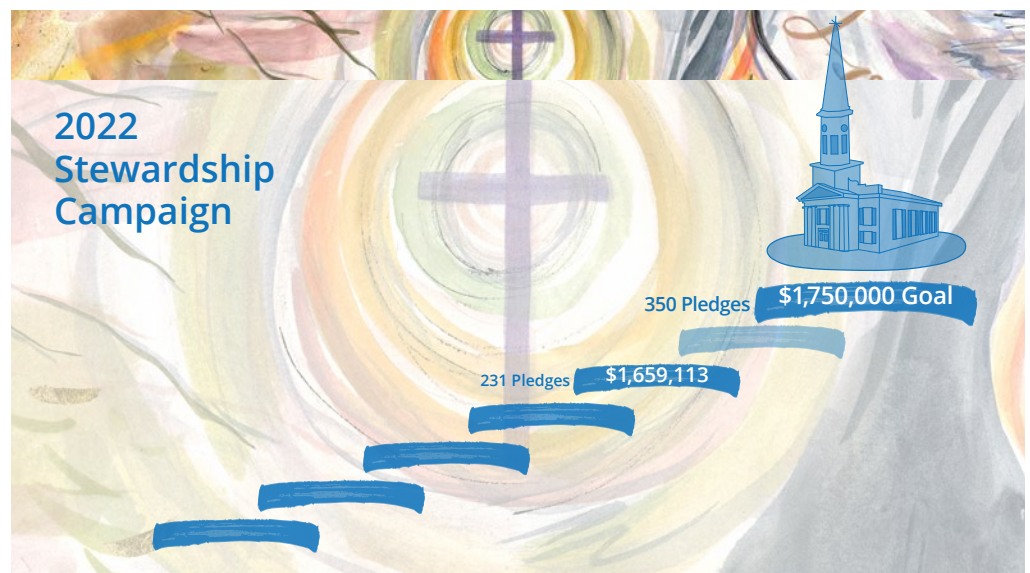
Almost two years into COVID, I think faith means realizing that we are worn down and not at our best; it means giving ourselves some grace and forgiveness. Faith means realizing that the person next to us might be struggling with anxiety or family issues and that they too might need some grace and forgiveness. Faith means going out of our way to "be the light of Christ for others," realizing that according to the numbers, more than half of all youth and adults are struggling right now with depression and anxiety, and mental health is at a crisis level. The simple act of asking the people around you how they are doing is perhaps the kindest and most Christ-like thing you can do. Sit. And listen.

Our faith assures us "when we do not know what the future holds, we do know who holds the future." (Shirley Guthrie, Christian Doctrine) Faithful people face the future, even a scary and unknown future, with calm and resolve. Why? Because their confidence is in God, not in themselves. Does faith matter? Yes, indeed. Our faith defines who we are and how we react to the challenges we face. In the end, faith matters most of all.

Blessings and Peace,
Kibbie

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

Our 2022 Stewardship Campaign is making positive strides towards our goal, though we still have a ways to go. Our Church's ability to thrive during this challenging time is a reflection of our community's commitment and support. With your help and generosity, we can ensure our Church can continue to serve God and Jesus Christ with its outreach to our members, our town, and the wider Church community. If you have not yet pledged, could you please consider making a pledge to the Stewardship Campaign and, if possible, please consider increasing your commitment.



Currently, we are at 251 pledge cards (71% of our goal) for a total of \$1,659,113 (94% of our goal)

Women's Fellowship

Christian Women's Book Club Join us in February

We are thrilled to have kicked off our inaugural meeting of the Christian Women's Book Club, led by Lesley Cousley, church member and avid reader. Our first book selection is *Call Your Daughter Home* by Deb Spera. If you would like to join us to discuss this book at our February meeting, pick up a copy today at Elm Street Books. We will meet monthly on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm. In February, we will gather on Zoom, but going forward will be in person in group members' homes. To learn more, contact Lesley Cousley, lcousley@gmail.com.



ANNUAL MEETING

Upcoming Annual Meeting

The Trustees are reviewing the financial results for 2021. Last year's results along with the budget for 2022 will be presented at the upcoming Annual Meeting on March 6, 2022 at 11:15am. This year's meeting will be hybrid, both in-person and available via zoom. Stay tuned for further details to follow.



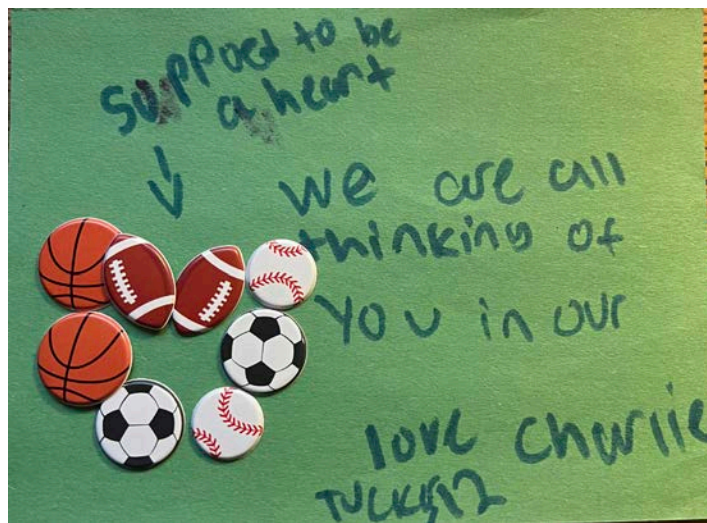
Card Ministry Team

Are you interested in helping to bring a smile to fellow church members? Please consider joining the Card Ministry Team. We send caring handwritten notes to: do-gooders, unsung heroes, those who may need support, those going through a life change, etc. Please join us and write cards that will make a difference in someone's life. We will supply you with beautiful church note cards with the recipient's name and address.



Also, if you know of anyone in need of a pick-me-up, going through a difficult period, or who may feel lonely, please let us know and we will send out a kindhearted note.

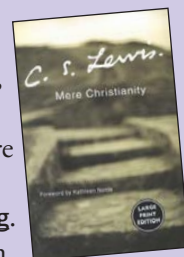
Contact Stephanie Radman (203) 952-4554 or stephanieradman@aol.com to learn more.



Above: two cards made by church school children to send to church members.

Merton Reads Lewis

The Thomas Merton reading group is now reading C.S. Lewis's essays in his book, *Mere Christianity*. Join us anytime for these weekly discussions about our faith. For more information and a zoom link, contact Marianna Kilbride, marianna@godsacre.org. This group meets Friday mornings at 8:00am.



February is Black History Month

In observance of Black History Month, an African-American spiritual will be included each Sunday in February. Lift your voices with us to pay tribute to the generations of Black Americans who held firm an inspiring faith in God each day through great struggles and adversity.

Sing During Lent and Easter with the Chancel Choir

PLAN AHEAD: if you would like to sing with the Chancel Choir but have limited time, consider singing during the Lenten season and on Easter Sunday. The Chancel Choir will sing Lenten anthems beginning Ash Wednesday, March 2, and Sundays beginning March 6. The special Lenten musical presentation with guest string instrumentalists will be Maurice Duruflé's *Requiem* at the Sunday morning 10:00 service on April 3. Also, you may sing the Palm Sunday service with trumpets on April 10; Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service on April 14; and Easter Day on April 17 with brass and tympani. There's a place for you! Come Thursday evenings at 7:30pm for rehearsals for these occasions. You will sit next to a strong singer who will support you along the way. For more information, please contact Jody Blaine Davis at music@godsacre.org or (203) 966-2651 x827.



Lenten Musical Moments

You are invited to hear our exceptional section leaders sing Lenten contemplative music. These occur each Wednesday afternoon, beginning March 9 through April 13. For those who have attended Musical Moments in the past, we will now offer them at a new time: 12:30pm for 30 minutes in the Meeting House.

DID YOU FORGET TO JOIN A CHOIR?

It's not too late, join in February.

Mondays

Grace Notes	4:00 – 4:30pm
Cherubs	4:30 – 5:00pm

Wednesdays

Spirit Singers	4:00 – 5:00pm
Joyful Noise/Junior Worship Team	5:00 – 6:00pm

Thursdays

Joyful Ringers (Bells)	6:15 – 7:15pm
Chancel Choir	7:30 – 9:00pm

Bring-a-Friend Music Night

The Children's Choirs enjoyed a fun evening of musical fellowship on January 11th. We shared songs, folk dancing, played musical games, and explored rhythm instruments, all through the lens of joining our hearts and voices in fellowship with one another. Stay tuned for more of these Bring-a-Friend Music Nights and a Family Music Night later this spring!

Junior Worship Team

Calling all Middle Schoolers! The Junior Worship Team is looking for new members. We meet Wednesday evenings from 5:00-6:00pm. In addition to learning traditional church choir music, the 5-8th grade choir also serves as our new Worship-Team-in-Training! Come learn favorite praise and worship solos and group songs, join the Worship Team in leading selections during Youth Worship Nights, and lead the congregation in praise songs during 10:00am worship services.



Children's Musical Update

This spring, the Children's Music and Drama Ministry will prepare scenes from our favorite Bible Stories. These will be announced this month and presented during Worship Services later this spring. If it is safe to do so, we will restart the beloved tradition of presenting our musical scenes to The New Canaan Inn residents in May! We will have a Parent Information meeting for those interested in participating on Sunday, March 13 at 11:15am in the Chapel, and rehearsals begin Sunday, March 20.

Catch the Children's Choirs Leading Worship in February:

Sunday, February 6

All Children's Choirs at 10:00am service

Sunday, February 13

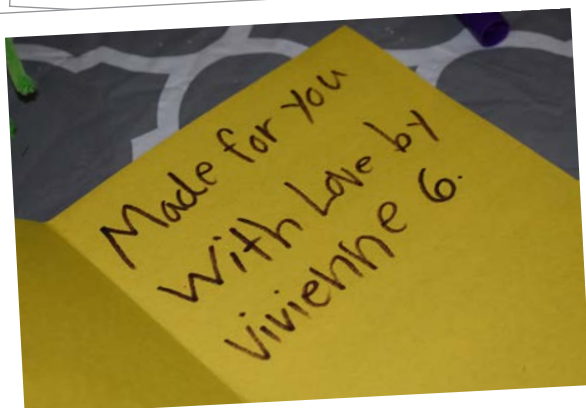
Junior Worship Team at 10:00am service

February Church School Calendar

- Feb 6:** Church School
- Feb 13:** Souperbowl of Caring
wear a jersey of any kind, and participate in the Bible Bowl competition
- Feb 20:** break, no church school, nursery is open
- Feb 27:** break, no church school, nursery is open

Chapel focuses on Love and Prayer

The youngest members of our church spent one Sunday in January learning about prayer and then created homemade greetings cards for some special members of our congregation. Love is the answer.



What is the Souperbowl of Caring?

In 1990 it all began with a simple prayer:

"Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those who are without a bowl of

soup to eat." This prayer was delivered to a small youth group in Columbia, SC by a seminary intern.



It gave birth to an idea. Why not harness the energy and enthusiasm of Super Bowl weekend, a time when people come together for football, food, and fun, to unite the nation for a higher good? Individuals and groups could collect dollars in soup pots and canned food for those in need and send every dollar and food donation directly to a local charity of their choice.

Since 1990 over \$170 million in dollars and food has been generated on through Superbowl Sunday collections benefiting thousands of soup kitchens, food banks, meal programs and other hunger-relief charities in local communities.

This year, on February 13, come to church school and participate in the Bible Bowl Challenge.

All children and youth are invited and encouraged to wear a sports jersey of any kind (football, soccer, baseball, etc), and come to church with canned goods to benefit the Open Door Shelter in Norwalk).

Souperbowl Sunday's List of Food Items Wanted to Open Doors Shelter on 2/13 (All regular sizes please)

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| • manual can openers | • mac & cheese |
| • canned tuna and canned chicken | • vegetable oil |
| • spaghetti sauce and canned pasta dinners | • sugar (2 or 4 lb bags) |
| • peanut butter | • all-purpose flour (2 or 5 lb bags) |
| • jelly (grape or strawberry) | • pancake mix |
| • rice (2 lb bags) | • pancake syrup |
| • dried beans (red or black) | • cereal oatmeal |
| • canned soup | • snack bars juice or juice boxes |
| • canned beans (red or black) | • coffee dry or shelf-stable milk |
| • canned vegetables fruit cups or canned fruit | • spices |
| | • reusable grocery bags |

Children and Family Bingo Night

Friday, March 4, 6:00pm
Fun & Prizes for All!



YG Mission to Allendale!

Thank you to our Mission Sponsors who have already contributed to make our trip possible!

Over the New Canaan Public Schools February break, 74 of our YG fish will travel to Allendale, SC, to serve as Christ calls us to! We are excited about the relationships that will be formed with residents and the work which we will accomplish. Our partnership with Together for Hope and Emma's House will bring forth transformation not just on the homes and playground we will work on but in the hearts of our fish!

If you haven't donated to our Mission Sponsor campaign there is still time – we have \$30,000 to raise before our departure on February 17! Please consider contributing, and as a thank you, you can look forward to receiving two letters from our mission fish while on their trip!



All Mission Sponsors are invited to attend our Youth Sunday on Sunday, March 13 at the 10:00am service.

Join us as we celebrate all that God made possible and thank you for all your prayers and support! A preview of our YG Mission Trip film will be shown in Smith Hall immediately following the 10:00am service with a light Mission Sponsor brunch! We can't wait to see you there!

Look for your invite coming soon!



Open Doors Food Collection February 13!

Mid-winter is a time of increased need at shelters. The holiday rations are waning and the client numbers increase due to cold weather. Help us restock the Open Doors Pantry by bringing non-perishables to the open car trunks in the church circle on Sunday 2/13 from 9:45am-12:00pm. The most needed items are: rice (preferably 2lb bags), dried beans (red or black), canned tuna, chicken noodle soup, spaghetti sauce, peanut butter, jelly (grape or strawberry), breakfast cereal, spices, coffee. Can openers (regular old manual can openers) and reusable grocery bags are always appreciated!



Welcome to Connecticut Collection

Please join us in welcoming some of our newest neighbors at Fairhaven School in New Haven. We are partnering with the Welcome Classroom, which consists of elementary aged refugees who are primarily Afghan. Students spend an average of one and a half years learning English and other basics in the class. We will be collecting specific items to help smooth their path. Stop by the Communion Table in the Meeting House to sign up to help or contact Tracy Goldman at office@godsacre.org. All items should be returned to Smith Hall by no later than Wednesday, February 9.



February Plate Collection – Open Doors, Norwalk

Every night in Connecticut there are 3,033 people without a home, 771 of those are in Fairfield County. Homelessness has many causes. In Fairfield County the lack of affordable housing drives many individuals and families into homelessness. Our longtime partners Open Doors' mission is to make a direct impact in the greater Norwalk area by guiding every person in the cycle of homelessness towards housing stability. Their vision is to engage every person at risk of, and experiencing, homelessness with a holistic set of tools and resources that can be tailored to their individual needs. Our plate offering for February is designated to this compassionate cause. Please join us in supporting Open Doors.



OG Back in the Saddle!

March 19-26, 2022

Warm work days, evening reflections with our teams, and a Mexican meal or two or three make up this year's OG trip to San Antonio, Texas. Join us to visit our longtime mission partner Blueprint Ministries, who seek to share Christ's extravagant love and hope with the local community most in need of help. San Antonio has one the largest percentages of sub-standard housing of any major US city, with a poverty rate of almost 18 percent. Blueprint Ministries facilitates teams of volunteers in making much needed repairs for homeowners unable to do the work due to age, disability or income level. Home repairs range from roofing and dry wall repair to subflooring installation and painting. The goal is to make homes safe, warm, and dry. In the process, lasting relationships are established between homeowners, Blueprint Ministries, and the groups who serve, as we did in 2015 and 2018. The trip commitment deadline is February 13, 2022. To sign up or for more information, contact Marianna Kilbride, marianna@godsacre.org.



Prayer Shawls Offer a Special Ministry

On the second and fourth Monday of each month, from 10:00am-11:30am in the Parlor, the prayer shawl ministry team gathers to knit, share their lives, and create beautiful shawls for members and friends going through a difficult time. Each month we receive thank you letters from very appreciative members saying how much the prayer shawls meant to them and how comforting they were to know that others had knitted them in love. If you would like to join this very special ministry, we would love to have you join us. Please call Twee Haffner or Troy Elliott. No experience is needed. We will teach you how to knit and provide all the supplies



FLOWER MINISTRY TEAM

A Bouquet of Arrangers

Starting with a visit to the local flower market to choose the blooms, then arranging in the flower room – often with the added challenge of a special request to honor a loved one or event – arranging the flowers for our services is great fun. However, a gathering of all the arrangers in the floral ministry is pure joy! This month on a snowy January afternoon, we gathered at Rosie, and the big table underneath an enormous flower arrangement shook with laughter. We look forward to another afternoon together in the spring. If you arrange flowers or have ever wanted to learn, join us! If you have a special person or event you would like to remember with a donated arrangement, please contact Tracy Goldman at office@godsacre.org or (203) 966-2651 x829!



Did you know we have a Prayer Chain?

The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
– Phil 4: 6-7

What is the Prayer Chain Ministry?

Members of the prayer chain receive requests via email to pray for those needing help. Anyone may join, but all information that is received is kept confidential. We pray for our own members, for sure, through all of the ups and downs of life, but we also pray for our extended family, neighbors, etc.

Who coordinates our Prayer Chain Ministry?

Who do I call to join and who do I send requests for prayer to when needed? BJ Flagg, (203) 216-5642, bj@nurenu.com.



Stephen Ministry

Do you or someone you love need a Stephen Minister right now?

As the pandemic enters yet another phase, and winter days are short, we are reminded that during the darkest times of the year, we search for the light, even as we are forced to live in the dark. Light and hope for many folks comes through relationships. And when we cannot be near family or we are working from home and relationships are strained, it is nice to have a companion along the journey. Last year we trained a record number of Stephen Ministers, and they are eager to listen, to help, and to pray with you. During an unprecedented time of depression and anxiety, can we help? We would love to help you for a month, for a season, or for a year. Stephen Ministry is free and completely confidential. The Stephen Ministry motto is Christ caring for people through people. Please reach out to Rev. Kibbie Laird at kibbie@godsacre.org or Beth Baker at bethcudabaker@gmail.com. We are here to help.



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

Sarah Haddad, x826
Church School Coordinator

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

Sam Garner, x839
Youth Ministries Assistant

Tracy Goldman, x829
Administrative Assistant

Anthony Jones
Sexton

Marianna Kilbride, x832
Director of Missions and Outreach

Caroline Leather, x835
Associate 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 March newsletter, please submit by February 17.
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 laurel@godsacre.org